



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 four-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Excellence Training Solutions (ETS) was established in 2005; it is licensed by the Ministry of Labour to offer management and soft skills courses. Most courses conducted during the last two years are short and non-accredited.

ETS is located in Sanad area. It is managed by a chief executive who is also the owner. He also acts as the human resource, account and administration manager, and a training consultant. ETS employs a head of consultation-training operations who is a full-time trainer as well, a business development manager, a part-time quality manager, three part-time administration staff and two drivers/assistants. ETS has a pool of 16 part-time trainers who work as and when needed.

During the last two years, the provider enrolled 812 learners, the vast majority of whom are sponsored by their employers.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days by a team of three reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons/training sessions, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the reviewer and talked with staff, learners, employers and trainers.

In the previous review, ETS was judged satisfactory overall; the quality of training and leadership and management were judged as good while learners' achievement, programmes, and support and guidance provided to learners were judged as satisfactory.

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

Table of review judgments awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Quality of Provision	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 3: Satisfactory

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

ETS provision is satisfactory across the board. Learners make satisfactory progress considering their starting points on the courses offered and develop suitable knowledge, skills and attitude which they implement at work and in their personal life. Trainers are qualified with good vocational experience; the best lessons are planned well and learners are sufficiently engaged while the less effective ones lack effective planning and engagement. ETS offers a range of management and soft skills short non-accredited courses which generally meet learners' and stakeholders' requirements. Although the provider maintains effective links with employers on their training needs and carries out effective market research, insufficient discussion is done on the appropriateness of course levels to learners. Trainers are supportive and approachable when needed, however, the support provided is on an *ad hoc* basis and left to trainers' individual efforts rather than being planned and systematic. ETS maintains effective links with employers on their training needs and use this information to update the courses offered. Although most compliance procedures are in place, implemented quality assurance practices are insufficiently rigorous to ensure continuous improvement.

ETS has satisfactory capacity to improve. In 2010, ETS obtained Cambridge University International Examination approval to run Information Technology Foundation and Diploma Programmes, and became an authorised training centre for MEDIC First Aid (USA). During 2011, ETS ran two groups of learners for each programme, however, the administration of these courses was insufficiently effective due to issues around assessment and certification. Recently, the provider resumed communication with City & Guilds to offer retail and hospitality programmes. ETS repeat business is good and the number of enrolments has increased between 2009 and 2010 from 345 to 419, although it decreased slightly to 393 in 2011. Although the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) identified some areas for development, it is insufficiently critical and grades are overestimated. Resources are adequate.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

The vast majority of learners make satisfactory progress and develop relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes which they implement in the workplace and their personal lives. Employers reported positive and noticeable changes in attitudes after attending courses in stress management, work ethics and customer care. A few had been promoted at work. However, there were some cases where added value was minimal. For example, some learners stated that content and learning objectives were similar on some courses or courses attended were of a very basic nature, and did not stretch them or meet their needs.

Scrutiny of learners' responses on the pre- and post-course assessments reveals that learners make satisfactory progress considering their starting points. The currently used pre-course assessment is not always successful in placing learners with limited literacy at the appropriate course level. Learners generally enjoy their lessons especially class practical activities and some are self-motivated. Some learners were able to reflect on how well they are progressing; they were able to self-assess their own work and evaluate the benefits they are receiving from the course. Meetings with learners' suggested that they are provided with opportunities for group work although this was limited and ineffective in the lessons observed. In addition, the more able learners dominated activities at the expense of the less able.

Learners Performance Data (LPD) shows that retention rates are high at 100 per cent for 2010 and 2011, as expected on such short courses. Learners attend regularly and punctuality has recently been recorded; it was an issue in a few observed lessons.

The quality of provision

How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Trainers have good vocational experience and are well qualified; learners appreciate this experience which helps them to build on their existing skills. The most effective lessons are planned and learners are sufficiently engaged while the weaker lessons lack effective planning and purposeful engagement. Some stakeholders stated that the better lessons are when trainers plan more practical activities for learners. Although lesson plans are available, they lack a clear focus on learners' activities and are just statements of what the trainers

need to achieve or cover. Also, they are not informed by initial assessment to support less able learners. Learning objectives are generally shared with learners and previous lessons are recapitulated. However, not all trainers start their lessons on time; in some cases there were trainers who arrived to teach learners up to fifteen minutes late.

On the short non-accredited courses, which make up most of the conducted courses, trainers use formative assessment to check learners' understanding and useful verbal feedback is provided. Trainers maintain adequate records on learners' progress and produce a report at the end of the course which reflects individual progress. This is an improvement recently implemented; however, learners do not always see the information as not all employers pass reports on to individual learners. The provider uses a star award system which is effective in motivating learners; however it is not effective as an assessment tool. Adequate resources are used to promote learning; this includes PowerPoint presentations, flip charts and the white board.

