



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Bahrain Institute of Technology
Manama - Kingdom of Bahrain

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Table of Contents

The Vocational Review Unit	1
Introduction	2
Description of the provision.....	2
Scope of the review	2
Overall judgement	3
Effectiveness of provision.....	3
Capacity to improve.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	6
Main judgements and recommendations	7
Strengths	7
Areas for improvement.....	7
Recommendations.....	8

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

Bahrain Institute of Technology (BIT) was founded in 2001 by the Bahrain Development Bank to provide information technology (IT) training in affiliation with major global IT partners. BIT runs externally accredited, provider-accredited and non-accredited IT courses, on topics such as desktop applications, database management, project management, operating systems, computer operations, technician training, graphic design, website design and management.

BIT is an authorised training centre for Microsoft, Oracle, ExecuTrain, Computer Information System Company (CISCO), Certified Internet Web Professionals (CIW), CompTIA and International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL). The institute has an authorised Prometric testing centre, and is a Microsoft Gold Partner. Courses last between 10 and 80 hours. During 2009, BIT enrolled 498 learners, of whom about 80% were sponsored by corporate or government agencies.

BIT operates from one centre located in Manama. It is run by a team comprising a chief executive officer, head of sales, finance and HR manager, training and development manager, administration staff and six full-time trainers.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of four reviewers. During the review the team examined learners' work, analysed data about the qualifications learners achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with staff, learners, trainers and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings regarding BIT's provision, and their recommendations for improvement.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 4: below satisfactory

The overall effectiveness of BIT is below satisfactory. Learners achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and leadership and management are below satisfactory. The quality of programmes and the support and guidance provided to learners is satisfactory.

Most learners develop a satisfactory level of vocational skills and knowledge. During 2009 learners achieved well on provider-accredited courses, with a success rate of 92%. Learners' achievements and progress on these courses are measured and assessed appropriately through a useful range of practical exercises and exams. Achievement rates vary on the externally accredited courses; the rate is satisfactory on the Certified System Administrator (CSA) course sponsored by the Labour Fund, Tamkeen, but very low, at only 5%, on ICDL. Learners' retention is satisfactory across all courses, at 90%. Learners' attendance is satisfactory, and accurate records are kept. Punctuality is poor and lateness is not recorded or challenged by trainers or staff.

Approximately 50% of BIT's courses are attendance based. Learners who attend 80% of the scheduled hours receive an attendance certificate irrespective of whether they have developed the required skills. They can move to the next level without a proper assessment of how well they achieved.

BIT's trainers are certified and have ample experience and knowledge of teaching IT courses. Few trainers, however, use a sufficiently wide range of training methods to engage or motivate learners. Sessions are mostly trainer-centred and little interaction takes place during sessions. Learners are not encouraged to participate in discussions. Lesson objectives are shared with learners in most sessions. Trainers usually depend on standard schemes of work provided by the IT vendor; this approach does not cater for learners with different abilities. Initial assessment is only undertaken for learners whose employers request it. Most trainers fail to address effectively the needs of different groups or individual learners.

Learners' performance is appropriately monitored on some courses, such as those sponsored by Tamkeen and a local university; on other courses learners' progress and achievements are not monitored closely and learners do not get adequate feedback on how they are doing. BIT does not keep effective records of learners' progress or provide them with written feedback.

BIT offers a good range of Microsoft-accredited courses with readily available progression levels, enabling learners to acquire international IT qualifications. Learners and employers

are satisfied with the range of courses on offer. BIT ensures that learners and employers receive course outlines before the start of a course. Generally, BIT provides suitable original course materials to learners, obtained from its international partners. Not enough enrichment activities are provided to enhance the learning experience. BIT's measures to assess local market needs are insufficient and depend too heavily on the sales team's relationship with clients. Contacts with employers are not documented or reviewed by higher management.

BIT's administration and sales staff give learners useful information and an introduction to their course; trainers provide informal guidance on career opportunities, and personal support. BIT provides learners with a safe working environment and with modern premises equipped with latest ICT technologies. BIT has no health and safety policy. The institute's website is informative and well maintained.

BIT's vision and mission statements are appropriately focused on learners' achievements, shared among staff and displayed on the website. The institute's strategic plan, however, is insufficiently detailed and its objectives are not challenging enough. Targets are set without clear ownership or defined end dates. It is not clearly specified how progress in implementing the plan will be monitored.

BIT does not systematically monitor learners' achievements and progress. The achievement data provided for the review were inconsistent except those for courses run for Tamkeen and a local university.

