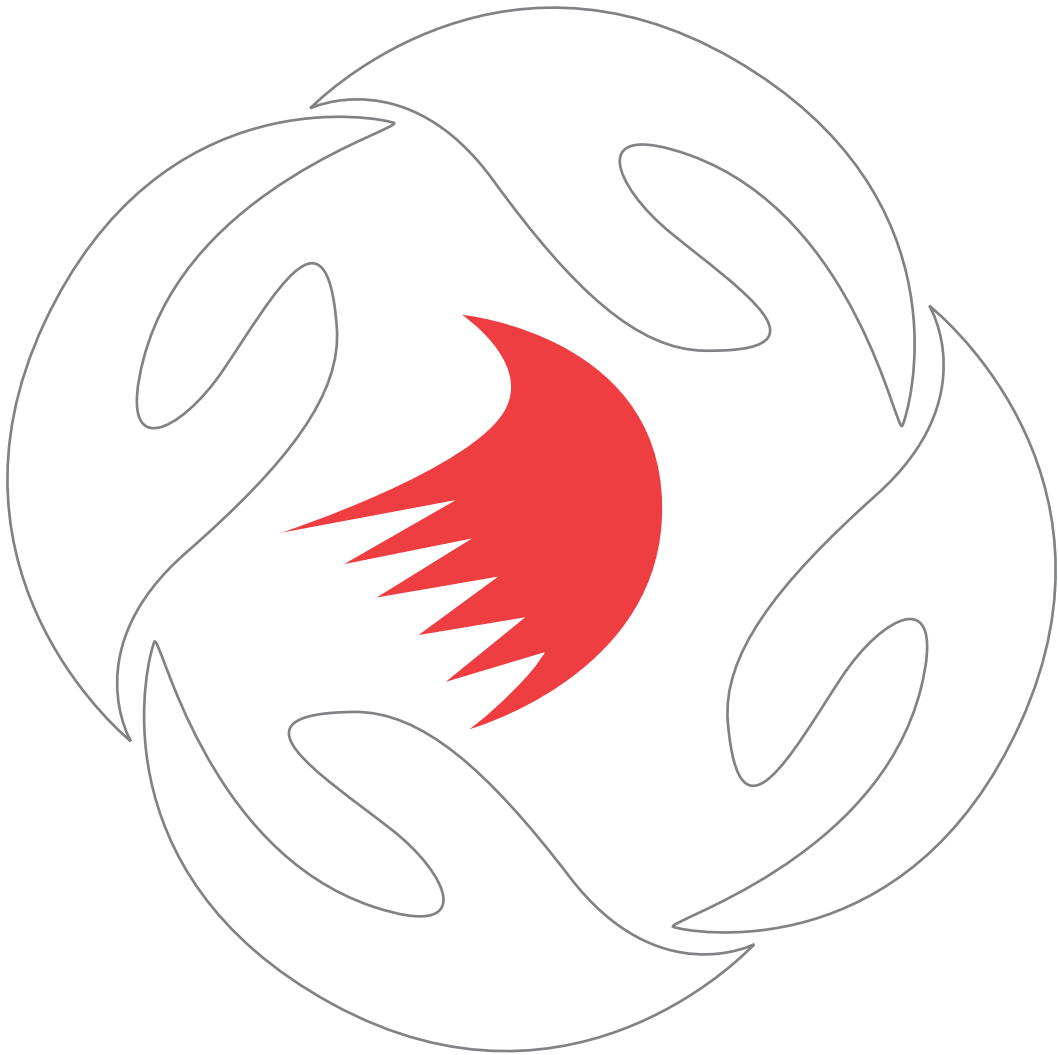


The Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training
Annual Report 2009



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



**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE
KHALIFA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFA**
THE PRIME MINISTER



**HIS MAJESTY KING HAMAD
BIN ISA AL KHALIFA**
THE KING
OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN



**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE
SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA**
THE CROWN PRINCE AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Shaping Bahrain's Future



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VISION, MISSION & VALUES



VISION

To be partners in developing a world-class education system in Bahrain.

MISSION

As an independent entity, we assure the quality of education and training in Bahrain by:

- Reviewing public and private schools, vocational training and higher education institutions, both for accountability and improvement purposes
- Developing and implementing a national examination system for schools
- Publishing reports of findings
- Advancing Bahrain's reputation as a leader in quality assurance in education regionally and internationally.

VALUES

The values that we embrace in our work are:

- Professionalism
- Fairness
- Transparency
- Consistency
- Integrity
- Credibility
- Commitment to international good practice.

STATEMENT OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA, CROWN PRINCE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

In the name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful

Today, we are entitled at the end of the first year of operations of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) to pause and look back at what was achieved, seeking inspiration from the past and paving the road to the future. When it comes to the Bahrain of tomorrow, our ambitions are huge and have no limit. Somerset Maugham, the great writer once said 'if you reject anything below the top, you will certainly reach there'. Al-Mutanabi similarly said 'in the eyes of the great there is no such thing as great hardship'.

Since the very moment of the inauguration of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 by His Majesty the King, God bless him, the importance of education as the foundation of the future, the cornerstone and the key to dealing successfully with the coming years that will be based on high global competition was realised and accepted. Knowledge, diverse skills acquisition and flexibility are needed to deal with endless modern changes. This will enable Bahrainis to achieve the highest levels of education and training, making them more confident and capable of managing their future and that of their country's in a highly professional and impressive manner, setting in the process an example to be followed in all that is modern, advanced and practical.

Education development initiatives are a proven and correct methodology as well as strong values since they always strive to improve and because they refuse half-solutions, ignore obstacles and never give up. This is why we continuously review these initiatives to assure that the wheels are correctly placed on the trail to success.

At the top of these initiatives comes the QAAET, the body that monitors quality and guarantees continuity in all training and educational institutions in the country, pointing out the importance of reforming failing institutions and supporting the successful ones. The reports issued by the Authority late this year are a prime example of its professionalism and ability to take independent and right decisions. Its destination is clear and its compass is accurate, all pointing to one direction - the future of Bahrain and the Bahrain of the future.

It is indeed a short period of time that has elapsed since the establishment of the QAAET; nevertheless, it has been fruitful and sufficient to highlight the work of the Authority. This has been achieved through solid bases and persistent efforts that aim to promote education, encouraging all those responsible to identify shortcomings, and to reflect on the observations and recommendations for their rectification to create a more ambitious educational atmosphere with better quality, resulting in sound defect-free outcomes capable of responding to modern requirements.



This is the moment to pay tribute to all who deserve it. In this regard, I can only extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty, King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, God bless him, for his endless support to the Authority and diligence in checking the progress of its work. I also extend my thanks to His Royal Highness, Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, God bless him, for supporting the Authority and continuously guiding government to cooperate with it. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Education & Training Reform Committee. We are privileged to benefit immensely from his wisdom and his life-long expertise in establishing the Authority. Many thanks to the Chairman of the Board of the QAAET, His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, and all board members, whose distinguished efforts made these achievements possible and to the Authority itself represented by all of its members.

I am confident that next year's report, God willing, will bring with it another set of achievements that all Bahrainis can look forward to, because within this project is a part of our dream, of a prosperous future for this dear country.

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings.

Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa

STATEMENT OF HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK AL KHALIFA, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE EDUCATION & TRAINING REFORM COMMITTEE

In the Name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful

Since its launch only a few months ago, the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) has managed to achieve a number of goals and hopes. By accurately assessing the current scenario of training and education in the Kingdom and adopting proven international standards, while at the same time maintaining our individuality, we are closer than ever to realising the Kingdom's 2030 Economic Vision which is entirely based on education and training.

Some of the achievements of the QAAET have been widely published in all media. The reviews subjected public and private universities, training institutes and schools to assessment of their standards and performance in all their functions, and with rigorous and hard work to raise the level of education and training. This cannot be done without helping and supporting all involved in these sectors and improving educational environments in schools, universities and training institutions to reach a level of excellence on par with developed nations.

Time and again, the people of Bahrain have proved they are ambitious, open to change, confident and high achievers. It is therefore only natural that education is placed at the top of an agenda where people can then transform it into the much desired Bahrain 2030 Economic Vision.

The fact that the QAAET was established by Royal Decree and is managed by the Cabinet emphasises the crucial role it plays in achieving what is asked of it.

Today, we announce that the achievements of the QAAET in the past year have met expectations and realised these ambitions. This has only been possible because of Allah's blessings and help followed by the royal guidance and support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander, God bless them all. This continuing support and follow-up of minute details of the Authority's work to facilitate its function and ensure its success reflects a firm belief in the Authority's pivotal role in the Kingdom's future. The future is education; more specifically, a modern education that empowers learners and provides them with the necessary elements to create and keep up with current scientific developments, in realisation of our motto 'Education, Education, Education!'

And finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister to the Royal Court of His Royal Highness, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Authority, and all its members for what has been achieved. I would also like to thank Dr. Jawaher Shaheen Al Mudhahki, Chief Executive of the QAAET and every member of the team for their efforts. The road ahead of us is



still long, but with Allah's will and support from our leadership, our goals will certainly be achieved.

Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa

STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH KHALID BIN ABDULLA AL KHALIFA, THE MINISTER OF THE OFFICE TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE PRIME MINISTER, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING

The Kingdom of Bahrain has chosen education as the path through which it will overcome various obstacles and be at the cutting-edge of development in every aspect of Bahraini life.

This path will help the Kingdom move forward steadily to strengthen its leading position for the benefit of future generations. This is best enshrined in the Kingdom's economic vision of 2030, a vision that places education in its proper position and emphasises its role in achieving prosperity for the nation.

This perceptive and ambitious national vision has more in mind than just guaranteeing quality in education; it also seeks to achieve sustainable quality assurance and to open channels with all international developments in the fields of education and training. This will enable our institutions to equip future generations with both confidence and competence as they step into the future.

For decades, and notably since the introduction of formal education in 1919, education and training institutions have worked hard to enrich immensely the nation's progress. Nevertheless, the world has witnessed enormous developments that are exceptionally unique and unprecedented in the history of humankind. This puts the onus on local institutions to keep up with these developments to ensure that our graduates will be part of this modern world. We need teachers who are effective leaders in their fields to ensure that our students acquire the necessary knowledge, capabilities and skills.

In light of this, the Board of Directors of the QAAET, which I am honoured to chair, is responsible for searching, studying and then adopting the best and most responsive of modern strategies, taking into consideration the particular requirements of Bahrain's society. This will make our experience in the QAAET a unique one that lends itself easily to addition, modification and alterations, resulting in a modern Bahraini strategy capable of promoting and improving education and training. We have no delusions that this field is highly competitive, yet the reward and pride from any achievements will be well deserved. Our ultimate aim is to place Bahrain firmly on the world education and training map.

The period covered by this report has seen a number of achievements and received unlimited support from both the state and private sectors. The reports issued by the Authority similarly received a warm response from all involved and a genuine desire to change and improve. The QAAET projects itself as a partner to all the institutions falling within its ambit. A true partnership must be transparent, open to improving performance and exerting the desired influence.

Based on our long experience in public service, we have learned that crucial to any significant success is visionary leadership and support, which when met with people's determination and commitment can only lead to proud achievements and prosperity.



The QAAET could not have achieved this without the continuous support of His Majesty, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and Chairman of the Economic Development Board, may God bless them all. A great source of help and inspiration was His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Education & Training Reform Committee, who has shown unstinting support to the Authority throughout the year.

I am honoured today to present the first Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training annual report to our supreme leadership. We envisage this will be the cornerstone of transforming education in Bahrain and the foundation for our prosperous and glorious future.



Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa

STATEMENT OF DR. JAWAHER SHAHEEN AL-MUDHAHKI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING

In the name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful

Today we are entitled to pride ourselves on the achievements of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training, which, at only one year from its inception, has the recognition and respect from all involved in the education and training fields in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This is more evident from the positive and encouraging reaction to the Authority's review and evaluation reports on all its activities. There is a consensus that the Authority is a true, effective and supporting partner aiming to improve the quality of education and training outcomes in our beloved country in order to realise Bahrain's 2030 Economic Vision. This vision paves the road to a secure future based on education and training that is strong, advanced and trustworthy, which enables the youth to fulfil their potential, allowing them to successfully use the ever-growing technological advances.

The main four units of the Quality Assurance Authority (Schools Review, Vocational Review, Higher Education Review and the National Examinations) have simultaneously worked to achieve the Authority's goals. National examinations were held and meticulously evaluated, setting the benchmark to improve performance and putting in place all the necessary indicators, mechanisms and guidelines to monitor and review the quality of this performance.

In the last year, the QAAET carried out reviews of the performance of a number of schools in different stages, as well as of universities and training institutes. With regard to schools, the details of their daily work were reviewed in terms of basic skills, individual differences, higher-order thinking, behaviour, self-assessment, communication with parents, attendance and effectiveness and several other related issues. All these points proved there are solid foundations to build on and that with determination, help and enough support, reforms can be achieved.

The Vocational and Higher Education Review Units examined the quality assurance arrangements of providers ranging from governance and management through to teaching and learning and infrastructure. The outcomes of these reviews, as expressed in the review reports, provide institutes and universities with a reference point from which improvement can take place. They also provide the Kingdom with a baseline from which future developments in these sectors can be benchmarked.

By the same token, the first national examinations were held, which involved all schools' third and sixth graders. These revealed important indicators concerning the status of education.



The first report in your hands is only a starting point for the work of the Authority to achieve its objectives. The Authority will also have to update and develop its review mechanisms and modify its standards to keep abreast of developments in the education and training fields. This goes in line with international standards and is consistent with the specific requirements of the Kingdom because improvement and development know no limits. We are confident that perseverance, hard work and effective collaboration with all education and training institutions, both public and private, with the QAAET will have the desired outcomes. This, God willing, will make the difference for the country's future.

The QAAET could not have possibly achieved all this in its first year without taking inspiration from the vision of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, and without the endless support of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister, and the ambitions of His Royal Highness Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Chairman of the Economic Development Board, God bless them all. We are very grateful for the guidance of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Education & Training Reform Committee, and the careful follow-up of His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister to the Royal Court to His Royal Highness the Prime Minister and Chairman of the Authority's Board of Directors. Thanks are also extended to all members of the Board of Directors.

I am also grateful to all my colleagues in the Authority whose hard work and remarkable contributions enabled us to have a successful first year of operation.

Jawaher Shaheen Al-Mudhahki





THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING LAUNCH



BOARD OF DIRECTORS, *from left to right*

HE Dr. Shakir Abdul Hussain Khamdan
Head of Environmental Monitoring,
Public Commission for the Protection of
Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife

HE Mr. Kamal Ahmed Mohammed
Chief Operating Officer,
The Economic Development Board

HE Dr. Aysha Salem Mubarak
Member, Shura Council

HE Dr. Bahia Jawad Al Jishi
Member, Shura Council



HE Mr. Mohammed Ali Hassan
General Director, Central
Municipal Council

HE Mr. Ahmed A. Al-Bahar
Member, Shura Council
QAAET Vice Chairman

His Excellency Shaikh Khalid
Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Prime Minister's Court Minister
QAAET Chairman (centre)

HE Dr. Dhafer Ahmed Al Omran
Director, Bilateral Relations Directorate,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

HE Dr. Hashim Hassan Al Bash
Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT, *from left to right*

Sylke Scheiner
Professor Dolina Dowling
Khalid Al Mannai
Dr. Jawaher Al-Mudhahki - Chief Executive
Nibal Al Dweiri
Dr. Lesly Thom
Dr. Jo Jolliffe

**HIGHER EDUCATION UNIT**, *from left to right*

Dr. Faisal Al Showaikh
 Dr. Tariq Al Sindi
 Professor Dolina Dowling - Executive Director
 Dr. Wafa Al Mansoori
 Dr. Basma Al Baharna

VOCATIONAL REVIEW UNIT, *from left to right*

Esmat Jaffar
 Jamal Dahneem
 Dr. Lesley Thom - Executive Director
 Maitham Al Oraibi
 Ebrahim Al A'ali
 Kareema Abbas

