



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

# **Vocational Review Unit**

## **Repeat Review Report**

**English Language Skills Centre**

**Tubli**

**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 24 -26 January 2011**

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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 English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) was established in 1996, and licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer English language courses for students aged 5 to 18. The duration of courses is 45 hours and they are run on a three hours per week basis. The centre provides three levels of courses: beginners, juniors and seniors. 358 students enrolled during 2010 on various courses.

The centre operates from one location in Tubli and managed by the institute's principal and an administrator who are partners. They employ a secretary and three teachers and a quality consultant on a part-time basis.

### **The repeat review**

ELSC was first reviewed in January 2010. The provision was graded as below satisfactory overall. Although courses offered met most students' and parent's needs, the quality of teaching, level of support provided to students and the leadership and management of the centre were below satisfactory. The capacity to improve was very weak. There was insufficient evidence to grade students' achievement. ELSC was therefore subject to a repeat review to ensure that these areas improved to the required standard.

The repeat review comprised two one-day monitoring visits and a final three-day visit by a team of three reviewers. During the repeat review, reviewers observed education classes, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with the institute's principal, the administration officer, part-time trainers, administration and support staff, students and parents

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

## Overall judgment

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### Effectiveness of provision

#### Grade 3: Satisfactory

English Language Skills Centre (ELSC) is now satisfactory overall. All aspects of the review were judged to be satisfactory by the Quality Assurance review team.

Most students develop adequate English language skills after attending courses at ELSC. Most improve their listening, reading and writing skills and become more self-confident in speaking the language. Most parents' testimony indicates their full satisfaction with their child's improved skills and better school results after going through ELSC courses. Retention and success rates have improved since the last review and students' progress is measured more systematically through class activities and three periodic tests that are taken during a course. These are followed by a rigorously marked final examination. The newly introduced placement test places students at a suitable level that matches their abilities. After the third session, teachers fill in a transition form to report on students' progress and those who are not doing well are transferred to other levels that are more suitable for them. Most students enjoy and participate during sessions although in the majority of sessions observed students were not provided with sufficient opportunities to work in groups. The progress reports that are sent to parents are not sufficiently clear as they do not always indicate areas that students need to improve and the behavioural part of the report is subjective with no clear criteria for making a judgement.

Although most sessions are well planned and objectives are shared with students, most teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the mix of abilities in their sessions with less able students provided with limited support. Most teachers succeed in motivating and engaging students during sessions, for example by the effective use of games and TV to play nursery rhymes which enriches their learning.

ELSC provide a range of non-accredited English language courses that meet students' abilities and parents' needs well. Most courses come with suitable progression from each level. Although parents get sufficient information about course content at the registration day, ELSC does not provide this information to the general public. Leaflets and brochures are very limited and the centre does not explicitly promote its courses.

Teachers at ELSC are very friendly and provide purposeful support to students during a course that helps them to achieve better; they also maintain contact with parents to provide them with information about their child's performance and behaviour. ELSC provides remedial classes free of charge in compensation for missed sessions and schedule extra

classes before school examinations. Classroom layouts have improved since the last review; they are now more inspiring and inviting, producing a better learning environment. ELSC centre is maintained well with appropriate health and safety measures in place, although these are not always communicated well enough to students. The institute does not have a qualified first-aider.

The centre's newly developed strategic plan focuses well on measuring and monitoring students' achievements but is not detailed enough in terms of timescales and responsibilities. Teachers at the centre are selected based on their teaching qualification and English language background, although not all of them are approved by the Ministry of Education. Monitoring of the quality of teaching has improved since the last review; each teacher is observed at least once during a course and visit outcomes are shared with teachers verbally and in writing. However, areas of concern are not aggregated and management do not always follow up to ensure that improvement actions have been carried out. The centre maintains effective links with parents and regularly invites them for face to face discussions. In addition, parents' feedback is sought through questionnaires that are sent to them after the end of each course. The management addresses issues arising from parents' meetings well. Gathering students' views is not rigorous enough as the principal himself helps young students with their input rather than allowing them to complete questionnaires unaided and in confidence.

