Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Delmon Academy for Computer and Managerial Sciences

Seef District

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 16-18 November 2015

VO094-C3-R015

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA), conducted this review over three days, by a team of three reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of Delmon Academy for Computer and Managerial Sciences, hereinafter refer to as Delmon Academy, was judged as inadequate. Learners' achievement and support and guidance were judged as 'inadequate', whereas quality of teaching and training, programmes, leadership and management were judged as satisfactory. Accordingly, the institute was subjected to two monitoring visits where the progress made in addressing the recommendations of the previous review report was judged as sufficient.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Grading scale

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

Table of review judgements awarded

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

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Good (2)

All aspects of provision at Delmon Academy are good. Learners gain effective knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to their courses, and the vast majority of them are making good progress considering their prior attainment. Pass rates are high and improving over the last three years; most learners achieve their course outcomes and the qualifications they aim for. Learners are provided with an enjoyable learning experience facilitated by qualified trainers who have good command of the areas they teach. A variety of teaching and training approaches are used to engage and motivate learners. Assessment methods used in most courses are effective, well-organised and utilised in planning for lessons. The institute has effective mechanisms in place to support and guide learners to achieve better outcomes.

Less able learners are identified and provided with the needed support inside and outside the classroom. The impact of the provided support is continuously monitored to ensure that they are progressing. Learners enrolled in the external accredited programme which is the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) are provided with mock examinations where their mistakes are clearly identified and discussed to ensure that they are ready for their online examination. Courses are offered based on effective understanding of the labour market. Most courses are well-structured and planned, and sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. Courses are supported with extra-curricular activities to enrich the learning experience. Delmon Academy strategic plan is well-focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of provision. It is well-informed with continuous evaluation of practices. The institute has effective quality assurance arrangements in place which are consistently implemented. Yet, the quality of the internal verification varies. Performance monitoring is regular and continuous.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Good (2)

Delmon Academy capacity to improve is good. During the last three years, the management made significant improvement in addressing the last review recommendations, particularly improving learners' achievement, quality of training and the quality of performance monitoring. Three important committees were established for quality improvement, courses design, and course review and approval. The quality improvement committee developed a detailed action plan to follow-up the implementation of the previous review recommendations. Furthermore, this committee developed a well-focused strategic plan and clear and detailed quality assurance policies and procedures. Currently, learners' achievement is effectively measured and all data relevant to learners' attainment and progress are kept and well monitored. Overall the pass rate in the externally-accredited course (ICDL) improved from 83% in 2013 to 86% in 2014 to 97% in 2015. The quality assurance arrangements are effective and consistently implemented, and the quality of performance monitoring significantly improved. In 2014, the institute moved to new and well-equipped premises. The institute has sufficient physical and human resources to enable improvement to be carried out; members of the management team are competent and have sufficient relevant experience and the institute utilises a pool of professional trainers. Number of enrolment is maintained between 2013 and 2015. Repeat business is satisfactory and improving between 2014 and 2015.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at Delmon Academy is good overall. In most courses, learners acquire and develop relevant knowledge, vocational skills and competencies in the fields of information technology (IT), graphic design and management. Most interviewed learners are highly satisfied with the learning experience and find the attended courses beneficial for their personal life and workplace. Some good examples were cited where learners enhanced or started their own businesses after attending graphic design courses. Reliable formative and summative assessment tools are used in most courses to accurately measure learners' acquisition of knowledge and skills against the pre-set course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). These tools include pre- and post-course tests, midterm tests, case studies and

activities. Moreover, the majority of assessments carried out are subjected to an effective verification and moderation to ensure consistency in terms of level and rigorousness. Learners' individual progress is continuously monitored to ensure that they are improving and overcoming any learning difficulties. Based on the outcomes of the conducted summative and formative assessments, learners are grouped into three categories; high, middle and low to track their progress. Considering the starting points of learners on entry to the course, the vast majority of them make good progress and performs well throughout the course.

