



Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Horizons for Human Resource Development
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 12-14 October 2015

VO028-C3-R012

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Grading scale	1
Table of review judgements awarded.....	1
Review judgements	2
Overall effectiveness	2
Capacity to improve	2
Learners' achievement	3
The quality of provision.....	4
Leadership, management and governance	7
The provider's key strengths	9
Recommendations.....	10
Appendix	11
Overview of the institute	11

Introduction

The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA), conducted this review over three days, by a team of four reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and talked with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, Horizons for Human Resource Development (Horizons HRD) overall effectiveness was judged as Satisfactory.

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

Grading scale

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
-------------	---	------	---	--------------	---	------------	---

Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Good (2)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Good (2)
Quality of support and guidance	Good (2)
Leadership, management and governance	Good (2)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)
Overall effectiveness	Good (2)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Good (2)

The overall effectiveness of Horizons HRD is good, as are all other aspects of its provision, with the vast majority of learners develop effective knowledge and practical skills and are able to work well both collaboratively and independently during a range of group activities and individual exercises. Most of the trainers are highly qualified and use effective training methods and the available learning resources to engage learners throughout the session. A range of formative assessment tools as well as post-course test are used to measure learners' achievement and the outcomes of these are regularly recorded. However, in a few cases, the assessments used do not cover all course objectives or occasionally lower in depth to the course level. Courses are well structured and internally designed to meet learners' and stakeholders' specific needs identified through effective use of labour market relevant data. The provider ensures that the training premises are conducive to effective learning, safe and well equipped. Learners are well supported and provided with useful guidance and a proper mechanism is in place to sustain this throughout their learning experience at the centre. The management team has a clear and shared focus on improving the quality of what they do through devising detailed operation and improvement plans with periodic monitoring mechanisms that are utilised for improvement. A recently established verification team has made noticeable impact on improving the design of courses and their assessment tools and decisions.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Good (2)

Horizons HRD has good capacity to improve, with a management team having a clear focus on improving the provision. This is done by establishing a set of relevant policies and procedures and quality improvement plans that are periodically monitored. An appropriate organisation structure with clear roles and sufficient number of staff is in place. Although some staff have joined the centre recently, they all have been continuously trained and

developed. The provider has started to address the internal quality issues strategically by securing external consultation and training, forming an internal quality assurance team and later recruiting one internal and one external verifiers who carry out monitoring and useful reporting. Nevertheless, the role of the quality assurance team has been intensified only recently with noticeable positive impact on newly designed and conducted courses. A number of other recent developments have been implemented or initiated such as the improved standardisation of course files and related forms to ensure consistency of practice. Furthermore, the provider maintains an access to a pool of trainers who have direct exposure and awareness of the quality assurance requirements. The institute enjoys good repeat business with a number of major clients and recently received approvals from the Ministry of Labour to expand course offerings in the field of English language and communication. The centre also has an appropriate data management system and very recently introduced 'Moodle' software to facilitate an on-line learning environment.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at Horizons HRD is good overall. The vast majority of learners develop effective knowledge and practical skills related to their chosen course. Almost all conducted courses are local completion courses, where learners receive attendance certificates upon attending 75% of the sessions and completing course assessment successfully. Almost all learners attain their certificates, and most of them achieve the course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) or objectives through productively completing the variety of formative assessment tools throughout the course and the post-course test.

The centre uses a variety of formative assessments, which include the class written individual and group activities, the personal incident/story telling or presentation by one person or a group, role-play of related marketing and customer service situations as individuals, pairs or groups, as well as using games. Results of these activities show that learners were able to work both collaboratively and independently in an effective manner and most of them have positive attitude towards their learning. From the sessions observed and recorded videos examined by the review team, it is well evident that the learners are self-motivated, enjoy their learning, and generally able to reflect critically on their level of attainment and opinions of other learners. Employers and learners acknowledged that learners gain very useful practical skills which are directly applicable to what they do at their workplace; particularly most courses are tailored to the special requirements of the clients to fill a certain gap.

The overall retention and success rates are high overall, and from the analysis of the pre- and post-course test results, majority of learners are progressing well from their starting point. The completed courses are mostly two to five days long, and as expected with short courses, the attendance is as high as 92% or more in most of them. However, punctuality is an issue in a few cases. Records of attendance are effectively managed and kept; learners are attending regularly, but punctuality is not sufficiently monitored.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Good (2)

