



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

# **Vocational Review Unit**

## **Review Report**

**Bahrain Institute of Hospitality and Retail**  
**Barbar - Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 7-10 December 2009**

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## The Vocational Review Unit

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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:

<b>Grade description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
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**

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### **Description of the provision**

The institute, which is licensed by the Ministry of Labour, was established originally in 1999 as the Baisan Institute of Hospitality Management; its management changed in 2007, when it was re-named the Bahrain Institute of Hospitality and Retail (BIHR). BIHR then moved to its current new premises in Saar, which include 16 classrooms and eight different laboratories (labs) and training workshops.

BIHR offers a diploma programme in hospitality, which consists of 15 modules. Twelve of the modules lead to Hospitality Operations Certificates (HOC), which are externally accredited by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI) of the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA). The remaining three modules – food preparation and business English 1 and 2 – are internally accredited by BIHR. The diploma programme takes two years to complete and includes six months of on-the-job training (OJT). In addition to the diploma programme, BIHR offers apprenticeship programmes at entry level in hospitality; front office operations; housekeeping; food and beverage service; food preparation; pastry and bakery; and cross-selling and cashiering. The apprenticeship programmes in hospitality last for six to nine months, including two months of on-the-job training. In addition to hospitality, BIHR offers a retailing apprenticeship programme, externally verified by the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), at two levels.

During the past two years, BIHR has trained over 1,200 learners, 79% of them working towards hospitality qualifications. Almost all the learners at BIHR are sponsored by the Labour Fund, Tamkeen. BIHR employs 19 full-time trainers and 16 full-time staff in management and other administrative and support services.

### **Scope of the review**

This review was conducted over four days by a team of seven reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed training sessions, analysed data about the qualifications learners achieve and the courses they complete and talked with managers, trainers, administration and support staff, learners and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations for improvement.

## Overall judgement

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### Effectiveness of provision

#### Grade 2: good

The overall effectiveness of BIHR is good. Learners achieve well. BIHR offers good programmes that suit learners' and employers' needs very well. The support and guidance that learners receive, from the time they begin to their final job placement, are effective. The quality of teaching and training, and the institute's leadership and management, are satisfactory.

Learners make good progress at BIHR. Most learners join the programmes with almost no prior experience or knowledge of their chosen area, and some need help with their interpersonal and communication skills. Learners reaching the end of their modules, however, have developed good employability skills and, generally, appropriate vocational knowledge and skills for their chosen professions. Learners' attendance is good and they work hard. Achievement is high and compares favourably to international rates. Although the number of learners has considerably increased from 384 in 2008 to 797 in 2009, overall success rates on all programmes have improved significantly, from 75% in 2008 to 89% in 2009, and the dropout rate has reduced.

BIHR is commissioned by Tamkeen to deliver niche programmes to bridge certain skill gaps in the local market. Programmes are selected well and tailored to suit the learners' and employers' needs. The programmes are effectively enhanced with additional modules important to learners and employers, such as business English and food preparation. Learners are given good opportunities to practise their knowledge in real work environments during their period of OJT. During the OJT programmes, BIHR supports learners well, monitors their progress and follows up regularly with their respective employers. BIHR's academic modules are effectively enriched with activities and tasks that reinforce learners' practical skills and knowledge of working practices.

Learners enjoy useful support and guidance throughout their time with BIHR. Learners are given a comprehensive induction on entry, followed by good one-to-one counselling and support, especially for less able learners to help them achieve better, either in their academic modules or at their OJT workplace. BIHR implements stringent measures to ensure the safety, health and security of all learners at its premises.

Lessons are appropriately planned at BIHR. Trainers use their vocational knowledge and skills to enrich the sessions and keep learners engaged. Initial assessment is done consistently but the outcomes are not used effectively in lesson planning, so as to cater for

the varying needs of learners. The institute is adequately equipped with practical labs but some of these lack the specialised equipment necessary for a realistic workplace environment.

BIHR's management closely monitors learners' achievements and has significantly improved them. They share with their staff a clear vision, mission and sense of responsibility towards supporting all learners and helping them achieve better. Learners' views are adequately gathered and used for improvement. Learners' feedback forms are distributed, analysed graphically, and the results are used appropriately. Over the past year, not all learners have received an evaluation form, but BIHR also runs focus groups for the collection of learners' concerns and suggestions. The views of these groups are well recorded, and managers take some good actions accordingly, for example, introducing English Level 2 in the diploma programme, and improving services such as the canteen, toilets and transportation.

BIHR has an appropriate staff performance appraisal system. Previously agreed individual targets are discussed during reviews. Most of the targets, however, are not linked directly to learners' achievements or satisfaction rates. Training needs are satisfactorily identified and staff are given adequate development opportunities. For example, BIHR has recently embarked on improving the training practices of trainers through structured internal workshops. The institute has not fully implemented systematic monitoring of trainers' performance nor does it have an established system for gathering employers' views for improvement purposes.

## **Capacity to improve**

### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

Learners' achievements at BIHR have improved significantly in 2009 compared with 2008. The overall success rate on all hospitality programmes has risen from 75% in 2008 to 92% in 2009, with a smaller increase, from 80% to 84%, on the retailing apprenticeship. The dropout rate has reduced by almost half. The improvement in success and retention rates occurred despite a considerable increase in the number of learners, from 384 in 2008 to 797 in 2009.

The institute is generally responsive to learners' and employers' concerns, and has made beneficial changes in response to learners' suggestions. The introduction of English at level 2 and improved support services such as the canteen, toilets and transportation came about because of learners' feedback. BIHR analyses the labour market well before introducing and tailoring programmes; the food preparation module, the OJT module for the diploma

programme and the retailing apprenticeship are such examples. The institute does not, however, seek employers' feedback and use it to enhance the range of programmes.

