



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Excellence Training Solutions
Sanad - Kingdom of Bahrain

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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

Excellence Training Solutions (ETS) was established in 2005 and licensed by the Ministry of Labour to offer a range of vocational training courses in the areas of management, work-related skills, marketing and sales, along with a few courses in occupational English. Courses are only offered to businesses, not individuals. Most of ETS's courses are short, lasting between 16 and 32 hours, and are non-accredited. In 2009, 646 learners attended ETS programmes.

In 2008, ETS was accredited by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) to offer administration, management and English courses. In 2009, ETS was accredited by Edexcel to offer its Business Administration Certificate and specialised English language programmes.

ETS operates from one centre in the Sanad area. The institute is managed by a chief executive and employs, on a full-time basis, a business development manager, a learning solutions quality and training consultancy manager, an HR and administration manager, a career counselling and recruitment advisory manager, a finance and accounts manager, two quality assessors, three training coordinators and a training operations department coordinator. ETS has a pool of 22 part-time trainers.

Scope of the review

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

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 3: satisfactory

Overall, ETS offers satisfactory provision. The training given and the leadership and management of ETS are good. Learners' achievements, the range of programmes on offer and the support and guidance provided to learners are all satisfactory.

Most learners stay until the end of their course and meet their course objectives. Learners are self motivated, enjoy training sessions and are proud of the work they achieve. They acquire skills useful to their professions and subsequently use them at their workplace. ETS assesses learners' achievement rigorously and measures it well. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory across all courses and monitored appropriately by ETS.

ETS trainers are well qualified and bring with them plenty of industrial experience related to the topic they teach. Most sessions are dynamic and trainers successfully use a wide range of group activities to maintain learners' participation, engagement and motivation. The varying needs of learners are satisfactorily met through the use of effective and detailed lesson planning. The previous experience and capabilities of learners are identified systematically using a thorough verbal and written initial assessment. Trainers use the outcomes of initial assessment effectively to plan sessions. Trainers do not, however, routinely provide sufficient constructive written feedback to learners to inform them of their current status or guide them on how they can improve.

ETS's range of non-accredited courses satisfactorily meets the needs of learners and the local labour market, although most courses are offered at entry level only and provide limited opportunities to progress to higher levels. ETS does not, however, offer externally accredited programmes, which are in high demand by employers and learners. Courses are effectively customised to meet employers' specific requirements. In most successful sessions, trainers effectively use enrichment activities such as video clips, real vocational examples and quotes from market leaders to stress a learning point. ETS's management provide effective counselling and professional support to learners before, during and after they have completed a course. Learners are given a useful and detailed booklet as an introduction to their course. Special bridge courses are available to help less able learners get up to the required starting level for their course. Trainers provide effective personal support and help learners to resolve work-related problems. Trainers also give learners their contact details for use after the course has ended. ETS's website is easy to use but does not have sufficient information about courses and their progression levels. The learning environment at ETS is appropriately maintained.

Data on learners' achievements and performance are effectively managed. ETS carries out useful data analyses periodically and prepares effective action plans to drive improvements. A detailed report is sent to employers at the end of each course. ETS does not seek and record employers' feedback systematically, relying on the marketing team's contacts with employers, which are not recorded appropriately.

ETS's management has developed a clear and well-defined strategic plan that focuses well on raising learners' performance. An appropriate quality assurance system is in operation. ETS uses an effective internal lesson observation scheme to monitor the quality of teaching: sessions are randomly observed by a qualified training coordinator and the feedback provided is mostly written. Comments from learners' feedback forms are also fed back to trainers. The reports given to trainers are very detailed and provide useful pointers for improvement.

Capacity to improve

Grade 2: good

ETS plans improvements well. The strategic planning process is systematic and detailed, focusing well on improving learners' experience and raising their skills and achievements. Targets are specific, realistic and sufficiently challenging. Improvement plans are monitored closely by the quality assurance team, with clear milestones agreed upon. There has been good progress in meeting the milestones already set. Plans include affiliation with global accreditation bodies, namely Edexcel and LCCL, with the aim of introducing externally accredited programmes to the local market. One outcome of the strategic plan has been the establishment of a quality assurance department.

ETS has increased the number of non-accredited courses offered, from 25 in 2008 to 68 in 2009. Enrolment figures for 2009 are up by 152% compared with 2008. Repeat business from corporate clients rose by 13% in 2009. Although ETS maintains effective links with the local market and employers, its method of gathering feedback is not sufficiently systematic.

ETS has sufficient human and physical resources to implement the planned improvements. The management team is focused and involved. The pool of part-time trainers is well qualified and deployed appropriately.

The institute's self-evaluation form (SEF) is comprehensive, detailed and well evidenced. It accurately identifies some of the areas for improvement found by the review team. The grades given in the SEF are over-estimated.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 3: satisfactory
Capacity to Improve	Grade 2: good
Review Findings	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective is training?	Grade 2: good
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 2: good

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Use of training activities and group exercises.** Trainers use a good range of activities and effective group exercises to engage and motivate learners. During the group work, learners are fully engaged and have clear roles that identify their responsibilities. Trainers make good use of practical activities such as videos, role play, games and case studies to enhance learning.
- **Initial assessment.** Learners' capabilities are identified systematically. ETS applies rigorous initial assessment, the results of which are used effectively in lesson planning. A thorough written initial assessment is conducted on the first day of a course and a useful discussion is held with each learner at the start of a training session to establish their level of knowledge.
- **Customisation of courses.** ETS customises courses very effectively to meet employers' specific requirements; courses such as the job orientation workshop have been tailored appropriately to meet the growing needs of specific employers. Courses are very specifically adapted not just to employers' needs but also to the requirements of the learners concerned.
- **Support for learners.** Learners receive effective support, guidance and counseling before, during and after a course. They are given a clear introduction on the first day of a course. On health and safety courses, less able learners are supported through a useful bridge session which helps them reach the required level. The timing of ETS's courses is generally flexible to meet the needs of employers and learners, and the institute provides free transport for those who need it. Trainers help learners resolve work-related problems. They give learners their contact details so that they can be accessed after a course has finished. ETS has a good system to recognise outstanding learners, offering rewards such as gift vouchers or a free laptop.
- **Strategic planning.** ETS has a particularly clear and detailed strategic plan, with objectives and targets that are specific to a training environment and focused well on raising learners' achievements. The plans are time-bound and ownership of targets is clearly identified. Milestones are realistic and are being met in a timely manner. Progress towards achieving targets and milestones is monitored carefully.

Areas for improvement

- **Written feedback to learners.** ETS does not provide sufficient written feedback to learners on how to improve; learners' work and assignments are not critically or constructively evaluated by a trainer, for example.
- **The range of courses and progression routes.** ETS's courses have limited progression opportunities; most are offered at one basic level. Employers have raised concerns about the lack of higher-level courses but ETS's management has not addressed these concerns sufficiently. ETS does not have the externally accredited programmes that are demanded by learners and employers.
- **Course information on the institute's website.** ETS's website does not contain sufficient information about the content of its courses and possible progression routes. Some links on the website do not work.
- **Collection of employers' feedback.** ETS does not have a systematic approach to seeking employers' feedback. Most feedback from employers comes from marketing calls and the outcomes of these calls are not used properly.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, ETS should:

- ensure that learners receive detailed and constructive written feedback
- increase the range of courses and progression routes available to learners
- update the website
- develop a system to gather employers' feedback and use the outcomes effectively