



Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Al Mashreq Training
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 28 February-3 March 2016

VO015-C3-R027

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Grading scale:	1
Table of review judgements awarded.....	1
Review judgements	2
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve.....	3
Learners' achievement	3
The quality of provision	4
Leadership, management and governance	8
The provider's key strengths	9
Recommendations.....	10
Appendix	11
Overview of the provision.....	11

Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA), conducted this review over five days, by a team of five reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of Al Mashreq Training previously known as Arabian East Training Center (AETC) was judged as outstanding as were all Main Questions of the provision except the effectiveness of teaching/training in promoting learning was judged as good.

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

Grading scale:

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Good (2)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Good (2)
Quality of support and guidance	Good (2)
Leadership, management and governance	Good (2)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)
Overall effectiveness	Good (2)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Good (2)

The overall effectiveness of Al Mashreq Training is good, as are all aspects of its provision. The majority of the courses offered are externally accredited through a number of international bodies covering health and safety, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and mobile applications. In addition, the provider offers internally designed courses in the field of health and safety, management and general English language. The majority of these courses are well designed, structured and planned and meet the stakeholders' needs. They are supported with an extensive range of learning resources and delivered by qualified, knowledgeable trainers using a variety of training methods to engage the majority of learners. However, in a minority of cases the trainers insufficiently motivate and encourage learners to participate fully. The provider utilises its effective links with local and external bodies to further enhance its provision.

Most learners develop effective vocational employability skills that are relevant to the industry requirements. The vast majority successfully achieve the qualifications they aim for, in a timely manner. However, the pass rates in a couple of courses accredited by the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) are below international levels. Learners are provided with effective support and career guidance that enables them to achieve their objectives.

Al Mashreq Training management has clear vision and mission statements that focus on developing the training provision. The strategic plan is detailed and focuses on how to achieve the stated goals. Useful and regular internal and external audits are carried out as part of the continuous self-assessment and improvement. However, the verification process in the internally designed courses is not sufficiently developed.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Good (2)

Al Mashreq Training's capacity to improve is good. Since the last review, enrolment has increased substantially and the provider maintains good repeat business with a range of major employers. The provider has fit-for-purpose organisation structure with sufficient human and physical resources for the business operation. The Self Evaluation Form (SEF) is sufficiently detailed and areas for improvement are identified accurately. The provider has developed a detailed and focused strategic plan with targeted strategic goals which are monitored and sufficiently followed through with an appropriate action plan and regular effective meetings. The management regularly monitors and discusses learners' achievement through the academic committee's meetings and an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. However, the exemplary practices of the previous review have not consistently been maintained and there is slight drop in the achievement pass rate of some NEBOSH courses.

Lately, Al Mashreq Training has relocated the training premises to a fit-for-purpose venue, with well-equipped learning resources for health and safety and ICT courses such as a digital fire extinguisher simulator, a full-scale confined space simulator, a Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), gas monitors, Mac machines and a Wi-Fi enabled library. The website is being revamped, and the range of programmes expanded by adding externally accredited programmes from NEBOSH, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) and Scaffold Training Institute.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at Al Mashreq Training is good overall. Most learners acquire effective vocational skills and knowledge in the fields of health and safety and ICT that are relevant to their day-to-day workplace duties. Learners' records and employers and groups of various learners interviewed confirm that the skills developed are respected at the workplace and meet the expected standards. In a number of documented cases learners have been able to apply their new skills in workplace and have completed successful projects, for instance from learners taking the Learning Tree courses. Furthermore, a number of the learners have been promoted after successfully completing the health and safety courses.

Most learners in the local completion courses achieve the course objectives and are awarded with a certificate of completion after passing a number of relevant formative and summative assessment. Most learners in the Aberdeen Rigging and Rope Access Services (ABBRAS), Scaffold Training Institute, National Safety Council (NSC-US), MEDIC First Aid, ECITB and Lloyds courses attain the course objectives and successfully achieve their qualifications in a timely manner. The majority of learners in the NEBOSH Award in Health and Safety at work (HSW) Level 2, Institute of Safety and Health (IOSH) and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) also achieve their qualifications. Although the vast majority of learners pursuing International Computer Driving License (ICDL) are secondary school graduates and jobseekers, they still develop useful skills and knowledge and the pass rates in these courses are comparable with the local pass rates. However, the pass rates on NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health (IGC) level 3 and NEBOSH International Technical Certificate in Oil and Gas operational Safety (IOG) level 5 courses, which represent just 7% of the total enrolment, are below the international pass rates by 10-20%.

