



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Capital Institute
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgments and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Capital Institute (Capital) was established in 1993 and is licensed by the Ministry of Education. The institute mainly offers provider accredited English language courses including general English language for young learners and adults, English for specific purposes (ESP), business English communication and preparation courses for international certificates such as the First Certificate of English (FCE), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The institute is an approved TOEFL Test Centre.

The institute has enrolled a total of 3580 students during the last three years, of which the vast majority were self-sponsored and under the age of 18 years. The rest were sponsored by a few large employers.

Capital Institute has one centre located in Al Mahooz, Manama and is operated by a chief executive officer, the head of the English department with responsibility for quality, a senior moderator, a curriculum designer, a marketing officer, a students' counsellor, a public relations and transportation coordinator, a receptionist and a number of drivers. The institute utilises a pool of fifteen part-time teachers.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over four days by a team of five reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed lessons, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with the managing director, teachers, administration and support staff, students and stakeholders.

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 2: Good

Capital Institute is good overall. All the aspects of the provision are also judged to be good by the review team.

Most students at Capital Institute achieve their qualifications, progress well over the levels and develop good English language skills. The Students' Performance Data (SPD) shows high success rates. The overall retention rate for the last three years is also high which is expected for short courses. The assessment is independently moderated to ensure that the examinations are appropriate. Students enjoy their classes, attend regularly and are punctual. An effective initial proficiency test is conducted to place the students at the right levels and as a consequence students have the appropriate skills to perform well on their courses. Although appropriate group work was used in lessons, in a minority of them a few learners were not able to work collaboratively.

Teachers are qualified with relevant teaching experience and most of them use effective teaching techniques to engage and motivate students. Moreover, they check students' understanding during lessons. Lessons always start on time with clear objectives shared with students in addition to effective recapitulation and the use of 'ice breakers'. The summative assessment provided to students is rigorous and moderated. Teachers provide constructive verbal and written feedback on students' work. However, the criteria for formative assessment are too subjective and are decided by individual teachers. Lesson plans are clear and detailed and are based on the pre-course assessment test for meeting the varying needs of students. In the majority of lessons, teachers responded successfully to the different needs of the less able and more able students, although in a few of these the pace of the lesson did not suit all students. Learning resources are used well enough to promote learning.

Capital Institute offers a wide range of provider accredited English language courses with progression routes for adults and young students, which generally meet students' and stakeholders' needs. Clear course outlines are provided to individual students and employers in advance and some enrichment activities are provided to reinforce students' learning. In addition, students are encouraged to read books from its extensive library of around 2500 books covering different genres and writers. Capital institute does not, however, actively seek and assess local stakeholders' future needs with the majority of its business depending on 'word of mouth' communication by its own students.

Capital Institute provides effective support to students. The counselor follows up on students' behaviour and progress in coordination with the teachers. Absenteeism and lateness are followed up with parents and employers. The institute provides well-run transport services for its students upon payment of a fee. An open day is usually conducted for parents to meet the teachers and update them on the progress of their children. During break times, a dedicated member of staff is responsible for the safety and well-being of the students. Relevant guidance on course selection is provided by the institute through its website and leaflets. Appropriate health and safety measures are in place and its policy on this aspect reviewed periodically. However, health and safety measures are not always communicated to students at the start of courses. Moreover, a certified first aider is not always available especially during the afternoon period when the young students are at the institute.

The institute has purposeful strategic and operational plans. It has carried out situational (SWOT) analysis and its vision and mission statements are appropriately focused on raising achievement. Management uses a sustained analysis of data and results as a basis for planning and deciding on the key performance indicators (KPIs). A useful lesson observation process is in place with relevant feedback provided to teachers and follow-up made on required actions. Since 2010, a new, more comprehensive appraisal form has been developed for staff and teachers. Moreover, qualified staff and teachers are recruited and deployed and are provided with clear job descriptions and some development opportunities. Regular management meetings are held and documented and pre-course meetings are held between the head of English and the teachers to follow up on feedback and actions from the previous course. Parents are usually updated on their children's behaviour and achievement and their feedback collected on the open day. Students' feedback is also regularly taken and aggregated and actions followed up. Similarly, employers are updated on their students' attendance and results. The institute participates in community services and provides free and discounted courses to charity funds. Although its Self Evaluation form (SEF) was informative, the grades were slightly overestimated.

Capacity to improve

Grade 2: Good

Capital Institute has good capacity to improve and has implemented a number of effective actions during the last couple of years. In February 2010, the institute got approval to be a TOEFL Test Centre. It has run a number of ESP courses of which the latest was on security. Moreover, the institute now uses a moderation team and a curriculum designer to refine and select course materials to more effectively support the curriculum. The institute has also now employed a counsellor to follow up on students' achievement and behaviour. The

Institute has a clear focus on offering preparation courses for FCE, IELTS and TOEFL which are demanded by school graduates. In addition, the institute has recently mapped its business English communication courses to the European Framework.