## **Capacity to improve**

### **Grade 3: Satisfactory**

ELSC has taken effective steps towards improving the centre since the last review. It has introduced an improved system to measure and monitor students' achievement having developed a student database to capture all activities and grades. The institute has also introduced an automated placement test, recruited an external quality consultant to address improvements and is working with the British Council and the University of Cambridge to provide English examinations for young students. However, the institute's internal quality system remains under-developed.

The centre has updated its curricula and text books. New text books have been introduced such as "Primary Colors" for juniors, "Kids Box" for beginners and "Messages" for senior students. Although the range of courses on offer did not increase during 2010, enrollment during 2010 increased by 5 per cent over the previous year, with many students progressing to higher levels at the institute.

ELSC maintains good links with parents and responds effectively to their emerging needs. They meet regularly with parents and conduct face to face dialogues, with the outcome of these discussions promptly addressed by the ELSC management. However the system for the collection of students' views is not rigorous enough.

The learning environment has improved since the time of the last review with classrooms which are more inspiring with new, appropriate resources being installed. The institute employs sufficient human resources to improve further.

The self-evaluation form provided for the review is informative, well-evidenced and properly identified the areas that need improvement. However, grades awarded to all the main questions were higher than those of the review team.

## Summary of grades awarded

Overall judgement	Original grade	Repeat review grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 4: Below satisfactory	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade 5: Very weak	Grade 3: Satisfactory
<b>Review findings</b>		
How well do students achieve?	Insufficient evidence to grade	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective is teaching?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs of students and parents?	Grade 3: Satisfactory	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory	Grade 3: Satisfactory



## Main judgements and recommendations

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### Strengths

- **Effective use of placement tests and transition forms to place students at the appropriate level.** A newly introduced placement test is placing students at the appropriate level. In addition, after the third session, teachers fill in a transition form to monitor students' progress with those who are not coping well transferred to another level.
- **Effective scrutiny of students' work with constructive feedback.** Students are kept well informed of their progress, with helpful and constructive written feedback provided by teachers on their work.
- **Courses on offer meet the needs of parents.** ELSC offers a range of short non-accredited English language courses that meet the needs of parents well.
- **Purposeful support provided to students to help them achieve better.** Teachers at ELSC are very friendly and provide purposeful support to students that helps them to progress and achieve better on their chosen course.
- **Effective links maintained with parents through regular meetings and questionnaires with the outcomes of these recorded and analysed for improvement.** ELSC maintains effective links with parents through frequently held "involvement" meetings and gathering parents' feedback at the end of each course. Issues arising from these meetings are addressed by the management.

### Areas for improvement

- **Insufficient co-operative learning.** Although most students enjoy and participate actively during sessions, students are provided with inadequate opportunities for co-operative learning.
- **The newly developed periodic progress report is not clear enough.** The progress report measures and records students' performance during courses by their class work, class participation, quizzes, periodic tests and end of course examinations. However, the outcome of this is not yet analysed closely enough to identify specific areas for improvement.

- **Although session plans are in place, they do not cater effectively for the various needs of all students.** Although structured session plans are prepared for most levels, these do not include plans for activities to be used for mixed ability students and, in a few cases, the less able students were not provided with sufficient support to help them improve.
- **Health and safety measures are not always shared with students and no first aider is available at the institute.**  
Although ELSC has introduced new health and safety procedures at the centre, for example the identification of an assembly point and the installation of a new fire detection system, these are not always communicated to students at the beginning of a session.
- **Although a session observation scheme is in place, the outcomes of these visits are not always acted upon.** Although the teaching performance appraisal system is detailed, with each teacher observed at least once on each course and verbal and written feedback provided after each visit, the outcomes of these visits are not always aggregated or acted upon by management.

## Recommendations

In order to improve provision, ELSC should:

- introduce more collaborative activities during sessions
- improve the grading system for the periodic progress reports
- improve teaching methodology to cater for students' different needs
- ensure that health and safety aspects are communicated with all students at the start of a course
- ensure that session observation is more rigorous and feedback is followed up appropriately.