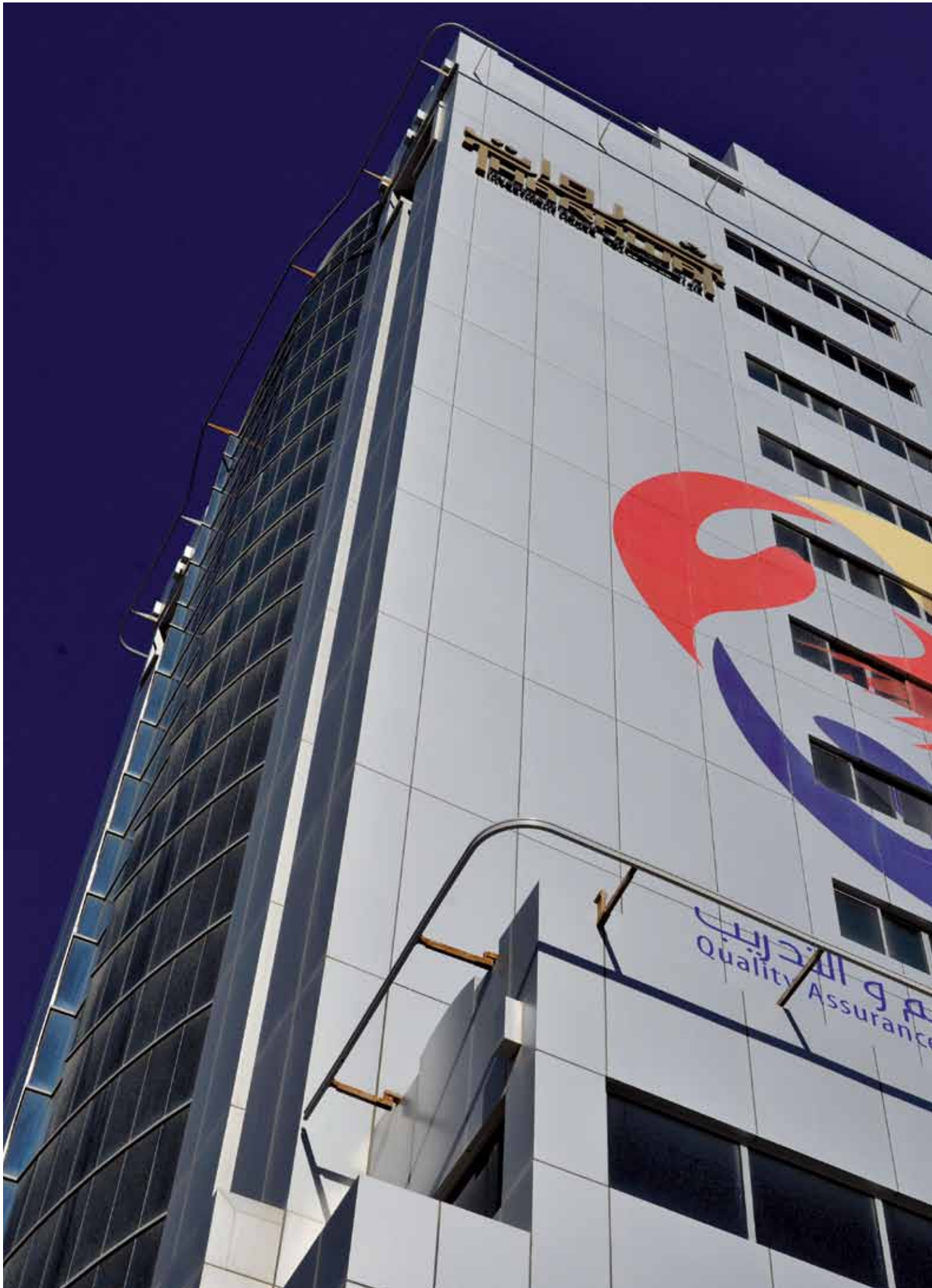
**NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS UNIT**, *from left to right*

Abdulridha Al Aradi
 Stephen Stocker
 Sylke Scheiner - Executive Director
 Wafa Al Yaqoobi

**SCHOOLS REVIEW UNIT**, *from left to right*

Asma Al Mehza
 Fayza Al Mannai
 Dr. Jo Jolliffe - Executive Director
 Abdulhakeen Al Shaer
 Hala Aljawder
 Adel Hasan
 Raja Al Mahmood







MANDATE

MANDATE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING

As part of the Education and Training Reform Project which is an initiative of the Crown Prince, a decision was taken to ensure that there is quality of education at all levels within the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training was established by Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. In terms of Article (4) of the decree, its mandate is to 'review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority'. The Authority is also required to publish review reports as well as to report annually on the status of education within the Kingdom; this includes findings as well as improvements that have occurred as a result of the work of the Authority.

To meet this mandate, four professional units were established within the QAAET. These are: the Schools Review Unit, the Vocational Review Unit, the Higher Education Review Unit, and the National Examinations Unit.

The purpose of the three review units is two-fold: to promote accountability and improvement. The reviews as expressed in the published review reports make judgements about an institution's quality assurance arrangements for purposes of public accountability. It aims to provide a clear picture on the status of Bahrain's education and training institutions for decision makers in government and stakeholders. The government wants to know that its investment in its public schools is providing an education that is appropriate for the development and growth of young students and which will contribute to students becoming well-rounded adults who can embrace the values of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In a similar vein, the Ministry of Labour and employers need to know if the training programmes that are offered by vocational institutions are meeting the skill needs of the country, as Bahrain becomes a competitive world-player in the global economy.

With regard to higher education, the government is interested in the quality of providers, both at the institutional and programme levels. Are the quality assurance arrangements of the country's higher education establishments appropriate? Do students receive a quality learning experience in an environment that enables them to reach their potential, to be good citizens and to make a positive contribution to the country's economy?

Similarly, students, parents and employers want to know that students are receiving an education which will equip them with the requisite critical thinking skills and knowledge in their chosen field to compete successfully in the world of work as anticipated in Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030. The publication of the review reports of the three Review Units meets these needs for accountability.

In a similar vein the development and implementation of a National Examination System provides the Ministry of Education and parents

with a benchmark for both the performance of the schooling system in Bahrain and the individual performance of students.

The National Examinations Unit provides detailed results and reports to the Ministry of Education. In these reports the results are broken down by student, by class, by school and by year. The reports also provide a breakdown of results by topics and skills from the Ministry's subject curricula. Whilst the Ministry of Education is responsible for working with the schools to design and implement improvement strategies based on the examination results reports, the National Examinations Unit is available to provide support and guidance, particularly in data analysis and research.

The reviews conducted by the three review units also contain a strong improvement or developmental component. They provide schools, vocational training providers and higher education institutions with an opportunity to improve. This is done firstly through the space reviews provide for institutions to undergo a self-evaluation exercise. This is in itself an opportunity for institutional learning and thus improvement. Secondly, the findings expressed in the review reports can be used by the institutions to enhance their governance, management, infrastructure as well as their teaching and learning activities.

There are different mechanisms in place in each of the three review units to ensure that findings are implemented and that they work towards developing and enhancing the education system in Bahrain. It is only then that the work of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) can contribute to the fulfilment of the Economic Vision 2030 which requires that 'the nation has a first-rate education system that enables all Bahrainis to fulfil their ambitions'.

The Schools Review Unit requires each school to provide a post-Review Action Plan which is signed off by the Ministry. The Action Plan should be received 6 weeks after the school receives the draft review report. After signing off the Action Plan, the Ministry should support and monitor improvement.

In the case of inadequate schools (Grade 4), there will be a monitoring visit 6 to 12 months after the full Review has taken place. The purpose of the monitoring visit is to check the school's progress since the review and it focuses only on the issues raised in the report. A report of the monitoring visit will be produced for the school and the Ministry. Discussions with the Ministry are currently being held to determine what action will be taken if the school continues to make insufficient progress. Monitoring visits began at the end of November 2009.

The Vocational Review Unit is currently finalising its provider improvement strategy, which will be formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET), the Ministry of Labour, the Higher Council for Vocational Training and Tamkeen. The strategy will comprise support for providers who need it, incentives for those awarded good review grades, and review outcomes will be used by those awarding training contracts.

Providers who receive a Grade 4 or 5 for either their overall effectiveness or their capacity to improve will be subject to a repeat review. This will take place within 12-18 months of the original review, and will comprise a combination of monitoring visits and a final, longer visit. Regardless of the outcome of the review, providers are required to write an action plan which addresses the recommendations made in the review report. They must also update their self-evaluation form and learners' performance data worksheet each year, and submit these to the Vocational Review Unit.

With regard to the Higher Education Review Unit, providers are required to submit Improvement Plans to the Unit three months after publication of the reports, which address the findings of the review reports irrespective of whether the review was about the institution's quality assurance arrangements as a whole or regarding a particular programme. These plans are assessed for viability and sustainability. One year after publication of an institution's review report, the provider is required to submit a report with supporting evidence, which states whether and how it has met the identified improvements, to the Higher Education Review Unit. This report will be evaluated by the Unit both through a paper-based analysis and a short site visit. At this point a final report will be written by the Unit.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the QAAET and the Higher Education Council is in the process of being finalised to ensure synergy between the work of the Higher Education Review Unit and the Higher Education Council. This will add impetus to the improvement process in higher education institutions.







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STATUS OF THE WORK
CARRIED OUT BY THE QUALITY ASSURANCE
AUTHORITY FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING DURING
THE SEPTEMBER 2008-AUGUST 2009 ACADEMIC YEAR**

During the first year of operations of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET), the Authority's main four units have worked hard to achieve the Authority's plans set by the QAAET's Board of Directors in a highly professional and transparent manner. The Authority perceived the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders and their interest in communication with the Authority to improve and develop the performance of their institutions.

In line with being transparent and accountable, the Review Reports are approved by the Board of the QAAET and the Prime Minister's Court before being published on the QAAET website. The reports provide information for parents, students, and the Ministries of Education and Labour and the Higher Education Council (HEC) on the status of the quality of each institution.

We will report below a summary of the executive units' overall achievements, the main findings expressed in the approved reports for schools, vocational institutions and higher education institutions, in addition to the findings of the first national examinations for Grades 3 and 6.

The overall results for the first year of the review cycle of the **Schools Review Unit (SRU)** are based on the analysis of 72 out of 204 public schools, (just over one third, 35%). Of the 72 schools reviewed, just over half, (53%) were Primary schools and 15% were Secondary, in line with the greater number of Primary compared to Secondary schools. 21% of the schools reviewed were Intermediate and a further 11% were mixed Primary-Intermediate schools. Over half of the schools were found to be satisfactory (53%). 2 were found to be excellent (3%) and just under one third were good (30%). 14% of schools were providing an inadequate overall quality of education. Primary schools generally performed better than Secondary schools. Two schools, both of them primary, were found to be outstanding. One was a boys' school, the other a girls' school. Just under half of secondary schools (45%) were inadequate. Girls' schools generally performed better than boys' schools. More girls' schools than boys' were judged to be good and more boys' schools than girls' were judged to be satisfactory or inadequate. Of the 15 Intermediate schools reviewed, all the good schools were girls' schools and all the inadequate schools were boys' schools, indicating significant challenges facing Intermediate boys' schools.

Schools consistently rated themselves more favourably against the review criteria than actual review judgements. More than half of the schools have good or better capacity to improve, but 13% do not have the capacity to improve without significant support from the Ministry. Achievement was satisfactory or better in the great majority of schools and good in one third of schools, but evidence indicates that there is a discrepancy between standards in Ministry examinations which are higher than standards in lessons. During lessons, students did not

always perform as well as they could in relation to their abilities. This directly related to the quality of teaching and learning and sometimes the students' behaviour. In particular, assessment is rarely used to plan learning and so teaching does not meet the needs of students across the full ability range.

The prescribed curriculum is not made relevant or interesting enough to engage students except in the best schools and lessons. This fails to gain students' interest in learning and at times gives rise to low level disruption and poor behaviour. Support and guidance are generally strong in schools, especially with regard to teaching students the difference between right and wrong. Leadership and management in schools are very variable, although they are at least satisfactory in 82% of schools. Strategic planning and monitoring of impact are weak in most schools, particularly the lack of focus on standards and achievement. Principals and staff are frequently moved from school to school which has a destabilising effect and hinders sustainable improvement.

During the **National Examinations Unit's** first year of operation, national examinations for Grades 3 and 6 were conducted in all government Primary and Primary-Intermediate schools in May 2009 for the first time. A total of approximately 21,000 students took the examinations, which in Grade 3 were in Arabic and Mathematics, and in Grade 6 in Arabic, Mathematics, Science and English. In all subjects the examinations covered the whole curriculum. All examinations were marked in Bahrain by teachers working in Bahraini government schools, and results were published to schools and students on 30 June 2009.

The results of the examinations varied across subjects and across grades. Overall, students found the examinations challenging and their raw marks were low as a proportion of the total available marks. Students did best in Grade 6 Arabic and Science, and they did worst in Grade 6 Mathematics and English. Grade 6 Mathematics stands out as a particularly poor performance overall and especially in comparison with Grade 3 Mathematics: there is a very significant decrease in performance in Mathematics from Grade 3 to Grade 6. This is not mirrored in Arabic, where there is in fact a slight increase in performance from Grade 3 to Grade 6. In all language examinations students performed best in listening and worst in writing. Girls outperformed boys in the examinations by a large margin at both grades and in every subject. At both grades this difference is largest in Arabic.

The results of school reviews indicate that girls outperform boys. This is confirmed by national examination data in all subjects examined at Grades 3 (Mathematics and Arabic) and 6 (Mathematics, Arabic, English and Science). The gender gap is greatest in Arabic at Grade 6, and it also widens from Grade 3 to Grade 6: in Arabic in Grade 3 the difference in mean performance score is 1.22 in favour of girls, and by Grade 6 this difference has increased to 1.77. Similarly the difference in mean performance score in Mathematics at Grade 3 is 0.83 in favour of girls; it increases to 1.44 by Grade 6.

Evidence from both school reviews and national examinations shows that Primary school students' performance in language is weakest in writing, whereas their listening and reading skills

are better. This is true for both the Arabic and the English languages. School reviews found that as a general trend, achievement is higher in Grade 3 than in Grade 6. In national examinations, this is reflected in the results for Mathematics where there is also a general overall performance decrease from Grade 3 to Grade 6. However, this is not the case in Arabic. An issue emerging from school reviews is the overemphasis on content in the teaching and learning process and a lack of sufficient opportunities to develop higher level thinking skills. The breakdown of examination results by topic and skill areas from the curricula also seems to point in the direction of students being better at knowledge recall skills than at higher level thinking skills. Examination results for Grade 6 Science, however, do not fit this picture.

In the **Vocational Review Unit's** first year of operation, 20 providers were reviewed, all of them privately owned and licensed by the Ministry of Labour. Between 2008 and 2009, they provided training in a range of vocational areas for some 8,000 learners. Overall, whilst nine institutes were judged satisfactory, and two good, a further nine of them were found to be below satisfactory, giving a high inadequacy rate of 45%. Thirteen of the providers were considered to have sufficient capacity to improve; the remaining seven were below satisfactory in this respect.

Most trainers had a good vocational background, and used this effectively, providing relevant, work-related examples. Learners were adequately supported; they and employers were generally satisfied with the variety of provision offered. However, too many of the courses provided were either internally-accredited or not accredited at all. Data on learners' progress and achievement was either unavailable or unreliable in 80% of the providers reviewed, with learners' achievement judged on the basis of attendance, rather than on what they had learned in far too many cases. Few trainers assessed learners' needs, experience or prior learning before they started their course, and most did not plan training sessions to ensure that the individual's specific requirements were met. Quality assurance was a significant area of weakness, with a majority of providers neglecting to monitor the performance of their trainers, or gather and use feedback from their stakeholders. The self-evaluation forms completed by providers were, in nearly all cases, overwhelmingly inaccurate, with providers overestimating the quality of their provision, and failing to identify key areas for improvement.

The **Higher Education Review Unit** conducted 7 institutional reviews and 6 programme reviews in the field of the Bachelor of Administration.

The institutional reviews do not make a final judgement on the quality assurance arrangements of the institutions. Rather they provide institutions with a detailed Report on the Panel's findings with commendations where good practice is identified, affirmations where the institution has itself identified areas in need of improvement, and recommendations where the Panel finds gaps in the quality assurance arrangements and which need to be addressed by the institution.

Of the six institutional review reports published, two institutions received no Commendation. The other four institutions received 18 Commendations between them. Generally these were around issues of student support, well-qualified academics and their commitment to the institutions and to students. Two institutions received Commendations on support for academic staff. Two received Commendations on good governance structures.

The issues that were found to be in need of improvement can be clustered into 5 broad areas: (i) mission, planning and governance; (ii) quality management and academic standards; (iii) teaching and learning; (iv) research; and (v) community engagement. For many of the private providers there is seriously insufficient campus infrastructure, in terms of buildings and space. Until new purpose-built campuses are operational, the quality of the teaching and learning environment will be permanently compromised.

With regard to programme reviews in the field of Business Administration at the Bachelor's level, judgements are made by an external panel of peers about whether the programme meets minimum standards in 4 indicators. This is in line with international good practice. Of the six published reports, two met minimum standards, two received 'limited confidence' judgements, and two received 'no confidence' judgements.

Given that this document reports on the first year of the operations of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training, it is far too early to assess the impact on the various types of educational institutions in terms of improvement.

The self-evaluation documents that the institutions had to compile according to the different methodologies of the Units were generally of poor quality; descriptive rather than analytical; and institutions were unable to identify for themselves areas in need of improvement. However, it needs to be kept in mind that the work of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training has resulted in a paradigm shift with regard to how education institutions should carry out their core functions. The Authority is confident that substantial improvements will be seen both in form and substance in the self-evaluation reports and supporting documents in the second cycle of reviews.

In line with the work of similar agencies worldwide, it typically takes 5 to 10 years to see substantial improvement in the core functions of the institutions themselves. The implementation of quality reviews and national examinations have posed significant challenges for stakeholders, not least in terms of the culture shift that is required from a non-regulatory environment to one in which there is an external quality framework implemented. Nevertheless, all Units reported that institutions were generally willing to work with them and expressed a desire to use the reviews, the reports, and the examination results as an opportunity to improve the quality of education and training being offered in their institutions and thus contribute to the future prosperity of Bahrain.





SCHOOLS REVIEW UNIT

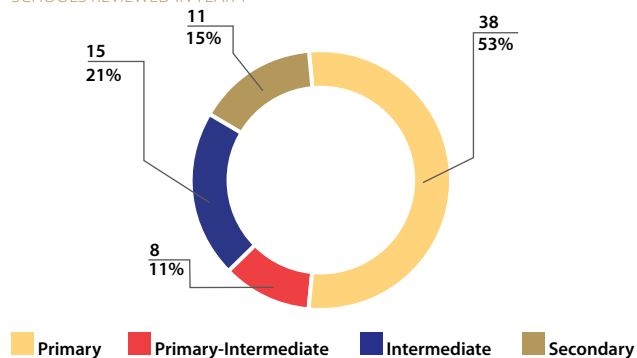
SCHOOLS REVIEW UNIT

INTRODUCTION

Following 50 pilot reviews, the Schools Review Unit (SRU) began its first formal review cycle of all public schools in Bahrain in September 2008. The full cycle will cover a two year period and 204 schools. In the first year of the full cycle, 72 reviews were completed. The overall results for the first year of the review cycle are based on the analysis of these 72 schools (just over one third, 35%). The following is, therefore, not a complete picture of overall school performance in Bahrain's public schools. This will be clearer after the review of all 204 schools.

