



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

The British Language Centre
Janabiya
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.....	5
Summary of grades awarded.....	7
Main judgements and recommendations	8
Strengths	8
Areas for improvement.....	9
Recommendations	9

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

The British Language Centre (BLC) was established in 2009, and is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer general English courses for children from the age of six years old to adults. The duration of courses is normally 30 hours and they are run on a four hours per week basis in multiple runs per year. The centre provides three categories of courses grouped by age range. These are for children in the age range of 6 to 11 years, young people of 12 to 15 years and adults aged 16 years and above. During 2010, BLC had 1451 students enrolled on various courses. Approximately half of the students attended for more than one course.

The centre operates from one location in Janabiya and is co-owned and managed by the strategic director and the operational director, the latter also teaching. A senior teacher, five teaching staff, a senior administrator, a member of staff to provide academic support services, two customer service staff, an accountant and a caretaker are all employed on a full-time basis.

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, employers, students and their parents.

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 2: Good

The overall effectiveness of BLC is good with outstanding features. The outstanding quality of leadership and management practices impacts positively on the centre's provision by offering an effective learning experience in an inspiring and safe environment facilitated by qualified teachers who deliver appropriate, well-structured and well-resourced courses. As a consequence, students develop as self-confident learners who make clear progress in the gaining of good English language and communication skills and in the development of effective personal and social skills.

The overwhelming majority of students develop good English language skills and knowledge as well as improving their self-confidence, leadership and presentation skills, and achieve better grades in school. Students who stay with the institute and progress through the levels achieve a commendable profile of A and B grades. Most of the courses show high retention and success rates reaching 98 and 95 per cent respectively in 2011. Students enjoy attending classes, learning collaboratively and interacting with teachers. The institute effectively measures and documents students' progress and achievement throughout all courses. An end of course achievement summary report is provided to stakeholders although they do not usually receive detailed feedback on progress unless requested. An age-appropriate placement test is in place although the adult placement test does not assess all language skills. There are a minority of cases where students were placed at an inappropriate lower or higher level. Students attend BLC on a regular basis and have a good record of punctuality.

BLC's teachers are English native speakers, certified in teaching English language, have relevant experience and use a variety of teaching techniques and resources to effectively engage and motivate students. In more than two thirds of the lessons observed, the teaching was good and none of the lessons were below satisfactory. Teachers communicate entirely in English with students and encourage them to do so within the lesson. In the majority of lessons observed, lessons were well planned and objectives shared with students. However, in a few lessons observed individual differences were not always met. BLC's teachers assess students' work covering the four language skills regularly and accurately and helpful verbal and written feedback is provided. The institute recently launched a moderation process to verify the quality of marking although the marking of students' writing activities is insufficiently critical.

BLC offers a wide range of general English courses for students from the age of six years to those attending university. All courses have clear progression routes that match the Common European Framework and are delivered using Cambridge University Press (CUP) resources. Stakeholders are very satisfied with the courses on offer. Appropriate course information is provided to stakeholders in advance. However, explicit course outlines for each level are not included. BLC, in collaboration with Tamkeen, designed and delivered a customised programme to meet the specific needs of unemployed undergraduate students. BLC uses a range of activities to gauge local needs. BLC added two pre-entry level courses for those who did not fit with the standard levels available based on identified needs. As part of enrichment activities, a number of Bahraini youth studying in the UK are invited to present their experience to BLC's students. The institute also has a 'Discover UK' programme where a group of students aged 14 to 16 visit the UK for two weeks to develop their communication skills and familiarise themselves with the British culture.

The highly effective support and guidance offered by the centre ensures that students make good or better progress in their acquisition of English language and personal and social skills. Teachers are approachable and supportive and often sit with students during the break to discuss their progress. Effective administrative support and guidance is also provided to students and their parents. During induction, useful information is conveyed clearly about the institute's policies and procedures, course structure, timetables, methods of teaching and assessment. Courteous administrative staff systematically monitor absenteeism and lateness. The customer service staff take an active role in following up issues on students' performance or behaviour. The institute also has an inclusive policy for the gifted and talented students. Students interested in pursuing higher studies in the UK are provided with useful advice. The premises were purposely built as a learning facility. The centre provides a well-ordered, inspiring and appropriately equipped learning environment with a high level of care and security for students and staff. All health and safety aspects are fully in place including staff monitoring the traffic around the car parking area at the start and end of classes and having full-time staff as certified first aiders.

BLC's management team have a clear focus on raising students' achievement and supporting them to achieve the course objectives. BLC's management, staff and teachers work as a team to ensure that students experience an enjoyable learning environment that is safe, secure and stimulating. Strategic and detailed quarterly action plans are in place and informed by regular self-evaluation and market outlook. Continuous monitoring of action plans are done through meetings and the internal communication system. BLC's vision, values, roles and responsibilities are communicated effectively to all staff in writing and in regular meetings. Teachers and administrative staff are provided with relevant development opportunities. Teachers' performance is effectively monitored by BLC's management through regular lesson observations, course review supervision meetings, appraisals and stakeholders' feedback. BLC also collects and analyses feedback from students and parents and the outcomes are shared with staff and teachers for action and follow-up. BLC

maintains appropriate links with local community charities and Tamkeen. Attendance, punctuality and achievement records are well recorded, analysed and trends noted and discussed. BLC's SEF is informative, completed collaboratively and its grades are reasonably accurate.

