



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Al Arael Institute
Riffa-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

Al Awael Institute was established in February 2010; it is licensed by the Ministry of Education to provide tutorial, non-accredited Microsoft office IT courses, General English and French language courses. The institute started operation on 1st March 2010.

Al Awael Institute has one centre located in East Riffa. The institute is owned by two partners; one of the two partners has the position of the institute's supervisor who actually runs the day to day activities. Al Awael employs an assistant to the manager who also has responsibility for students' support and counselling, a receptionist, a bus driver who also work as a cleaner and a part-time office boy. The institute uses eight part time teachers.

The total enrolment since October 2010 has now reached 851 students of which 90.8 per cent are tutorial students, 7.5 per cent are General English students and 1.7 per cent are IT students.

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 students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with the managing director, teachers, administration and support staff, students and parents.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what Al Awael Institute should do to improve.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 4: Below satisfactory

Al Awael Institute offers below satisfactory provision. Although courses offered are satisfactory, students' achievement, the quality of teaching, support and guidance and leadership and management are all below satisfactory.

Most students are not achieving to the expected level and there is insufficient measurement of students' achievement and progress across all courses. In general, they develop adequate knowledge and skills in mathematics and physics but do not acquire the necessary skills in English, Arabic, science and chemistry. Students have basic skills in mathematics but some lack Arabic concepts and basic language skills. They are not self-motivated and are provided with limited opportunities for group work. Initial assessment is conducted for the General English courses only but even this is ineffective in placing students at the appropriate levels. Attendance is satisfactory but is not well recorded; punctuality is an issue and it is not recorded.

Although the majority of teachers provide accurate explanations and content for lessons, in almost all English lessons the medium of instruction was not solely in the target language to promote students' speaking and listening skills. Teaching strategies are mainly teacher-centred with insufficient use of engaging, motivating or challenging techniques. The exception to this was in a few mathematics lessons where students were supported and encouraged. Students varying needs are insufficiently accommodated; there was a lack of differentiated activities during the observed lessons with all students provided with the same tasks regardless of their varying needs. Summative assessment is only used in General English but even here it is insufficiently rigorous. There was insufficient use of visual or audio aids in almost all of the observed lessons.

Al Awael Institute offers an adequate range of tutorial courses for school subjects, non-accredited General English courses and Microsoft office IT courses. With the exception of the General English courses, students and parents are generally satisfied with the range of the tutorial courses offered which make up around 90 per cent of the courses conducted. On tutorial courses, students are provided with useful summaries which the majority of students find helpful in preparing for school examinations. However, the implementation of the General English courses is not focused on the four main language skills and progression levels are insufficiently clear. Students are not provided with enrichment activities in General English and tutorial courses.

Essential health and safety measures are not in place and students are not guided on how to react in case of emergencies. Furthermore, serious health and safety hazards were found in the institute such as wooden sticks with nails and an open-access store room containing glass panes. Students are provided with insufficient guidance about course selection. Two positive aspects of the provision are that students who miss lessons are compensated and the institute provides some consolidated support materials for some subjects. The venue is fit for purpose although students stated that the number of classrooms is insufficient during examination time.

The institute lacks strategic or operational planning to provide organisational direction and plans for improvement. Students' achievement is insufficiently assessed, monitored and analysed and no data are kept on achievement or retention. Although the majority of teachers recruited are qualified, some do not have sufficient teaching experience. Their performance is insufficiently monitored; there is no internal lesson observation or performance appraisal system in place. Students' feedback has recently been collected through end of course evaluation but it is not aggregated or analysed although in a few cases it has been used to improve provision. Parents' feedback is not routinely collected and analysed.

Capacity to improve

Grade 5: Very weak

Al Awael Institute's capacity to improve is very weak. The institute lacks any kind of strategic or operational planning. Targets are not set and there is no vision statement or objectives set to provide a direction to the provision. Students' performance is insufficiently monitored and assessed and no data are kept on achievement or retention. As a consequence, the management does not know how well or badly students are performing and cannot plan appropriate improvements. Moreover, there are insufficient quality assurance measures in place. Teachers' performance is insufficiently monitored as the institute has no internal lesson observation systems to evaluate performance and secure appropriate and continuous improvement. In addition, there are no job descriptions that set clear roles and responsibilities for staff. Al Awael institute does not have sufficient and appropriate human resources to enable improvement to be carried out and the management has made no noticeable impact on the quality of provision

Although the institute introduced the IT non-accredited Microsoft office courses in February 2011 and initiated communication with the ICDL to become an ICDL approved centre, it is still too early to judge whether these will have a positive impact on the overall performance of the institute. The number of enrolments since October 2010 has reached 851 students with

tutorial students making up around 90.8 per cent of this. Repeat business is satisfactory. Al Awael's self-evaluation (SEF), although insufficiently informative and highly overestimated, identified some areas for improvement which were highlighted by the review team. However, the institute lacks the necessary procedures to effectively evaluate overall performance.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
Capacity to Improve	Grade 5: Very weak
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
How effective is teaching?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 4: Below satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Useful summaries are provided to students on tutorial courses.** These include a variety of exercises and activities which students who were interviewed found helpful in preparing for school examinations.

Areas for improvement

- **Most students are not achieving to the expected level and there is insufficient measurement of students' achievement and progress.** Students' attainment was judged below satisfactory in approximately half the lessons observed; in these lessons, teaching was too teacher-centred and there was insufficient checking of students' understanding to promote learning and achieve the lesson's objectives.
- **Ineffective initial assessment in General English Language and no initial assessment for IT courses.** Although initial assessment is conducted on the General English courses, it is mainly used just as a placement test. However, it is actually ineffective in placing students at the appropriate level, one reason being that the criteria at which students are matched to levels are not clear.
- **Insufficient teaching strategies to engage, motivate, challenge or meet the varying learning needs of students.** The teaching strategies in most of the lessons observed were too teacher-centered and did not contribute to students' acquisition of the necessary understanding and skills. In very few lessons did teachers use a range of teaching strategies to engage and motivate students.
- **The implementation of the General English courses for juniors does not develop the four main skills and progression levels are insufficiently clear.** One reason for this is that there are no proficiency descriptors for the expected outcomes for each level.
- **Essential health and safety measures are not in place and are not being communicated to students; furthermore serious health and safety hazards were found at the Institute, such as wooden sticks with nails and an open-access store room.** Further examples include fire extinguishers being outdated, the fire alarm is broken, no first aid kit is kept, emergency exits are not identified and an evacuation assembly point has not been allocated.
- **Lack of both strategic and operational planning.** As a consequence, the management does not have a clear sense of direction or appropriate plans for improvements based on effective and realistic self-evaluation.

- **Insufficient monitoring of students' and staff performance.** As a consequence, managers do not know how students are performing; data on achievement and retention are not kept and hence trends are not monitored over groups or time.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Al Awael Institute should:

- improve students' achievement and ensure that it is measured accurately across all courses
- ensure that initial assessment is conducted effectively and rigorously on General English and IT courses
- improve teaching strategies to engage, motivate, challenge and meet students' varying learning needs
- improve the implementation of General English courses to develop the four main skills and provide clear progress level descriptors
- ensure that essential health and safety measures are in place and communicated to students and staff
- introduce strategic and operational planning to ensure development of provision
- monitor students' and staff performance through:
 1. Collecting and recording data on retention and achievement ensuring that such data are aggregated to monitor trends over time
 2. Introducing an appraisal system in which internal lesson observation and students' feedback are parts of it.