Of the 72 schools reviewed (see Figure 1), just over half of the schools reviewed (53%) were Primary schools and 15% were Secondary. This discrepancy is in line with the greater number of Primary compared to Secondary schools. 21% of the schools reviewed were Intermediate and a further 11% were mixed Primary and Intermediate schools.

FIGURE 1:
SCHOOLS REVIEWED IN YEAR 1



Each Review is carried out by a team of highly trained Reviewers. Schools are notified of the Review date at least one week before the on-site stage of the Review. The on-site visit normally extends over three days. During their time in school, reviewers observe lessons, hold discussions with staff, students and parents and evaluate students' written and other work.

Review grades are awarded on a four point scale:

Outstanding.....	1
Good.....	2
Satisfactory.....	3
Inadequate.....	4

REVIEW OUTCOMES

Review results are analysed according to the Review Framework in which there are 6 areas or aspects. These are as follows:

- Students' achievement in their academic work
- Students' personal development
- Effectiveness of teaching and learning
- Curriculum delivery and enrichment
- Student support and guidance
- Effectiveness of the schools' leadership and management

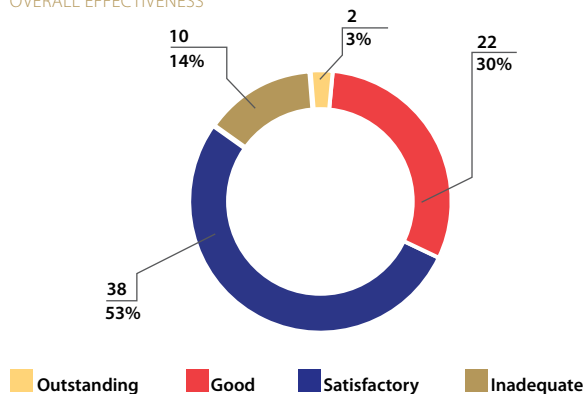
The school's overall effectiveness and its capacity to improve are arrived at by considering all the other judgements together with the weight of evidence.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

The most important judgement is on the school's overall effectiveness. This judgement is reached after considerable consideration of the other review judgements in the framework and all the evidence. It should be noted that the aspect judgements are not of equal value and therefore the results cannot be arrived at by a simple calculation.

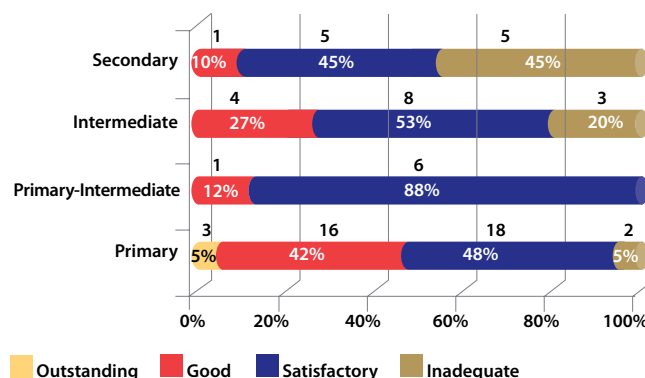
Of the 72 public schools already reviewed, over half were found to be satisfactory (53%). 2 were found to be outstanding (3%) and just under one third were good (30%). 14% of schools were providing an inadequate overall quality of education.

FIGURE 2:
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS



Primary schools generally performed better than Secondary schools (see Figure 3). Two schools, both of them Primary, were found to be outstanding (Grade 1). One was a boys' school, the other a girls' school, both led by female Principals. Just under half of Secondary schools (45%, 5 schools) were inadequate.

FIGURE 3:
OVERALL GRADES BY STAGE

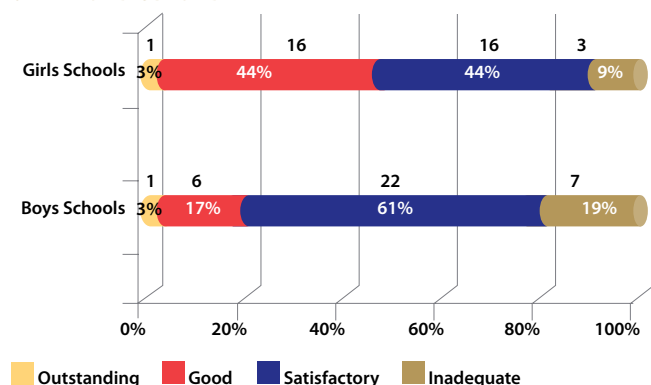


Girls' schools generally performed better than boys' schools (see Figure 4A). More girls' schools than boys' were judged to be good and more boys' schools than girls' were judged to be satisfactory or inadequate.



FIGURE 4A:

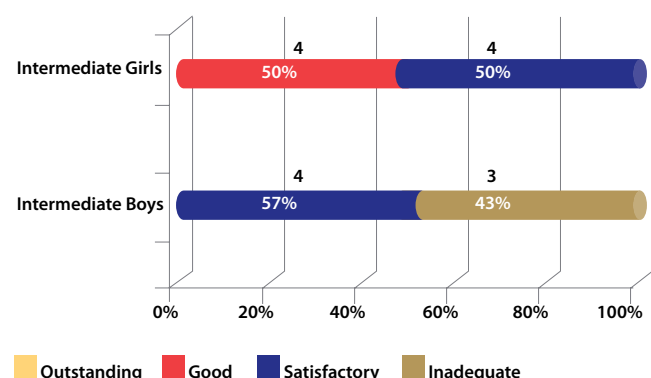
OVERALL GRADES BY GENDER



Of the 15 Intermediate schools reviewed, all the good schools were girls' schools and all the inadequate schools were boys' schools (see Figure 4B). This indicates that there is a significant challenge facing intermediate boys' schools at the national level.

FIGURE 4B:

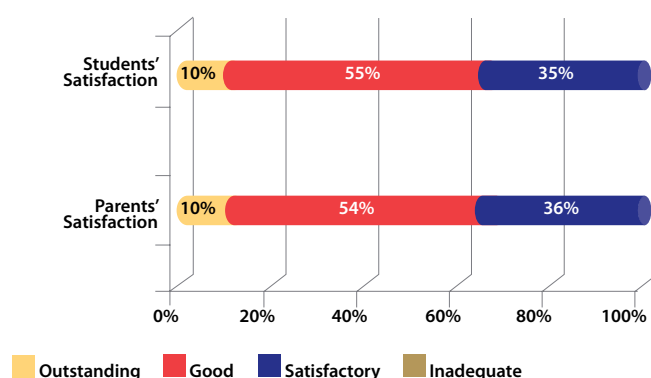
OVERALL INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL GRADES BY GENDER



The general view of parents and students is that they are satisfied with their schools but this often does not reflect the actual performance of the school (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5:

SATISFACTION OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS



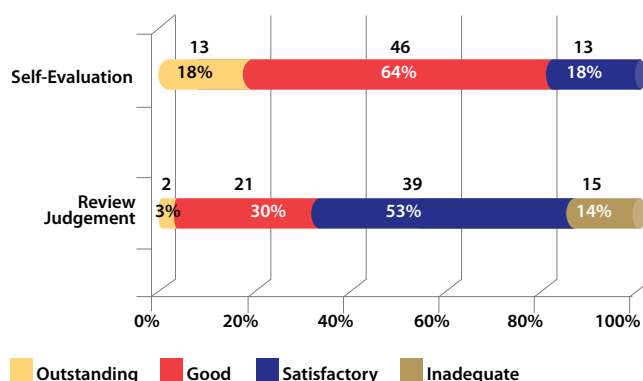
A feature of outstanding schools was the strong leadership which promoted high standards across the school. The teaching and learning process was effective, with students of the various abilities, including those with special needs, making at least good progress. Support for the development of basic skills, including

support for speakers of other languages, was strong. Challenges facing the school were tackled determinedly and successfully and there was commitment from the entire school to improve.

Schools were required to evaluate themselves against the 4 point scale used in the **School Review Handbook**. Grade descriptors were provided to help the schools judge themselves as accurately as possible. Training in the use of self-evaluation was provided by the Schools Review Unit or Ministry. Nevertheless, schools consistently rated themselves more favourably against the criteria than they were judged by the Review (see Figure 6). This indicates that there is a substantial lack of accurate self-evaluation in the system. Without a clear view of their strengths and weaknesses, schools will not be able to produce a good quality strategic plan which focuses efforts on improvement.

FIGURE 6:

COMPARISON BETWEEN REVIEW JUDGEMENTS AND SELF-EVALUATION

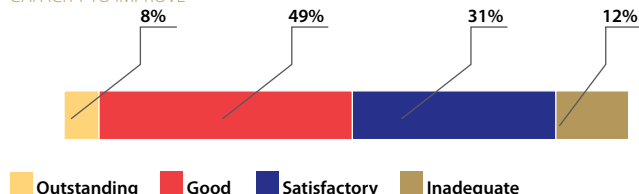


CAPACITY TO IMPROVE

The judgement concerning a school's capacity to improve is very important. This judgement is based on the signs of future improvement, such as strategic planning, systems for monitoring the quality of provision and achievement of performance targets, and clear leadership. More than half of the schools have good or better capacity to improve but 12% do not have the capacity to improve without significant support from the Ministry (see Figure 7). Where schools did not have any capacity to improve, this was generally because (i) they lack strategic planning or fail to monitor the impact of planning; (ii) teaching and learning are weak; and (iii) the behaviour of students was not conducive to a safe and productive learning environment.

FIGURE 7:

CAPACITY TO IMPROVE



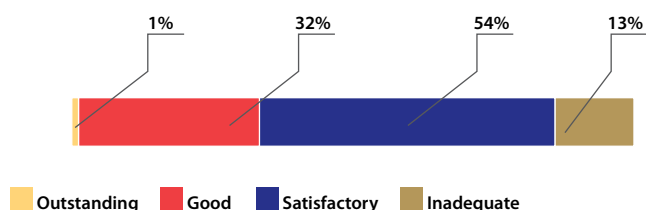
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN THEIR ACADEMIC WORK

The achievement grade is a very important judgement. This concerns how much a student has learned over time in relation to their ability.

Judging standards and achievement has been a challenge for Reviews. In addition to analysing the results of Ministry examinations and test results, students' work is scrutinised and their performance in lessons is judged against criteria in the framework. The overall achievement grade is based on evidence from the Review and takes results from external examinations into account. However, there is significant reliance on first-hand evidence during the Review. Thus, the achievement grade is much broader than an examination result.

Achievement was satisfactory or better in the great majority of schools (87% - see Figure 8) and good in one third of schools (32%). The evidence from Reviews indicates that there is a discrepancy between standards in Ministry examinations, which are higher than standards in lessons. Since the Ministry examinations are not standardised, these are not considered to be a reliable indicator of standards. Nevertheless, these high results, to which the schools contribute a percentage of the total marks, lead schools to believe that standards are high, even though this is not the full picture.

FIGURE 8:
STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT



During lessons, students did not always perform as well as they could in relation to their abilities. This directly related to the quality of teaching and learning and sometimes their behaviour. Although most students generally made satisfactory progress, this was often limited by teaching and learning strategies that do not suit the full ability range. This particularly affects the achievement of the less able and the more able students whose learning needs are frequently not catered to by teachers. As a result, too many students do not achieve their full potential and this has an impact on standards at the system level.

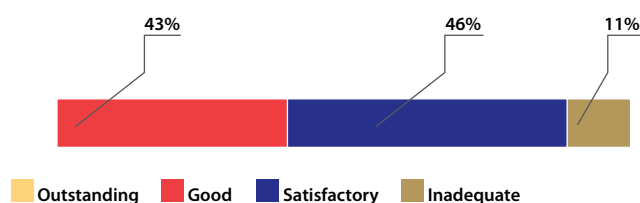
Reviews have mainly focused on core subjects and the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). Standards and achievement vary between subjects. Standards of written Arabic and English are often weak but reading skills are better. Standards in written Arabic and English are often referred to in reports as being too low, particularly in the Intermediate and Secondary schools. Nevertheless there are exceptions. There is particularly effective practice in the outstanding schools.

Literacy is a bigger issue for improvement in boys' schools than girls' schools. In some commercial courses, the curriculum which should be taught in the medium of English is actually taught in Arabic due to the lack of staff proficient in English.

STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students' personal development, i.e. the degree to which students develop into mature young people taking responsibility for their learning and actions and behaving well, was satisfactory or better in the majority of schools (89%). Schools generally place high priority on students' personal development and this is an important ingredient in supporting successful learning. In a minority of schools, personal development was inadequate. Where it was inadequate there were often elements of poor behaviour amongst students which affected their learning and achievement. In a few instances, but of concern, were incidents of intimidating or aggressive behaviour by older students. In these cases, the school response to dealing with this was not always as effective as it ought to be.

FIGURE 9:
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



Behaviour is at least satisfactory or better in the majority of schools (92%). However, despite this positive picture, behaviour concerns were highlighted in some schools, mainly boys'. In general, there is a marked difference in the attitudes of boys and girls, especially at the Intermediate and Secondary levels. In the schools where behaviour was inadequate, this was often related to the lack of clear expectations and coherent systems to manage behaviour. Although extreme cases were rare, poor behaviour was not always dealt with effectively enough by staff. This made other students feel insecure. Reports from Primary, Intermediate and Secondary boys' schools give examples of unacceptable behaviour, including the use of expletives, intimidating behaviour, students disrupting lessons and poor behaviour around corridors. Of further concern is the low level disruption in class, such as chatting and lack of concentration. This is often due to the failure of teaching methods to enthuse and engage students or cater to a variety of learning needs in the mixed ability classes.

Attendance in the great majority of schools (99%) is satisfactory at the least. Schools have systems in place for recording attendance, punctuality and incidents of misbehaviour. However, punctuality to lessons, particularly after the break, is an issue in some schools. The cumulative effect of the loss of learning time in schools where punctuality to lessons is poor is considerable. In schools where there is frequent lateness to lessons, this often reflects the poor attitudes of students and the schools' weak monitoring of internal attendance.

In the 43% of schools where personal development was graded as good, the students make a positive contribution to the school. They attend school regularly and are punctual for lessons. Such schools are characterised by positive relationships between students and their teachers.



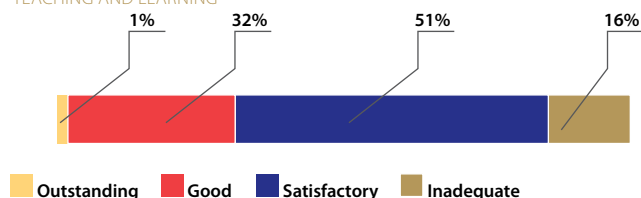
The development of students' analytical and critical thinking skills and their ability to work and learn independently is only satisfactory or inadequate in the great majority of schools. Almost half of schools do not develop these skills sufficiently, which in turn impacts standards and achievement. The teacher-dominated approach in many lessons creates student dependency on the teacher. This creates a gap in relation to preparing students with the independent learning skills needed for higher education and employment. Where personal development is graded as good, there is still scope for improvement in relation to the extent to which teachers promote independence and responsibility. Although students in good schools are often confident and articulate, in lessons they are not consistently given enough opportunities to work independently or to work together.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory or better in the majority of schools (84% - see Figure 10). A minority of all lessons observed (16%) were judged to be inadequate and the majority of these were in Secondary schools. In the main, teachers have strong subject knowledge but using this expertise so that their teaching strategies are suited to learning needs was very often comparatively less skilful or effective. This is of particular concern because mixed ability classes are the norm in Bahrain's schools and these teacher skills are critical if the full range of learning needs is to be met.

FIGURE 10:

TEACHING AND LEARNING



Too often, teachers teach to the 'middle ability' students. This lack of attention in meeting the needs of all abilities results in work being too difficult for the less able students and not challenging enough for the most able ones.

In practice, the ideology of mixed ability teaching overrides the imperative to meet the wide variety of student learning needs. Students are generally not placed according to ability despite the failure to plan lessons or use strategies which suit all abilities. The issue is generally seen as too sensitive by many school Principals who are concerned about a potential backlash from parents and teachers. As a result the matter is generally avoided except in those schools where there is the strongest leadership.

With regard to assessment, the use of assessment was satisfactory or less than satisfactory in the majority of schools (82%). As teachers do not have an accurate understanding of what students know and what they still need to learn, their planning does not address individual needs. This underpins the weakness in matching teaching to the learning needs of the full range of student abilities. In outstanding schools,

teaching is well-matched to the students' learning needs. In one school the approach to dealing with individual student differences was based on cooperative learning and in the other, on rigorous monitoring of teaching strategies matched to students' needs.

Judging standards and student progress in schools has been hindered by the lack of reliable data at the national level and the lack of a consistent approach to baseline testing in many schools with subsequent systematic testing to monitor and measure student progress over time. The best schools use diagnostic tests but these results are rarely used to plan teaching and learning or to set targets for students, except in some good schools and in the outstanding schools. The introduction of national examinations will provide the data needed for benchmarking standards and monitoring academic progress over time.

In the main, students' work is regularly marked. However, there is inconsistency in approach within too many schools. Very often, students' work is just ticked without any constructive feedback from teachers to help students understand how they can improve. Homework is regularly set, but it is rarely used to enrich or extend their learning and is usually just a continuation of lessons. It is rarely matched to ability levels so, as with lessons, it is often pitched at the wrong level for many students.

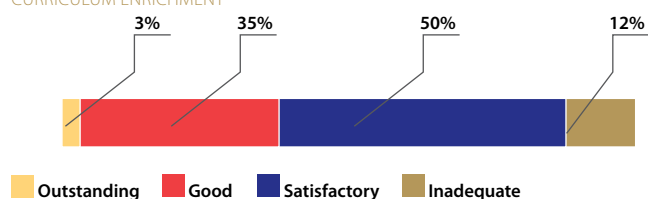
The best lessons are free from disruption and students are keen to work. In outstanding lessons, teachers captured students' interest, challenged them and developed their analytical and problem solving skills. In many schools, students are not given enough opportunities for developing independent learning skills, which has a limiting effect on achievement. There are pockets of good and outstanding teaching in many schools but they do not have a clear strategy to ensure that all staff benefit from this.