Most trainers are highly qualified and have relevant theoretical and practical command of their vocational specialism and always provide useful and related real life examples. This was also evident through the proper explanation of concepts, the informed responses to learners' questions and their elaboration and comments on learners' answers. From the sessions observed and the samples of recorded videos, trainers succeeded to motivate, engage and challenge learners through the use of a range of effective training methodologies. In most of the sessions observed, trainers use role play and effective group work with useful discussions among learners. In the most effective sessions, trainers use challenging techniques by further questioning and encouraging learners to challenge other learners' answers to stimulate higher order thinking skills and promote reflective understanding of the topics taught. Trainers use structured and informative lesson plans in most courses. These plans have relevant activities and clear objectives, informed by learners' prior and continuous assessment. Trainers create their lesson plans according to the outcomes of a training needs analysis (TNA), conducted prior to a course, and update them to match learners' needs where needed. Sessions start on time by sharing learning objectives followed by ice-breaker activities and useful recapitulation. Overall, sessions are structured and managed well with clear time slots allocated for each activity. However, in a few cases, activities took more time than planned but this had only a minimal impact on the time available for meeting other objectives.

The vast majority of trainers address learners' individual needs well and assess learners' understanding through effective range of focused and practical activities such as group work, role play evaluation, individual presentations, and open-end questioning. In addition, all courses have summative assessment in the form of pre- and post- course assessment. While the pre- and post-assessments are relevant and of appropriate quality for most courses, in few cases, it was found that the assessments used do not cover all course objectives or occasionally lower in depth to the course level. Trainers follow general

assessment rubric to assess learners' participation in various activities, but it is not always clearly reflected on actual learners performance. Records of learners performance are regularly maintained for different courses and effective verbal feedback are provided to learners during the sessions. In addition, learners are informed about their performance by useful end of courses report. However, in a few cases the written feedback is not critical enough. From the observed sessions and recorded videos, trainers made very effective use of the available resources to promote learning such as PowerPoint presentations, the whiteboard, relevant video clips, flip charts, range of stationery, extra handouts and physical objects.

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

Grade: Good (2)

The centre offers a wide range of internally designed attendance courses mainly in management, soft skills and customer service, in addition to three levels of Business English. They also offer a new programme called Certified Professional in Human Resource and Compensation (CPHRC), through an American-based provider. Courses are well-structured and planned with informative course description, together with course objectives and course topics. The course material are organized and cover the course objectives well and have a mixture of individual and group activities in the most of the internally designed courses. However, in few courses delivered in 2014, the objectives in the course description, the lesson plan and the course material were inconsistent and the formulation of course objectives were not fully developed as ILOs. The institute utilizes relevant market studies and develop their own market sensing of the current needs and use the outcomes effectively to influence course offerings. These courses highly meet learners' needs and stakeholders' requirements. The centre uses Tamkeen's national skill gap study, corporate TNA through interviews and direct contact with employers, mystery shopping to gauge the market needs in the retail sector and to identify the needs of stakeholders based on the nature of their operations and procedures. In addition, the provider also collects learners' future interests in courses during enrollments to estimate demands for certain courses.

Horizons HRD has clear policy and procedures to design, approve, review and update courses. This process has been recently introduced and implemented at appropriate level on a number of courses. Most of the internally designed courses are reviewed and updated upon request and when needed to meet the needs of learners' and stakeholders' requirements. Course content is often reviewed in consultation with clients to meet their specific needs. The courses are effectively resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. The provider has fit for purpose training classrooms in different venues which are equipped with a good range of training resources such as data show projectors, videos, course materials supplemented with relevant worksheets and handouts for activities. The

quality of activities is enhanced by material produced by two well-known international developing companies. Courses are supported with useful and relevant range of additional activities for enriching learners' experience such as attending to guest speakers, going field visits and having access to supplementary materials including links to websites and selected videos. The provider has clear access and entry requirements to soft skills courses. However, the requirements of CPHRC and Business English are just recently implemented.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

The centre has an effective mechanism to support and guide learners throughout the course. Before the start of the course, the participants and the human resources coordinator/manager receive reminding emails and SMS, which contain the course details, and contact person phone number for any raising issues. On the first day, learners are provided with very helpful induction including instructions on the health and safety precautions, course regulations as well as agreeing on certain disciplinary roles. In addition, learners fill in a registration form, where they indicate their personal details and any physical or learning disabilities. Another form is given to all candidates to be filled in by those interested in one-on-one counselling or special guidance and support. Horizons HRD trainers and Staff are supportive and approachable. The centre keeps effective communication with stakeholders and provides them with course details in advance, and offers to conduct a free TNA for the whole corporate to identify the gaps and recommend suitable courses for each member. List of courses to be offered and course information are made available on printed brochures and through the centre's handy website. The learners are provided with opportunities for one-on-one useful guidance and counselling. The centre had several cases of career or educational counselling and support to many learners who had issues affecting work or social life.