How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

ETS offers a range of short non-accredited management and soft skills courses to suit learners' and stakeholders' requirements. ETS and stakeholders have an effective working relationship; stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the type of training and courses offered. Course planning is effective on those short courses where there are learning and assessment models to follow.

During 2011, the provider conducted two externally accredited courses with Cambridge University International Examination and MEDIC First Aid. However, the administration of these two courses was insufficiently effective. There have been issues regarding assessment and there is no internal verification process in place to check the quality of this provision. Course materials are available before commencement of delivery for learners and stakeholders. In most cases they are individually planned to meet the specific needs of the stakeholder.

The institute carries out effective market research. There is clear information on the type of stakeholders and new businesses being monitored. Courses are updated after discussion with employers to meet their requirements. Training needs analysis is completed with stakeholders, however, insufficient discussion is conducted on the appropriateness of the level of courses that learners are sometimes placed on.

Resources at ETS are satisfactory to deliver courses at the centre, however, a few trainers stated that they sometimes have to use their own resources to cover the range of learning activities and improve learners' experience. The library is very basic and CDs are not in an appropriate place for learners' use.

How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Learners at ETS receive adequate support and guidance. Trainers are approachable during and after a course when needed and provide informal advice on work and personal life matters. However, insufficiently systematic support is provided for the less able and more able learners, this being left to the trainers' own initiatives. The institute keeps a clear and fit for purpose trainee handbook with important information such as the attendance policy, code of conduct, health and safety and methods of assessment.

Detailed course description and contents are available in advance to learners and stakeholders. The ETS website was recently updated to provide useful information about courses on offer; this information as well as the trainee and trainer-in-charge handbook can be downloaded. The website is supported by a social media page to communicate with learners. Transportation is provided when needed. Premises are adequate and suitably equipped, although some learners stated that some classrooms are small. Most courses are held either at the employers' premises or in hospitality venues which vary in quality.

ETS communicates effectively with stakeholders regarding learners' achievement and individual reports are provided for them. However, learners are not always updated on their individual progress during or at the end of a course; some learners interviewed said that this is done informally during lessons through verbal feedback on their participation.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Although ETS maintains effective links with employers on their training needs and preferences and most compliance procedures are in place, current practices are insufficiently rigorous to promote continuous improvement. In addition, action planning and monitoring are insufficient to ensure timely achievement of the set objectives. However, the institute is managed well enough on a day-to-day basis.

The mission statement has an adequate focus on learners' achievement and strategic objectives are sufficiently challenging. However, no action plans have been developed to ensure the achievement of the set objectives and to monitor progress. Considering the number of enrolments and the type of courses offered, the current organisation structure is appropriate to meet the providers' aims and objectives. ETS has a plan to replace the three part-time administrative staff by full-time staff, two of whom would also act as training coordinators/consultants.

Although achievement data are collected and management oversees training reports produced by trainers, these reports are insufficiently analysed to improve the quality of provision. Initial assessment, although implemented on almost all courses conducted, the outcome is insufficiently utilised for placement decisions or for lesson planning. Qualified and vocationally experienced trainers are recruited and suitably inducted and deployed. Internal lesson observations are conducted to monitor trainers' performance; the form used has appropriately focused criteria, however, completed forms are insufficiently informative and do not identify areas for development which minimise its contribution to quality improvement. Performance appraisal, although in place, does not involve having action plans to address identified areas for development to improve performance.

Learners' feedback about the provision is collected through an end of course evaluation, then aggregated and analysed. However, employers' feedback is mainly sought verbally. Nevertheless, ETS maintains effective links with employers on their training needs and preferences. The provider sends employers a questionnaire to identify their training needs twice a year, these questionnaires are analysed and used to update the courses offered. Health and safety policies, procedures and practices are appropriate to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for learners and staff. Where the provider needs to use hospitality venues for training, management has clear requirements to ensure the well-being of learners and staff.

The provider's key strengths

- Recruitment and deployment of vocationally well qualified trainers
- The institute carries out effective market research and uses the outcome to update the courses offered
- Effective links and communication with employers
- The majority of learners are enjoying their courses.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Excellence Training Solutions should:

- raise learners' achievement on all courses
- make initial assessment more effective to ensure all learners are placed on appropriate courses
- improve the quality of teaching and training by:
 - having clear learning outcomes and more learner focused activities
 - using the outcomes of initial assessment more effectively in lesson planning to accommodate the varying needs of learners.
- improve the current quality assurance practices by:
 - better analysis of training reports
 - ensuring the current internal lesson observations system is more critical and informative to promote continuous improvement
 - ensuring the administration of the two newly introduced externally accredited courses is better organised.