



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

# Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Capital Institute  
(Al Mahooz)  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 10-13 December 2017**

VO067-C3-R078

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## Introduction

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The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over four days by a team of six reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed lessons and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and certificates learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the Institute and met with learners, parents, teachers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of Capital Institute was judged as outstanding, as were all aspects of its provision except the quality of teaching which was judged as good.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the Institute should do to sustain its improvement.

## Grading scale

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Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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## Table of review judgements awarded

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Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Outstanding (1)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Outstanding (1)
Quality of support and guidance	Good (2)
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding (1)
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Outstanding (1)</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding (1)</b>

## Review judgements

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### Overall effectiveness

**How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?**

#### **Grade: Outstanding (1)**

The overall effectiveness of Capital Institute (Capital) is outstanding, as are the other aspects except the effectiveness of teaching and assessment and support and guidance which are evaluated as good. Leadership and management are focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of the provision. The Institute has a highly effective approach to assess and evaluate learners' prior attainment and place them in the different sub-levels according to their ages and language ability. Most learners gain and develop effective language skills and competencies that are relevant to their level, with the majority achieving high proficiency rates. The majority of learners show a high level of confidence and a positive ability to complete given tasks, and they perform extremely well during in-class activities. This shows well in their attainment results and the progress they make from their starting points. However, a few develop writing skills less effectively compared to their excellent development of the other skills. The system for planning, delivering, assessing, moderating and verifying learners' achievement is highly effective. Teachers assess learners' progress effectively, and data on learners' performance is always kept and meticulously analysed to further inform decision making.

Learners benefit from the effective support and guidance they receive from the professional and experienced teachers. Capital management selects teachers carefully and monitors their performance closely to ensure sustainable and continuous quality improvement. Teaching is interactive, with most teachers deploying a variety of strategies which succeed in engaging, motivating and stimulating the vast majority of learners in the good and better lessons. However, in the less effective lessons a few learners are reliant on their teachers' directions and the methods used to engage them are insufficient. Courses are highly planned, structured, resourced and regularly reviewed and updated, while being enriched with an engaging range of extracurricular activities. The strategic and operational plans are based on regular and rigorous evaluation of practices. Quality Assurance arrangements are effective and consistently applied, with clear policies and procedures. Performance monitoring is highly effective to ensure continuous quality improvement.

## Capacity to improve

### How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

#### Grade: Outstanding (1)

Since the last BQA review Capital has developed and implemented a range of development initiatives including building a comprehensive database of learners' achievements and maintaining a very well organised documentation system. The Institute has also expanded the range of its learning resources, including building a listening assessment pack and launching an e-resources library instead of a static website. Other substantial developments include the restructuring of the Adult English programme to include additional hours of learning; this has impacted significantly on success rates and obtaining a higher level of proficiency since 2016. Other improvements include the recruitment of a head of department who takes responsibility for the internal verification process, which is implemented consistently and effectively. There are plans to expand the training offered to include more externally accredited certificates from well-reputed international accreditation bodies, and further broaden the range of local courses to include more languages and introduce more certified English for Specific Purposes courses, such as in the field of tourism, to meet learners' and stakeholders' learning and qualification needs. There is also a plan to move to better quality premises. The Institute has competent management and capable teachers, with appropriate physical resources to further drive its improvement plans.

To ensure sustainable and continuous improvement the management team has taken considerable steps including the development of more comprehensive policies and procedures; these are rigorously implemented, such as those relating to the quality assurance of teachers' performance. The highly effective strategic plan is based on a thorough understanding of the provision, where the performance is systematically monitored. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) provided for this review is informative and identifies a range of improvement actions. The last BQA review recommendations have been appropriately addressed. Success rates for learners across most courses over the past three years are maintained at a high level and the Institute has managed to retain high repeat business over the same period. However, enrolment numbers have decreased, although the number of courses have been maintained.

## **Learners' achievement**

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

#### **Grade: Outstanding (1)**

Most learners gain and develop the knowledge relevant to their course level and use their language skills and competencies effectively, with the majority achieving high proficiency rates. Almost all learners find the courses very helpful for their school and daily life, while the parents find the courses remarkably beneficial with a positive contribution to improving language skills and their children's self-confidence in communication. From the lessons observed and scrutiny of learners' work, the vast majority of learners show a high level of confidence and they are able to work well both independently and collaboratively. They perform well above average during in-class activities, though a few do not achieve the pass criteria and/or have not mastered their skills upon course completion, particularly in writing skills. In a few cases a number of learners still require further support from their teachers to move forward and be able to complete the given tasks in the required time.

