



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب  
Education & Training Quality Authority  
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

# Directorate of Vocational Reviews

## Review Report

**Agora Training Centre**  
**Manama**  
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 08-12 October 2023**

**VO149-C4-R040**

## Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over five days by a team of seven 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 materials provided by Agora Training Centre (ATC) and collected feedback from learners, employers, trainers, management, and support staff.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first review for ATC, and the report summarises the review team's findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Summary of review judgements		
	Aspect	Judgement
Outcomes	Learners' achievement	3
Programmes and processes	Effectiveness of teaching/training and assessment	3
	Quality of courses/programmes	3
	Learners' support and guidance	3
Management and governance	Effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	4
Capacity to improve		4
Overall effectiveness		3

### Provider's overall effectiveness



Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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## Overall Effectiveness ‘Satisfactory’

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### Judgement justifications

- The Overall Effectiveness and all Aspects of ATC provision are judged as ‘Satisfactory’, except for the leadership and management Aspect and capacity to improve are judged as ‘Inadequate’.
- ATC has relevant vision and mission statements, which have been used to guide its strategic direction. However, the Centre does not conduct any kind of self-evaluation process to inform its strategic planning, enhance learners’ achievement, and continuous improvement of the provision.
- Based on the management’s relevant experience and understanding of the target stakeholders’ training requirements, ATC offers a range of externally accredited and local achievement courses in the field of occupational Health, Safety and Environment (HSE).
- The offered courses are very short and short in duration. The externally accredited courses are offered in affiliation with a number of international awarding bodies including Highfields, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and Health and Safety Institute (HSI). However, in a minority of the conducted local achievement courses, the assessments are not clearly stated or mapped to the learning outcomes.
- Trainers are knowledgeable; they have relevant qualifications and sufficient experience in their field. A suitable range of training methods is utilised to engage and motivate the majority of learners. However, in a few cases, the less active learners are not sufficiently encouraged or motivated. This limits their participation and mastery of the skills.
- Most learners enrolled in the local achievement courses representing 92% of total enrolment, acquire knowledge and develop sufficient vocational skills and competencies relevant to their field of learning. However, a minority of learners have difficulties in completing the required tasks timely and competently, as reflected in the observed sessions and produced work.
- In addition, most learners enrolled in the local achievement courses achieve a certificate of completion after fulfilling the course requirements in a timely manner. On the other hand, learners enrolled in externally accredited courses representing 8% of the total enrollment obtain the qualifications they aim for considering the awarding bodies' regulations.
- Trainers assess learners’ performance and measure the achievement of course outcomes through a suitable range of formative and summative assessment tools. While marking is generally accurate, the accuracy and rigorousness of the assessment are implemented inconsistently, particularly in the local achievement courses.
- Learners at ATC receive appropriate support and guidance to fulfil the course’s requirements. Nevertheless,

there is no comprehensive and explicit procedures for learners' support.

- The Centre's arrangements to monitor learners' achievement are insufficient, and reliable learners' performance records are not maintained. However,

moderation and verification practices of assessments are not implemented to ensure the accuracy of marking and relevancy of assessments.

## Capacity to Improve 'Inadequate'

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### Judgement justifications

- Since its inception in 2018, the Centre has not carried out formal, regular, inclusive, and rigorous self-evaluation processes where subsequently the outcomes are disseminated into its operations and utilised to inform the strategic planning.
- The Centre lacks detailed long-term objectives with clear operational plans that define in-depth and clearly articulate tasks with timescale, accountability and success measures to facilitate effective monitoring of progress over time.
- The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for the purpose of this review is insufficiently critical and does not represent a clear understanding of the provision. Grades are overestimated for all aspects by one or two grades and there are cases where the assigned grades conflict with the grading rubrics stipulated in the BQA/DVR Review Handbook.
- The Centre has sufficient physical and human resources to fulfil the requirements for the on-offer courses.
- The Centre has a few policies and/or procedures in relevance to learning

and training with a detailed Integrated Management System (IMS) manual which focuses on ISO certification and processes; these are supported with a number of forms. However, a number of essential policies are not in place and/or the others are insufficiently detailed. Moreover, practices do not comprehensively cover all aspects of the provision, nor are they effectively or consistently implemented.

- The Centre lacks procedures for monitoring the performance of staff and trainers consistently and regularly.
- The Centre has not maintained proper and analysed data on learners' achievement for all conducted courses. The verification and moderation processes are not in place including the evaluation of the effectiveness of the assessment administration, control, and implementation across the different groups of learners.
- The Centre has valid partnerships with a number of awarding bodies such as the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH), Highfields and HSI. On the

other hand, the Centre discontinued its partnership with IOSH.

