



Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Regal Gulf Training Centre

Sanabis

Kingdom of Bahrain

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The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR 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 DVR'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

Regal Gulf Training Centre (RGTC) is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and has been in operation since February 2012 as a subsidiary division of Mohamed Bin Eshaq Group.

RGTC provides Information and Communication Technology (ICT) vendor based training programmes such as, ICT certifications, ICT customized training packages, and programmes in business and management. The ICT programmes covers basic computer courses, graphics design, and programming. RGTC is a Microsoft approved centre, a CompTIA partner, and provides Six Sigma and Project Management courses through Key Alliance consultancy company.

From the commencement of the centre on February 2012 and up to the date of the review, it enrolled a total of 127 learners. Learners are adults, employed by private and government organisations , most of whom are sponsored by their employers.

RGTC is run by a general manager, a training manger (who is also a full-time trainer), an administration staff, and a sales and marketing staff, all are employed on a full time basis. RGTC has a pool of seven part-time trainers who are utilised as needed. The centre management reports to the board of directors. The centre operates from one location in Sanabis.

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 courses and qualifications learners achieved, examined available learners' written and other work, studied documents and the materials provided by the provider and met with the management, staff members, learners, employers and trainers.

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

Table of review judgements 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 programmes 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

The overall effectiveness of RGTC is satisfactory, as are all other aspects of the provision. The majority of RGTC learners develop appropriate vocational skills and knowledge in the fields of ICT and management which are beneficial to their workplace and relevant to their professions. Learners are attentive and enjoy their learning experience. However, a significant minority of learners are not achieving the qualifications they aim for. RGTC trainers are qualified, have theoretical and practical command of their specialisms and certified to deliver the courses assigned to them. However, a few trainers have a limited training experience. Trainers use appropriate teaching methods and real life work related activities to motivate and engage learners. During sessions, trainers check learners understanding and provide useful verbal feedback. Trainers occasionally provide appropriate feedback to learners on their assignments and projects, with random written feedback.

RGTC offer proper balance of the externally and non-accredited courses with progression mainly in the ICT field and a number of business and management courses. A few courses in ICT are customized to meet individuals and corporate needs. Learners and employers interviewed are generally satisfied with the range of the offered courses. RGTC has recently introduced a suitable verification and moderation policy.

Learners are provided with fit for purpose support to help them achieve better outcomes, trainers are approachable and staff are cooperative and responsive. Learners have access to a suitable technical advice on course track and selection through brochure and friendly administration staff. Recently RGTC keeps adequate communication with employers about learners' results through useful performance reports.

RGTC organization structure is suitable to the number of enrolments and range of courses on offer. Recently the centre started monitoring the quality of training through proper internal lesson observation scheme. However, performance appraisal is not yet conducted.

The training centre has arrangement to assess learners' skills and knowledge prior to the start of a course. RGTC utilises both pre-course assessments and skills identification to tailor the course materials. However, this process is not consistent across all courses. RGTC has a

basic data base system to monitor the performance and progress of learners. However, those data are not analysed or utilised to inform decision making. The centre collects learners' and employers' feedback for a few courses, they are aggregated and analysed, the outcomes are sufficiently utilised to trigger improvement actions. The centre has pleasant learning environment.

RGTC has satisfactory capacity to improve. Pass rate is maintained appropriately for the last three years which represent 79%, 63%, and 100% for the year of 2012, 2013, and 2014 respectively. RGTC developed a comprehensive strategic and action plans with clear objectives that enable the management to run the business smoothly. Recently RGTC management introduced quality assurance system including detailed policies, procedures, and a number of useful forms. The new management maintains effective links with its concerned stakeholders. In addition, RGTC management initiated communication with some international ICT vendors to seek approvals for offering Oracle and Android courses, as well as getting the approval to be an authorized for Certiport testing centre. The centre has sufficient and appropriate human and physical resources. RGTC has recently developed an interactive learning management system through external vendor 'Calana' data base to closely monitor learners' performance and progress. In addition, the centre is currently revamping its website. All the above actions are recently developed and the impact is yet to be seen.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners' achievement at RGTC is satisfactory overall. The majority of learners achieve their course objectives and generally gain and develop appropriate knowledge and vocational skills relevant to their workplace and day-to-day duties. The Learners' Performance Data sheet (LPD) indicates that the overall retention rate is 100% for the past three years, as expected in such short courses while the overall success rate is 74%. However, there are a significant minority of learners which constitutes 33% of the total enrolment in the past three years still did not set for their online examinations to achieve the qualifications which they aimed for. The observed sessions, the end of course results and the learners' feedback show that learners demonstrate appropriate level of attainment. However, a small proportion of learners did not achieve the set course objectives and their benefits from the completed courses are minimal. The only records of learners' progress kept by RGTC are the results of the pre- and post-course assessment. Scrutinizing learners records and the sessions observed by the review team reveal that learners' make appropriate progress.

