



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

# **Vocational Review Unit**

## **Review Report**

**Arabian East Training Centre  
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date reviewed: 06<sup>th</sup> - 08<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

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## The Vocational Review Unit

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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**

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### **Description of the provision**

Arabian East Training Centre (AETC) was established in the year 2000. Most of AETC's programmes are in the safety and health area, with a few in purchasing and supply, sales and marketing and other business and management courses. Around 82% of the programmes are externally accredited by international organisations including the National Examination Board on Occupational Health and Safety (NEBOSH), Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), National Safety Council (NSC), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS).

AETC is led by a managing director, who is a full-time trainer as well. There are four other full-time staff; a marketing manager, an accountant, a training coordinator and a trainer, and a number of part-time trainers. In 2008, 1,151 learners enrolled on various training programmes, nearly all of them employed, and the vast majority from the private sector.

### **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 qualifications learners achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with the managing director, trainers, administration and support staff, learners and employers.

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

## Overall judgement

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### Effectiveness of provision

#### Grade 3: satisfactory

The effectiveness of AETC in meeting learners' and employers' needs is satisfactory overall. There is a good range of programmes in which learners achieve satisfactorily. Training, support and guidance and leadership and management are all satisfactory.

Learners acquire good and relevant vocational skills and achieve adequately on the majority of programmes. Pass rates for short accredited courses are satisfactory, especially in CIEH, IOSH and NSC. On the long and advanced courses, which form only a small part of the provision, success rates are very low. Some learners on these courses lack the Basic English language proficiency they need to progress further. Trainers are highly knowledgeable in their specialist fields. Lessons are particularly thoroughly planned and enriched with practical exercises and group work. Trainers use a variety of methods to gauge learners' progress, but do not record the outcomes. Assessments of learners' work, written assignments and tests in the accredited courses are accurately corrected and moderated internally, and learners are provided with helpful feedback. In many cases, the exercises are drawn from learners' places of work to make the training more relevant.

Most of the accredited courses, including the NEBOSH, IOSH, CIM, NSC and CIEH courses, begin with a formal initial assessment. The admission process for these courses is usually followed but in a few cases, at their employer's insistence, learners with weak English have been admitted. On non-accredited courses and some very short courses, learners are verbally assessed on the first day of the course, mainly to establish their practical background. This practice is insufficient to establish whether the course is appropriate for their needs. A few learners find the content of their course too difficult.

AETC offers a good range of externally accredited courses, mainly in the safety and health area, which suit the Bahrain labour market well. The programmes are well structured and enriched with effective and purposeful practical exercises, relevant to employers' vocational needs.

Trainers are supportive, assessing learners' understanding and helping them to progress further in their courses. Additional technical English language courses and an adequate library, with relevant learning resources, are provided for learners. AETC has detailed booklets, brochures and an informative website that help both learners and employers in course selection. Although AETC identifies safety and health hazards inside its premises,

some of the hazards have not been addressed. Learners are not always made aware of the provider's safety procedures.

AETC is satisfactorily led and managed. Managers take a thorough and effective approach to marketing the courses and establishing employers' requirements for more courses. Full-time staff have adequate development opportunities. The performance of some part-time staff is not monitored thoroughly enough. Learners' and employers' feedback is not used effectively to plan improvement, and strategic plans do not give sufficient consideration to monitoring and increasing learners' achievement.

## **Capacity to improve**

### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

AETC has taken satisfactory steps to expand its provision. NEBOSH certificate and diploma courses were introduced in 2006 and CIM and NSC courses in 2007. The company is increasingly moving towards externally accredited programmes, which increased from 69% of the total provision in 2006 to 82% in 2008. The most recent programme, which was introduced in collaboration with a government initiative, Tamkeen, is designed and structured to train professionals in the field of safety and occupational health. The programme is an improvement on AETC's previous programmes, with more rigorous admission procedures, more thorough initial assessment, plenty of on-the-job training elements and underpinning foundation courses in English and mathematics. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes on the learning process.

Learners' success rates fluctuate across the programmes but are satisfactory overall. AETC has effectively increased the number of learners it enrolls and employers it works with. The number of learners enrolled has risen from 81 in 2001 to 1,151 in 2008 and the number of client employers has increased from 20 in 2001 to 52 in 2008.

