Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Al Muheet Institute

Nuwaidrat

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 17 – 20 October 2011

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU 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 VRU'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 five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Al Muheet Institute was established in 2009 and is licensed by the Ministry of Education to deliver courses in general English and information technology (IT) as well as school tutorial and remedial courses. All courses are short, non-accredited courses except the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) which is externally-accredited. In 2010, more than three-quarters of the students were enrolled on school tutorial and examination night revision courses while less than 10 per cent attended the ICDL course. During 2011, approximately half of the students have been enrolled on general English courses, around one quarter on examination week revision and 16 per cent on ICDL. Most English and tutorial students are children and young adults, whilst those on IT courses tend to be employed older adults. In 2010, Al Muheet had 489 students enrolled on various courses while 559 students have been enrolled so far in 2011. More than 80 per cent of the students attended for more than one course.

The institute operates from one location in Nuwaidrat and is managed by an executive director and a centre director. The centre has four senior teachers who act as subject coordinators and also teach and a pool of around 15 teachers who are all employed on a part-time basis. The institute also has two administration staff and a person responsible for housekeeping who are all employed on a full-time basis. The centre has a Board comprising four members.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over four days by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed teaching lessons, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with the centre's management, teachers, administration and support staff, students and their parents.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what Al Muheet Institute should do to improve.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 3: Satisfactory

The overall effectiveness of Al Muheet is satisfactory. The recent improvements introduced by the senior teachers have impacted positively on the learning experience of the majority of students who make satisfactory progress and gain useful skills across the range of courses on offer.

The majority of ICDL students achieve their externally-accredited awards and develop practical IT skills. For the general English and tutorial courses, parents reported improvements in their children's grades in school after attending classes at the institute, with students on general English courses often progressing from level to level without difficulties. A minority of students show low self-motivation and appear to be placed at an inappropriate level. However, most students enjoy their work and are self-motivated. The overall retention rate is high as expected on short courses and the average attendance rate is also good. However, punctuality is not recorded. Al-Muheet Institute conducts regular diagnostic tests and keeps records for general English, Arabic and mathematics remedial courses. Nevertheless, there is no initial assessment for the tutorial and ICDL courses and the adults' general English placement test does not assess all language skills. Achievement records for most courses are available. However, records of progress on tutorials are not kept.

Al Muheet's teachers are qualified and have appropriate command of their specialism. Three-quarters of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Generally, teachers use suitable activities in class such as games, pair or group exercises and a variety of teaching styles and audio-visual resources to engage students. Al Muheet's teachers use basic lesson plans for ICDL, general English and Arabic remedial courses. Tutorial classes are conducted without specific lesson plans. Students are suitably assessed and useful verbal and written feedback is provided on general English, remedial and ICDL courses. However, insufficient focus is put on assessing reading and writing skills in the final general English examinations. Appropriate support is given to the majority of students inside class. However, individual differences are not always accommodated.

Al Muheet has a range of general English courses which offer progression for children and adults in addition to tutorials and computer courses including the externally-accredited ICDL course. However, the levels' structure of the general English courses does not follow a recognised external framework to facilitate students' progression and transfer outside the institute. Although courses generally match the needs of students and parents, a formal

gauging of local needs is not conducted. Parents continue to enrol their children on these courses despite the unrest in the area. Original books are used for the general English and ICDL courses. Handouts are available for the nights of the examinations and revision week for different subjects but not for tutorials. Adequate enrichment activities are used on the English courses and mathematics but little on other courses.

Students at Al-Muheet Institute receive suitable support and guidance from the management and staff who are cooperative, flexible and follow up on issues on students' behavior, medical, and academic status and monitor their safety. However, the premises are cramped and lack sufficient open spaces for students' use during break times. There are no proper prayer rooms. ICDL students are provided with free trial lessons and access to IT laboratories outside class hours. Students who perform well on some courses are awarded suitable educational gifts. Health and safety measures are in place. However, students have only recently been provided with useful guidance in the form of emergency drills and classroom notices.

