



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain**

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The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the DVR's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a four-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group (TAG) is a member of Talal Abu Ghazala Organisation (TAGorg) which provides services in various fields such as training, accounting, management consultancy, legal services and translation. TAG started operating in Bahrain since 1976, it is licensed by the Ministry of Labour. Initially, TAG offered non-accredited short courses in finance, accounting, marketing and management. In 2012, the institute added two externally-endorsed qualifications to its offering list. These are: Islamic Finance of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Arab Certified Quality Manager (ACQM) programme which is endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

TAG employs an executive director and a training manager who, in addition to working as a trainer, manages the training centre and reports to the executive director. The institute also employs a senior quality officer, two training coordinators, a health and safety officer, an accountant, one marketing staff, one IT support staff, a receptionist and a care taker. All staff members are recruited on full-time basis. TAG draws from a large pool of part-time trainers through the mother company as needed.

During the last three years, TAG enrolled a total of 329 learners; 33 and 212 learners were enrolled in 2011 and 2012 respectively and in 2013, 84 learners were enrolled until the date of the review. 56% of the total learners enrolled attended the externally-indorsed programmes. Learners are adults, employed by private and government organisations.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, studied documents and materials provided by the institute and met with staff, learners, employers and trainers.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness and all other aspects of the provision were judged as satisfactory.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Table of review Judgements awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Quality of Provision	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

All aspects of provision are satisfactory with no major weakness that would impact learners' progress. Most learners in the externally-endorsed programmes achieve their qualifications, with a minority achieving the qualification after several attempts. Learners develop appropriate knowledge and relevant vocational skills and make proper progress from their starting points. A few learners, however, make minimal progress. Quality trainers are recruited and their performance is appropriately monitored. TAG's trainers have good theoretical and practical command of their specialisms. However, training methods used vary among trainers. Better sessions are learner-centred while less effective ones are more trainer-centred with limited learners' engagement. Assessment and record keeping are adequate. TAG offers a balanced range of internally-designed non-accredited courses in management, accounting and marketing which meet the needs of stakeholders, in addition to a couple of externally-endorsed programmes which are offered in Arabic to meet specific needs of learners and stakeholders. Courses are appropriately structured and resourced and are generally reviewed and updated. Limited additional activities are provided to enhance the courses and enrich learners' experience. Learners are offered suitable support and guidance; they are presented with sufficient information about the course they are attending, enabling them to settle in. Staff members are cooperative and trainers are approachable when needed. Learners are kept aware of their progress through verbal feedback provided during sessions. Employers are updated with learners' attendance and results upon completion of courses. TAG's management has clear vision and mission statements which are shared with staff. The institute has revised its strategic plan recently to be more focused on improvement. Although learners' achievement is measured and relevant data are kept, trends are not monitored over years. Health and safety policies and practices are sufficient to ensure the wellbeing of learners and staff.

TAG has good capacity to improve. The management has sufficient understanding of the provision, and is committed to improving the provision. The institute is planning to introduce new externally-accredited programmes. In February 2012, TAG received Edexcel's approval to offer seven of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications with different progression levels in business, accounting and management and as a result, a group of the part-time trainers were trained on BTEC implementation in November 2012. In addition, all other short courses will be endorsed by Edexcel.

TAG has developed and started to implement a project for overall quality improvement. As a result, a sufficiently critical SWOT analysis was conducted where all staff and trainers were consulted and accordingly the institute's strategic plan was refined to be more focused on improving the identified areas for development. Moreover, the provider has developed recently a useful quality manual which sets clear procedures for all relevant operations. TAG currently has developed its own website, separate from the mother institute, which is supplemented with Moodle to provide a more interactive learning experience to the learners.

TAG has sufficient staff and resources to enable improvement to be carried out; management staff are competent and training staff are qualified and experienced. The provider has sufficient quality assurance measures in place to monitor the quality of training although the internal lesson observation system needs to be more rigor to promote continuous improvement. The number of enrolment has increased from 33 learners in 2011 to 212 in 2012 and repeat business is satisfactory.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Most learners at TAG achieve their course objectives, develop suitable knowledge and vocationally-related skills, and make at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. A few learners, however, are not progressing as expected especially in the accounting courses. Learners are generally motivated and sometimes can work well without direction. Most learners and employers interviewed expressed their high satisfaction with the learning experience at TAG and the impact the training has on their work performance.