On the other hand, AETC's plans to improve the provision are not sufficiently robust or coherently developed. The company has a 10-year strategic plan, but this is not reviewed systematically. It is not sufficiently based on learners' or employers' feedback or focused on raising learners' achievement. There is a shortage of trainers to deliver more courses, but the provider is working to recruit more. The self-evaluation form (SEF) is not rigorous. It gives over-estimated grades and identifies few key areas for improvement.

## Summary of grades awarded

Overall judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 3: satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade 3: satisfactory
<b>Review findings</b>	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective is training?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?	Grade 2: good
How well are learners guided and supported?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade 3: satisfactory

## **Main judgements and recommendations**

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### **Strengths**

- Good acquisition of vocational skills that are used in the workplace
- Effective and detailed lesson plans
- Good theoretical and practical knowledge of instructors
- Good range of externally-accredited courses in health and safety
- Good enrichment of programmes by relevant practical exercises and real case studies.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Pass rates for long accredited courses
- Maintenance of records of learners' progress on courses
- The system to observe and improve the performance of part-time trainers.
- Plans for the development of the provision
- The self-evaluation form

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve, AETC should:

- ensure that learners have the basic skills they need to succeed on long accredited courses and to achieve better success rates
- maintain records of progress and achievement for all accredited and non-accredited courses
- formalise the system of performance monitoring of all trainers so as to continuously improve the quality of training



- draw up development plans that focus on improving learners' achievements and take into consideration learners' and employers' feedback
- make the SEF more analytical and self-critical.

## **Review findings**

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### **How well do learners achieve?**

#### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

Learners acquire good vocational skills, which they use in their workplace. They recognise the positive impact of the training on their performance; two learners were promoted directly after attending some courses at AETC. Learners enjoy attending the courses and take pride in their work.

Pass rates for short accredited courses are satisfactory, especially in CIEH, IOSH and NSC. On a few of the advanced courses, such as the Advanced Certificate in Health and Safety in the Workplace and the level 3 award in risk assessment principles and practice, pass rates are low, at between 16 and 27 %. Pass rates for long accredited courses such as the NEBOSH certificate are also low, ranging between 7 and 10%. These longer and advanced courses comprise less than 5% of AETC's overall business. Some learners on these courses lack the basic skills necessary to complete them. Although learners' achievement is recorded for the accredited courses, there are no records to show how learners progress during the courses. Trainers use various methods to monitor learners' progress, but the outcomes are not recorded. AETC has no systematic method of measuring learners' achievement on non-accredited courses, which makes up about 30% of the overall business.

Attendance is recorded but punctuality is not. Although AETC has a system to report poor punctuality, it is not used regularly by trainers.

### **How effective is training?**

#### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

Training is satisfactory overall. AETC's trainers demonstrate a particularly high level of professional experience and expertise. Some occupy senior positions in their specialist fields. They use their knowledge well during training sessions, linking theoretical understanding with relevant practical examples drawn from their experience. Trainers check learners' understanding sufficiently by open and sometimes direct questioning. Learners were motivated and engaged during the observed sessions. Group work and discussions are satisfactorily used in training sessions. Learners are sometimes given the chance to share their experiences with each other. Lesson plans are very well prepared, setting out in good detail the topics, training methods and training resources related to each element. The plans

are effectively used and the lesson objectives are shared with learners at the beginning of each session, carefully followed, and re-visited at the end of the session.

Assessments of learners' work, written assignments and tests in the accredited courses are accurately corrected and moderated internally, and learners are provided with helpful feedback. In many cases, the exercises are drawn from learners' places of work to support teaching.

Most of the accredited courses, including the NEBOSH, IOSH, CIM, NSC and CIEH courses, begin with a formal initial assessment. The admission process for these courses is usually followed but in a few cases, at their employer's insistence, learners with weak English have been admitted. On non-accredited courses and some very short courses, learners are verbally assessed on the first day of the course, mainly to establish their practical background. This practice is insufficient to establish whether the course is appropriate for their needs. A few learners find the content of their course too difficult.