Records of learners' assessments and the majority of sessions observed reveal that most learners are able to work well both independently and collaboratively. Learners progress well throughout the courses from their baseline starting points, particularly the learners in NEBOSH and ICDL courses. However, a few do not develop the expected outcomes and their progress is minimal in the general English language courses. Notably, the majority of learners are self-motivated, eager to participate confidently, and have positive attitudes towards their learning. In many instances, they are able to reflect critically on their level of attainment and understanding and to identify their mistakes and correct themselves. Al-Mashreq Training has a clear attendance and punctuality policy which is shared with the learners. It is evident from the records kept and the sessions observed that the attendance rate is generally high, although punctuality is an issue in a few cases.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of training and assessment is good overall. Trainers are qualified, knowledgeable and have the theoretical and practical command of the areas they teach. Trainers display a high level of knowledge as reflected in the accurate explanations, responding to learners' questions and sharing relevant real-life cases and useful vocational examples within the scope of the sessions.

The vast majority of the sessions observed by the review team were timely managed and were well planned. Sessions usually start with an effective review of the previous session and sharing the objectives or defining the topics. The flow of the sessions is delivered in a progressive and systematic way, though in a few cases activities take longer than planned or learners are not given sufficient time to practice. Trainers usually use well-designed lesson plans with clear session's objectives or, occasionally, the scheme of work. However, the outcomes of prior learning and continuous assessment are insufficiently utilised to inform the lesson plans. Sometimes trainers adjust the time and mode of delivery and activities, for instance to match the gender of the learners in cases of practical health and safety exercises, or to take into account the educational levels and ages of learners.

Trainers succeed in engaging learners and motivating them to participate throughout the session by utilising a variety of training methods, including presentations, open discussion, role play, practical demonstrations and a range of interactive activities. In a minority of observed sessions, however, a number of learners were less active and insufficiently motivated to participate. Learners are frequently assessed through a range of relevant formative and summative assessments to measure the achievement of course objectives. Trainers assess learners' understanding during the sessions through different techniques of questioning and effective hands-on activities. Most of the learners' work is accurately marked. However, the assessment of general English courses concentrates mainly on grammar and vocabulary.

Trainers accommodate learners' varying needs appropriately. They usually set challenging tasks to extend the more able learners, involving the less able in group activities or supporting them individually when they are struggling. Occasionally, trainers further learners' understanding and stimulate critical and higher order thinking by enriching the delivery with relevant case studies through discussion of real life examples from learners' workplaces that promote self and life-long learning. Records of learners' performance are kept for most of the courses, including a useful achievement report for each learner. Instant and constructive verbal feedback is continuously provided to learners, though the feedback on learners' written work is generic and does not precisely state what learners can do to improve further. Trainers utilise the available learning resources and materials effectively in order to facilitate and enhance learning.

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of programmes to meet the needs of stakeholders is good overall. The majority of courses are externally accredited from reputed international awarding bodies such as NEBOSH, MEDIC First Aid, and ICDL. These courses are well structured and planned. On the other hand, the provider offers internally well-designed courses in the fields of health and safety, business and management. In addition, general English language courses are offered, however, these are not clearly structured. Courses on offer are based on accurate understanding of the stakeholder's needs in the fields of health and safety and ICT. The needs of major stakeholders are gathered through a yearly purposeful survey, focus group meetings and/or end-of-courses feedback. The outcome of this information is used to introduce a number of courses. Customised courses are presented based on employers' requests to precisely match learners' needs, such as a hybrid of externally accredited course content and local stakeholders' needs. Effective prerequisite requirements are used by the provider before accessing learners for NEBOSH and scaffolding courses. For the NEBOSH courses, learners' knowledge and skills in health and safety and abilities with the English language are pre-assessed. The provider then utilises the outcomes of the test and interview by placing learners on the most suitable course or to recommend bridging courses. In addition, work experience is an essential pre-requisite requirement on Scaffold Supervisor/Inspector courses and NEBOSH diploma courses.

Al Mashreq Training has a formal policy to design, update, review and approve courses. However, the implementation of this policy is not sufficiently streamlined. The externally-accredited course materials are expertly structured, designed and resourced, and the internally designed courses are proficiently prepared and organised. Course materials include clear course outlines that show the purpose and content of the courses on offer. Al Mashreq Training courses are extensively supplemented with a rich range of resources. The provider introduced a state of the art digital fire extinguisher simulator, full-scale confined space simulator utilising a shipping container, with Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and gas monitors for the confined space training. In addition, the first aid courses are enhanced with high quality and well-resourced equipment. Courses are supported with purposeful extra-curricular activities to enhance the learning experience. These include outdoor training on the fire extinguisher, visits to local construction sites, visits to local shipyards for confined space training, and coaching activities to enhance the skills of learners who join the Defensive Driving Course (DDC).

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners at Al Mashreq Training are provided with good support and guidance to help them achieve better outcomes. An explicit support mechanism is in place and accessible to all learners. The induction policy and procedures for learners are clear and detailed. Before the start of a training course, learners and stakeholders have access to well-informed advice and guidance about the selection of courses through an informative website, social media and clear course outlines. Useful route maps for various courses that provide useful guideline for professional career development are shared with learners, as are relevant employment and On Job Training (OJT) opportunities. To overcome learning difficulties and improve learners' achievement, different measures are taken by the provider such as providing learners with significant tutorials and revision sessions, comprehensive mock examinations, reasonable extended learning hours, bridging courses, access to relevant material and translation of material into Arabic language. The written supportive material provided to learners is of good quality and highly relative to the courses. However, they are only provided in English language.