- Enrolment in the Centre has been steady since its inception and it has declined during exceptional

circumstances, more than 1,722 learners have been enrolled since 2020 till the date of this review.

## The Provider's Key Strengths

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- Achievement of certifications by most learners in a timely manner.
- Training methodologies to engage the majority of learners.
- The sufficient understanding of stakeholders' requirements to shape the offering.

## Recommendations

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In order to improve its provision, Agora Training Centre should:

- ensure that learners effectively develop relevant knowledge, skills, and competency.
- ensure rigorous implementation of course structure and planning including assessments.
- maintain and analyse accurate records of learners' performance throughout the course.
- improve leadership and management by:
  - conducting inclusive and rigorous self-evaluation process to inform strategic planning and continuous improvement of the provision.
  - introducing a comprehensive quality assurance system which is consistently and rigorously implemented including effective monitoring of overall performance.

## Learners' Achievement 'Satisfactory'

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### Judgement justifications

- The analysis of the Learners Performance Data (LPD) and other records indicate that learners are enrolled in the local achievement and externally accredited courses, constituting 92% and 8% respectively. All these courses are very short and short in duration in the field of HSE.
- Learners enrolled on the local achievement courses have previously attended and completed these courses and their certificates according to the HSE rules and regulations instituted by the regulator have to be renewed by attending these courses to update their skills and knowledge.
- As for meeting the course learning objective, most learners enrolled in the local achievement courses achieve a certificate of completion after fulfilling the course requirements of attending the required Guided Learning Hours (GLH) and completing the written and practical assessments. However, in some cases, the assessments do not cover all course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). In addition, most assessments focus on basic-level questions that do not require critical thinking.
- The provided LPD submitted for this review shows high success and retention rates, which is expected in these very short and shot refresher courses. Moreover, most learners enrolled in the externally accredited courses obtain the qualifications they aim for considering the awarding bodies' regulations.
- Scrutiny of learners' produced work and analysis of end-of-course written assessment revealed that most learners acquire knowledge and develop sufficient vocational skills and competencies relevant to their field of learning. However, a minority of learners have difficulties in completing the required tasks competently and in a timely manner. This is evident from learners' contributions and their level of participation and understanding in the observed sessions.
- Given learners' starting points on entry and the level of prior knowledge and experience acquired in the field of HSE, generally, learners make appropriate progress, that is commensurate with the nature of the courses, particularly the local achievement courses. However, the Centre does not have a clear mechanism to measure learners' progress.
- Learners attend regularly and the majority of learners show a positive attitude towards their learning. A few learners reflect critically on what they have learned by sharing their practical experience related to their workplace. However, in a few cases, learners remained less active.
- In general, learners' ability to work independently was clearly demonstrated in their written assessments submitted at the end of the course. Furthermore, in a few cases, learners showed their ability to develop and communicate their own opinions on the topics taught, and this

was evident during the observed sessions. However, in group exercises, learners' contributions to the group work were limited and the division of

responsibilities during practical exercises was not defined clearly.

### Areas for improvement

- attainment of learners' knowledge and skills, in addition to the absence of a mechanism to evaluate learners' initial attainment at entry level and their progress.
- learners' ability to complete the assigned tasks effectively, independently, collaboratively and in a timely manner.

## Effectiveness of Teaching/Training and Assessment 'Satisfactory'

### Judgement justifications

- ATC trainers are knowledgeable and have relevant experience in the subject they teach. They provide clear explanations that are enriched with useful real-life examples and workplace-related cases.
- Trainers effectively use a suitable range of training methods supported with a sufficient range of learning resources that are suitable for delivering the conducted courses to engage the majority of learners appropriately. However, in a few cases, trainers do not engage and motivate the less active learners sufficiently, in the learning process.
- A suitable range of formative and summative assessments relevant to the type of courses are used to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of ILOs. For externally accredited courses, final examinations are administered and assessed by the awarding bodies.
- Furthermore, summative assessments for local achievement courses are suitably aligned with course ILOs. However, in a few cases, the marking of learners' work is not accurate and moderation and/or verification processes are not implemented to ensure the accuracy of marking and relevancy of assessment.
- Trainers appropriately plan daily training sessions, share ILOs with learners, and manage the sessions adequately with a smooth transition and progression from theoretical to practical learning. A few sessions are customized based on the client's requirements. However, pre- or continuous assessment outcomes are not adopted to plan sessions.
- Trainers appropriately accommodate learners' needs by providing relevant work-related examples and clarifications in different languages. However, training sessions are not suitably adjusted to accommodate and meet a few learners' needs, particularly those with limited previous knowledge and experience in the field of study.