Learners' achievement is accurately measured throughout the courses by clear assessment methods which are closely linked to the course outcomes and are verified effectively. The Institute has a well-defined grading scheme with clear rubrics for the different levels of English skills, which are robustly implemented. Most learners achieve their course outcomes and certifications successfully and in a timely manner, proceeding smoothly to the next level. Overall achievement and retention rates are 93% and 97% respectively. The General English courses are offered in three progression levels – junior, senior and adult. The achievement rates across these levels have been maintained at a high level over the past three years, though these rates are slightly better in the junior and senior levels than in the adult level, though the rates have increased enormously in certain sub-levels after the re-structuring of the courses in the adults' level. These high rates are also mirrored in the standards of learners' work, their high attainments' levels, active participation during in class-activities, and their high level of interaction with their teachers. Their progress is closely monitored and learners are provided with effective support to ensure that they progress well and reach their full potential. Learners' prior attainment is established through a written pre-course assessment. The performance records indicate that most learners make significant progress throughout their course, with the majority making well above average progress considering their prior attainments and their entry levels. The majority of learners advance through the levels and maintain their performance or improve further.

Learners are very enthusiastic towards their learning, with most of them participating actively in in-class and enrichment activities where the high competence of the vast majority is proved. Most learners are eager to demonstrate their understanding, present their work, reflect

critically on their level of attainments and extend what they have been taught during lessons by participating in discussions, answering probing questions, and correcting themselves and their colleagues in a constructive manner. A clear attendance and punctuality policy is in place that learners are made aware of. It is implemented very effectively and closely followed-up. From the analysis of the attendance records and lesson observations, most learners regularly attend their courses on time and return to their lessons promptly after the breaks.

## **The quality of provision**

### **How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?**

#### **Grade: Good (2)**

Teachers are qualified, with relevant subject knowledge and teaching experience of the level they teach. This is evident in the lessons, where they extensively use clear English and provide accurate explanations and clear illustrations of points. They show a high depth of knowledge of their subject and respond well to learners' questions. Teachers use well-structured lesson plans which are mostly detailed, and modify these by adding enrichment activities to accommodate learners' varying needs and maintain a good pace of activities. However, in a few cases the breakdown of time allocations and/or differentiation activities are not always clearly stated. Teachers address learners' varying interests and their needs effectively through the type of questions asked and by the varying planned activities that suit learners' language levels and ages. However, in a minority of the observed lessons the challenge or individual support provided to learners is insufficient.

Lessons are well-managed and controlled throughout, focussing on pre-defined and clear outcomes which are shared with learners. Most lessons are delivered in a systematic manner, reinforcing topics covered in previous lessons as well as allowing sufficient time for activities and assessments. Several examples were cited where teachers succeeded in linking topics to real life to attract learners' attention. Most lessons are activity-based, with teachers utilising a variety of effective teaching methods that productively engage, motivate and stimulate learners' interests throughout the lesson. These include direct questioning, individual activities, productive pair and group work, questioning techniques, discussion, role play and learning through games and songs. These methods widen learners' knowledge and positively improve their level of confidence. The vast majority of the lessons observed were learner-centred, with a significant minority of learners participating extremely well throughout the lesson. Teachers use challenging teaching and learning methods, though in the few less effective lessons these are insufficient to encourage learners to participate actively.

The majority of teachers use effective follow-up questioning techniques and relevant activities to develop learners' understanding, build self-confidence and stimulate their critical thinking. Teachers occasionally use different approaches to promote learners' self- and life-long learning through provoking critical discussions and arranging activities, and preparing and delivering presentations on different topics. They use the available learning resources and materials effectively to ensure the smooth delivery of lessons and to increase learners' understanding.

Effective summative and formative assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding. These are well-structured to measure learners' achievement of course outcomes throughout the course. These include mid-term examinations, final tests, in-class activities, homework, and peer evaluation. Learners' written work is accurately marked and clear and well-understood rubrics are implemented at all levels, though a few inconsistencies in marking are observed particularly in the writing sections. Teachers accurately maintain and regularly update records on learners' performance throughout their period of study. In the effective lessons, learners receive constructive verbal feedback, but in the written work and the final performance reports the quality of feedback varies among teachers as they do not always precisely indicate how and where learners can improve further.

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

### **Grade: Outstanding (1)**

Capital offers a wide range of locally accredited General English courses, with the aim of developing the language skills of learners. The provision of the courses is based on the management's robust understanding of their learners' academic profiles developed through direct and informal communication with parents and learners. In addition, the Institute uses the outcomes of highly relevant studies, carried out by authorities in the field of education, to modify the course outcomes at certain levels and comprehensively address the English language skills' gaps identified. From the 'results' summary of the BQA's National Exams, significant modifications were made to the writing, listening and reading skills' course outcomes to enable learners to achieve higher levels of competency in English. In addition, the Institute has developed a range of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses to address the minimum language proficiency requirements in the most significant sectors of Bahrain's labour market.

