



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Life in Music Institute

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

Life in Music Institute was established in 2007 as a private company. The institute offers programmes in piano, guitar, electric guitar, voice, ballet and art. Students on piano and guitar programmes are offered the option of external assessment through a British or Russian curriculum. The majority of students opt for the Russian qualifications.

The institute is managed by a full time director and an administrative assistant. Eight part-time teachers teach the various programmes. In the last three years, there have been in excess of 150 students enrolled on different programmes; the vast majority of them are in piano. Life in Music Institute is located in Sanad village.

Scope of the review

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

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 2: Good

Life in Music Institute is good overall. Although leadership and management, and support and guidance are of a satisfactory level, learners achieve well as the teaching and the quality of programmes are good.

Students achieve good skills in the music and art programmes and the institute has an excellent record of success with its top students. The majority of students who opt for external accreditation achieve their objectives with high results. Students are provided with excellent opportunities to enrich their learning in competitions and concerts. They enjoy these activities and participate with pride and high self-motivation. In classes however, the level of motivation and enjoyment is not fully expressed due to the limited range of teaching methods.

Teachers are competent and knowledgeable in their fields. They support students, check their understanding and practical skills and provide them with helpful feedback. Upon joining a course, teachers assess practically, but casually, students' knowledge and skills in order to place them at the correct level and adjust the teaching scheme accordingly. Teachers challenge students but do not use a wide variety of teaching methods to sustain all student's motivation and interest.

The programmes at Life in Music Institute are effectively enriched with a wide range of additional activities, including concerts, competitions and exhibitions that the institute puts on, which support the development of students' knowledge and skills. The range of the programmes, although limited, successfully meets the stakeholders' needs. The staff at the institute are very supportive of students and help them to achieve. The institute uses appropriate resources, but does not carry out a full health and safety and risk assessment, to ensure that all potential risks are minimised and fully controlled.

The leadership and management have been successful in achieving good results by using their expertise and professional networking and by providing the resources that the students need. The day-today operations are effectively run to support all students and staff, however they are not systematic nor rigorous enough. The internal quality assurance system is not sufficiently well developed to ensure significant improvement in the overall effectiveness of the provision.

Capacity to improve

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Since its establishment, Life in Music Institute has shown a satisfactory record of improvement. However, strategic planning at Life in Music Institute is not structured and is not based on an effective analysis of stakeholders' needs. Initially there was no external accreditation scheme, but later on, the Russian and the British qualifications have been offered to students. In 2011, the ballet programme was added. However, the rationale behind the choice of programme or the accreditation systems is not always clear. The institute is active in planning for more enrichment activities for the coming academic year. Many of these activities have been repeated from the previous year. The website is being upgraded at the moment.

The management staff and teachers are knowledgeable in their areas of specialism and use their professional networks to enrich the learning experience. Teachers are appropriately managed and monitored and receive advice and guidance on how to improve, but not in a systematic or formal way. Opportunities for professional development are limited to a master class every year by a visiting professor who also is the centre's external verifier. The records of students' external marks indicate that the institute is managing to maintain a steady profile of improvement. However, there is no formal means of gathering students' or parents' views. Data are available but are not effectively analysed nor used to drive further improvement.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: Good
Capacity to Improve	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 2: Good
How effective is teaching?	Grade 2: Good
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 2: Good
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 3: Satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Students develop a relevant range of skills at appropriate levels and achieve their objectives, which are geared to either examinations or to music for pleasure.** Success rates in examinations are high, particularly for the larger group of candidates studying for the Russian examinations. In addition, gifted and talented students are encouraged to progress further by entering a range of local, national and international competitive events.
- **Teachers are alert to students' learning needs, assess their practical skills closely and provide relevant feedback to challenge them to improve further.** Teaching at Life in Music is good overall and most of the lessons observed during the review were of good or better quality. Teachers provide clear step by step demonstrations of skills, hence illustrating what is required from students to learn and use praise effectively to encourage students in their learning.
- **Classes start on time with an appropriate recapitulation and make good use of the available learning resources.** In addition, homework is always checked and immediate feedback provided.
- **A wide range of enrichment activities, including concerts, competitions and exhibitions, support the development of students' knowledge and skills and provide them with excellent opportunities to work together.** All students are encouraged to participate and the institute takes steps to ensure a broad representation at these events. Students enjoy these enrichment activities and the centre has an excellent record of awards with their gifted students.
- **The institute provides a limited but relevant range of programmes that meets the needs of a niche market. The programmes are well designed with a full collection of syllabi and progression routes.** The institute's provision is strongly focused on piano, and this and the other courses it offers, meet students' needs well.
- **The institute is run by professional musicians who foster productive relationships with relevant stakeholders and use these to support students and staff well.** They also use these relationships to arrange various competitions, concerts and other enrichment activities to enhance the learning experience of students..

Areas for improvement

- **Lack of a systematic way to measure and monitor student's progress, or the added value from the start of a course.** This includes not having a formal or consistently applied mechanism or procedure to record initial assessment as the foundation measure for assessing students' progress more effectively.
- **Insufficient use of a range of teaching methods that allow appropriate opportunities for students to increase their level of enjoyment and reflect critically on how they are going to improve.** Where one-to-one teaching is used, teachers can be engaging but due to this mostly didactic style of teaching, students are not given sufficient opportunities to reflect critically on how well they are doing; furthermore, the level of enjoyment that students show is, in a few cases, limited.
- **Stakeholders' views are not systematically sought or analysed so as to effectively assess their needs and aspirations.** The institute does not carry out any formal gathering of information or analysis of local needs to support course provision, or to find out from students their specific, personal needs and aspirations.
- **Comprehensive health and safety and risk assessment is not carried out to identify and control all associated risks on the premises, or whilst performing.** Although the premises are equipped with basic fire and safety measures, other important aspects are missing such as an evacuation plan and signage, emergency exit door and a qualified first aider. In addition, the ballet classroom might be a source of considerable safety risk, from the use of insufficiently qualified ballet teachers and non-standard flooring for classes.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Life in Music Institute should:

- develop and implement mechanisms to record initial assessments, measure the progress students make and analyse the data for all courses to drive further improvement
- introduce a variety of teaching methods, to enable learners to take more responsibility for their learning, reflect critically on how well they progress and how they can achieve a greater level of enjoyment
- devise and implement a process of analysing stakeholders' views, including students and parents, views and needs in order to inform an effective strategic planning process

- carry out a thorough and comprehensive safety and health risk assessment, and take the necessary preventive and corrective measures accordingly; ensure that students and staff are fully aware of health and safety policies and procedures.