A number of schools have an increasingly diverse population which presents a further challenge to some schools. Students for whom Arabic is not a first language, or those who know a significantly different dialect of Arabic, do not always receive the individual support they need. Nevertheless, in the best schools, particularly in the outstanding schools, the leadership and the staff tackled this challenge with determination and produced very successful outcomes with students making excellent progress. Of note is the outstanding school where students, whose first language is not Arabic, were taught to use spoken and written classical Arabic.

CURRICULUM DELIVERY AND ENRICHMENT

Overall, the delivery and enrichment of the curriculum is good or better in just over one third of schools (38%) but it is satisfactory or less in just under two thirds of schools (62%) (see Figure 11). A strength in the curriculum is the development of students' sense of rights and responsibilities. 92% of schools are judged to be satisfactory or better in this area.

FIGURE 11:
CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT



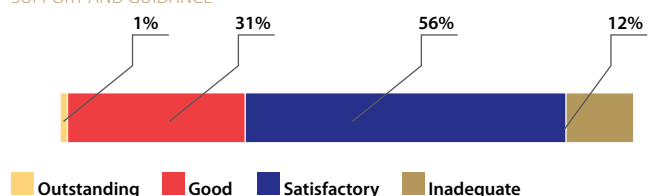
The curriculum is set by the Ministry but schools often follow this too literally and miss the opportunity to 'bring the curriculum to life'. An over-reliance by too many teachers on the prescribed textbooks fails to capture students' interest and engage them in learning. Moreover, this is related to the failure to make the curriculum more coherent which hinders the development of cross curricular skills, including literacy and numeracy. ICT skills are not yet being developed well enough. Sometimes this is due to a lack of resources, but often it is due to a failure by the school to make the best use of generous resources.

Most schools keep accurate records of student participation in clubs, trips and activities, but a number of reports highlight the fact that the most able students benefit the most from enrichment programmes. There are ample programmes for students with special educational needs although the exact impact is measured only in the best schools.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

The support and guidance offered is generally a strong point in schools with 88% of them being judged as satisfactory or better (see Figure 12). The various aspects which make up the overall judgement on the quality of support and guidance, received the highest percentage of good and outstanding grades. The exception to this is the extent to which there is a healthy and safe environment in the school. This is inadequate in 11% of schools and is an issue for the Ministry to address, as well as those who hold senior responsibility in schools for the well-being of students.

FIGURE 12:
SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE



In most schools there are procedures in place to care for and protect students. However, in a small minority of schools, there are weak procedures and occasionally serious issues are not tackled with the right level of action and determination. The Ministry has been informed directly of some issues concerning the care and protection of students. These issues must be addressed if the trust and confidence of students and their parents are to be maintained.

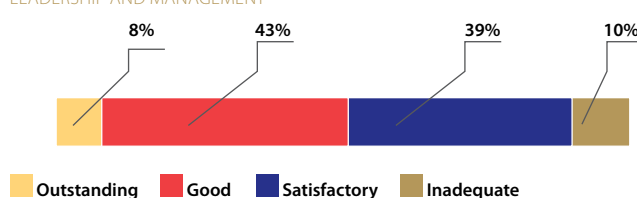
The induction programmes provided by schools are generally effective. For the most part, students quickly settle into a new school. In a very small number of cases, induction plans for new students have not been fully implemented.

Whilst personal support is good outside of class, support for learning is far weaker in the classroom. In particular the school social workers provide very sensitive and effective support to students. Schools usually provide reports to parents on their children's academic progress each semester but often there is little interim reporting on progress.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOLS' LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In the great majority of schools (82%), leadership and management are satisfactory or good. Approximately half (51%) have at least good leadership and management and 8% (6 schools) of these are outstanding (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13:
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT



The Review Framework emphasises driving continuous improvement through effective self-evaluation. This has presented a significant challenge in many schools where the administrative duties are the main focus of the work of the Principal. From day to day, there are substantial administrative demands placed on Principals from different quarters in the Ministry and this distracts too many of them from focussing on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Instead of time being spent on supporting school improvement, too much of the bureaucracy takes higher priority. Added to this, school Principals are driven by the priorities set by others who do not have school improvement at the centre of their work and Principals have little power to control this given the lack of autonomy.

The lack of autonomy impacts differentially on schools. Principals are not able, for instance, to control staffing and are dependent on teachers sent by the Ministry. Often, Principals are moved from one school to another before they have had time to make a difference.

A characteristic of the most effective schools is that the Principal and senior teachers have a clear vision focused on achievement, and this is made clear to the whole school community. In these schools the strategic plan is well developed with clear and measurable objectives. Teachers and other staff work well together as a team and support the Principal in developing a positive climate for teaching and learning.

In the weakest schools (10% are inadequate), strategic improvement planning is not developed, teaching and learning are not effective and the poor behaviour of a

minority of students contributes to hindering their progress and achievement as well as the progress of other students. These behaviour issues as well as low level disruption are dealt with ineffectively.

Few schools carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation, and where this does occur, the information, for example about the quality of teaching and learning across the school is not often used to drive the school's improvement. The most effective schools have a more developed system of self-evaluation and use the information to drive the strategic planning process so that they can focus on improving areas of weakness. In particular, schools rarely use student performance data to target resources or raise achievement at the individual, class or whole school levels. As a result, issues of underachievement are not precisely diagnosed in order to plan interventions. There are examples of excellent teaching in schools, and two examples of excellent schools. However, rarely have schools formally planned the spreading and sharing of best practice and therefore fail to capitalise on what is best in the system.

Almost all senior management teams have well-defined roles and carry out their administrative tasks effectively, and middle managers and social workers are effective in promoting students' academic and personal development.

In well over half of the schools (64%), the Principal motivates and provides effective support for staff. Principals are very often highly respected by staff, parents and students alike. The feedback from parents and students suggests that mostly, they are at least satisfied with their school. Nevertheless, 10% of parents and 10% of students were less than satisfied and a few raised serious issues, particularly in the least effective schools, where procedures tended to be weak on issues such as behaviour.

SUMMARY

The SRU has undertaken 72 school reviews, and it will complete the first full review cycle of all 204 schools in Bahrain by the end of December 2010. The 72 reviews were undertaken in two phases. In phase one 20 reviews were undertaken and 52 reviews in phase two. The latter were published in two batches of 20 and 32 reports respectively.

Whilst it is too early to speak of impacts of the reviews, some trends in terms of performance can be observed. As seen in Figure 14 the distribution of school performances over the two phases and which has been disaggregated into three batches are noticeably different:

- Batch 3 saw the first two schools judged as outstanding.
- In batch 1, 20% of schools were judged good; in batch 2, 25% were judged good, whilst in batch 3, 38% received a judgement of good.
- When taking into account all 72 schools reviewed so far, 54% of them have been judged good, see Figure 15.
- In batch 1, 65% of schools were judged to be satisfactory; in batch 2, 55% and in batch 3, 47% of schools received a satisfactory judgement.

- When taking into account all 72 schools reviewed so far, 54% of them have been judged satisfactory.
- The proportion of inadequate schools also differed in the three batches: 15% in batch 1, 20% in batch 2 and 9% in batch 3, which is a percentage of 14% out of the 72 schools.

Overall this may give an indication of the fact that schools in the second phase are taking the reviews more seriously and preparing more thoroughly for self-evaluation and the review visits.

FIGURE 14:

SUMMARY OF SCHOOLS REVIEW PERFORMANCE IN EACH BATCH

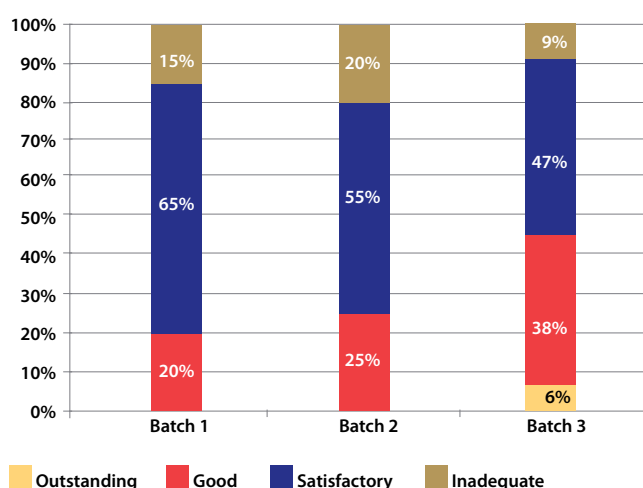
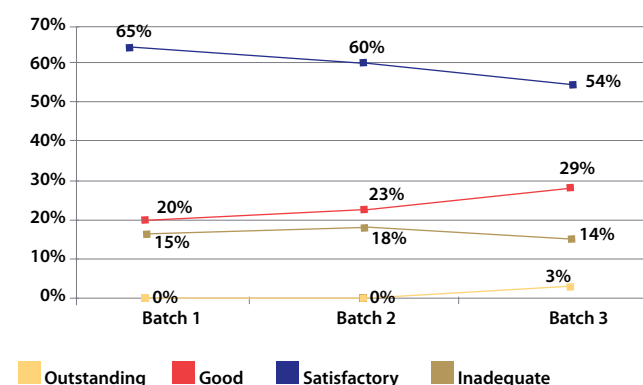


FIGURE 15:

CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGES OF SCHOOLS REVIEW PERFORMANCE BY BATCH



RECOMMENDATIONS

Following each review, schools receive a number of recommendations to guide them in planning improvement. Below is a summary of generic recommendations:

• *Achievement*

Schools lack sufficient performance data to help track and measure performance and set quantifiable targets for improvement. There is an urgent need for a unified IT based performance management system which analyses all performance data at national and school levels.

The issue of boys' lower achievement compared to girls' has been identified through reviews. A gender analysis of all school performance data is needed to confirm this and to identify particular students and schools where this is of concern, so that efforts and resources can be targeted. Teaching and learning strategies need to be better suited to boys' interests and learning needs.

• *Personal development*

Every school needs to make clear what its expectations are in relation to standards of behaviour. They also need to set out an agreed and consistent approach to behaviour management. Behaviour for learning policies should be put in place in schools and actions and improvement carefully monitored.

Much of the learning in schools is dependent on teachers. Students need greater encouragement to develop their independent and lifelong learning skills so that they can increasingly take responsibility for their own learning.

• *Teaching and Learning*

It is very common in schools to find a 'one size fits all' approach to teaching mixed ability classes. Teaching needs to cater for the learning needs of the full range of students through: better use of assessment data to plan learning and monitor student progress; organising student grouping so that teaching is better focused to match ability; and teachers need to be supported so that they have the skills to plan and deliver lessons suited to the different needs of students in their classes. There are pockets of excellent practice in some schools to tackle differentiation, but the most effective practices at national and school levels are not consistently or rigorously spread.

Although schools generally assess students, there are often weak systems to establish baselines or to use regular assessment in order to: plan learning; monitor student progress; provide useful feedback for students to help them understand how they can improve; and set targets for raising students' achievement.

• *Curriculum enrichment*

Although there is a set curriculum, the delivery of the curriculum is in the hands of teachers. The curriculum needs to be interpreted by teaching staff so that learning is more coherent, relevant and interesting for students. Opportunities

to develop core skills (i.e. literacy, numeracy and information technology) need to be better planned and maximized.

There are some good examples of relevant and interesting extra-curricular activities in many schools, but these opportunities need to be open to students of all abilities.

• *Support and guidance*

Strong measures are needed at national and school levels to ensure that every child is safe in school. This includes measures to ensure that all teachers conduct themselves in an acceptable and professional manner. Sound reporting systems need to be in place to deal with any serious incidents and to set out new procedures as required.

Whilst there is much good practice to support and guide students outside of lessons, class support for students with particular learning and behaviour needs to be increased and targeted.

• *Leadership and management*

School leaders need to be re-focused on school improvement and raising standards rather than administrative diligence. Skills and capabilities to be developed in school leaders need to include: critical self-evaluation; change management; strategic thinking and planning as well as decision-making. School leaders should also be capable of leading a professional body of staff and meeting their development needs as well as building capacity from existing strengths and external support.

Of key importance is the necessity for the Ministry to ensure greater stability in the leadership and management of schools. School Principals need to be given sufficient time in a school, with appropriate support, to be able to implement strategic plans and to have an impact on standards.







NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS UNIT

NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Bahrain's first set of National Examinations was conducted in May 2009. They were taken by all students in state schools in Grades 3 and 6, a total of approximately 21,000. Grade 3 students took examinations in Arabic and Mathematics, and Grade 6 students took examinations in Arabic, Mathematics, English and Science.

The examination papers were marked in Bahrain in May and, for the majority of students, marks were captured at the level of paper totals. For a sample of students, however, marks were captured at an item level. The conclusions in this report are based on an analysis of the performance of that sample of students on the core questions in the examinations.

The May 2009 National Examinations were the first to be administered, and they served to establish a baseline against which future performances can be measured.

PERFORMANCE OF THE EXAMINATIONS

The most common internationally established measure of the reliability of an examination is Cronbach's Alpha α . It is a measure of the internal consistency of the examination, i.e. how well the scores of the individual items correlate with the overall score, on average. As a commonly held international standard, the value of α should not be lower than 0.7, while values above 0.8 indicate strong internal reliability.

The value of α is related both to the number of items on the examination and to the standard deviation of the marks – it will tend to be lower on examinations with only a few items and with a narrow concentration of marks than on examinations with many items and a wide spread of marks.

The values of α for the May 2009 core examinations are shown in Table 1 below, together with the mean and standard deviation of the marks achieved by the sample (expressed as percentages of the maximum mark available).

TABLE 1: MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Grade	Subject	Mean mark	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
3	Arabic	43%	22%	0.91
	Mathematics	40%	19%	0.93
6	Arabic	46%	20%	0.93
	Mathematics	20%	14%	0.93
	English	33%	16%	0.84
	Science	47%	17%	0.90

The data show that the reliabilities of all six examinations were good, and examination results can be treated with confidence.

PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS

Performance of students is measured and reported by two scores: a normalised percentage score and a performance score.

The normalised percentage score is a norm-referenced score, which compares the performance of students, classes and schools within the year group; it is a relative measure. The national average is set at 70% every year.

The performance score is an absolute measure that is based on an absolute ability scale derived from a Rasch model within item response theory. It is an absolute measurement of students' ability against the skills and topics in the test specifications. The national average performance score has been defined as 4.0 in the first year and gives the baseline against which to measure future years' performance. The performance score is reported on a scale from 0.0 to 8.0, with 0.0 being the lowest and 8.0 being the highest possible score.

Students' performance, both in terms of normalised percentage and performance scores, is shown in Tables 2 and 3; gold highlights the national average scores:

TABLE 2: CUMULATIVE NORMALISED PERCENTAGE SCORES

	Grade 3		Grade 6			
	Arabic	Maths	Arabic	Maths	English	Science
Insufficient marks to report	2.3%	1.5%	1.3%	15.9%	0.4%	1.4%
50% or above	97.7%	98.5%	98.7%	84.1%	99.6%	98.6%
60% or above	84.0%	82.8%	81.7%	84.1%	90.0%	83.4%
70% or above	51.0%	49.9%	55.5%	45.8%	39.8%	51.8%
80% or above	18.7%	18.4%	18.5%	17.6%	16.4%	18.5%
90% or above	2.4%	2.2%	1.0%	4.5%	6.0%	1.3%

TABLE 3: CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE SCORES

	Grade 3		Grade 6			
	Arabic	Maths	Arabic	Maths	English	Science
0.0	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
1.0	94.2%	95.5%	93.9%	90.2%	99.6%	99.4%
2.0	86.8%	87.2%	86.9%	81.0%	98.2%	96.0%
3.0	71.6%	74.7%	74.5%	68.0%	82.3%	81.8%
4.0	51.0%	49.9%	55.5%	45.8%	39.8%	51.8%
5.0	30.4%	25.4%	29.9%	22.4%	16.4%	20.5%
6.0	14.1%	10.2%	9.3%	8.2%	6.0%	2.9%
7.0	4.8%	2.2%	1.8%	2.1%	2.0%	0.2%
8.0	1.0%	0.5%	0.1%	0.3%	0.7%	0.0%

The mean marks of the examinations as shown in Table 1 are low. The figures are expected to improve in subsequent administrations; the National Examinations are a new and different phenomenon in Bahrain, and the teaching force has not yet had an opportunity to become accustomed to the style of the questions or to the best ways to prepare students for them. The brief given to the examinations developers was to adopt the best of international practice and to include types of questions which would require students to think rather than merely to recall. It was acknowledged that these types of questions might be unfamiliar and challenging

for Bahraini students. Over the first few years of examining, as the National Examinations become an established part of the educational system, the performance of students can be expected to rise.

Low performance was most pronounced in Grade 6 Mathematics, where the mean mark of the sample was only 20% of the total. This is lower than can be attributed simply to an unfamiliar style of examining, and indicates a more deep-seated mismatch between the demand of the examinations and the abilities of the students being examined. In principle, this could be because:

- The demands inherent in the National Curriculum are not realistic for the education system to achieve;
- The National Curriculum is not being taught.

In general, this low performance in Grade 6 Mathematics echoes Bahrain's performance in TIMSS 2003 and 2007. Bearing in mind that TIMSS tests Grade 8 students and is a curriculum-independent test, the similarities are generally low performance of students in Mathematics. In the Bahrain National Examinations, Mathematics performance deteriorates markedly from Grade 3 to Grade 6, whereas Science performance in Grade 6 is significantly better than Mathematics. Bahrain's performance in TIMSS Science is fairly close to the international average, and the gap between Bahrain's performance and the average decreased between 2003 and 2007. In TIMSS Mathematics, however, the trend is the exact opposite: Bahrain's performance is a long way below the international average, and the gap between its performance and the average increased from 2003 to 2007.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE PERFORMANCE SCORES IN RELATION TO TOPICS AND SKILLS

The data are for subjects examined at Grades 3 and 6, and refer specifically to the 'Topics' within subjects (for example, Listening, Reading, and Writing in the case of languages), and to the 'Skills' within 'Topics' (for example, 'understanding explicit meaning', 'structure and grammar', 'main points of argument', in the case of Arabic).

