



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Vocational Review Unit Review Report

**Al Meer Training Centre
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date reviewed: 10th- 12th March 2009

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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 Meer Training Centre is part of the Al Meer group of companies. Established in December 2007, it offers training in management and soft skills. The programmes offered are all short and non-accredited and cover topics including excellence in customer service, team building, performance development, self-confidence and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

Over the past 12 months, the company has enrolled 406 learners on its programmes. All Al Meer Training Centre's learners are employed adults and 90% of them work for the Al Meer group of companies. Recently the Al Meer Training Centre has started targeting employers outside the Al Meer Group.

Al Meer Training Centre is located in Isa Town, Manama. The company has a full-time centre manager, who is the only full-time trainer, and an office assistant. In addition, a pool of some 10 part-time trainers is available, although only a few of them have actually conducted training courses for Al Meer.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of four reviewers. During the review the team observed learning sessions, examined learners' work and talked with staff, learners and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings regarding Al Meer Training Centre's management courses, and their recommendations for improvement.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 4: below satisfactory

Overall, the provision offered by the Al Meer Training Centre is below satisfactory. Although the quality of training, support and guidance are satisfactory, the range of programmes offered and the leadership and management of the company fail to meet the required standard.

Learners acquire basic vocational skills relevant to their current jobs. Attendance and punctuality are good and retention rates are high. Al Meer Training Centre lacks a systematic method for measuring learners' achievement. No data are kept on learners' achievement or progress. The data provided for the review only takes account of attendance. Learners who attend for at least 75% of the course hours receive a certificate of achievement. This is not an adequate measure of achievement, and does not demonstrate what learners have gained from their course.

There are lesson plans for most sessions and course goals and objectives are shared satisfactorily with learners. Although learners on some courses are given an initial assessment, the results are not used effectively to reinforce lesson planning. Most of the training done is for Al Meer employees and the courses are designed around the job descriptions of attendees. There is no consideration of how well employees perform at work or of the prior attainment of learners. Learners are satisfactorily engaged in sessions, although the tasks and practical exercises used in the sessions are insufficiently challenging. Learners' work is appropriately assessed on a few courses, such as NLP and strategic planning.

The range of programmes is narrow and learners have no progression opportunities. A few employers would like more specialised courses, particularly in accounting and human resources. Employers are sent course outlines before the course starts. There is no system for collecting and analysing employers' feedback although managers have recently started to gather learners' feedback.

Learners are given adequate guidance on course selection and career progression, and are satisfactorily supported. Their superiors are told when they have performed well on courses. Trainers are accessible outside training sessions and they provide resources and material for learners to further their understanding. Health and safety measures on Al Meer Training Centre's premises are insufficient and learners are not informed about health and safety

procedures. The lighting in the premises is inadequate. Some learners find the learning environment uncomfortable and unsuitable.

The company's vision and mission are insufficiently focused on improving learners' achievement. Although appropriate strategic objectives are set, Al Meer Training Centre has not yet developed action plans to achieve these objectives. There are too few full-time staff, and part-time trainers are not used sufficiently. There are no systematic methods of performance monitoring and quality control, including no internal lesson observation system.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4: below satisfactory

Al Meer Training Centre has recently developed new procedures and forms. Some of them, such as a programme evaluation form, a trainers' evaluation form and a form for performance improvement, could serve to quality assure the provision but it is too early to judge their effectiveness and impact. Although the self-evaluation form (SEF) completed for the review was generous in its evaluation of the provision and was not supported by evidence in some areas, it did identify several areas for improvement.

The provider's capacity to improve is compromised, however, by insufficient measuring and monitoring of learners' achievement and feedback, the lack of effective quality assurance systems and procedures, and a shortage of human resources to enable improvement. Development plans include only the introduction of a small reference library for learners and the replacement of some classroom furniture.

Summary of grades awarded

| Overall judgement | Grade |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision | Grade 4: below satisfactory |
| Capacity to improve | Grade 4: below satisfactory |
| Review findings | |
| How well do learners achieve? | Insufficient evidence to grade |
| How effective is training? | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers? | Grade 4: below satisfactory |
| How well are learners guided and supported? | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | Grade 4: below satisfactory |

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

No key strengths

Areas for improvement

- **The methods for measuring learners' achievement.** Learners' achievement and progress are not monitored or recorded. Al Meer Training Centre measures learners' achievement on the basis of their attendance at courses, rather than the skills they have learnt. This is an insufficiently rigorous approach and does not present an accurate reflection of learners' achievement, progress or attainment
- **Use of initial assessment.** Although there is some initial assessment the outcomes are not utilized effectively. Learners complete a form in which they specify their personal goals and expectations of the course. This form remains in the learner's possession, and is not used by trainers to ensure that individuals' needs are accommodated.
- **The range of courses.** The range of courses offered is too narrow. It consists mainly of soft skills programmes, which are offered at a basic level only. A few courses are customised to meet the needs of specific employers, such as the NLP courses. With the exception of the NLP courses, programmes do not provide suitable progression opportunities for learners. A few employers have highlighted the need for more specialised courses in areas such as accounting and human resources. The Al Meer Training Centre has not addressed this request.
- **The systems for collecting and analysing learners' and employers' feedback.** Al Meer Training Centre lacks a formal system for gathering learners' and employers' feedback. Learners are asked for their views at an open discussion but their thoughts are rarely recorded. Recently, management has started to gather learners' feedback more formally but it is only aggregated or analysed for one food hygiene course. The views of learners and employers are not used to improve provision.
- **Staffing levels.** Al Meer Training Centre has a shortage of staff. The one full time trainer is also the centre manager. As well as carrying out most of the training, he takes responsibility for the centre's strategy and operations, with too little support from Al Meer Group's central administration. The centre lacks key personnel, such as a dedicated marketing manager. The part-time trainers available are not used sufficiently.

- **Quality assurance procedures.** Al Meer Training Centre lacks important elements of an effective quality assurance process. It does not measure learners' progress systematically and keeps no data on learners' achievement. It does not keep information vital to effective quality improvement. It has no internal lesson observation scheme
- **Plans for improvement.** Al Meer Training Centre's vision and mission are generic and insufficiently focused on improving learners' achievement. Although the centre's strategic objectives are appropriate and suitably challenging, no action plans or timescales have been developed to identify how or when they are to be achieved.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Al Meer Training Centre should:

- develop a system for assessing and recording learners' progress and achievement
- introduce a system for initial assessment and use it to reinforce lesson planning
- ensure that programmes offer sufficient range and progression opportunities to meet the needs of learners and employer
- establish a formal system to collect, aggregate and analyse learners' and employers' feedback and use it to improve the provision
- develop a strategy for the recruitment and development of staff
- develop a quality assurance system that includes an internal lesson observation scheme
- develop clear improvement plans focused on raising learners' achievement