- Trainers adequately linked learning points with real-life examples, and in some sessions, questions such as 'Why' and 'How' are raised to encourage learners to be critical. However, the learning tasks and activities are not sufficiently challenging to stimulate and develop learners' higher-order thinking skills.
- Trainers record learners' attendance and maintain adequate performance records

about learners' practical tasks completion and summative written assessments details. In addition, trainers provide learners with sufficient and informative verbal feedback that is evident during the observed sessions and alert them of any hazardous situation during practical activities. However, trainers are not providing written feedback on learners' work.

### Areas for improvement

- further engagement of the less active learners in the learning process.
- rigorous implementation of assessments to evaluate learners' understanding and measure achievement of ILOs.
- effective use of pre- or continuous assessments' outcomes to inform lesson planning and accommodate learners' different learning needs.

## Quality of Course/Programmes 'Satisfactory'

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### Judgement justifications

- ATC offers a range of very short and short local achievement and externally accredited courses in the field of HSE. Although the Centre does not implement a formal mechanism for sensing the market needs to inform its offering, the management's relevant experience and understanding of the target stakeholders' training requirements are utilized to inform decisions on-demand courses in the local market.
- Courses are appropriately planned and structured with fit-for-purpose course outlines that describe the GLH, assessment methods, and other relevant components. However, in a minority of the conducted courses, the

assessments are not clearly stated or mapped to the ILOs.

- Furthermore, these courses are suitably designed to support theoretical and practical assessments. However, there are cases where the courses are conducted in a compressed duration and/or a significant proportion of the courses' GLH is not adequately allocated. This affects meeting course's ILOs.
- The Centre has an appropriate policy and procedure to design, review, and approve local achievement courses, where courses are developed by ATC's senior trainers and reviewed by an external partner who provides critical feedback. However, the follow-up processes are not comprehensively

documented for the internal and external review and update mechanism. The externally accredited courses are implemented in accordance with the awarding body's stipulations, and updated versions of the courses are utilized by ATC.

- Courses are suitably resourced with relevant course materials and teaching and learning resources such as confined space simulator, gas detectors, first aid kits, and dummies for practical exercises. As for the externally accredited courses, up-to-date training materials, and assessments are sourced from the awarding body portal.

- Considering the nature of the courses offered, ATC has a proper mechanism for enrolling learners, where learners' profile is collected, and prerequisite is clearly specified. Accordingly, a fit-for-purpose registration form is utilized to ascertain learners' educational/vocational background and work experience; however, these details are not effectively taken into consideration when grouping learners, particularly those learners registered to renew their certificates and update their knowledge and skills.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- implementation of local achievement courses in accordance with mapping ILOs to assessment, and the allocation of actual GLH hours approved.
- documentation of the courses' design, review, and update processes.

## Learners' Support and Guidance 'Satisfactory'

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### Judgement justifications

- Given the nature, type and duration of the courses offered, ATC has a proper arrangement to support and guide learners. Appropriate practices are in place to determine the type of support required, such as arrangements for the preferred language of delivery, venue, and timing to accommodate learners' needs and employers' requirements. However, the Centre does not have explicit policies and procedures that comprehensively detail support and guidance arrangements.
- The Centre addresses learners' complaints and appeals by adopting fit-for-purpose procedures, form, and register that are related to learners' main concerns. It is worth mentioning that no cases have been reported until the date of this review visit.
- Prior to the commencement of the course, learners are provided with a useful induction session that enables them to settle quickly and confidently. This includes essential information about the course and the available learning resources and facilities.
- ATC is not offering any extra-curricular activities to enhance learners' abilities and life skills for any courses of its offering.
- Learners and stakeholders have access to useful information in advance about the courses through different channels including course outlines and active social media accounts besides the useful website.
- ATC learners are suitably inducted about the health and safety instructions at the beginning of each course. The administrative staff is approachable and available to answer learners' and employers' raised inquiries through phone calls, emails, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, the administrative staff follows up with employers to register their employees for HSE certificate renewal courses.
- Although ATC deals with a significant number of employers, they are not provided with detailed and reflective reports/records on learners' performance and analysis of course outcomes. The Centre only shares learners' certificates and attendance regular updates.
- ATC premises is not sufficiently equipped with suitable facilities to accommodate learners with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Moreover, the Centre lacks explicit and detailed policies and procedures to identify and support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It's worth mentioning that the Centre has taken a suitable arrangement for a learner with hearing impairment.