The performance score, reported on a scale of 0.0 to 8.0, is given for each 'Topic' and 'Skill' in each of the subject tables below.

The general comments below are based solely on data taken from a 10% random sample of all students in the cohort. The data is drawn from only the first year of the programme of National Curriculum Assessment, so any observations are tentative. They represent an exploratory scrutiny of the data, and may be used as the basis for further investigation.

PERFORMANCE BY THE NATIONAL COHORT AT GRADE 3 ARABIC

- Performance across 'Topics' (Reading, Writing and Listening) is broadly similar.
- Writing seems to pose the greatest challenge to students, with students performing least well in this area.
- 'Skill' areas where students appear to be strongest include identifying main ideas in a conversation, detecting tone of voice, appreciating writers' language, and summarising main points. However, giving meanings of words and providing details of a conversation appear to provide students with the most difficulty. See Figures 16A and 16B below.

FIGURE 16A:
GRADE 3 ARABIC RESULTS BY TOPIC

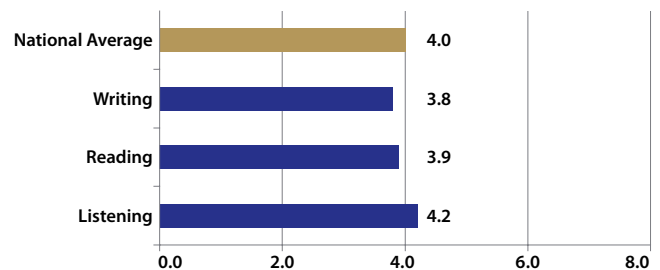
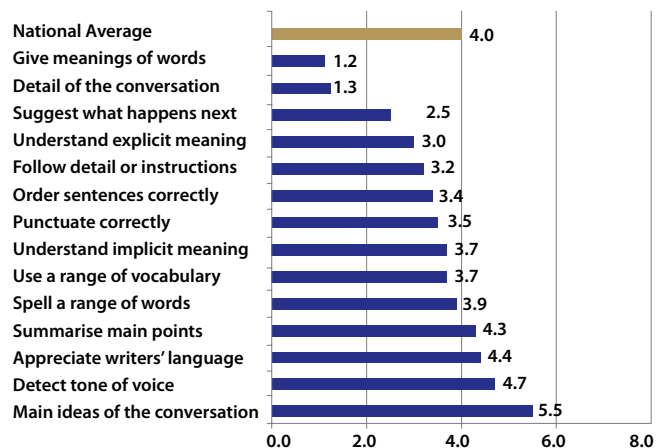


FIGURE 16B:
GRADE 3 ARABIC RESULTS BY SKILL

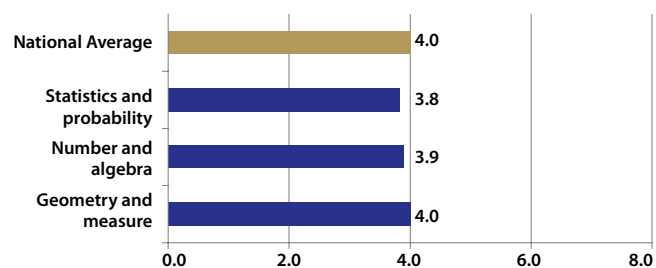


MATHEMATICS

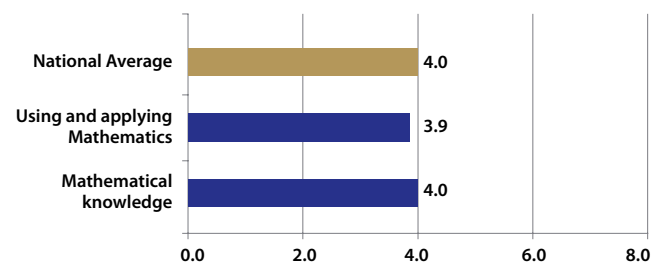
- Performance across the 'Topics' (Statistics and Probability, Number and Algebra, Geometry and Measurement) is very similar.
- Again, performance in the 'Skill' areas: using and applying mathematics, and mathematical knowledge, is very similar, as can be seen in Figures 17A and 17B.

FIGURE 17A:

GRADE 3 MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY TOPIC


FIGURE 17B:

GRADE 3 MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY SKILL

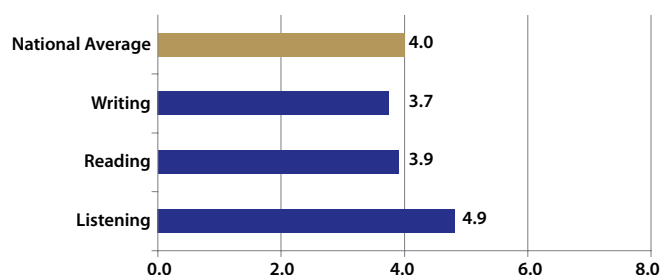


PERFORMANCE BY THE NATIONAL COHORT AT GRADE 6 ARABIC

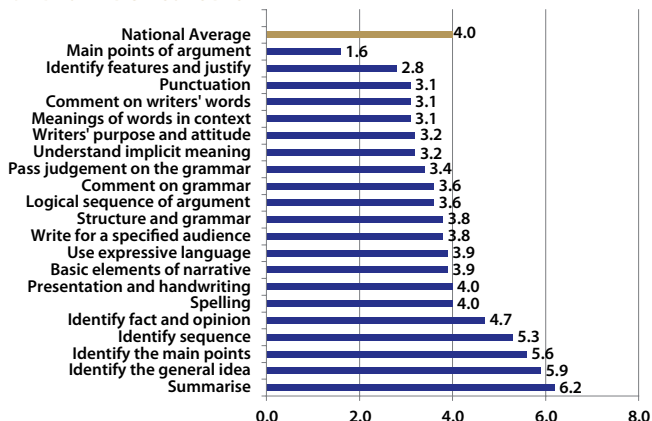
- Across 'Topic' areas (Reading, Writing and Listening) there are notable differences, with students performing particularly well on Listening compared to Reading and Writing (Figure 18A).
- As in Grade 3, Writing appears to present more of a challenge.
- Performance across the broad range of skills is fairly evenly distributed, with some notable exceptions.
- The strongest skills demonstrated include: summarising, identifying the general idea and main points, identifying a sequence, fact and opinion.
- The weaker areas identified are: identifying features and justifying, commenting on writers' words, and meanings of words in context. (See Figure 18B.)

FIGURE 18A:

GRADE 6 ARABIC RESULTS BY TOPIC


FIGURE 18B:

GRADE 6 ARABIC RESULTS BY SKILL

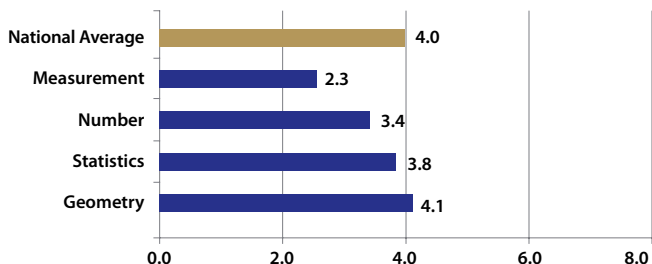


MATHEMATICS

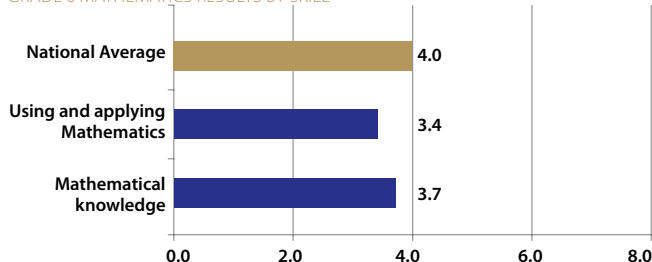
- There is a wide range of performance across 'Topics' (Measurement, Number, Statistics, and Geometry), as shown in Figure 19A.
- Student performance is strongest in Geometry and notably weaker in Measurement.
- Student performance is broadly similar across skills which address using and applying Mathematics and mathematical knowledge, Figure 19B.

FIGURE 19A:

GRADE 6 MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY TOPIC


FIGURE 19B:

GRADE 6 MATHEMATICS RESULTS BY SKILL



ENGLISH

- Students are significantly weak in Writing, though performing equally well in Listening and Reading, Figure 20A.
- Students are strongest in the skill areas of understanding short dialogues, understanding detail and gist, skimming and scanning, understanding signs or notices, and use of language in context, Figure 20B.
- Students are particularly weak in brief guided writing, and story writing from pictures.

FIGURE 20A:

GRADE 6 ENGLISH RESULTS BY TOPIC

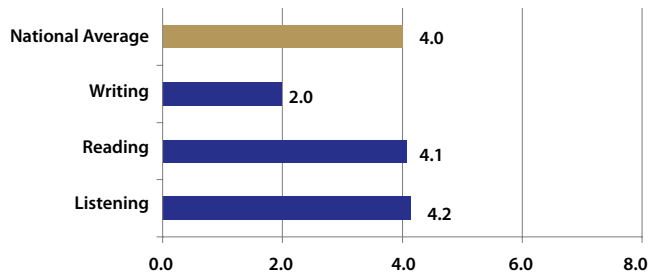
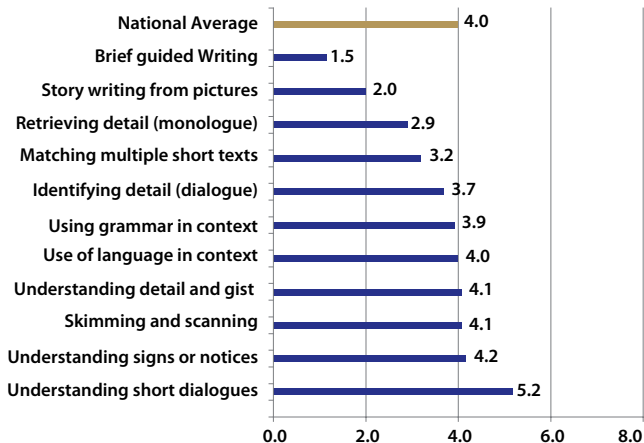


FIGURE 20B:

GRADE 6 ENGLISH RESULTS BY SKILL



SCIENCE

- Students perform equally well in Earth and Space Science, Life Science and Environment, and Natural Science. (See Figure 21A.)
- Performance in the skill areas of enquiry skills and analysis, applications and implications, recall and understanding, is very similar, Figure 21B.

FIGURE 21A:

GRADE 6 SCIENCE RESULTS BY TOPIC

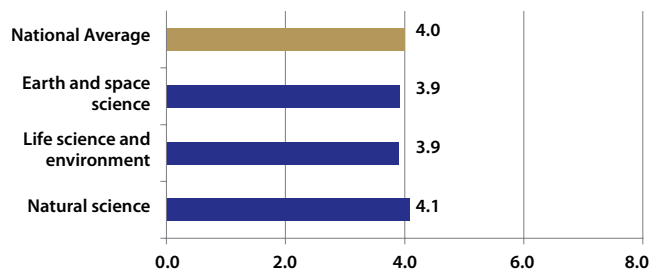
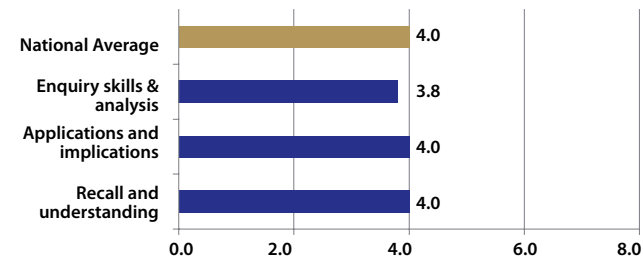


FIGURE 21B:

GRADE 6 SCIENCE RESULTS BY SKILL



PERFORMANCE BY GENDER

Girls outperformed boys in the National Examinations by a large margin at both grades and in every subject. The difference in performance can be seen clearly in Figures 22 to 27 below. In all six figures, the distribution of performances by the girls is clearly located further to the right than the distribution for the boys. Again, this picture echoes Bahrain's performance in TIMSS 2003 and 2007, where the gender difference in performance was one of the greatest ever found in a participating country.

FIGURE 22:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 3 ARABIC

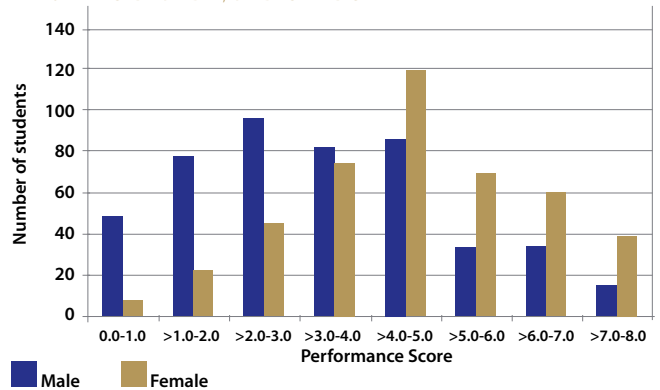


FIGURE 23:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 3 MATHEMATICS

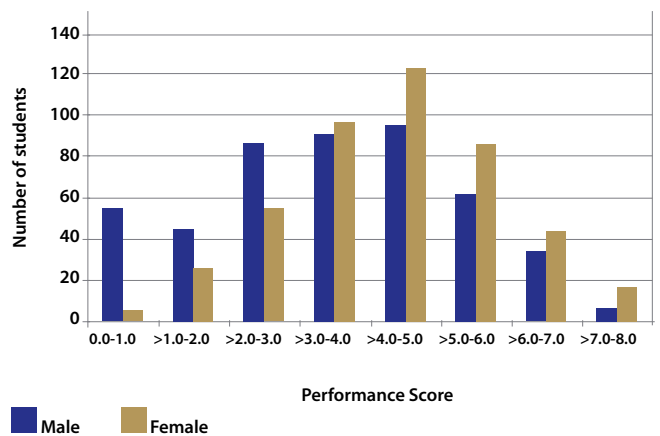


FIGURE 24:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 6 ARABIC

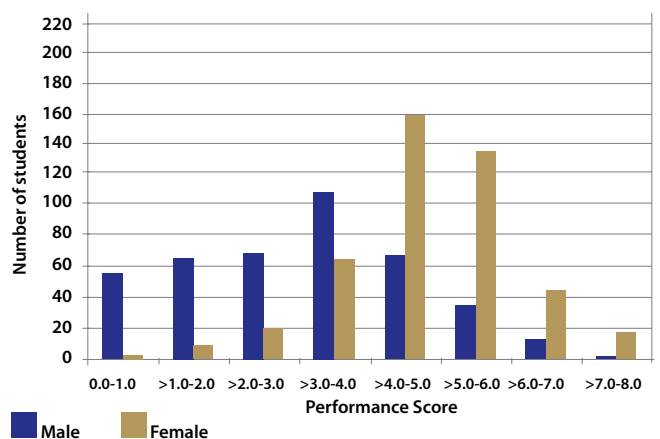


FIGURE 25:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 6 MATHEMATICS

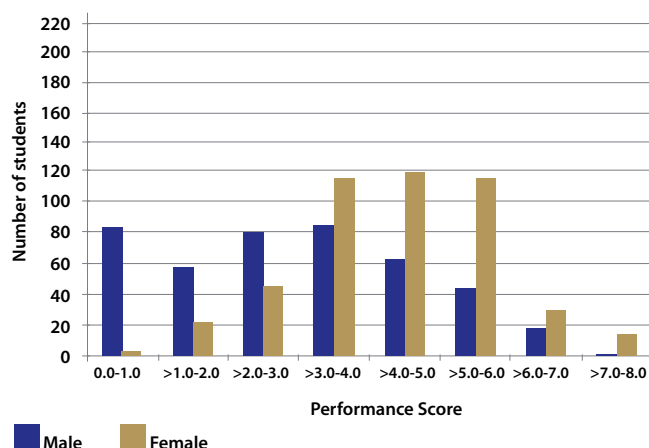


FIGURE 26:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 6 ENGLISH

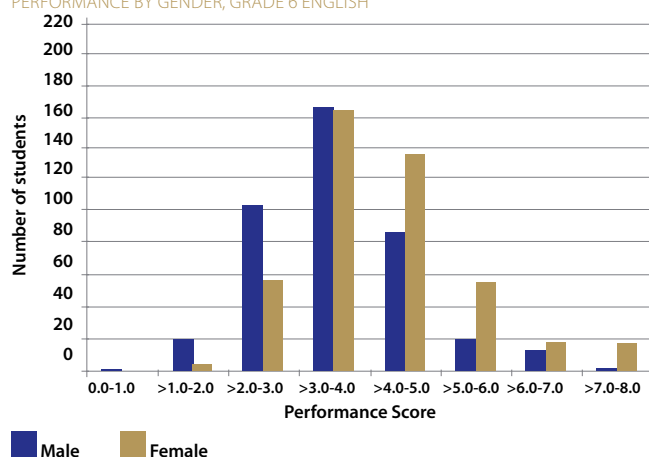
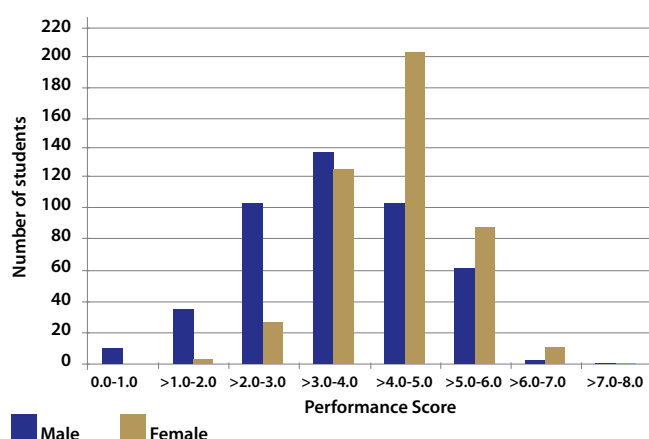


FIGURE 27:

PERFORMANCE BY GENDER, GRADE 6 SCIENCE



The differences in mean performance score between girls and boys together with the standard error of those differences are shown in Table 4. These figures demonstrate that the scale of the gender differences is considerably larger than the uncertainty (the standard error) which arises from the size of the sample. The figures provide a benchmark against which gender differences in future years can be compared.