The majority of the learners and employers interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the learning experience at RGTC. In the observed session, learners show attentiveness, proper level of enthusiasm and self-motivation. Moreover, a few learners are able to reflect on how well they are progressing through questioning and challenging their trainers but not necessarily set for themselves plans on how to improve further. Generally, learners are able to work independently at a suitable level when they are given tasks to complete, however, a few of them still need continuous direction from their trainers.

Attendance and punctuality policy is in place and relevant records are regularly kept. It is evident from the records and the observed sessions that the vast majority of learners are attending regularly and on time.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The effectiveness of teaching and learning at RGTC is satisfactory overall. Generally, trainers have relevant ICT professional certificate with theoretical and practical command of their specialisms and the courses they teach. However, a few trainers have limited training experience. Trainers generally respond to learners' questions and provide them with good hints for useful websites and ICT applications.

Trainers use standard lesson plans provided by the ICT partner such as Microsoft, and CompTIA to deliver their courses. However, not all lesson plans are well informed by learners' prior attainment or the outcome of the continuous assessment to meet individual learning needs. Sessions start and end on time and most parts are timely managed. Trainers start sessions with a short and useful recapitulation of the previous session and sharing the session objectives. Moreover, throughout the training sessions, trainers assess learners' progress sufficiently, and check their understanding suitably through questions and practical class activities, where useful verbal feedback is provided. Occasionally trainers provide learners with appropriate feedback on their assignments, and projects *via* electronic mails.

Trainers use suitable teaching methods and activities to motivate and engage the majority of learners through questioning techniques, class activities, and real life vocational relevant case studies. However, in a few cases, teaching and training are more trainer-centred with limited opportunities for interactions of learners. Generally, trainers accommodate the learning needs of the less able learners and enable them to further their understanding and solve problems by challenging their abilities. However, the more able learners are not challenged sufficiently.

Whilst most trainers maintain update records of pre- and post-courses assessments results for the majority of learners, a few learners' records are not kept. The pre- and post-course assessment tests are adequate. However, in a few cases, the assessments approach does not measure some of the course objectives. Moreover, the marking scheme is subjective and left to the trainers' own estimate. During sessions, trainers effectively utilise available learning resources such as ICT hardware and software that meet industry standards to facilitate effective training.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

RGTC offers an appropriate balance of externally-accredited and non-accredited courses mainly in ICT with suitable progression levels. The majority of these courses are vendor based training programmes and a few are customised to meet the individuals and corporate needs and aspiration. RGTC also offers courses in the fields of business and management. The centre has affiliations with international ICT partners such as Microsoft, and CompTIA. To widen the range of their offering, the centre also offers Six Sigma and Project Management qualification in cooperation with Key Alliance Consulting. Learners' and employers' express their satisfaction with the range of the offered courses which generally match their needs. However, in a few occasions, customisation of courses is not effective enough to meet the learner's specific needs.

For the externally accredited courses, the centre uses partners' authentic approved course materials, which are well structured, planned and suitably linked to the course objectives. For the non-accredited courses, the centre has an agreement with a third-party vendor to use their well written course materials. However, in a few number of courses, learners and stakeholders raised their concerns of the quality of the books which they received after the courses started.

Whilst a number of learners believed that the previous learning resources of the centre were not suitable and they faced difficulties with them, currently courses are appropriately resourced to meet learners' needs. None the less, only a few courses supported with a relevant additional activities to enrich the learning experience such as providing learners with evaluation version of software or some useful support documents or links to relevant websites.

RGTC rely heavily on the contact with its clients and refers to the local studies conducted by other local stakeholders to offer new courses. However, the centre does not have a systematic approach to gauge labour market needs.