The Learners' Performance Data (LPD) indicates high retention and success rates of 93% on average. Approximately 50% of the learners are enrolled in the ICDL base modules, which is an externally accredited programme with an online final examination. The overall pass rate in these modules improved to reach 97% in 2015. In addition, the vast majority of learners scored above 80% in the online final examination from the first attempt. Nevertheless, a minority of learners in these modules achieve from the second or third attempts within the awarding body policy. In the non-accredited local courses, most learners receive completion and attendance certificates after completing the required guided hours of training and successfully achieve the course learning outcomes.

Learners are attentive and have positive attitude towards their learning, especially during the class activities. The majority of learners are self-motivated and able to extend what they had been taught by questioning their trainers or colleagues. Furthermore, learners are requested to fill a form, in which they appropriately reflect on the level of their performance and how beneficial are the courses to them. From the observed sessions and scrutiny of learners' work, it is noted that learners work well independently and show high ability to work collaboratively during group activities.

Delmon Academy has a clear policy on attendance and punctuality, which is communicated to learners and stakeholders. Attendance and punctuality are always recorded and necessary actions are taken against absenteeism and frequent lateness. From the records of attendance and the observed sessions, it is evident that most learners attend on a regular basis. However, punctuality is an issue in a few cases.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of training and assessment in Delmon Academy is good overall. Trainers are qualified and have relevant professional and training experience in the areas they teach.

They deliver accurate explanation of concepts, provide knowledgeable responses to learners' questions and use relevant vocational examples. Lesson plans used by trainers are well-structured, detailed and informed by prior and continuous assessment of learners. They are developed based on a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) report prepared by the training manager which summarises the outcomes of the pre-course assessment as well as learners' backgrounds and expectations of the course. After each summative assessment, learners are divided into three groups based on their levels. Less able learners are provided with the needed support and activities to accommodate their individual needs and help them achieve better. Accordingly lesson plans are updated throughout the course. Lesson plans clearly indicate the learning outcomes, activities, time allocated for each activity, the outcomes of each activity, resources needed, and the role of both the trainer and learners. In addition, they highlight how differentiation will be addressed. In the observed lessons, the less able learners are well supported while the more able learners are appropriately challenged through further questioning.

A variety of teaching and training methods are effectively used to engage and motivate learners. These include brainstorming, practical exercises, group activities, presentations, as well as reflective discussion. Lessons are well managed and the learning outcomes/objectives are shared with learners. Most learners are engaged and participate actively. A range of effective summative and formative assessment is used to measure learners' achievement of the ILOs. Assessment methods include relevant pre-course, mid-term and post- course tests as well as well-designed class activities. However, in Business English courses which constitute only 9% of the total enrolment, assessment does not fully cover the course ILOs. Learners' work is corrected and marked based on clear marking schemes and assessment rubrics and constructive verbal and written feedback is provided to learners on how to improve further. Trainers maintain and regularly update learners' performance records; an improvement report is produced for individual learner which includes scores of the pre- and post-course assessment, attendance, quizzes, activities, class participation and the final online examination in case of the ICDL. The report also includes useful comments on learners' performance and the further development required. Learning resources and materials are effectively utilised to promote learning; these include the white board, computers, PowerPoint presentations, videos and flip charts.

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of programmes in meeting the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders is good overall. Delmon Academy offers a range of short non-accredited courses mainly in business, management, graphic design and English language. The provider also offers one externally accredited programme that is the ICDL. This programme

is offered at three module levels, which are base, standard and expert. Delmon Academy course offerings are based on an effective understanding of market needs, which are gauged through different means and channels. These include a fit-for-purpose online survey administered annually, occasional meetings held with stakeholders, and questionnaires distributed *via* emails to current and potential stakeholders. In addition, learners' and trainers' feedback about courses are taken into consideration when deciding on the annual training plans. Moreover, the provider conducted an exploratory survey on a group of youth to sense the current trends in the market. The outcomes of these endeavors and other national market studies are effectively utilised to shape the provider's offerings.