Al Mashreq Training is very flexible in supporting the needs of learners and stakeholders, in terms of time, venue, language and the availability of tailor-made courses suited to the needs of stakeholders. The provider communicates effectively with its stakeholders. At the end of each course, detailed information about learners' attendance and achievements are provided to stakeholders and learners, while employers have access to the ERP system to view the attendance and progress of their employees. Effective arrangements are in place to support learners with special needs, along with a comprehensive policy. The provider's learning environment and facilities are fit for purpose. The premises provide a congenial learning environment and are suitably equipped to support the current courses. The learners have access to various effective learning resources such as comfortable ICT laboratories and a Wi-Fi enabled library facility. However, in limited few instances the classrooms are crowded.

Leadership, management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Good (2)

Al Mashreq Training has clear vision and mission statements that focus on providing training and development. The detailed strategic plan is regularly revised to match the current strategic goals and aims, and focuses on how to achieve the strategic goals. Monitoring of the goals is sufficiently followed up through an appropriate action plan and regular effective meetings. Relevant policies and procedures have been developed and are utilised effectively, and the provider has an effective quality assurance management system that enables continuous monitoring of the provision. However, the verification process in the internally designed courses is not sufficiently developed. Al Mashreq Training has effective and rigorous procedures to assess learners' prior attainment in the areas of health and safety and ICT, but general English language capability is insufficiently measured. Learners' achievements are regularly monitored through meetings of the academic committee. In addition, the management suitably utilises an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to monitor learners' performance.

A fit for purpose organisation structure is in place that meets the needs of the provider's operations and nature of business. Highly qualified staff are recruited, deployed and retained. Clear roles and responsibilities are shared with the staff. Trainers' performance is regularly monitored and evaluated through suitable classroom observations. Actions are taken based on these visits and sometimes the outcomes of the visits are shared with the trainers; however, those areas identified for improvement are not always acted upon in a timely manner.

The provider's SEF is sufficiently detailed, with areas for improvement being identified accurately. Useful and regular internal and external audits take place as part of the continuous self-assessment process and development. A contingency risk assessment plan is carried out when required and effective yearly SWOT analysis is conducted. A health and safety policy is in place and learners are made aware of the instructions at the start of their course. Premises are suitable, pleasant and free from hazard, with effective measures are in place. By the end of the course, learners' and employers' views are systematically collected and aggregated and actions are taken. Highly effective links are maintained with international partners and awarding bodies to improve the offering.

The provider's key strengths

- The development of industry relevant skills and knowledge by learners.
- The effective range of training methods and activities to engage and motivate learners.
- The highly resourced programmes with an extensive range of learning resources.
- The effective support mechanism provided to learners that enable them to achieve better outcomes.
- The highly effective links with international and local stakeholders.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Al Mashreq Training should:

- ensure that learners further develop the expected skills and knowledge, and successfully achieve their qualifications in a timely manner
- enhance the utilisation of prior and continuous assessment to inform lesson planning and accommodate the learners' varying needs
- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enhancing the verification and moderation processes across all courses
 - ensuring that session observations are consistently conducted, recorded and acted upon.

Appendix

Overview of the Institute

Al Mashreq Training was established in 2000 and was previously called Arabian East Training Centre (AETC). The provider is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL), mainly offering a range of externally accredited and locally designed courses in the fields of health and safety and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). It also offers a few management and general English language courses. The externally-accredited courses are of long duration, while the local completion certificate courses are of short and very short duration. The externally accredited courses offered include those by National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH), Aberdeen Rigging and Rope Access Services (ABBRAS), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), Institute of Safety and Health (IOSH), Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), Lloyds, MEDIC First Aid, National Safety Council (NSC-US), International Computer Driving License (ICDL), Scaffold Training Institute and Learning Tree International. The completion courses are mainly in health and safety, management and general English language courses. Al Mashreq Training is an approved testing centre for NEBOSH and ICDL courses.

Since the last review conducted in March 2012, the provider has enrolled 8,385 learners; broken down as 672 in 2012, 1,515 in 2013, 2,725 in 2014, 3,301 in 2015, and 172 in 2016 up to the date of this review. The Learners Performance Data sheet (LPD) for the last three years reveals that 77% of the total enrolment is in the externally-accredited courses, with the remaining 33% being in the local completion courses. The learners are adults employed by private and government organisations and most of them are sponsored by their employers. Al Mashreq Training is managed by a chief executive officer, who is the owner of the provision, and operated by a marketing general manager and a training manager. The provider employs four customer services staff, an administration and accounting staff, an Information Technology officer, a driver and an office cleaner. The provider has two full time trainers and a pool of local and regional part-time trainers who are utilised as needed. Al Mashreq Training operates from one location in Manama, Seef district.