TABLE 4:

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MEAN PERFORMANCE SCORE

Grade	Subject	Performance scores for girls		Performance scores for boys		Difference between boys and girls	
		Mean	Standard error	Mean	Standard error	Mean	Standard error
3	Arabic	4.56	0.08	3.33	0.08	1.22	0.11
	Maths	4.33	0.07	3.50	0.08	0.83	0.11
6	Arabic	4.79	0.06	3.02	0.08	1.77	0.10
	Maths	4.31	0.06	2.87	0.09	1.44	0.11
	English	4.13	0.06	3.56	0.05	0.57	0.08
	Science	4.30	0.04	3.56	0.06	0.74	0.07

The performance of boys and girls on individual items has been examined from graphs of girls' facilities against boys' facilities. These show that the better performance of girls cannot be attributed to particular groups of questions.

In the language subjects, the difference in performance seems to be independent of the major competency. Boys found the same questions as difficult as girls, and the scale of the difference in performance seemed to be independent of what was being assessed.

In the Mathematics and Science examinations, however, there were some small but identifiable trends. Although girls outperformed boys in all areas, the differences were slightly less pronounced in:

- Grade 3 Mathematics questions assessing Geometry and Measurement
- Grade 6 Mathematics questions assessing Measurement
- Grade 6 Science questions assessing Recall and Understanding
- Grade 6 Science multiple choice questions.

Of the 262 items in the six core examinations, boys performed better than girls on only 12 of them (representing 13 out of the 428 marks). Of these, seven items were on the Grade 6 Science examinations (six of them assessed Recall and Understanding, and six were multiple choice questions). Girls performed better than boys on every item in Arabic (both grades) and in English.

Despite these 12 items, there are no groups of questions which stand out as favouring girls in such a way as to distort the overall picture. The girls have performed better across the board. The differences are not, in other words, caused by a subset of biased questions in each examination which favour girls.

The reasons for these substantial differences in performance cannot be determined from examination data alone. Possible reasons could include differences in resources (including class sizes, space, and materials such as books), differences in pedagogy, in classroom discipline, in the qualifications or competence of teachers, cultural differences in male and female attitudes to learning, or differences in motivation during the administration of the examination.

SUMMARY OF EMERGING ISSUES

The May 2009 National Examinations were the first to be administered. They provide a benchmark from which trends in performance can be identified in the future. Nevertheless, a small number of issues can already be identified:

- The examinations showed good levels of reliability at both grades and in all subjects.
- Students found the examinations challenging and their raw marks were low as a proportion of the total available marks. This is particularly pronounced in Grade 6 Mathematics, where it seems that the National Curriculum is either mismatched to the abilities of the students or is different from what is taught in schools.
- There is a difference between the performance of boys and girls, with the girls outperforming the boys by a very large margin. This difference appears at both grades and in all subjects, but at both grades it is largest in Arabic.
- The difference in performance between girls and boys is independent of the skill in the languages.
- In Grade 6 Science, the smallest differences between the performance of boys and girls were found in multiple choice questions assessing Recall and Understanding.
- In Mathematics, the smallest differences between the performance of boys and girls were found on questions assessing Geometry and Measurement (Grade 3) and Measurement (Grade 6).
- The general comments on the performance scores in relation to Topics and Skills represent an exploratory scrutiny of the data, and may be used as the basis for further investigation.





VOCATIONAL REVIEW UNIT

VOCATIONAL REVIEW UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) began its first formal review cycle in September 2008. Between that date and June 2009, reviews of twenty providers were undertaken, all of them licensed by the Ministry of Labour. Pilot reviews of four non-compulsory education institutes licensed by the Ministry of Education were also carried out during this period; the outcomes of these were not published, and are not included in this report.

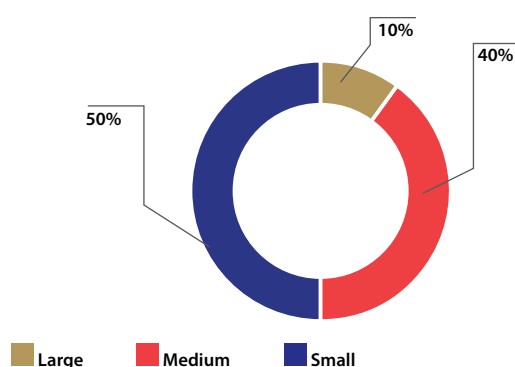
Reviews are based on the VRU's Review Framework, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team 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:

Outstanding.....	1
Good.....	2
Satisfactory.....	3
Below satisfactory.....	4
Very weak.....	5

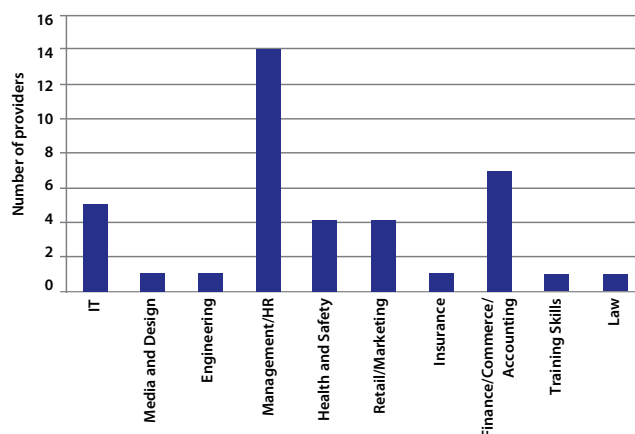
All the providers reviewed were privately owned. They varied considerably in size, some enrolling fewer than 50 learners each year, whilst others catered to several thousands. Most learners came from the private sector, having been sponsored by their employers. Figure 28 gives a breakdown of the proportion of small, medium and large providers.

FIGURE 28
BREAKDOWN OF PROVIDERS BY SIZE



Between them, the providers covered a range of vocational areas, including management, information technology (IT), health and safety, retail, insurance and finance. The majority of the courses offered were in management, soft skills and related courses, with over half the providers concentrating on these areas. Figure 29 provides more detail.

FIGURE 29:
VOCATIONAL AREAS OFFERED BY THE PROVIDERS

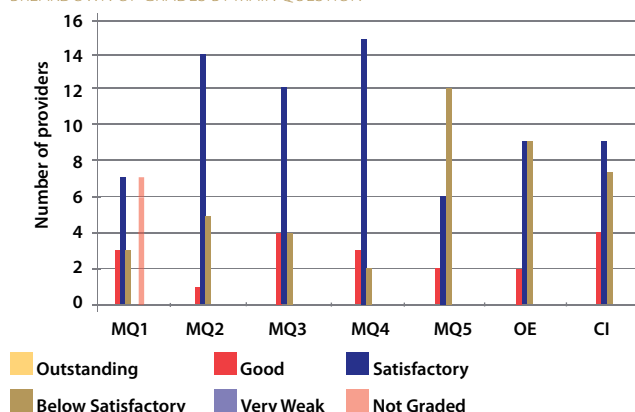


Most providers offered a mix of accredited and non-accredited provision. Three-quarters of the providers reviewed offered some externally accredited courses. However, there was a predominance of internally certificated provision for which learners' attendance was the only measure of achievement. The vast majority of the courses offered were of short duration, lasting three days or less.

REVIEW OUTCOMES

Reviewers award a grade for each of the five Main Questions in the Review Framework, for the overall effectiveness of the provision, and for the providers' capacity to improve. A synthesis of the grades given for each Main Question, Overall Effectiveness and providers' Capacity to Improve is shown in Figure 30.

FIGURE 30:
BREAKDOWN OF GRADES BY MAIN QUESTION

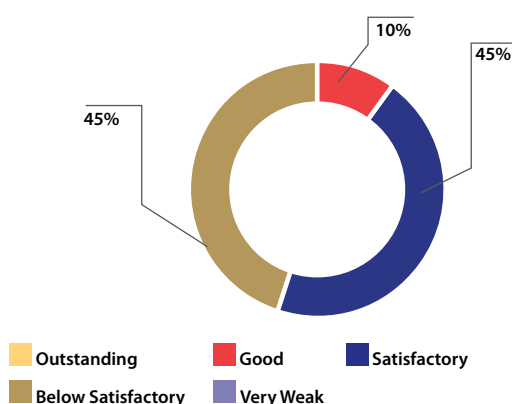


PROVIDERS' OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

The most important review judgement is that of providers' overall effectiveness. This is arrived at on the basis of the grades for the five Main Questions, and the significance of the strengths and areas for improvement identified. 11 of the 20 providers reviewed were judged to be offering an adequate standard of training overall. Of these, 9 were graded satisfactory, and the remaining 2 good. Provision amongst the other 9, however, was found to be below satisfactory overall, giving a high inadequacy rate of 45%. In general, inadequate providers demonstrated weaknesses in the key areas of learners' achievement, the effectiveness of training or the quality of their leadership and management. The grades for overall effectiveness are given in Figure 31 below.

FIGURE 31

ANALYSIS OF GRADES AWARDED FOR PROVIDERS' OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS



PROVIDERS' CAPACITY TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR TRAINING

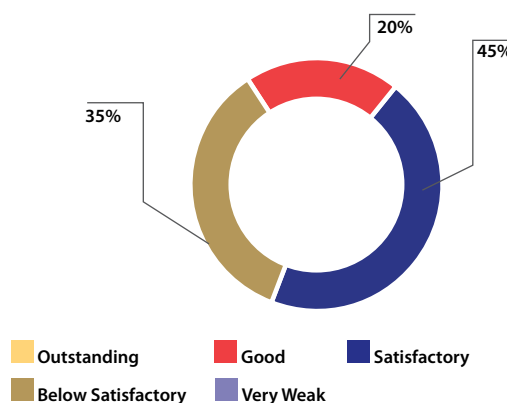
This is a highly significant judgement because it looks at whether providers have in place the potential to raise their standards continuously, to look at their provision objectively, and to make adjustments and improvements as necessary. Like the rest of the Review Framework, it focuses firmly on the learners' experience and achievement, and the providers' ability to improve these. It is not concerned with the extent to which providers increase their profits or to improve in a purely business sense.

As seen in Figure 32, 20% of those reviewed were judged to have good capacity to improve, and 45% were deemed satisfactory in this respect. The remaining 35%, however, demonstrated inadequate capacity to improve – a sizeable proportion which gives cause for concern. Providers who fared well had got things right in terms of human resources; they had a management team equipped to take them forward and sufficient staff to deliver programmes effectively. Most were either expanding the range of programmes on offer, or appropriately increasing their enrolment. The best of them demonstrated improving trends in learners' achievement, and the implementation of well-considered initiatives to enhance their provision.

Where providers received a low grade, it was generally because they either lacked, or failed to use information and systems crucial to quality assurance and improvement planning – performance data or feedback from stakeholders, for example. These deficits were reflected in self-evaluation forms which were without objectivity and failed to identify key areas for improvement.

FIGURE 32:

ANALYSIS OF GRADES AWARDED FOR PROVIDERS' CAPACITY TO IMPROVE

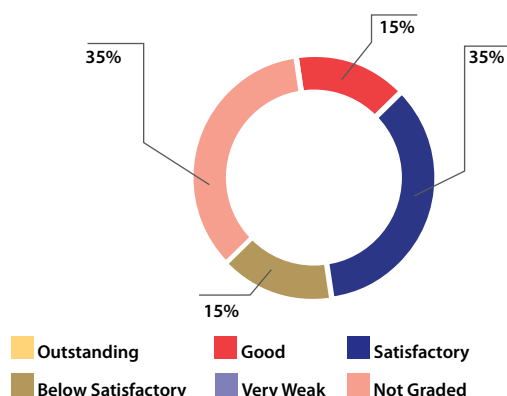


LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT: MAIN QUESTION 1

This question focusses on the extent to which learners develop appropriate skills and gain the qualifications for which they are aiming. Establishing how many learners achieved their qualifications or learning objectives was challenging and sometimes impossible, because too few providers keep records of how well their learners perform. Either data is not kept at all, or it is incomplete and of dubious accuracy. For this reason, as Figure 33 shows, Main Question 1 was not graded in over one-third of the providers reviewed. Of the remainder, achievement was found to be good in only three providers, whilst it was below satisfactory in three of them.

FIGURE 33:

ANALYSIS OF GRADES FOR LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT



There are several possible reasons for this. A key issue is the one mentioned above; the fact that some providers neither check learners' progress through their courses, nor do they record individual outcomes. This was particularly evident on internally accredited and non-accredited courses, which currently form the bulk of provision in the Kingdom. In far too many cases,

learners on short courses were awarded an attendance certificate indicating that they had successfully completed their training without their trainers checking to see whether they had attained the requisite skills and knowledge. On longer courses, trainers did not always monitor learners' progress, or adequately document what learners had achieved and what they had still to cover. A majority failed to assess learners' starting points at the outset of their training, to establish the extent of their prior knowledge, and ensure that they were on the right level of programme.

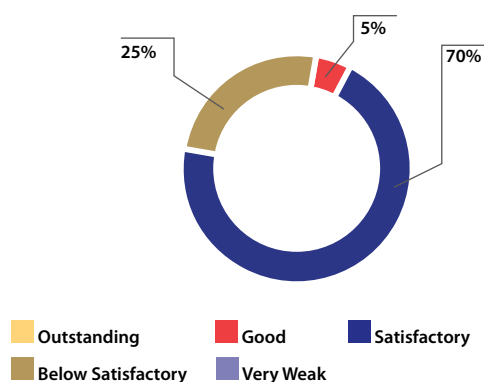
Encouragingly, a majority of the providers reviewed, 12 out of the 20, offered learners satisfactory or better opportunities to develop relevant skills. Reviewers found several good examples of learners who had increased their professional capabilities, gained in confidence and sometimes even secured promotions after attending a training course. Learners generally attended regularly. Attendance and retention were judged satisfactory or better in fourteen of the twenty providers. There were serious instances of unpunctuality, however, in nearly nine of the providers reviewed, with a significant proportion of learners arriving late, sometimes by thirty minutes or more. Such unpunctuality frequently went unchallenged by the trainer, and, in the worst examples, led to poor classroom management, with trainers keeping the rest of the class waiting until the stragglers arrived, and subsequently failing to get through the material planned for the day.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND TRAINING: MAIN QUESTION 2

The quality of the actual training offered, how well planned and delivered it is, and how learning is assessed, are all issues central to the learners' experience. Whilst 70% of the providers reviewed were satisfactory in this regard, as shown in Figure 34, training was judged below satisfactory in a further 25%. Of the 92 training sessions observed, 20% were good and just over 50% satisfactory. However, nearly one-third of the sessions were below satisfactory, a proportion which indicates significant room for improvement.

FIGURE 34:

ANALYSIS OF GRADES AWARDED FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING AND TRAINING



There were some aspects to celebrate. In nearly all cases, trainers were appropriately qualified and experienced in their professional area, although only a small proportion had relevant qualifications in teaching or training. They used real, work-related examples to enliven sessions and maintain learners' interest and motivation. In nine of the providers reviewed, however, lessons were insufficiently planned, with the learning objectives either not clear enough, or not shared with learners. In over half the providers, trainers failed to ensure that the work set met learners' individual needs. In far too many cases, learners were all expected to work at the same pace, irrespective of their ability and prior knowledge, meaning that those who needed more support were left behind, whilst the more able were not sufficiently challenged.

Assessment was unsatisfactory in half the providers, generally because it was not thorough enough, and did not result in the detailed feedback necessary to help learners improve. There was no assessment at all on some short courses, meaning that learners were left with no indication of how they had performed.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH PROGRAMMES MEET THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS AND EMPLOYERS: MAIN QUESTION 3

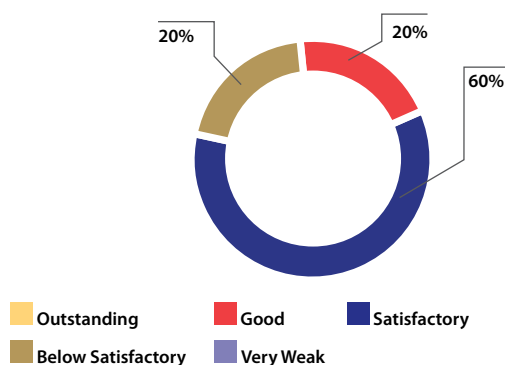
For this Main Question, reviewers consider the relevance and range of the programmes offered by each provider. Generally, providers fared well in this respect, with 80% of them graded satisfactory or better. The strengths identified significantly outweighed the areas for improvement. In three-quarters of the providers reviewed, employers and their learners expressed good levels of satisfaction with the range of programmes available and their vocational relevance. Some specialist, 'niche' provision, for example in design, retail and insurance, was particularly well-focused. In most of the more generic providers, there was far too little provision leading to recognised, externally accredited qualifications, which are crucial to the realisation of Bahrain's National Economic Strategy, and there were too many short, non-accredited courses on aspects of management and soft skills. This was a shortcoming recognised by several providers. Progression routes were limited in many cases.