Al Muheet's management and senior staff have a shared vision and clear lines of responsibility. Well-focused strategic and action plans are in place which have a clear focus and quantitative targets to measure improvements. However, this detailed planning, the standardisation of processes, record keeping and analysis, and monitoring of performance have only recently been formalised. Records of students' achievement are kept and useful analysis is carried out on mainly general English and ICDL courses. However, progress and attainment on tutorials are insufficiently monitored and analysed. Teachers are appropriately selected and provided with a number of relevant internal development opportunities. Most teachers' are regularly observed in class. However, comments made are not always critical. Suitable forms are available to collect feedback from students and parents but, only a small number of forms have been collected and aggregated recently. Al Muheet maintains appropriate links with parents and the local community including schools and charities. The self-evaluation process is collaboratively carried out and in the self-evaluation form (SEF) the grades and the number of priorities for improvement identified are reasonably accurate and objective. However, it has insufficient details and reference to evidence.

Capacity to improve

Grade 2: Good

Al Muheet Institute relies on the educational background of its team of qualified senior teachers who are well aware of the quality assurance requirements and the measures necessary to sustain continuous improvement. They share a common vision and have developed strategic and action plans that are focused on improving the provision with clear key success targets. In addition and despite the hectic start during the early months of 2011, the centre maintained high repeat business, exceeding 80 per cent, and students' enrolment increased. Similarly, the overall students' achievement in ICDL has risen relatively compared with 2010.

Management has recently established quality and audit committees that have started to introduce clear improvements including standardising of course files, developing new quality forms such as a lesson observation and student follow-up form, preparing an improved general English placement test, collecting and analysing achievement and performance records, and conducting development workshops for teachers. The audit committee has also recently started to verify assessments and collect samples of students' marked work for moderation.

The centre has installed five data show projectors and started to pilot the use of active whiteboards in classrooms as part of their strategy to expand the use of information technology in teaching. The health and safety measures and the general environment of the premises have been improved and there is a plan to expand the number of classrooms to meet the expanding demand as the current space is limited. While Al Muheet has a number of databases to record students' records, it lacks a fully developed and integrated management information system to provide timely executive summary reports.

The self-evaluation process is done collaboratively and critically. Management and senior staff have a fairly clear idea of their strengths and areas in need of development. This information is used to inform the improvement plans.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	**Grade 3: Satisfactory**
Capacity to Improve	Grade 2: Good
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective is teaching?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 3: Satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **The majority of ICDL students achieve their qualification and gain useful IT skills.** For example, two employed students developed a database application for their workplace. The success rate on these courses has improved.

- **Al Muheet has a range of general English courses which offers progression for children and adults in addition to tutorials and computer courses including externally accredited ICDL.** These courses generally meet the needs of parents and students with parents continuing to enrol their children on these courses despite the unrest in the area.

- **Well-focused strategic and action plans, informed by self-evaluation, are in place and have a clear focus on targets for improvement.** For example, the percentage of lessons to be conducted using the active whiteboard. Plans are discussed and followed-up with regular meetings.

- **Management and senior staff have a shared vision, clear lines of responsibility and are key members in the internal quality and audit committees at the institute.** These effective committees have recently been formed to look after quality assurance and to audit the teaching processes and verification of assessments.

Areas for improvement

- **Students' individual differences are not always accommodated.** Students who are more able are not always provided with extension activities and the less able students are not always given sufficient attention and assistance.

- **Insufficient focus on reading and writing skills in the general English examinations.** Although students are suitably assessed on general English, remedial and ICDL courses, insufficient focus is put on assessing essential reading and writing skills in these examinations

- **Monitoring, recording and analysis of progress and attainment on all courses including tutorials.** Although progress and attainment records for most courses are available, records of progress and attainment on tutorials are insufficiently monitored and analysed.

- **Monitoring of teachers' performance.** Although most teachers' are regularly observed in class by management and, peers comments made are not always critical and the form used for this lacks targets. In addition, teachers' performance in class is not linked with stakeholders' feedback and achievement rates to form a robust performance monitoring system.

- **Collection, aggregation and analysis of feedback from students and parents and acting upon their outcome.** Although suitable forms are available to collect feedback from students and parents on the quality of the provision, only a small number of forms have been collected and aggregated and this only recently.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Al Muheet Institute should:

- ensure that students' individual differences are always accommodated for
- improve the general English examinations to appropriately assess all language skills
- monitor, record and analyse students' progress and achievement in all courses including tutorials
- device a more effective system to monitor teachers' performance
- collect, aggregate and analyse feedback from students and parents and act upon the outcomes.