



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Horizon for Human Resource Development
Manama - 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

Horizon for Human Resource Development (HHRD) started its training activities in 1999. It offers a range of programmes, mainly in leadership, management and soft skills. The vast majority of the programmes are short and non-accredited. Recently, HHRD has introduced externally accredited programmes in retailing, in partnership with City & Guilds and Edexcel. In addition, the institute has recently introduced externally accredited programmes in leadership and management from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). A very small proportion of learners currently attend these courses.

Nearly all HHRD's learners are sponsored by their employers; they come from both governmental and private sector bodies. Almost all programmes are run for groups of learners who come from a single employer. In 2008, HHRD trained 1,324 learners.

HHRD uses a pool of some 40 trainers, mostly on a part-time basis. A total of 16 staff work at HHRD, led by a managing director. Staff work either in business development or operational functions. HHRD also employs a quality assurance and assessment manager.

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 managers, trainers, administration and support staff, learners and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations for improvement.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 3: satisfactory

Learners at HHRD achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and training are good, as is the quality of programmes; the support and guidance provided to learners at HHRD are satisfactory. The leadership and management of the institute are good.

Learners at HHRD gain satisfactory new vocational knowledge, skills and attitudes. They are motivated and enjoy their courses. The retention rate is high, ranging between 85% to 100% across the different programmes. Trainers on all programmes use a variety of activities to measure learners' progress and skills development. These assessments do not provide an objective measure of achievement, however. Learners' achievements are not sufficiently aggregated to establish trends in improvement. The pre- and post-assessments give a satisfactory indication of learners' starting points, but do not effectively measure the skills they acquire from their course. Although learners' common objectives are adequately identified in the pre-course assessment sheets on the first day of a course, HHRD does not establish to what extent these objectives have been met by the end of a course. Learners' attendance is good at between 95% and 96%, and their punctuality is generally satisfactory.

Teaching and training are good at HHRD. Trainers are well qualified and experienced in their areas of specialism. They use plenty of practical exercises, group work and role play to motivate learners and challenge them to improve. Learners enjoy these activities. Throughout the course, trainers assess learners' work and progress sufficiently and give them helpful feedback. At the end of the course, trainers report in writing on each learner's performance and participation during the course.

HHRD mainly targets the corporate sector. It customises courses well to meet employers' needs, which are assessed through a thorough training needs analysis. A minority of learners are not placed on a programme appropriate to their requirements.

HHRD adequately ensures the safety of learning venues before and during training events. An effective health and safety assessment is carried out before training starts and corrective action is taken where necessary. Occasionally, talented learners are offered appropriate incentives or commended to their employers as a means of motivation. Learners receive supplementary booklets in specific soft skills as end-of-course gifts. HHRD has an appropriately stocked information resources centre. Learners are not yet using the resources centre effectively and are not fully aware of its potential benefits. Few learners receive sufficient guidance on the range of courses offered at HHRD.

Managers at HHRD gather, analyse and use learners' and employers' views effectively to improve training. The peer observation system is used well to bring about improvement. HHRD has a satisfactory system to recruit trainers and support staff. Although it does not set challenging targets for employees, the staff appraisal system identifies relevant training needs for staff. Trainers and staff benefit from many development opportunities inside Bahrain and occasionally outside the Kingdom. HHRD clearly analyses the market needs for training in soft skills and uses this information to shape the range of programmes. HHRD's management have appropriate plans to improve their training programmes and the quality of provision.

Capacity to improve

Grade 2: good

HHRD's range of programmes and the number of enrolments display a steadily upward trend. The institute has increased its portfolio of programmes from seven in 2006, to 14 in 2007 and 33 in 2008. The number of learners has risen from 573 in 2006, to 926 in 2007 and 1,324 in 2008.

HHRD has recently introduced externally accredited courses in retailing in partnership with City & Guilds and Edexcel, and new courses in management and leadership in partnership with ILM. An adequately sized learning resources centre has been recently set up and is being expanded to serve learners on longer accredited courses. HHRD is actively working towards introducing new programmes in English and in health and safety. A purposeful and well-focused market survey was done to establish the need for health and safety courses. The institute is also in the final stages of approval to run marketing programmes from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and training, personnel and recruitment programmes from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). HHRD effectively identifies market needs for training programmes in soft skills and uses this information to shape and improve the content of its soft skills courses.