Providers maintained good one-to-one relationships with employers, tailoring courses, especially short courses, to meet individual employers' specific requirements, and showing flexibility with regard to course timings. Few of them, however, carried out a systematic analysis of local labour market needs to inform decisions about what courses they should offer, and only a minority were able to explain why they offered the programmes they did.

Providers who were below satisfactory for this Main Question generally demonstrated a narrowness in the range of provision offered, an absence of suitable progression routes, or lack of coherence in the provision overall.

FIGURE 35

ANALYSIS OF GRADES AWARDED FOR THE EXTENT TO WHICH PROGRAMMES MEET THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS AND EMPLOYERS



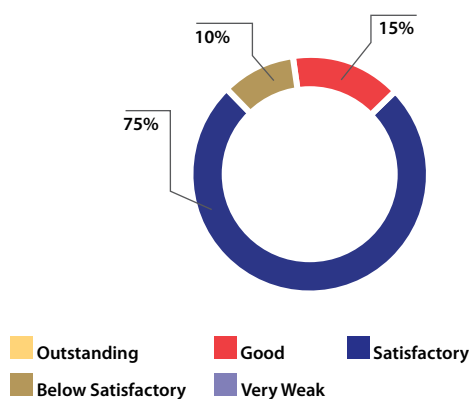
LEARNERS' SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE: MAIN QUESTION 4

For this Main Question, reviewers examine how effective the support available to learners is in helping them make progress and achieve their goals. Amongst the 20 providers reviewed, the quality of support was overwhelmingly satisfactory, with three-quarters of those reviewed receiving a grade 3. 3 providers offered good support; in a further 2, the support given to learners was below satisfactory.

Generally, support was well-focussed. Trainers made considerable efforts to make themselves available to learners, both during and outside training sessions; they were accessible by telephone and email, as well as in person. Most providers, aware of the conflicting demands on learners' time, had good arrangements to enable them to catch up if they missed training sessions. Whilst structured career guidance was rare, trainers provided good, informal help in this respect and some made effective use of their professional contacts to help learners find employment opportunities. The information available regarding course selection and progression routes was largely satisfactory. The quality of providers' websites varied, however. The best of them were clear, helpful and easy to use, whilst others were not updated regularly enough, and contained inaccurate information.

FIGURE 36:

ANALYSIS OF GRADES FOR SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS



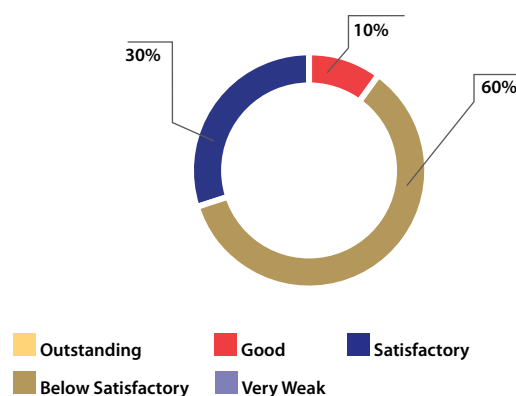
Health and safety, graded inadequate in over half the providers, was an area of significant concern. In the worst cases there was evidence of unsafe practices, inadequate risk assessment and poor maintenance of vital equipment, such as fire extinguishers. In some other providers, whilst the basics of health and safety were adequately followed, health and safety policies were either not sufficiently clear, or not effectively shared with staff or learners.

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS: MAIN QUESTION 5

Effective leadership and management, focussed on the achievement and experience of learners, are essential to the long-term success of skills training. It is a matter of some concern, therefore, that 60% of the providers reviewed, as shown in Figure 37, were judged to have leadership and management in which the weaknesses significantly outweighed the strengths. The only area of consistently good performance related to the recruitment and deployment of staff. Generally, providers used rigorous selection processes, in most cases setting the bar high in terms of the educational qualifications required of their trainers. The most thorough providers directly evaluated the skills of prospective candidates by observing them in the classroom. Once staff members were employed, however, providers were not nearly rigorous enough in monitoring their performance. Some did not observe their trainers at all. Others undertook some observations, but did so haphazardly and irregularly, failing to provide clear, developmental feedback to trainers, or to ensure that any weaknesses identified had been addressed. Only a few carried out observations which were structured, helpful and which led to demonstrable improvement.

FIGURE 37:

ANALYSIS OF GRADES FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN RAISING ACHIEVEMENT AND SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS



To manage provision effectively, raising standards and promoting improvement, providers must understand how well they are performing. A significant majority of those reviewed lacked this crucial information, because they either failed to collect data regarding their learners' achievements, or, if they did collect it, neglected to use it to monitor their performance over time. Similarly, although most collected some feedback from learners and employers, 60% of them were either not systematic enough in doing this, or failed to make effective use of the information they had gathered.

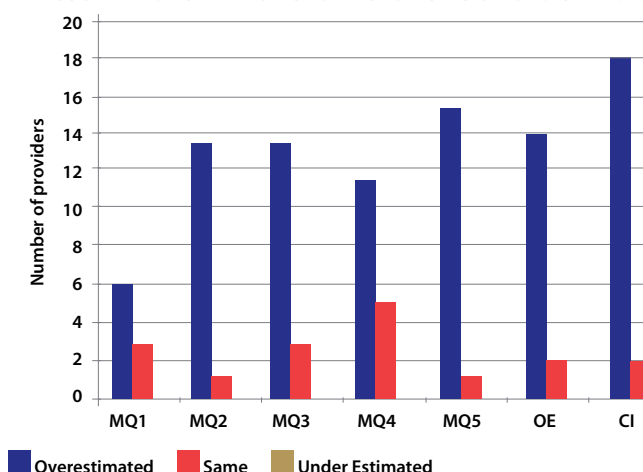
It is perhaps not surprising, then, that strategic and improvement planning were ineffective in a majority of providers – 60% of the sample. Whilst managers were able to describe their vision and mission, these were, in many cases, insufficiently focussed on the experience and achievement of learners. Plans were often not detailed enough, lacking the clear objectives and timescales necessary to ensure fulfilment of the mission and vision expressed, and to enable continuous improvement.

As part of the review process providers are required to assess the quality of their provision, using the same framework and criteria as the review team, and submit this in the form of a self-evaluation form (SEF) listing strengths, areas for improvement and grades for each Main Question, for overall effectiveness and for capacity to improve. The quality of the SEF is a key aspect of the evidence used in judging leadership and management. Self-evaluation is a challenging task, and the Vocational Review Unit held several workshops for providers to introduce them to the process, as well as giving significant one-to-one support in the run-up to reviews. Despite this, the SEFs prepared for reviews were poor in a majority of cases. Most of them lacked detail, and contained judgements which were frequently unclear and unsupported by evidence – statements of intent rather than objective reflections of performance. In every review, the team identified areas for improvement which were missing from the SEF.

There was, too, as seen in Figure 38, a substantial degree of inaccuracy in the grades proposed in SEFs, with providers significantly over-estimating the quality of their provision. In the worst example of this, a provider judged inadequate by the review team graded themselves outstanding across all aspects of their provision. Whilst the general trend was less extreme than this, a significant lack of objectivity was evident across the board. Of the individual grades proposed by providers, only 8% were accurate. 45% were over-estimated by one grade, 37% by two grades, and in 10% of cases, providers judged themselves three grades better than they actually were – a worrying lack of accuracy.

FIGURE 38:

ANALYSIS OF AVAILABLE SELF-EVALUATION GRADES AGAINST ACTUAL GRADES AWARDED



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The substantial evidence base collected during this first year of vocational reviews suggests that while most providers have the raw materials necessary to meet the needs of their learners, few of them are using these to the best effect. Each review has resulted in a series of recommendations tailored to meet the specific circumstances of that provider. Below are a series of recommendations which apply to the majority, and can be used to good effect by all.

- Every provider has something to celebrate, and this should be the cornerstone for future success. Most have experienced and well-qualified trainers, for example – to function more effectively in their role, these need to be supported through regular observation of their performance, thorough appraisal, and well-focussed staff development.
- Managers cannot promote improvement if they do not know how well they are doing in the first place. This is a more challenging task for those offering non-accredited provision; however, the Vocational Review Unit has devised a system to enable providers to gather performance data on all courses, irrespective of the length, or method of accreditation. It is crucial that managers make it a priority, and a regular part of their practice, to get an overview of achievement, and trends in achievement, by individual programme as well as across the whole of their provision.
- Vocational learners come from a range of backgrounds and have widely differing levels of ability. Whatever the type of course they are attending, their individual needs must be identified and respected, and training sessions planned to ensure that all participants have an equal chance of success.

- Vocational training is not an end in itself; its ultimate purpose is to ensure that Bahrain's employers and labour market have the skilled work force they need to compete in a demanding economic environment. The current predominance of short courses in management and 'soft skills' may be of short-term benefit to learners, employers and providers, but is unlikely to meet Bahrain's longer-term skills development needs. Providers need to consider carefully whether the programmes they currently offer or plan to offer in the future are the best and most relevant available. In particular, they should find ways to extend their range of accredited provision, so that a higher proportion of learners can gain qualifications as well as developing skills.
- Providers need to take a more rigorous approach to quality assurance, consistently and objectively assessing how well they are performing, and making considered, detailed and regularly updated plans for improvement. This rigour should be reflected in a self-evaluation process which is thorough, inclusive and objective, and which results in accurate, regularly updated self-evaluation forms.







HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW UNIT

HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The primary function of the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) is to assure the quality of higher education in Bahrain. It does this through two types of quality review: institutional and programme. These are carried out in a transparent manner and are in line with international good practice.

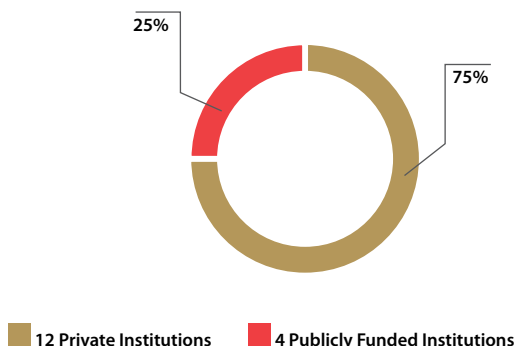
With regard to institutional reviews, the Unit conducts whole-of-institution reviews across all higher education institutions operating in Bahrain. A panel of peer reviewers who are experts in higher education are constituted. They assess the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance arrangements against a pre-defined set of quality indicators through which areas of strength and weakness can be identified.

Programme reviews are a specialised exercise, which focus on the quality assurance arrangements within existing learning programmes in a particular disciplinary or subject area. The reviews are carried out by a panel of peer reviewers using specific indicators. These indicators are based on minimum standards required to assure the quality of a given programme. The report on a programme review judges whether the programme meets minimum standards and also makes recommendations for the enhancement of the programme. If the programme meets minimum standards, a confidence judgment is made.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS

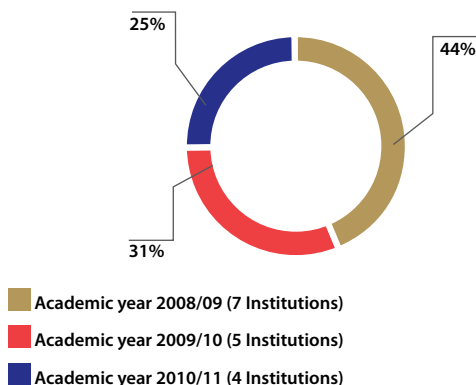
In the 2008-2009 academic year, there were 16 higher education institutions operating in Bahrain; four of which were public providers supported by the Kingdom of Bahrain. These were: the University of Bahrain, Bahrain Polytechnic, the College of Health Sciences, and the Royal Police Academy. The other 12 institutions were private providers, some of which were free-standing institutions with Bahraini owners, whilst others were campuses of foreign institutions. Between September 2008 and December 2010, HERU will conduct institutional reviews of all 16 higher education institutions operating in Bahrain. See Figure 39.

FIGURE 39:
INSTITUTIONS IN BAHRAIN



The first cycle of institutional reviews began in May 2008 when the seven higher education institutions to be reviewed during the 2008-2009 academic year received notification of the schedule concerning their review, see Figure 40.

FIGURE 40:
PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS TO BE REVIEWED DURING 2008-2011 ACADEMIC YEARS



A series of capacity building workshops were held for the seven institutions by an international expert as well as the Director responsible for each review. The purpose of the workshops was to provide information to assist the institutions in the production of a review portfolio, which consists of a self-evaluation report and supporting evidence. The Director also ensured that the institution made appropriate and adequate preparations for the site visit by the Panel.

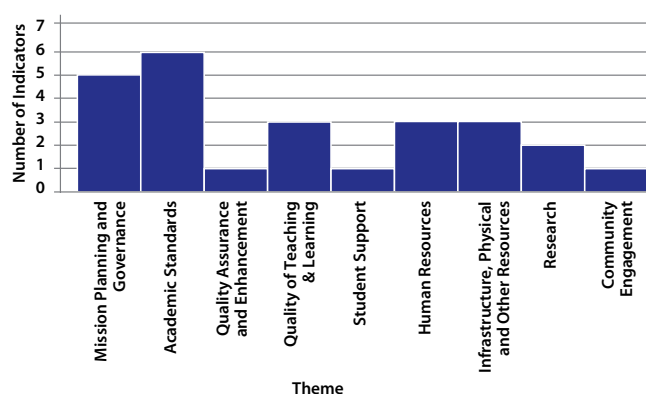
For the seven institutional reviews that took place during the 2008-2009 academic year Panels comprising international and regional experts in higher education were constituted to undertake each of the reviews. The first self-evaluation report was submitted on 4 September 2008 with the site visit taking place from 9-13 November 2008.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS

In order to ensure that there is public accountability of the quality of higher education providers, after the site visit, Review Reports were developed by the Panel. These provided assistance to institutions as they enhanced the quality of provision in the core functions of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement and generally assisted the institutions as they continued with their development trajectory.

The reports contained judgements about the quality assurance arrangements for each institution in terms of nine themes which together contained 25 indicators as can be seen in Figure 41. The judgements are in the form of Commendations (areas of strength), Affirmations (areas in need of improvement recognised by the institution itself) and Recommendations (areas in need of improvement).

FIGURE 41:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW THEMES AND INDICATORS



ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS

Of the seven institutional reviews in which the site visits have been carried out there are similar areas in urgent need of improvement. All of the institutions are owned by private investors. Of the six institutional review reports published to date two institutions received no Commendation. A Commendation refers to a demonstrated good practice that goes beyond the expectations contained in an indicator, and which in the HERU's view is particularly significant.

The other four institutions received 18 Commendations between them. Generally these were around issues of student support, well-qualified academics and their commitment to the institutions and to students. Two institutions received Commendations on support for academic staff. Two received Commendations on good governance structures.

The issues that were found to be in need of improvement can be clustered into 5 broad areas: (i) mission, planning and governance; (ii) quality management and academic standards; (iii) teaching and learning; (iv) research; (v) community engagement. These will be considered in turn below. Before doing so it needs to be noted that for many of the private providers there is a seriously insufficient campus infrastructure, in terms of buildings and space as well as library with regard to stock collection and electronic resources. Information technology is also a weak area. Institutions need to move ahead quickly with their plans to build new campuses. Until such time that these become functional, the quality of the teaching and learning environment for students is compromised.

MISSION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

Firstly, while most of the universities had vision and mission statements there was often a disjuncture between how these translated into the identity, culture as well as planning of the core functions of the institutions. Furthermore, the statements were typically developed by the owners or Presidents and have not been the result of a consultative process by stakeholders. This has a negative impact on the ethos of the institution and often on the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

Secondly, there is a blurring between the governance and management structures of the universities. In some of the institutions reviewed there are inappropriate governance structures. While there may be Boards of Trustees, these are often not active. Boards need to meet regularly to fulfil their role in setting strategy, and monitoring the quality of the provision in the three core functions in the institution. Furthermore, in some cases where there is a single owner, he or she is also the President of the university, which means there is a complete absence of good corporate governance and management.

Thirdly, Panels were concerned to find that management practices were not formalised, transparent or inclusive. Importantly, they found a disjuncture between the executive management and the Deans. Institutions will not gain full benefit from the appointment of Deans of Colleges unless there is an appropriate management structure in which the Deans are full members and in relation to which they are empowered to exercise their responsibilities, which needs to include control of the budget.

A fourth concern is the absence of strategic planning which links budgeting, resource allocation and planning around the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. In many cases of singly owned institutions, the budget is developed and managed by the President with no input by other members of staff or the Board (if it exists).

The Panels generally did not find evidence of mechanisms that link the planning, resourcing, implementing and monitoring of the academic project in a coherent manner. Aligning quality assurance with planning and resource allocation is essential to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is not compromised. The universities need to develop a system for planning and resource allocation which is informed by both, the institution's commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning in its programme offerings, and where appropriate with special attention being given to the postgraduate programmes as well as the broader teaching and learning environment. Failure to do so constitutes a major academic and reputational risk for the institutions.

Few of the seven institutions reviewed provided evidence of appropriate external benchmarks being used to set academic standards or to measure the institution's performance in its teaching and learning programmes. A university needs to identify similar institutions, both regionally and internationally, so that it can first, set benchmarks for itself and second, ensure that the findings of its benchmarking activities are used to improve the quality of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement within the institution.

Lastly, institutions generally operate without having a management information system and so academic decisions are made on the basis of individual or collective preferences rather than on the information available from a management system. This impedes the extent to which reliable data is used for institutional

planning at the institution. Furthermore, meaningful information, which could be used in identifying and providing support for weak students and for tracking success rates across the teaching and learning programmes, is not readily available. While some form of evaluation using data takes place, the absence of a reliable database for the purpose of the consistent monitoring of performance in all the higher education institutions is an area of serious concern and needs attention.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The commencement of external quality review processes in Bahrain has resulted in the awareness of quality assurance and the need for good quality management practices within the higher education institutions. Most universities have constituted quality assurance committees and some have established quality assurance units. However, quality assurance arrangements in the institutions are at the early stages of development and so have limited impact.