Trainers' performance is not monitored adequately during sessions. BIT has no system to measure whether trainers are conducting successful sessions, or to guide them in how to improve. Although BIT seeks learners' feedback at the end of a course the feedback is not summarised to drive improvements. BIT recruits certified trainers who have sufficient knowledge and experience in their specialisation. Trainers are occasionally offered useful development activities related to their area of work but these activities are not well planned and not linked to BIT's performance management system.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4: below satisfactory

BIT has secured a reasonable rate of repeat business, 20%, from its current corporate clients, who among them provide almost 80% of BIT's total enrolments. The overall number of learners decreased by 8% between 2008 and 2009, however. BIT has adequate resources, including certified trainers, enough administration staff and well-equipped premises.

BIT has some appropriate plans for improvement. These include affiliation with other international accreditation bodies, such as Project Management Professional (PMP). For that they have established the first Prometric approved testing centre for medical and project management exams in the Gulf Cooperation Council region. BIT is also planning to add locally designed programmes such as an entrepreneur development programme and IT training for people with disabilities. The rationale for introducing these programmes is not based on a thorough market needs analysis or an accurate understanding of what employers need. The sales team approaches some employers but do not maintain effective records of these visits and the outcomes are not analysed by senior management.

BIT's systems to improve the quality of its training and the performance of its staff are inadequate. Its quality assurance system is inadequate; it does not monitor or measure the quality of training. No links are made between trainers' performance and learners' achievement. Trainers are not given targets to improve learners' achievements, and achievement data are not collected or maintained systematically. A new appraisal system has been introduced recently but has barely been implemented. Learners' post-course feedback is not used effectively to plan improvements.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) completed for the review is not detailed and does not provide sufficient evidence. Senior management had very little input into the self-assessment process. The SEF overestimates BIT's performance in all areas. This casts doubt on managers' ability to diagnose or address weaknesses.

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?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective is training?	Grade 4: below satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?	Grade 3: 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

- **Achievement on provider-accredited courses.** On the provider- accredited courses, which represented 24% of the institute's business in 2009, the success rate is good, at 92%. Learners' achievement on these courses is measured and assessed rigorously through practical exercises and exams.
- **Range of Microsoft-accredited courses.** BIT offers a good range of Microsoft-accredited programmes, which enable learners to acquire international IT qualifications and offer plenty of opportunities for progress to different levels. Courses include the Microsoft new platform courses, and newly launched courses such as Silverlight.

Areas for improvement

- **Monitoring of learners' progress on most courses and the feedback given to learners about their progress.** For non-sponsored courses, BIT does not keep clear records of learners' progress or feedback. Trainers grade learners' performance on a scale of A to D based on their own view of how learners participate in class and on the outcome of in-class practical exercises. There is no objective mechanism to verify these grades as no marked assessments are carried out. No written feedback is given to learners to inform them about their progress and the areas they need to improve
- **Strategies to meet learners' individual needs.** Although a few trainers gauge the level of learners' understanding at the beginning of a course through open questions, few trainers effectively address the various needs of individuals or groups of learners. Lessons are seldom planned based on an initial assessment of learners' prior knowledge and skills. In one case, however, BIT extended the duration of one course when the trainer found learners' skills to be below the required standard. Most sessions are taught as one entity based on a course structure set by the vendor; less able learners are not always sufficiently supported and more able ones are not effectively challenged.
- **Teaching strategies.** Most trainers use an insufficient range of training methods to engage or motivate learners. Sessions are largely trainer-centred and learners' interaction and participation are minimal; learners are passive during most of the sessions. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged or motivated to participate in discussion. Sessions do not provide enough opportunities for teamwork and learners are not encouraged to work collaboratively.

- **Collection and analysis of learners' achievement data.** BIT's managers do not systematically monitor learners' achievements; achievement data provided for the review was not reliable enough to measure achievement and progress on many courses, except those conducted for Tamkeen and a university.
- **Systems to monitor and improve the quality of training.** Although new trainers are observed directly after they have started their employment, managers do not monitor their performance subsequently, nor do they observe sessions to provide trainers with feedback on how to improve. Trainers are only given feedback if problems arise and this feedback is not recorded and used to plan improvements.

Recommendations

In order to improve its provision, BIT should:

- devise a system to record, monitor and analyse learners' progress and ensure that learners receive appropriate feedback
- implement rigorous pre- and post-course assessment for all courses
- increase the range of teaching strategies used
- establish a system to record and analyse learners' achievement and use it to plan improvement
- develop a quality assurance system to monitor and improve the provision.