The submitted Learners' Performance Data (LPD) reveals that retention rates are high at 97% for the past three years, as expected in such short courses. The externally-endorsed programmes make 56% of the total enrolment in the last two years, where ACQM learners make approximately 80% of the total enrolment of these programmes. Most learners enrolled in these programmes achieve their qualifications; a minority of which achieve their qualifications after several attempts. The overall pass rate for the Certificate in Islamic Finance (IF) by CIMA and the ACQM programme by ILM is 97% and 98.50%, respectively. TAG Bahrain's pass rate in IF-CIMA programme is higher than the pass rate of the others TAG branches in the Arab World. The vast majority of the learners in the non-accredited courses receive TAG's completion certificates however, there is a few learners who do not pass their post-course assessments and are yet awarded certificates of completion. Learners' achievement is suitably measured through formative and post-course assessments. In a few courses, post-course assessments do not cover fully the pre-defined learning objectives. The observed sessions, learners' work and end of courses results show adequate level of attainment and progress.

Learners are attentive to their learning and the majority enjoy the attended sessions and the activities and discussions held. The majority of the learners are able to work independently and collaboratively. A few learners reflect on how well they are progressing; this is evident in the observed sessions where learners question their trainers and challenge them with examples from their workplace.

Attendance and punctuality are regularly checked and records are always kept. It is evident from the records and the observed sessions that attendance rate is high in almost all courses. Although TAG emphasise the importance of attending on time, punctuality is an issue where a significant minority of learners are more than 15 minutes late in arriving to their sessions.

The quality of provision

How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Trainers have theoretical and practical command of their specialisms, they provide accurate explanations, respond professionally to learners' questions, draw on direct experiences and use relevant vocational examples to link theory to practice. Documented lesson plans used by trainers are basic and insufficiently detailed, and do not reflect how the varying needs of learners will be accommodated. There is no evidence provided on how trainers utilise learners' pre-course and continuous assessments to inform lesson planning. Most of the observed sessions, however, are suitably structured and timely managed. Sessions have clear objectives which are shared with the learners. Appropriate training methods are used by trainers to engage and motivate the learners, and the needs of the majority of learners are generally accommodated. In the better sessions, most learners are engaged in relevant discussions and effective group works and are occasionally challenged through follow-up questions. In the less effective sessions, although learners are attentive, their engagement is marginal.

During sessions, learners are suitably assessed through class activities and useful verbal feedback is provided. Pre- and post-course assessment are conducted in all courses including these leading to external qualifications. Assessment tools are relevant however, in a few courses, these do not cover fully the pre-defined learning objectives. Moreover, learners are provided with insufficient written feedback on how to improve further. Records on learners' progress are kept, however, these reveal that in some courses, the distribution of marks is not justified and balanced appropriately. This has resulted in a few cases where learners are awarded completion certificates even though they did not pass the post-course assessment. Moreover, marks earned from participation and group work are subjective and not guided by a clear rubric.

Fit for purpose learning resources and material are effectively used. These include PowerPoint presentations, whiteboards, flipcharts and relevant videos.

How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

TAG offers a balanced range of locally designed non-accredited courses which are mainly in management, accounting and marketing. In addition, two externally-endorsed programmes

are offered; these are the Certificate in Islamic Finance from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Arab Certified Quality Manager (ACQM) programmes endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). The two externally-endorsed programmes are offered in Arabic language to meet specific stakeholders' needs. These programmes are received positively by learners; during the last two years, eight batches of learners were enrolled in the ACQM programme and two batches were enrolled in the IF-CIMA programme. TAG has carried out a suitable market survey. However, the findings of this survey are insufficiently reflected in the range of the offered courses.

Courses are appropriately planned, structured and sufficiently resourced to meet the stakeholders' needs. The majority of the non-accredited courses have clear course objectives which are covered by suitable training materials and are supported with sufficient activities, except for a few courses where course materials are not well structured to match the length of the course. One such course is the Accounting for non-accountants' where the amount of information included in the course is considerably large compared to its duration. This issue was highlighted by a few learners. Course materials are designed, verified, and generally reviewed and updated by the regional office. However, customisation is mainly done through the selection of the course topics rather than considering the type of employers or the nature of learners' work needs. The translation of the externally-endorsed course materials is also the responsibility of TAG's regional office.

Only ACQM Programme is supported with a few additional activities to enrich learners' experience such as related videos of a famous speaker to share their experience. ACQM learners make 80% of the total enrolment of the externally-accredited programmes and except for the IF-CIMA, all other programmes are of very short duration.