Teachers now use the website to include extra, non-compulsory homework for students who would like to do more practice at home. The institute has expanded its building and renewed some furniture.

At the beginning of 2011, Capital Institute implemented a project called "Back to Book". The project encouraged students to read from various topics available in its extensive library. Each teacher has to take the students to the library for reading once a week.

The institute has a comprehensive and useful database which was developed in June 2009. It contains all the information related to the students and their achievement. Moreover, it produces all the required reports and shows how each student is progressing over the levels. It also has a set of detailed policies on a range of areas such as attendance and punctuality, assessment and the moderation process. The recently implemented attendance and punctuality policy has significantly improved these aspects. A number of relevant and effective forms have been developed by the institute. These include forms for the appraisal of staff, internal moderation, reporting on behaviour and achievement, absence follow up, lesson planning and lesson observation.

Capital Institute has a robust quality assurance system in place. Periodic reviews are conducted by the quality team which focus on achievement, quality of provision, and leadership and management. The reviews come up with strengths, areas for improvement, and actions required. The actions are followed up to ensure implementation. The institute has also conducted a self-evaluation process in March 2010 where strengths, weaknesses, and suggested remedial actions were identified.

The institute is planning to offer French language courses in September 2011. Moreover, it is planning to move to a full facility building and to make its website used more interactively by students. The institute has capable human resources and sufficient physical resources to carry out its improvement plans. It has good repeat business and enrolment numbers with 617 students in 2008, 1572 in 2009 and 1391 in 2010. Its Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) was informative but, slightly overestimated the grades given.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: Good
Capacity to Improve	Grade 2: Good
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 2: Good
How effective is teaching?	Grade 2: Good
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 2: Good
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 2: Good
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 2: Good

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Most students achieve well and progress over the levels; moreover, they acquire and develop good English language skills.** In addition, the Students' Performance Data (SPD) shows high success rates over the last three years at 94 per cent in 2008, 95 per cent in 2009 and 98 per cent in 2010.
- **High attendance and punctuality rates and well maintained records.** The institute has a clear and strict policy which was implemented in September 2010 with well-maintained records on students' attendance and punctuality. As a consequence, attendance is high at 96 per cent and punctuality is good.
- **Qualified teachers with relevant teaching experience with most of them using effective teaching techniques to engage and motivate students.** Approximately half of the lessons observed were judged to be good. Teachers use a variety of activities and methodologies and check students' understanding during lessons. Lessons always start on time with clear objectives shared with students, effective recapitulation and the use of ice breakers to make students ready for the class.
- **Summative assessment which is rigorous and teachers' provision of constructive verbal and written feedback on students' work.** Teachers assess and correct students' homework, class activities and worksheets in addition to using moderated mid-term and final examinations. Examination questions are clear and test key competencies set by the curriculum.
- **A wide range of provider accredited general English language courses, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP), with progression levels and preparation courses for externally accredited courses.** These cover a range of levels for young students and adults. In addition, the ESP courses are customised to employer requirements and specifications and other business English courses are designed to match the Common European Framework levels.
- **Effective follow-up on students' behaviour and progress and helpful and supportive staff.** The institute has a counselor who follows up on students' behaviour and progress in coordination with the teachers. Each student has a follow-up "behaviour and achievement" form which is attached to his/her workbook and teachers write their notes to the parents and require them to sign. In addition, reminders are sent to students and parents for examinations and registration renewal dates.

- **Clear and detailed strategic and operational plans with follow-up on actions; detailed and useful analysis of results which are used as a basis for planning and deciding on Key Performance Indicators (KPI).** The institute has also carried out situational (SWOT) analysis and has vision and mission statements which are appropriately focused on raising achievement. The strategic goals are broken down into specific actions with clear evaluation tools, targets and time spans. The operational plans include actions, key performance indicators (KPIs), the person responsible and a thorough follow up process is in place that shows the percentage of achievement of each goal.
- **A useful lesson observation process with effective feedback provided to teachers.** Each teacher is observed twice per course, once by the head of English department and another time during the periodic quality reviews. This process is linked to their annual appraisal system.

Areas for improvement

- **Subjective rather than uniform, objective criteria used for formative assessment.** This constitutes twenty per cent of the total mark and is determined by attendance, participation and personal development but it is left to the teachers' individual judgment to make the assessment.
- **Insufficient seeking of stakeholders' needs.** Capital Institute does not actively seek and forecast local stakeholders' future needs, the majority of its business relying on 'word of mouth' communication from its own students.
- **Health and safety measures which are not always communicated to students and the absence of a certified first aider always being available at the institute.** Although the institute takes the necessary precautions, such as checking students' temperature at the time of 'swine' flu, its certified health and safety officer is only working on a part-time basis and a qualified first aider is not always available at the institute, especially during the afternoon period when the younger students are at the institute.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Capital Institute should:

- introduce clear, objective criteria for formative assessment
- actively seek stakeholders' future needs
- ensure that health and safety measures are always communicated to students at the start of courses and a certified first aider is always available at the institute.