## **How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?**

### **Grade 2: good**

AETC has a good range of externally accredited courses in the field of health and safety, such as IOSH, CIEH, NSC and NEBOSH certificates and diplomas. In addition, there are a good set of courses from CIPS in marketing and purchasing and supply, marketing courses from CIM and other business and management courses. The programmes offered provide sufficient progression opportunities for learners. The vast majority of the provision, 82% of the total programmes run in 2008, is externally-accredited.

Learners are provided with useful and purposeful practical enrichment activities; on one rigging course, for example, AETC provided a crane to give learners the opportunity to practise what they had learnt. On a risk assessment course, learners were provided with a one-day practical element in one of the biggest industrial companies on the island.

Good, well-structured and informative course materials are prepared and used for most externally-accredited courses. For the NEBOSH courses, AETC purchased the rights to publish and use training notes from a very reputable international organisation in this field.

Learners and employers are highly satisfied with the range of courses offered and the outcomes of the training. Learners feel that programmes satisfy their needs and vocational aspirations and employers confirm that training has improved learners' performance. Many

employers, some of them large corporations, use AETC regularly for a variety of training and have done so since AETC was set up.

AETC satisfactorily customises its programmes to meet employers' specific needs. For the accredited courses, trainers sometimes go out to workplaces to gather relevant vocational examples and real case studies to customise their delivery. AETC discusses the programme and the venue with employers. The content of programmes is specified in writing and shared with employers, but learners do not always see the content before the course starts.

## **How well are learners supported and guided?**

### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

Support and guidance are satisfactory overall. Trainers are helpful and appropriately supportive during training sessions. They provide extra explanations to help weak learners achieve better and run revision sessions before tests. Trainers frequently simplify or translate terminology to help learners overcome English language difficulties. AETC offers learners who have difficulties in English language a chance to join a technical English language course, free of charge, before joining the core courses. A reward of BD 200 was given for the candidate with the highest mark in the NEBOSH Diploma as an incentive to learners to achieve better.

AETC has detailed booklets, brochures and an informative website that help both learners and employers in the course selection. The premises are equipped with a fit-for-purpose library, which has relevant text books, magazines, journals and an internet facility with guidance notes on relevant sites. It is not clear how effectively the library is used to support learning.

Although AETC identifies safety and health hazards inside its premises, some of the hazards have not been addressed. Learners are not always made aware of the provider's safety procedures. The premises are adequate overall. A few learners think that classrooms are cramped.

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

### **Grade 3: satisfactory**

AETC employs highly effective strategies and tools to market its courses and identify employers' needs for further training programmes. It has structured marketing objectives to reach existing and new clients. Special software is in use to help in scheduling and recording meetings with clients and in analysing their future requirements. The same software is used in telemarketing courses to clients with specific interest in the targeted programmes. The views of most employers are sought after each course, but are not recorded. AETC maintains good links with relevant professional organisations and uses these links satisfactorily to enrich the library with useful reference materials and learning materials.

The performance of AETC's full-time staff is monitored and improved satisfactorily. Full-time staff are given sufficient training opportunities to help them function better in their administration roles. Staff appraisal is not directly linked to clear plans or objectives for improving the overall quality of training. The performance of NSC trainers is thoroughly monitored by an NSC representative. Other part-time trainers are occasionally observed by AETC's managing director, and some receive verbal feedback. This process is unsystematic and does not include all part-time trainers. It is not evident how it is used effectively to improve training.

Learners' achievements on accredited courses are recorded after each course and AETC's managers see these results. No analysis is carried out to establish trends that could be monitored to improve the overall achievements. Records of achievement for different courses are kept in a variety of places and formats. In a few cases there was a discrepancy between the data kept in the files and that presented for the review.

AETC does not have sufficiently robust plans to improve the provision. It does not develop plans in a coherent way, based on learners' or employers' feedback or on learners' achievements. A general 10-year strategic plan was developed for 2001-2010, but it has not been effectively implemented or subsequently reviewed. Learners' views are collected and aggregated but not effectively used to drive improvement. Post-course questionnaires are quantitatively analysed after each course, but learners' descriptive comments are not captured in the analyses. Regular meetings are held with students on the NEBOSH diploma course to collect their views, but recommendations are not systematically acted upon or followed up at subsequent meetings.

AETC's self-evaluation form was not rigorous in its analysis of the provision. The grades given in it were too high, and it identified few key areas for improvement.