How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners at TAG receive appropriate support and guidance to help them achieve better outcomes. At the beginning of a course, learners are provided with suitable induction which includes information related to attendance and punctuality, assessment methods, grades distribution, and guidance on health and safety aspects. Recently, TAG started communicating with ACQM learners regarding setting mock examination and revision sessions. Staff are cooperative and helpful and trainers are approachable; they provide their contact information and e-mail to learners to communicate with them if needed. Most learners interviewed are satisfied with the provided support and the guidance.

TAG premises and facilities are fit for purpose. It has sufficient classrooms which are equipped with smart boards and are well furnished with comfortable seats, IT laboratory, canteen and sufficient water closets and male and female prayer rooms. However, most of the courses are conducted in hospitality venues or employers' premises. TAG's website is user-friendly and is updated with sufficient details on courses on offer however, the institute's brochures and booklets have insufficient information about courses. Once learners are registered in a course, the course outlines are specified in writing and made available in advance to relevant stakeholders. This was confirmed by all interviewed employers.

TAG maintains suitable communication with stakeholders to inform them on learners' achievement. Employers are updated with learners' attendance and results upon the completion of a course. Generally, learners are kept aware of their progress through verbal feedback on class activities and discussion.

Arrangements for the delivery of programmes are flexible to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders in terms of timing and venues. Currently, TAG is working on introducing e-learning to promote interactive learning.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

TAG's management has sufficient understanding of the provision. Learners' achievement is measured and relevant data are kept. Nonetheless, trends are not monitored over years. Quality training staff are recruited and their performance is appropriately monitored. Learners' and employers' views and feedback about the provision although always sought, the analysis and utilisation of these could be improved. TAG has sufficient health and safety measures in place to ensure the wellbeing of learners and staff members; Training venues are safe and learners are always provided with guidance on how to react in the case of an emergency.

The institute has clear vision and mission statements which are shared with staff. TAG management has recently refined the institute's strategic plan to be more focused on improvement. A useful SWOT analysis which is conducted in consultation with staff and trainers was utilised in refining the strategic plan. This plan is translated to an action plan with timescale, accountabilities and clear performance indicators for the majority of the

proposed initiatives. However, a small number of the identified actions are not focused enough, and some indicators sound like actions rather than indicators.

Considering the number of enrolment and the type of the offered courses, TAG management structure is fit for purpose, senior management is competent and the provider has access to a pool of qualified and experienced trainers through the mother company, in addition to the support provided in material development, review and update.

Learners' achievement is properly measured in all courses and relevant data are kept. Whilst results are analysed on individual course level, trends of achievement are not monitored over time to inform decision making. Learners' prior attainments are suitably assessed in all courses; learners are asked to complete a form which provides information about their previous qualifications, experiences and their current job requirements. In addition, pre-course assessment is conducted for all courses, however, the outcomes of both are insufficiently analysed and utilised by the management.

Qualified and experienced trainers are recruited, inducted and suitably deployed. Their performance is sufficiently monitored through learners' feedback and internal lesson observations. The completed observation forms provide indication of the quality of training. Nonetheless, they are insufficiently informative and do not identify any areas for development to promote continuous improvement.

Learners' and employers' views and feedback about the provision are always sought through post-course evaluation questionnaire and trainer evaluation forms. Data are aggregated, but the analysis could be improved to include the learners' comments and suggestions part of the questionnaire so that learners' responses are better used for further improvement of the provision. Links with stakeholders are appropriate. TAG communicate with employers regarding their training needs and uses the information adequately to inform the provision.

TAG's Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for this review is sufficiently critical and reflects the necessary understanding of the provision and where to improve. Most areas for development highlighted in the SEF match those identified by the review team.

The provider's key strengths

- Qualified and experienced trainers are recruited, inducted and suitably deployed
- Islamic Finance by Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Arab Certified Quality Manager (ACQM) programme endorsed by Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) are offered in Arabic to meet specific stakeholders' needs
- TAG's Self-Evaluation (SEF) is sufficiently critical and identifies areas for development and the recently revised strategic plan has sufficient focus on improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve, TAG should:

- improve learners' achievement and ensure that all learners are making the expected progress
- ensure that learners' prior attainment and continual assessment are effectively analysed and utilised to inform lesson plans and better accommodate learners' varying needs
- ensure that learners are provided with sufficient written feedback on how to improve further
- ensure that trends of achievement are monitored over time and the outcomes are utilised for further improvement
- improve the current internal lesson observations to be more critical and informative to ensure continuous quality improvement.