Horizons HRD courses are conducted in-house or in hospitality venues in which the learning environment is fit for purpose. In addition, the centre has a rich library in the main premises and an e-library for the use of the interested candidates. Access to the virtual learning environment 'Moodle', has recently started to eight courses, and planned to expand the usage to all courses in the coming future. The centre is flexible with choice of the trainer, venue, dates, timings, delivery language, course contents and materials provided, with many changes arranged within the course whenever required. The centre holds useful communication with stakeholders throughout the course, and shares an informative 'Learners Achievement Report', at the end of the course with them. The centre has a fit-for-purpose policies and procedures for learners with special needs. Those with learning special needs are identified by the trainers and dealt with positively, particularly with English

language difficulty, however, no physical need cases were identified up-to-date as indicated by the centre.

Leadership, management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Good (2)

The management team at Horizons HRD has a clear vision and mission statements that are shared with staff and trainers. These are well focused on raising learners' achievement and improving the overall quality of the provision. The strategic plan is appropriately set with five key objectives emerging from the vision feeding into a detailed operational plan that is monitored regularly. The centre has a fit for purpose organizational structure with clear job descriptions and roles that includes an internal quality assurance team with external support. Purposeful regular meetings are held, particularly in 2014 and 2015 focusing on reviewing practices and developing procedures and quality monitoring measures. A range of useful policies and procedures covering most aspects of the training operation are in place. An improvement and verification team has been formed and started to perform some useful audits and verifications. Quality improvement plans have been developed since 2014 and monitored periodically. Impact of the quality and verification team is evident on improving assessment and course design of recent courses. Learners' achievements records are systematically collected, aggregated and recently reviewed, issues identified by the verification team are discussed with management for actions. Nonetheless, further analysis of the aggregated learners' achievement data have not been developed to include trends and comparisons to enhance the improvement decisions.

A proper recruitment policy is in place to select trainers with the required qualifications and experience. Roles and the expected standards including the internal quality assurance requirements are clarified during appointment inductions and through effective communication with staff and trainers. Trainers' performance is monitored regularly on an appropriate observation form with useful comments provided, particularly in 2014-2015. The form has very useful rubric. The common priorities for development have been identified for follow up recently. In addition, staff and trainers have appropriate biannual appraisals and annual development plan, and they are provided with a range of relevant development opportunities. Learners' feedback is systematically collected and aggregated and shared with stakeholders. Employers views are sought through face-to-face meetings, calls and emails. Feedback is usually discussed on management meetings and actions

followed up. Useful links are maintained with stakeholders, particularly for analysing training needs and post course follow-ups.

The centre is free from obvious hazards and health and safety measures are well in place. Useful checklists and plans are regularly used to ensure the health and safety aspects at the centre and external venues. Staff, trainers and learners are made aware of the necessary health and safety instructions. A detailed SWOT analysis and mechanisms for internal reviews are in place. The provider has started to generate critical and informative audit reports since 2014 and year-wise comparisons on a number of performance indicators that have been shared with the staff and trainers. The SEF is informative with a range of relevant priorities for development and adequate number of supporting attachments. However, the grades are overestimated.

The provider's key strengths

- Learners are able to work well both collaboratively, and independently during a range of class group activities and individual exercises
- Most of the trainers are highly qualified and use effective training methods and the available learning resources that engage learners throughout the session
- The outcomes of market studies have been used effectively in offering the range of soft skills and management courses, that meet learners' and stakeholders' needs
- Horizons HRD has an effective mechanism in place to support and guide learners
- Detailed operation and improvement plans with periodic monitoring mechanisms are utilised for improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Horizons HRD should:

- enhance learners' achievement further by continuing improving the assessment to fully cover the course objectives or the intended learning outcomes
- ensure that design of courses and their assessment tools and decisions are always effectively verified
- develop the analysis of the aggregated learners' achievement data further for trends to inform the improvement decisions.

Appendix

Overview of the institute

Horizons for Human Resource Development (Horizons HRD) was established in 1999 to offer a range of vocational courses, mainly in leadership, management, retail and soft skills. The centre is affiliated with a number of international awarding bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS). Most of the courses conducted since the last review in April 2012 have been short and very short non-accredited. Lately, Horizons HRD has started to offer a basic human resources programme through an American-based provider called 'Institute for Human Resource Management Education' (IHRME).

Since the last review conducted in April 2012, Horizons HRD has enrolled 1294 learners; 299 in 2012, 327 in 2013, 296 in 2014 and 372 in 2015 up to the date of this review. Most of them are sponsored by their employers or Tamkeen. The centre operates from one location in Manama. Horizons HRD uses either employers' premises or hotel venues to conduct courses. The centre is run by a managing director who is also the owner. The management employed a quality assurance specialist who is also a trainer, an internal verifier who is also a trainer, a part-time external verifier, an operation team leader, a business development team leader, two operations executives, two business development executives, and an accountant. Horizons HRD uses a pool of local and international trainers, mostly on an assignment basis.