The provider has a formal mechanism implemented to design, approve, update and periodically review courses in response to learners' needs and external accreditation body requirements. This mechanism clearly describes the process and states the roles and responsibilities of the two committees involved. The first committee is responsible for designing and approving courses based on the conducted market needs analysis, while the second committee is responsible for reviewing and regularly updating the different components of courses. Most courses are well structured, planned and resourced to meet learners' needs. Courses are planned in a sequence that encourages progressive acquisition of knowledge and skills with detailed course outlines. The course outlines indicate the learning outcomes and the corresponding teaching and assessments methods, which are shared with learners and stakeholders in advance. Furthermore, courses outlines and brochures clearly specify the entry requirements and the target audience along with the pre-requisites for courses. Learners are screened upon registration to obtain their expectations and educational backgrounds, which are effectively used to make the necessary adjustments to course content and plan.

High quality training manuals are used in ICDL modules that are reinforced with extensive illustrations and practical activities. The locally designed handouts and PowerPoint slides are well written which are mostly supplemented with relevant formative and summative assessments to cover the set learning outcomes for a course. In addition, the technical courses are resourced with sufficient personal computers, projectors and relevant computer software to meet the course requirements. Courses are supported with relevant and engaging extra-curricular activities such as field visits to enrich the learning experience. Learners are requested to fill a form to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of these activities on their performance during the course.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

Delmon Academy has effective mechanisms in place to support and guide learners to achieve better outcomes. At the start of a training course, learners are provided with effective induction to help them settle quickly and confidently. The induction includes information about the institute's vision and mission statements, facilities and rules and regulations. They are also provided with a very useful 'trainees guide' which provides helpful information about the courses offered, modes of training, attendance and punctuality policy, the passing requirements, assessment methods, grading system and the appeal policy. Low achievers are identified and are provided with effective support which includes more focused activities inside the classroom, additional sessions and one-on-one support sessions to enable them to overcome any difficulties and improve their achievement. The impact of the provided support is monitored to ensure that learners are improving and progressing. Learners enrolled in the ICDL modules are provided with mock tests, where their mistakes are clearly identified and discussed to ensure that they are well prepared for their online examinations. Those who fail their online examinations from their first attempt are provided with effective feedback on their pitfalls and, if needed, they are provided with extra support sessions. Moreover, learners who need more support of any kind can fill in a 'support form' and accordingly the needed support is provided; there are cases where a lesson was repeated for learners based on their requests. Furthermore, trainers and management are supportive and approachable, and analysis of learners' feedback shows that most learners are highly satisfied with the support provided. The institute has relevant policy and procedure in place.

Delmon Academy learning environment is fit for purpose; the institute has two classrooms which are equipped with the needed training aids. In addition, the institute has a library which contains a range of learning references for the use of learners and trainers. Learners and stakeholders have access to well-informed advice and guidance about courses; brochures and course outlines provide detailed information about courses' objectives/learning outcomes, training and assessment methods. Delmon Academy website is user friendly and provides helpful information for learners and stakeholders, such as courses schedules and leaflets, information about the syllabus, learners support information, posting and career opportunities. Stakeholders are adequately informed of learners' achievement during the course, however; the comments provided on learners' performance are insufficiently detailed. Arrangements for the delivery of courses are flexible to meet the needs of learners' and stakeholders' particularly in the timing and the language of delivery. Delmon Academy has a policy in place to support learners with special needs.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Good (2)

Leadership and management are focused on maximising learners' achievement and continuous quality improvement. There is a sense of shared purpose among the staff, driven by the institute management, which is reflected in the clarity and consistency of the practices.

Delmon Academy strategic plan is well focused on the recommendations of the previous QQA review report; targeting the key areas for development, specifically improving learners' achievement, quality of training, monitoring and enriching the curriculum with relevant activities. This plan is translated into an operational plan which sets specific actions, responsibilities, time scale, resources and the budget needed. Actions are followed-up regularly. Nevertheless, few of the key performance indicators (KPIs) identified are not measurable. The strategic plan was informed by regular and accurate evaluation of practices. The self-evaluation process is effective; a quality improvement committee was established in July 2013 to follow-up the implementation of the previous QQA review report recommendations and continuously evaluate the impact made. This committee has worked with a local consultancy and developed a well-focused action plan which is regularly monitored. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for the review is informative and reflects good understanding of the provision.