The Institute has clear guidelines and effective processes for designing, approving, updating, reviewing and modifying the English courses. The Adult English Programme was very effectively restructured to include additional hours of learning at each level. The different

courses are highly structured and rigorously planned, with clear course outlines advising the duration, units of study and the learning outcomes at each sub-level within the courses, which are clearly identified. Courses have clear scheduling of tasks, with highly relevant assessment methods that are carefully aligned to the course outcomes and supported with clear rubrics. The information is delivered and taught in a sequence that encourages a progressive acquisition of knowledge and skills. The courses are supported with a range of internationally recognised course books, along with very specific and interactive enrichment activities that are well suited to the target learners' ages and needs. The teachers have developed an array of e-learning language resources for different skills to complement the course materials and enhance learners' acquisition of language. Learning is further enhanced with extracurricular activities such as 'Reading for Pleasure', 'Spelling Bee' and other useful mechanisms, though these initiatives are mostly organised by individual teachers at their own discretion.

Capital has a clear entry and access policy which is implemented rigorously. New learners are required to take a placement test based on their age to ascertain their language ability and subsequently be placed in the appropriate sub-levels. These tests are matched closely to the learning outcomes at the different levels and clear rubrics are utilised for learners' placement. Besides that a clear progression route is identified within the different courses, which are benchmarked to the Common European Framework Referencing (CEFR) system thereby allowing learners to advance seamlessly through the levels.

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

### **Grade: Good (1)**

The Institute has an effective mechanism to support and guide learners throughout their learning in order to achieve better learning outcomes. The support provided certainly influences the levels of learners' achievement and significantly improves their language skills. All staff are friendly and have close relationships with the learners. Prior to the commencement of a course learners and parents have access to course overview documents such as a learners' manual which provides very useful information about key aspects of the learning. These include the contents of levels, course progress requirements and assessment methods with their marking schemes. They are informed about upcoming courses through various means, including the Institute's website, flyers, advertisements on social media programmes such as Instagram and Facebook, and the announcement of re-registration times for current learners. Learners are provided with a proper induction on the first day of their course to familiarise them with aspects related to their learning, such as attendance and punctuality policy, health and safety arrangements, support and guidance procedures and Institute contact details.

Learners are provided with opportunities for personalised counselling and guidance in order to develop specific skills or overcome learning difficulties. They have access to fit-for-purpose e-learning resources that allow them to practice different skills for the various levels. In the event that learners need further support they are offered additional materials or enrichment activities to practice. Learners are further motivated to achieve better outcomes through 'learning honouring certificates', which are provided to those who have a demonstrable interest in learning the language, are hardworking and committed, make extreme progress and succeed in their final attainments. The Institute is aware of learners with special educational needs, where they are suitably accommodated. Detailed behavioral policies and procedures are in place, though Capital does not have a comprehensive policy to support all categories of learners including those with special needs.

Effective communication is maintained with parents to inform them about their children's performance during the course. The Institute regularly follows up with them to discuss any issues relevant to learners' attitude, behaviour or attendance that may arise. They are reached through various communication channels such as phone calls, informal face-to-face communication and WhatsApp. A useful performance report indicating the learners' marks, with a rating of attendance, is shared with parents upon course completion.

The Institute has highly flexible arrangements for the delivery and scheduling of courses to suit learners' and parents' needs, in terms of course days and timings. Financial support is available to learners. The learning environment is suitable; classrooms are sufficiently equipped with fit for purpose learning aids, educational posters, and displays of learners' work. The Institute has a library with a range of books and stories that are utilised effectively by the teachers to enrich the learning experience. However, the premises are not inspiring, particularly in respect to having sufficient hygiene facilities.

## **Leadership, management and governance**

### **How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?**

#### **Grade: Outstanding (1)**

Capital Institute has a coherent strategic plan directed by its well-defined vision and mission statements. The strategic objectives and operational targets are based on an inclusive understanding of the provision and aligned towards continuous improvement, with a very clear focus on raising learners' achievement and improving their experience. These plans are tightly linked to the outcomes of the self-evaluation process, which are translated into effective and detailed action plans stipulating clear accountabilities and timelines. Progress in

achieving these plans is thoroughly and systematically monitored. The self-evaluation process is holistic and rigorous in identifying highly relevant improvement actions. Different constructive self-assessment tools and quality management frameworks are used to establish the Institute's strategic directions. Critical periodic reviews and structured pre-course meetings are used to evaluate overall performance, with the outcomes being carefully considered in strategic planning and informing the decision-making process. This is very evident in the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for the purpose of this review, which is informative and identifies priorities for improvement in the overall quality of the provision.