### Areas for improvement

- comprehensive and detailed support and guidance policies and procedures for all categories of learners.
- detailed and reflective reports/records on learners' performance and analysis of course outcomes.

## Effectiveness of Leadership, Management and Governance 'Inadequate'

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### Judgement justifications

- Although ATC has relevant vision and mission statements which have been considered to guide its strategic direction, the strategic and operational planning processes are not conducted coherently nor systematically to ensure rigorous monitoring of the Centre's performance. Moreover, the Centre does not conduct any kind of self-evaluation process to shape the strategic planning, as well as continuous improvement of the provision.
- During the exceptional circumstances, ATC has taken some suitable operational initiatives focusing on business growth, though the Centre has not conducted a detailed risk management assessment or developed a clear mitigation plan.
- Due to insufficient aggregated data kept on learners' performance over course level or consolidated across the provision, learners' achievement is insufficiently monitored to enable the management for future improvement.
- To some extent, the trainers' performance is regularly monitored through end-of-course evaluation forms filled out by learners and random class visits carried out by the Centre's management and senior trainers. Trainers are provided with sufficient guidance based on these visits that impacted appropriately on their performance. However, this process of internal sessions' observations is not documented. Some professional development opportunities are provided to trainers when needed to deliver specific courses.
- ATC follows the daily tasks of staff; yet no records for monitoring the performance of staff members are consistently kept.
- Considering the number of enrolments and the size of the operations, the organisational structure is fit for purpose and meets the Centre's aims. Qualified and experienced full-time trainers and a suitable number of staff are appropriately deployed for the current level of business and are properly inducted on the Centre's profile and services.
- ATC lacks a sufficient and effective integrated system to quality assure its provision. The Centre has a few policies and procedures supported

with a number of forms; however, these are insufficiently detailed, or other essential policies are not in place, specifically those in relevance to learning and training. Moreover, practices do not comprehensively cover all aspects of the provision nor are effectively or consistently implemented, particularly those in relevance to moderation and verification processes.

- The learning environment is suitable; essential health and safety measures are mostly in place where staff and learners are provided with relevant guidance. However, the maintenance

of the premises is not always carried out. The relevant policies and documentation are proper.

- The Centre has proper links with stakeholders, awarding bodies, and proper networks and agreements with international partners. Learners' views about the provision are regularly sought; yet these are neither aggregated nor analysed to guide enhancement. Moreover, ATC has not formally collected the views of employers and has limited efforts towards local community engagement.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- inclusiveness, rigorousness, and regularity of the self-evaluation process that is utilised to inform strategic planning and quality assure the overall performance of the provision.
- monitoring of learners' performance and utilisation of outcomes to inform decision-making and improvement actions.
- comprehensiveness and effective implementation of internal quality assurance system across all aspects of the provision including the verification and moderation processes and monitoring of trainers' performance.

## Appendix: Provider Information

<b>Provider Name (English)</b>	Agora Training Centre					
<b>Provider Name (Arabic)</b>	مركز أجورا للتدريب					
<b>Licensing Body</b>	Ministry of Labour					
<b>Year of Establishment</b>	2018					
<b>Age Range of Learners</b>	16 and above					
<b>Number of Learners</b>	<b>Male</b>	1,722	<b>Female</b>	0	<b>Total</b>	1,722
<b>Learning Areas</b>	<b>Externally Accredited</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Safety and Environment (HSE)</li> </ul> Awarding Body: Highfields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highfields Fire Safety Level 1.</li> <li>Highfields Fire Safety Level 2.</li> <li>Highfields Risk Assessment Level 2.</li> <li>Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.</li> </ul> Awarding Body: Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IOSH Managing Safely.</li> </ul> Awarding Body: Health and Safety Institute (HSI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medic First Aid, CPR &amp; AED for Adults.</li> </ul>			
	<b>Local Achievement</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Safety and Environment (HSE)</li> <li>Authorized Gas Tester.</li> <li>Basic HSE.</li> <li>Confined Space Awareness.</li> <li>Confined Space Entry &amp; Rescue.</li> </ul>			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defensive Driving</li> <li>- Fall Protection.</li> <li>- Fall Protection &amp; Working at Height</li> <li>- H2S &amp; SCBA Level 2</li> <li>- Scaffold Erection &amp; Dismantling</li> <li>- Scaffold Inspection</li> <li>- Site Safety Awareness</li> </ul>
	<b>Local Attendance</b>	- NA
<b>Available Learning Platform(s)</b>	-	
<b>Institution's Listing Status</b>	<b>Not yet listed on the National Qualification Framework (NQF)</b>	
<b>List of Qualification placed on/aligned to the NQF</b>	-	