The institute is currently considering a new system to assess learners' progress and achievements, based on a recent trial during a course held abroad. The system, in which learners create action plans related to their job requirements that are then followed up to assess the effect of training on their performance, has been offered to a few client employers in Bahrain. A system of monitoring and reporting learners' punctuality has recently been implemented successfully for all programmes.

The institute has a well-qualified team of trainers and support staff to carry out its established plans. Staff are given sufficient opportunities for development, many of which are a result of the strong links that HHRD maintains with regional and international business partners. HHRD has an effective system of peer observation and gathers useful information from employers and learners to enhance the provision. Managers gather these various inputs, review them rigorously and take appropriate action to improve the overall quality of training.

The self-evaluation form (SEF) prepared for the review is sufficiently critical. It identifies all the areas of improvement highlighted by the review team.

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

- **Teaching techniques.** Trainers use a good variety of training methods during sessions, such as role play, group work and practical exercises, which are effective in motivating learners, linking their theoretical and practical knowledge, and developing their critical thinking skills. On many programmes, trainers visit learners at work, familiarise themselves with the nature of learners' work tasks, and draw up activities based on these.
- **Trainers' qualifications and experience.** HHRD's trainers have good qualifications; they are knowledgeable and have wide vocational experience related to the courses they teach.
- **Customisation of course materials.** HHRD tailors most of its courses effectively to meet clients' corporate needs. The institute offers a complimentary training needs analysis, at group level, before each course.
- **System for establishing market needs for soft skills programmes.** HHRD uses a comprehensive and thorough system to establish the market needs for soft skills training. The needs of each sector for training in soft skills are identified well and updated regularly using different market intelligence tools and relevant studies and surveys. The outcomes of this system are used effectively in marketing courses and updating training materials.
- **Measures to gather and use learners' and employers' views.** HHRD maintains good systems to gather, analyse and make use of learners' and employers' views. As well as completing an end-of-course written questionnaire, all learners are interviewed. HHRD has recently started a new system, whereby a sample of learners are chosen from each cohort to be interviewed after returning to work in order to measure the impact of learning on their performance there. HHRD's staff meet frequently with client employers to discuss their feedback, general views and training needs. Appropriate actions are taken in response to feedback.
- **Peer observation system.** HHRD operates an effective peer observation system for trainers. Written reports are given to the management team, who meet trainers individually and share with them the outcomes of their observations and feedback from learners and employers. Although HHRD's managers use a good range of methods to gauge the performance of trainers, the results are not collated to measure the overall performance of each trainer, and monitor any improvement trends.

Areas for improvement

- **Pre- and post-course assessment.** HHRD uses pre- and post-course assessments to measure the difference in learners' performance before and after a course. These assessments do not enable a precise evaluation of an individual learner's acquisition of knowledge and skills to be made.
- **Aggregation of learners' achievements.** Learners' achievements are not measured or aggregated sufficiently to establish trends across various programmes.
- **Time management during classroom activities.** Time management was poor in some of the observed sessions and group exercises took a long time.
- **Planning to meet individual learning needs.** Although trainers identify learners' individual objectives on the first day of the course and adjust training delivery to meet most of these, a minority of learners end up on courses that do not suit their requirements or their prior knowledge and experience. Lesson plans do not include information about how individuals' needs will be met.
- **Guidance to learners on the range of courses and progression routes.** HHRD does not give individual learners sufficient information about the range of courses it offers and the clear progression routes available for externally accredited courses. It does provide such information to employers' representatives.

Recommendations

In order to improve its provision, HHRD should:

- refine the criteria of pre- and post-course assessments to measure reliably learners' attainment and acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes
- establish a system to aggregate and track learners' achievement
- ensure that learners' individual training needs are identified properly and that training effectively meets those needs
- ensure that sufficient guidance is available to learners on the programmes offered and progression routes
- improve schemes of work and lesson plans to optimize the time for group activities