The Institute has effective arrangements and practices to quality assure its provision. The policies and procedures are mostly detailed and cover almost all aspects of the learning provision. An effective assessments verification process is in place to ensure that assessment tools are efficiently and consistently administered across all courses and levels, though the moderation of marking is not always rigorously implemented. Learners' prior attainment is constantly measured through tests to assess their language skills and inform lesson planning accordingly. Learners' achievement and progress are meticulously monitored and accurate records of learners' performance are maintained, aggregated, extensively analysed and closely followed up. Trend analysis over time is carried out at various course levels and groups, with substantial use of the outcomes being used in strategic planning and to trigger improvement actions.

The Institute's organisational structure suits the nature of the provision and is effective in meeting its aims and objectives. Staff and teachers are highly qualified and have relevant professional and teaching experience, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers' selection, recruitment, induction and performance monitoring processes are thoroughly and carefully implemented by the management. Teachers are deployed effectively in terms of matching learners' specific needs and age groups. They receive comprehensive and intensive induction to support and accelerate their performance, which is closely monitored through a robust lesson observation system. Scheduled and random classroom observations are carried out, along with visits to scrutinise learners' work. The completed lesson observation forms are critical and identify relevant areas for improvement. Follow-up observations are carried out promptly when required. Annual performance appraisal is in place for both teachers and staff, through which their training needs are assessed. They are regularly guided on how to improve further and are provided with ample in-house training and continuing professional development opportunities that are linked to their performance management outcomes.

Learners' feedback and views about the provision are systematically gathered and analysed. Though the Institute maintains effective links with parents, the practice of gathering their feedback via questionnaires has been discontinued and this is currently obtained informally by the students' counsellor. Issues raised are immediately addressed and the outcomes are integrated into the strategic planning process. The management has effective arrangements to

ensure the well-being of learners and staff. The premises are free from obvious hazards and essential health and safety measures are in place including a periodic inclusive risk assessment audit.

## The provider's key strengths

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- The acquisition and development of effective skills and competencies which improve skills' levels by most learners, with the majority achieving high proficiency rates.
- The highly relevant assessment tools which are implemented and verified effectively.
- The well structured, well planned and regularly reviewed and updated courses that match the needs of learners and stakeholders.
- The continuous and effective support and guidance provided to learners to help them to achieve better outcomes.
- The highly effective strategic plan which focuses on improving the provision, and the highly structured operational plans that are based on critical self-evaluation processes.
- The very close monitoring of learners' achievement, where trends analysis and comparison across batches are successfully carried out to further inform improvement.
- The thorough and regular monitoring of teachers' performance and the effective in-house training and continuous professional development opportunities that are linked to their performance management outcomes.

## Recommendations

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**In order to maintain its outstanding performance, Capital should:**

- further improve the training strategies and ensure that outstanding practices are spreaded across the Institute
- improve the facilities to make the learning environment more inspiring.

## Appendix

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### Description of the provision

Capital Institute (Capital) was established in 1993 and is licensed by the Ministry of Education (MoE). It offers a range of internally accredited general English courses, mainly for learners who are studying English as a second language at school. It also offers advanced level English for secondary school learners and adults. The courses have progressive levels catering for age groups and learners' varying abilities. They are divided into three main categories: Junior with 8 levels, Senior with 9 levels and 18 Adult levels. When required, the Institute provides preparation courses for other advanced English certificates such as First Certificate of English (FCE), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and The International English Language Testing System (IELTS). It also offers English for specific sectors, such as tourism. The courses offered are based on learners' and parents' feedback and carefully considers their needs.

The Institute has one branch located in Al Mahooz. It is operated by a chief executive officer and a managing director, who currently takes the responsibility as a head of quality. They employ a head of department, an assessment moderator, a learners' counsellor, a receptionist and a transportation coordinator with a number of drivers. A pool of part-time teachers are utilised whenever needed.

Since the last BQA review the Institute has enrolled a total of 2,855 learners at various levels, at ages six and above. This total is composed of 579 in 2014, 1,005 in 2015, 778 in 2016 and 493 in 2017 to the date of this review. Most learners are self-sponsored and under the age of 18 years. The junior levels form 30% of the total enrolment number for the past three years, the senior levels make up 34%, while the remaining are enrolled on the adult levels.