Although, the centre recently introduced policies and procedures to verify, review and update courses; courses are not reviewed consistently and the verification process have not been implemented yet to validate its effectiveness. Moreover, RGTC depends on the international partners to notify them regarding latest updates.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners at RGTC are provided with appropriate support and guidance to help them achieve better outcomes. Trainers and staff are supportive and provide learners with the needed guidance. Before the start of a training course, learners have access to adequate guidance and advice on course track and selection through brochures and the centre website which provides suitable information about courses on offer. Health and safety instructions, and general rules and guidance on attendance and punctuality are shared with learners. In addition, the centre has recently developed an informative learners' guide that includes information about the centre's vision, mission and core values, support provided during the course such as in class monitoring, and complaints. RGTC trainers are approachable, and provide extra assistance to learners such as additional classes and guidance on course progressions when applicable and links to relevant websites.

The training centre is flexible for course delivery to suit the needs of employers' working hours, venue of choice and timing that match learners working hours. Course outlines and content are specified in writing, suitable and available for learners and stakeholders in advance.

Although learners are aware of their progress through feedback provided by the trainers on their performance during class activities and test results, they do not necessarily know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve further. Currently RGTC keeps adequate communication with employers about learners' results through suitable performance report, also convey to them any issues regarding pending assessments for externally-accredited programmes.

RGTC learning environment is fit for purpose, ICT laboratories and class rooms are suitably equipped to support the current courses. When training is conducted outside RGTC premises, the centre ensures that the place is safe and conducive to learning and equipped with the needed technical resources. RGTC current website is basic. However, currently the centre is working on revamping the website to provide more information.

Leadership and management

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

RGTC leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The training centre has a clear mission and vision statements that focus on learners' achievement and career development. RGTC new management has established a useful strategic and action plans with clear objectives based on a clear self-evaluation and a comprehensive SWOT analysis which enable them to re-engineering the training centre. Although RGTC leaders have achieved some of the set objectives, the initiatives are not always clearly linked to the objectives and ownerships are not identified. Extensive quality assurance policies and procedure are newly developed. However, a few of these policies have been implemented.

The centre senior management staff receive strong support from the board, and have the required authority to manage the place. RGTC recruits qualified trainers and staff with relevant experiences and background. Clear procedure to recruit and hire new trainers and staff has been introduced by the new management team. Roles and responsibilities for each staff member are identified and cascaded.

Most of RGTC part-time trainers are qualified within the areas they teach. However, the centre does not always ensure the quality of training through regular internal lesson observation scheme. Recently critical lesson observations have been conducted through useful form, trainers are informed on how to improve further and some actions are stated. RGTC full-time trainer is provided with sufficient development opportunities based on the training centre requirements.

Learners' progress and achievements are monitored mostly at trainer rather than at management level. RGTC has recently introduced a basic database to monitor the performance and progress of its current learners. However, this data is not fully utilised to inform decision. RGTC has clear policy to assess learners' skills and knowledge prior to the start of a course. The training centre utilises both pre-course assessments and skills identification process to customize the course content and place learners at the right level. However, this evaluation is not consistent across all courses, and the outcome is not utilised sufficiently to inform lesson planning for better accommodation of learners' individual needs.

The centre premises is fit for purpose and provides suitable learning environment. RGTC management ensure that essential health and safety aspects are in place, the premises are well equipped with smoke detectors, maintained fire extinguishers with sufficient emergency exits. A risk assessment and fire drill were carried out recently.

Generally the centre collects learners' and employers' feedback for a few courses, the outcomes are aggregated, analysed and sufficiently used to trigger improvement. Useful links are maintained with local communities and international accrediting bodies.

The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) provided by the centre for the purpose of the review is sufficiently detailed and refers to sufficient evidence on most aspects. However, the grades provided are somehow overestimate.

The provider's key strengths

The key strengths of the provider are:

- The appropriate balance of the externally-accredited and non-accredited courses mainly in ICT field with progression levels
- The effective utilisation of resources by trainers
- The comprehensive policies and procedures which are recently developed.

Recommendations

In order to improve its provision, RGTC should:

- ensure that learners are successfully achieving their qualifications and make sufficient progress from their starting point
- improve training strategies to effectively engage and motivate learners
- devise a system to effectively gauge local market needs and use its outcomes to improve the offering
- improve leadership and management effectiveness by:
 - ensuring that learners achievement data are aggregated, analysed to monitor trends of achievement and utilise its results to trigger improvement and inform decision making
 - ensure that trainers' performance is regularly monitored to ensure continuous quality improvement.