While the management of most institutions espouse their commitment to quality education, most were unable to demonstrate a clear shared understanding from management or from other layers of staff across the institution about the meaning of 'quality education'. Discussions around quality appear to be largely concentrated on meeting the external requirements of the Higher Education Council and the Higher Education Review Unit. It is to be hoped that the universities will move away from a compliance attitude to a quality promotion culture. To do this, institutions might consider engaging in a debate with their stakeholders on what 'quality' means for its university. Flowing from this a quality assurance framework needs to be developed, which in turn would underpin the implementation of a quality plan across the core functions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

None of the universities had a fully developed teaching and learning framework with an associated plan for implementation. The main quality improvement mechanisms, such as adequate resources, timeframes and success indicators are not clearly identified at institutional or college level. These need to be developed and implemented in order to ensure consistency in both teaching and learning practices and in approaches used to quality assure those practices across colleges. This framework should have measurable objectives, timeframes and allocated responsibilities.

Whilst most institutions had a suite of policies and regulations for academic conduct and administrative operations, these were in various stages of development. Institutions need to finalise their policies and procedures, make sure that these are known and understood by staff and students alike; and that they are implemented consistently and fairly across departments, colleges and the institution.

Panels noted with some concern the high number of postgraduate qualifications offered by some universities. They did not find that there is appropriate infrastructure to support postgraduate students, for example, there is limited access to academic journals; supervisors have limited time at their disposal to assist

postgraduate students due to the high teaching loads; indeed they may not even be active researchers themselves; the computer to student ratio is poor, and in many cases there are insufficiently resourced laboratories.

Generally the libraries are inadequate (with a few notable exceptions), even for undergraduate libraries the collections in relation to student numbers and programme enrolment are typically substantially below international norms. The universities need to make a substantial investment in their libraries including subscribing to a wide range of electronic resources. This includes making available a sufficient budget allocation to the library to support the quality of programmes being offered. Failure to provide undergraduate and postgraduate students in particular with the necessary academic and infrastructural support constitutes a major academic and reputational risk for the universities.

Panels found academic staff to be well qualified with most holding doctoral degrees. The staff members are highly experienced, enthusiastic about their work and committed to their institution and their students. However it was with concern that Panels heard during interviews across the six institutions with different levels of staff of excessively high workloads. The Panels are of the view that universities are generally taking advantage of the flexibility implied in the Higher Education Council regulations with regard to teaching loads. Teaching 5+2 courses is the legal maximum load for an individual academic, not the requirement for all academics. Taking this as a requirement negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning.

Many of the institutions do not have policies pertaining to the recruitment and retention of staffing and staff development. The Panels encourage these institutions to give immediate attention to the development and implementation of a human resource plan and policy which includes recruitment, retention, workload, and staff development. Failure to do so compromises the teaching and learning experience of students, as well as the sustained growth and development of the institution.

Some of the six institutions offer their learning programmes during the weekend. This is called 'block teaching'. The Panels were concerned about the adequacy of contact hours in the weekend programmes. The number of taught hours on Thursdays and Fridays typically exceeds what is accepted as maximum class hours that enable a student's conceptualisation, active interaction and participation in the teaching and learning process. Further, the students do not have adequate opportunity to utilise the libraries and other learning resources. While flexible learning models are important to provide access to higher education, institutions need to consider carefully the type of model and ensure that innovative support mechanisms are in place for such students. Failure to do so constitutes a risk to the academic reputation of the institution as well as providing students with a poor quality learning experience; all of which negatively impacts the quality of graduates.

RESEARCH

Although the Panels did not find evidence of research plans and implementation strategies, they did find a growing recognition by management of the need for institutions to undertake research. There are a number of active researchers and some support is provided by universities but this seems to be on an *ad hoc* basis. Research is not only important in universities in which postgraduate programmes are offered. Good undergraduate teaching is underpinned by research and scholarship. While the Panels found that institutions have made provision for research budgets for the next academic year - in line with the regulations of the Higher Education Council - they did not find evidence of comprehensive research management plans, which include implementing, reviewing and monitoring mechanisms. Institutions need to develop and implement such plans in line with their own institution's vision and mission statements. While it is acknowledged that in new and essentially undergraduate teaching universities it would be unrealistic to attempt to become research-intensive or even research-focussed institutions, there needs to be at a minimum an identification of niche research areas as well as allocated responsibility for this core function. This would also mean that executive management take research time into account when determining individual academic staff workloads.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Panels generally did not find an understanding of community engagement as being the third core function of a higher education institution. Nor did they find a common understanding of the term within individual providers. As this is an internationally recognised core function of higher education institutions, the universities need to give attention to this function by developing a plan through which the institution: (i) conceptualises its own understanding of community engagement; (ii) identifies and integrates its activities in line with their understanding of community engagement into the other core functions; (iii) ensures that there is allocation of appropriate resources, which includes time being made available for academic staff to participate actively in this function, and (iv) develops and implements quality assurance mechanisms for community engagement in order to mitigate against the various risks inherent in the sort of activities carried out in this core function.

IMPROVEMENT PLANS

There is an expectation on the part of all stakeholders that an institution will act positively in response to quality review findings about areas that need improvement, including the recommendations and affirmations. To ensure that institutions respond appropriately, each reviewee must produce an Improvement Plan for QAAET three months after publication of the Review Report. These reports will be analysed for viability and sustainability after which they will be discussed with institutions.

PROGRAMME REVIEWS

The quality of existing higher education programmes needs to be reviewed to ensure that minimum standards are being met and to establish a baseline from which higher education institutions can offer enhanced learning experiences. Hence HERU devised an external quality assurance process for programme reviews that has international credibility and which evolved over the course of the 2008-2009 academic year.

As indicated in the Programme Review Handbook in the first instance programme reviews would be conducted on a sampling basis with Bachelors and Masters programmes being reviewed for each academic field in the 2009-2014 academic years. The generally recognised academic fields or categories are: Business; Science, Engineering and Technology; Law; Education; Humanities and Social Sciences; and Health Sciences.

Reviews in the 2008-2009 academic year took place at the Bachelors level in the field of Business Administration. The first site visits took place in January 2009.

FOUR PROGRAMME REVIEW INDICATORS

In line with the published methodology contained in the Programme Review Handbook, each of the programmes is reviewed on the basis of the following four indicators.

• **Indicator 1: Curriculum**

The programme complies with existing regulations in terms of the curriculum, the teaching and the assessment of students' achievements; the curriculum demonstrates fitness for purpose.

• **Indicator 2: Efficiency of the programme**

The programme is efficient in terms of the use of available resources, the admitted students and the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates.

• **Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates**

The graduates of the programme meet acceptable academic standards in comparison with equivalent programmes in Bahrain and worldwide.

• **Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance**

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMME REVIEW FINDINGS

Of the 6 programmes reviewed between January and May 2009, 2 programmes received 'confidence' judgements, i.e. that the programmes meet minimum standards; 2 received 'limited confidence' judgements and 2 received 'no confidence' judgements. Figures 42 and 43 show the findings of the reviewed programmes.

FIGURE 42:

ANALYSIS OF BACHELOR IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OVERALL FINDINGS

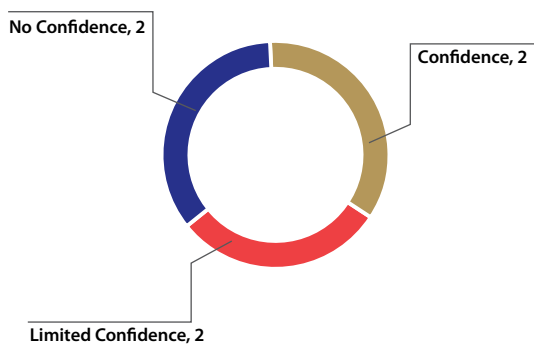
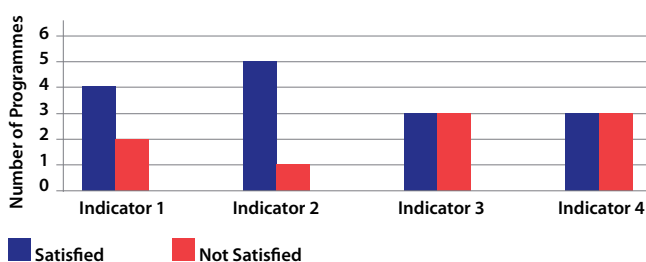


FIGURE 43:

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION FINDINGS



In the paragraphs below some of the more important findings in terms of improvements that are required have been highlighted under each Review Indicator.

INDICATOR 1: CURRICULUM

Most programmes need to develop appropriate intended learning outcomes that reflect the knowledge and skills that students will have attained during their programme. Examinations need to be conducted in a rigorous manner so that the integrity of the process is protected. This should include the use of external moderators. Programmes need to be designed, delivered and assessed in such a way that students become critical thinkers and independent problem solvers. This is a *sine qua non* for the 21st century labour market and for the future prosperity of Bahrain.

INDICATOR 2: EFFICIENCY OF THE PROGRAMME

All institutions impose heavy teaching loads on academic staff. This negatively impacts both the quality of the teaching and learning experience of students and also affects the further professional development of academics. Knowledge is growing exponentially in the 21st century and for institutions to function optimally, all staff need to be provided with opportunities for further development, whether it be in research, scholarship or pedagogy.

Library resources are generally weak and need to be bolstered to ensure that they support effectively the programme aims and intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, there need to be mechanisms to monitor and track at-risk students so that academic support is provided before the summative assessments. Information and Communication Technology is generally not sufficient to support the programmes offered.

INDICATOR 3: ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF THE GRADUATES

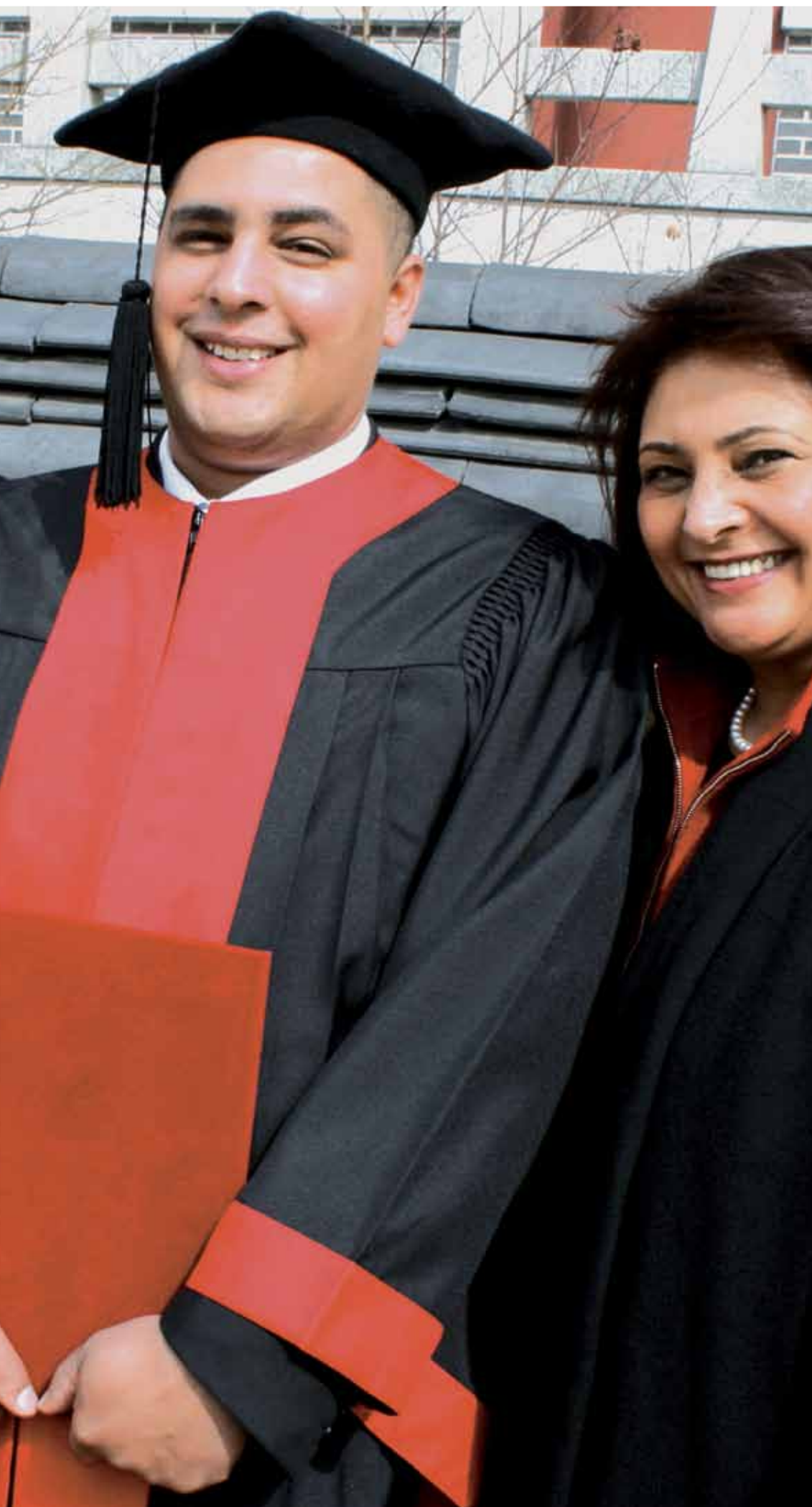
Most of the programmes have not established clear benchmarks and reference points with other institutions' programmes in order to verify that there is equivalence of standards. Furthermore, institutions do not make enough use of employers, both in the design of their programmes or in receiving feedback on the capabilities of the graduates that they employ which would contribute to the enhancement of the programme.

INDICATOR 4: EFFECTIVENESS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE

As noted in the analysis of institutional reviews most institutions are aware of the need to develop quality management processes and ensure that these are implemented across the university. However, these are at a very early stage of development and few of the processes have penetrated the programme review level. Institutions need to make more and better use of user surveys and to ensure that the findings are acted upon. They also need to initiate a formal process by which the views of graduates, employers and other external stakeholders can be used to inform programme development and review. For these to function optimally they should not be *ad hoc*. To be beneficial to the institution and students, there need to be formally constituted Programme Advisory Boards that have clear terms of reference with monitoring and evaluation procedures.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The challenges facing the higher education sector are wide-ranging and demanding. As noted throughout the HERU section of the report, the improvements that need to be made will require a considerable investment of resources – both financial and human. However, as the cycle of the two types of reviews continue, it is likely that improvements will start to emerge as institutions learn not only from their own reviews but from each other.







CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

CONCLUSION

While the Review Units have found that there is a need for significant improvement across all education providers, the ability of the education institutions to implement improvements is varied. For example, as noted earlier in this report the Schools Review Unit found that more than half of the schools have good or better capacity to improve but 12% do not have the capacity to improve without significant support from the Ministry. A number of reasons have been identified for why this is the case. It is expected that the monitoring of improvements will go a long way to assisting schools in their efforts to enhance the quality of the learning experience which they offer to children in Bahrain.

Improvement in the performance of schools will also positively impact the results in National Examinations in the future. It was noted that for Grades 3 and 6, students found the examinations challenging and their raw marks were low as a proportion of the total available marks. However, the acquisition of new learning methodologies through professional staff development; enhanced and better used classroom resources; and a more dedicated and settled teacher working environment coupled with support from the Ministry of Education should bring about better student performance scores over the next five years.

In terms of vocational training, as noted earlier, there are high inadequacy rates amongst providers reviewed during the year. The reasons for this were more to do with the governance and management of providers rather than the adequacy of the trainers. Indeed generally trainers had good vocational experience. The improvement planning process which is being initiated in collaboration with key stakeholders should bring sustainable improvement.

Unlike the reviews in the Schools and Vocational Review Units, the institutional reviews undertaken by the Higher Education Review Unit in the first cycle of reviews 2008-2010 do not make final judgements on the quality assurance arrangements of the institutions. The findings of the reviews provide a baseline for higher education institutions in the country. They also identify key areas which are in need of improvement. The programme reviews like the other two Units, however, do make final judgements on the quality of the programmes. In both cases institutions will address the identified areas of weakness in improvement plans which will be assessed in terms of viability and sustainability. It is expected that these plans will form the basis of a continuous improvement process for the higher education institutions and will lead in the long-term to a good quality higher education sector.

The common areas for improvement identified by the three review units are: the lack of ability of education providers to self-reflect critically on their performance; blurring of governance and management roles; insufficient record keeping in order to facilitate informed decision making; and the lack of innovation in teaching and learning which is necessary to prepare students to become independent thinkers and problem solvers.

If education institutions commit themselves to meeting the challenges outlined above, they will be in a position to play a positive role in contributing to the future prosperity of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

OUTLOOK: SEPTEMBER 2010-AUGUST 2011

The QAAET will continue to complete its approved business plan for the coming five years relying on the strong foundation it built in its first year of operations. This foundation helped the QAAET's three review units complete their first phase of reviews and begin successive phases in well-planned and deliberate steps.

Accordingly, the School Review Unit will complete the reviews of all the public schools by the end of 2010. In October 2011, the SRU will conduct pilot reviews for private and pre-primary schools to enable it to commence the second cycle of reviews in March 2011 with reviews of all the public, private and pre-primary schools.

The National Examinations Unit will conduct Grade 9 examinations in Mathematics, Science, Arabic and English for the first time in 2010. The Unit will also start developing Grade 12 test specifications and Grade 12 pilot examinations for 2011, so there will be a full complement of national examinations in 2012.

The Vocational Review Unit will continue with its provider reviews with the first cycle being completed in December 2011.

The Higher Education Review Unit will commence with a new batch of programme reviews in January 2010. These will be conducted in three disciplinary fields both at Bachelor's and Master's levels. The first cycle of the site visits of institutional reviews will be completed by December 2010.