Delmon Academy organisational structure is fit for purpose. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Currently, most quality assurance responsibilities are carried out by the operational manager and the training manager as this post is currently vacant. The organisation structure shows that there is a plan to establish a marketing and public relations department.

Effective quality assurance arrangements are in place; clear and detailed policies and procedures were developed and implemented. Learners' prior attainment is assessed through relevant pre-course assessment. In addition more information is gathered about learners' backgrounds and expectations. The outcomes of this process and the continuous assessment are effectively utilised in lesson planning to accommodate learners' individual needs throughout the course. Assessment is internally verified to ensure its accuracy and reliability, however the quality of this process varies. Learners' achievement is effectively measured through a range of relevant formative and summative assessment methods, and

data on learners' attainment and progress are kept. Achievement data are aggregated and analysed to monitor trends over years.

Qualified trainers are recruited, effectively inducted and deployed. Trainers are provided with a guide which includes detailed information about their roles and responsibilities before, during and after the training course. Trainers' performance is closely monitored throughout the course. Before delivery of a training course, they are requested to provide the course assessment plan, the list of all the activities to be used during the course, lesson plans and all assessments. The quality of training inside the classroom is frequently monitored through different class observations conducted by the operation manager and the training manager. These include observations to monitor lesson planning, effectiveness of activities and overall training methods used by the trainer. Regular meetings are held with the trainers to discuss relevant issues and they are provided with focused workshops to address the most common areas for development identified in class observations. Learners' feedback about the provision is frequently sought through different forms; these forms include the daily feedback form which is completed by the end of every training day so that any emerging issues are timely addressed. In addition to the feedback form about the activities, learners' feedback about the course, and feedback form for improvement and development are used. The feedback is aggregated, analysed and utilised to improve the provision. For example, a trainer was sacked based on learners' feedback and the management monitoring process. Stakeholders' views are used to shape the offering.

Delmon Academy premises are free of any obvious hazards and all essentials of health and safety are in place. Learners are provided with health and safety guidance at the start of any new training course.

The provider's key strengths

- Learners gain effective knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to their courses and most of them achieve the courses outcomes and the qualifications they aim for

- Trainers have command of the areas they teach, use a variety of teaching and training methods which succeed in engaging and motivating learners, and utilise effective assessment methods in most courses

- Courses are sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders and most of the courses are well-structured and planned

- Effective mechanisms are in place to support and guide learners to help them achieve better outcomes

- The strategic plan is well focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of provision

- Effective quality assurance arrangements are in place.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Delmon Academy should:

- ensure that the assessment in business English courses covers all course learning outcomes

- ensure that the quality of the internal verification is consistent across all courses

- ensure that the reports provided to stakeholders include sufficient comments about learners' performance during the course.

Appendix

Overview of the institute

Delmon Academy for Computer and Managerial Sciences was licensed by the Ministry of Labour in 2010 and offers a range of local courses in information technology including Microsoft Office and graphic design courses, and business and management courses. In addition, the institute offers one externally accredited course which is the International Computer Driving License (ICDL). This course is offered in three levels; level one includes the base modules, level two includes the standard modules, and level three includes the expert modules. All offered courses are short and very short where the learning hours range between 12 to 30.

The institute operates from one centre located at Seef District. It is managed by an executive/operational manager who oversees the overall performance of the institute including the quality assurance matters. The operational manager reports to a chairman who is the owner of the institute. The institute employs a training manager to follow up and monitor trainers, finance and administration manager, information technology manager and information technology assistant. All staff are working on a full-time basis. The institute has a pool of 16 part-time trainers; seven of them are most frequently used. They are utilised as and when needed.

Delmon Academy has enrolled 405 learners since 2013; 166 learners in 2013, 40 learners in 2014, and 199 learners in 2015 up to the date of this review. Most of them are walk in learners or learners sponsored by charity organisations. Externally-accredited courses make 52.6% of learners' total enrolment, completion certificate courses make 10.1%, and attendance certificate courses make 37.3%.