Capacity to improve

Grade 1: Outstanding

In a relatively short span of time, BLC's provision has reached a well-established position in terms of having relevant strategic and action plans in use and having sufficient and appropriate resources to deliver high quality provision which has led to rising student achievement. There are a shared vision and common and consistently applied policies and practices among the teaching and administrative staff necessary to implement further improvements to the provision. Courses are well-structured with progression that is matched to the European Common Framework and delivered using CUP resources. The communication and data management system that has been developed is highly effective in supporting students' learning.

The strategic and quarterly action plans provide a clear pathway for development. In April 2010, BLC moved to their current well-resourced purpose built premises and in September 2011 the number of classrooms was expanded further. Two courses were introduced in late 2009 to fill a gap at entry level. The data management and communication system provides a detailed analysis and useful reports on students' history and progression within the centre. In May 2011, BLC introduced a basic moderation process for the marking of examination papers.

The number of teaching and administrative staff is expanding with the recent appointment of one senior teacher, one classroom teacher and a students' academic advisor. Enrolment in 2010 batches jumped noticeably and continued in 2011 despite the unrest in the Kingdom. BLC has high repeat business as approximately half of the current students continue with BLC to take more courses and most parents have more than one child attending BLC with some on a waiting list for current courses.

Recent initiatives have included starting a support service called 'English language clinic' to provide assistance to students with specific language difficulties, offering academic advice to students and parents interested in higher education in the UK and expanding the library service for students' use. The centre also has plans to establish BLC as a Cambridge ESOL examination centre if there is an identified demand for this.

Self-evaluation processes are an integral part of BLC's planning. An effective continuous process of review and evaluation of performance embedded in the BLC's feedback analysis and monitoring procedures provides the management with vital information to drive further improvements.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: Good
Capacity to Improve	Grade 1: Outstanding
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 2: Good
How effective is teaching?	Grade 2: Good
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 2: Good
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 1: Outstanding
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 1: Outstanding

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Students develop good English language skills and knowledge and useful life skills.** Students make good progress on all the courses offered by the institute. In addition, the institute promotes the development and improvement in students' self-confidence, leadership and presentation skills that boost their self-esteem.
- **Teachers succeed in engaging and motivating students and use resources effectively to promote learning.** This is achieved by the judicious use of direct questioning, pair and group work, encouraging young students to speak in front of others, open discussions, playing games, singing songs and relevant outdoor activities.
- **Appropriate courses which have clear a road map with progression routes that match the Common European Framework.** Parents and students are very satisfied by the courses offered by BLC these resulting in marked improvements in students' mastery of the English language.
- **A wide range of enrichment activities for students.** This includes the use of extra materials, online stories, various relevant indoor and outdoor activities and some Bahraini students from the UK invited to present their experience to BLC's students. The institute also has an annual 'Discover UK' programme where BLC students visit the UK develop their communication skills, familiarise themselves with the British culture and practice life skills such as leadership and independence.
- **Highly effective academic and administrative support and guidance to aid students' progress and achievement.** This ensures that students study in a safe, caring and inspiring environment and as a consequence they make good or better progress in their acquisition of English language and personal and social skills.
- **An inspiring, secure and appropriately equipped learning environment.** This well-ordered environment provides a high level of care and security for students and staff with rigorous health, safety and fire policies in place and strictly adhered to.
- **High quality vision, values, roles and responsibilities which are communicated to all staff in writing and promoted in regular meetings.** Specifically, BLC's management team has a clear focus on raising students' achievement and supporting them to achieve the course objectives. They work as a cohesive team to ensure that students work in an enjoyable learning environment that is safe, secure and stimulating.

- **Comprehensive policies and procedures shared and implemented with all staff.** In addition, newly recruited staff undergo an induction programme and are provided with a written guidance package which includes information on the local culture and BLC's communication and teaching methodology.
- **Effective monitoring of teachers' performance by BLC's management; the performance of the administrative staff is also monitored well and given regular feedback to improve.** Teachers' performance is monitored through regular lesson observations, course review supervision meetings after each course, appraisals and stakeholders' feedback. Opportunities for job enrichment are offered for staff as part of their development.
- **The collection and effective analysis of achievement data and performance feedback, the outcomes of which are shared with staff and teachers.** This analysis is used effectively by the centre to identify trends and areas for development.

Areas for improvement

- **Stakeholders do not usually receive detailed feedback on progress unless requested.** However, they do receive an end of course summary report.
- **Insufficiently critical marking of students' writing activities.** Although the institute recently launched a moderation process to verify the quality of marking, this aspect of marking is not critical enough.
- **Students' individual differences are not always catered for in lessons.** Although most teachers cater for the needs of the students as a group, individual differences are not always met. On a few occasions in the lessons observed, some less able students were left without appropriate assistance.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, the British Language Centre should:

- enhance current reporting of progress to all stakeholders
- ensure students' writing activities are marked more critically
- ensure that students' individual differences are always effectively catered for in lessons.