BIHR has a number of appropriate improvement plans in varying stages of implementation. These include extending the existing premises, and introducing new staff appraisal and lesson observation systems. Although relevant, the plans are not drawn together as part of a coherent system with clear objectives and targets and specified required resources. BIHR has no formal arrangements yet for monitoring the implementation of its improvement plans and actions.

BIHR has brought in additional qualified and competent staff to improve the academic standards of departments and support the OJT programmes. Staff are well motivated and share a common vision and mission. The newly introduced internal workshops to develop the performance of trainers are a good development. The post of quality assurance director at BIHR has been unfilled for almost a year, although BIHR is currently recruiting for this position.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) gives largely accurate grades but provides insufficient details or evidence to support these.

## Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: good
Capacity to Improve	Grade 3: satisfactory
<b>Review Findings</b>	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 2: good
How effective is training?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?	Grade 2: good
How well are learners guided and supported?	Grade 2: good
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade 3: satisfactory



## Main judgements and recommendations

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### Strengths

- **Retention, success and attendance rates.** The success rate in hospitality has significantly increased, from 75% in 2008 to 92% in 2009. The proportion of learners passing their tests at the first attempt compares positively with global averages, at 85% as against 75% internationally. On the retail programmes the success rate has increased from 80% to 84% during the last two years. Retention shows an improving trend; the dropout rate in 2009 is only half that for 2008. The attendance rate is very good overall and is consistent across all subject areas, at an average of 93%.
- **Progress by learners from their entry point to employment.** Learners at BIHR make good progress from when they join BIHR to the point of employment, on both hospitality and retail programmes. Most learners start with almost no knowledge or skills in hospitality, catering or retailing. Most, too, start with low levels of ability in English language, computing or communications and many need help with interpersonal skills. During their time at BIHR, learners develop the appropriate work skills and discipline required to pursue a career in the hospitality, catering and retail sectors. Many of BIHR's learners have progressed from crafts to supervisory level, or gained better employment opportunities after a BIHR programme.
- **Enrichment activities.** BIHR offers learners a wide range of practical enrichment activities such as educational videos, visiting speakers and site visits to relevant work locations. BIHR also encourages learners to plan and set up exhibitions and a bazaar, which give learners realistic working experiences.
- **Customisation of modules to suit learners' and employers' needs.** BIHR has selected its programmes carefully from reputable external accreditation bodies. It has effectively customised major modules to meet local employers' and learners' specific needs. For example, business English at levels 1 and 2 and food production modules were introduced to enrich the hospitality diploma programme. BIHR has also appropriately introduced an Arabic context to the hospitality learning materials to complement the original English text books. Course materials are suitably contextualised to meet Bahraini requirements.
- **On-the-job training.** Learners are given useful advice before they join OJT. They are helped to prepare CVs and given clear instructions and advice about OJT requirements, employers and workplaces. Staff from BIHR liaise with potential employers and arrange interviews for candidate learners at BIHR's premises. BIHR regularly and effectively monitors learners and evaluates their progress on OJT. It

reviews employers' evaluations of individual learners and advises learners on how to improve.

- **Support and guidance for learners.** Learners benefit from good one-to-one support and counselling throughout their stay at BIHR. They attend a thorough induction programme and initial assessment. The Student Affairs department provides helpful academic, career and personal support. Female learners have access to a female counsellor when required. Weekly sessions of guided study are offered for less able learners or those who feel they are not progressing well in their modules, and for pre-exam preparation. All learners are provided with free transport from and to the institute. BIHR gives learners caring and highly effective support and counselling during their OJT. An OJT officer or trainer visits learners frequently at their workplace to monitor their progress.
- **Strategies to monitor and improve learners' performance.** BIHR monitors learners' achievements well at various levels; from trainers, through departments and at the top leadership level. Learners are assessed regularly through progress monitoring and final exams, or competency-based evaluation for the apprenticeship and OJT modules. Achievement reports are discussed in detail at the weekly Academic Committee meetings, at which proper actions are taken to improve results.

## Areas for improvement

- **Opportunities for collaboration and team working during sessions.** Learners are given insufficient opportunities to work collaboratively or to undertake more challenging problem-solving tasks. Some classroom layouts hinder participative group work or team activities.
- **Accommodation of learners' needs, especially those of more able learners.** The outcomes of initial assessment are not used to cater for the varying needs and abilities of learners. Generally, less able learners are well supported, but the more able are not sufficiently challenged to further their understanding and critical thinking
- **Practical specialist labs.** BIHR's specialist labs (which include a training restaurant and kitchen, a student bazaar and a front office and housekeeping facility) do not all provide the specialist equipment and environment that give learners a realistic picture of the world of work.
- **Gathering, analysing and using employers' views.** BIHR does not make the most of its links with employers to ascertain their views and needs systematically and to use the outcomes to plan improvements.

- **Implementation of internal lesson observation process.** BIHR's recently introduced internal lesson observation system, although well structured, is yet to be fully and consistently applied to all trainers, linked with their appraisal system and used effectively to improve their performance and identify development opportunities.

## **Recommendations**

In order to improve its provision, BIHR should:

- introduce more interactive learning activities.
- develop lesson plans according to individual learning needs
- improve the practical specialist labs to reflect a real working environment more closely
- develop a more rigorous system to gather and analyse employers' views and use them to plan improvements
- implement the lesson observation system fully and consistently.