



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Life in Music Institute
Nuwaidrat
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 17-19 September 2017

VO083-C3-R068

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Introduction

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over three days by a team of four 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, parents, management and support staff.

In the previous review Life in Music (LIM) overall effectiveness was judged as outstanding, as for learners' achievement, effectiveness of teaching and assessment and quality of programmes. Support and guidance and the effectiveness of leadership and management were graded as good.

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

Grading scale

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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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	Satisfactory (3)
Leadership, management and governance	Satisfactory (3)
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory (3)
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)

The overall effectiveness of Life in Music (LIM) is judged good as are all aspects of its provision except support and guidance and the effectiveness of leadership and management which are graded as satisfactory.

Learners develop effective music and art skills relevant to the programmes they are enrolled in. Almost one-third of learners are enrolled in the music programmes, which include piano, violin and vocal. The rest of the learners are enrolled in art and ballet courses. The vast majority of learners show considerable progress over the levels, particularly in the piano programme. Nevertheless, a few learners in the lower level courses are slower at developing their technical skills. Learners attempting the external examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the Russian Music School achieve the qualifications they aim for. They represent 20% of the total enrolment. Teachers are actual artists and performers. Lessons are carefully planned, conducted and effectively managed for individual learners. Teaching is learner-centred and a variety of interesting and highly effective instructional styles are utilised to explain and teach musical concepts or techniques. However, in a few of the lessons observed teachers were not able to engage learners effectively. Learners are assessed accurately and rigorously through continuous in-class assessments, and theoretical and practical examinations in the vast majority of cases. Written feedback on homework assignments is very precise and indicates the areas for further practice and improvement.

The LIM management gathers information about their niche market through their own international and local professional networks, communication and direct course requirements received from parents and learners. The externally accredited programmes are well designed, and updated versions are provided by the awarding bodies which include ABRSM and Russian Examinations. Local courses have clear outlines which include the learning topics and materials to be used. Although there is no policy on periodically reviewing programmes, scrutiny of materials confirms that most are valid and of good value. Teachers and administration staff provide learners with fit for purpose support and guidance. Recently, the Institute developed a basic policy on support and guidance. Learners and parents have access to useful information.

Although LIM enrolls a few learners with special needs, it does not have a clear policy and procedures to support these learners in meeting their goals. Adequate yearly objectives and regular daily activities are in place, though strategic planning is not fully developed. LIM utilises daily interaction, meetings and feedback from examination officials to continuously improve the overall quality of its provision. However, the Institute lacks a regular holistic self-evaluation process and comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures. While sufficient trend analysis is not carried out, the management does monitor achievement of the externally accredited courses and undertakes immediate improvement action where appropriate.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

The capacity to improve is satisfactory. Life in Music has addressed the recommendations stipulated in the previous review report of 2014 to an appropriate level. Although the Self-evaluation form (SEF) submitted by the Institute contains some useful information, it is insufficiently detailed and areas for improvement are not clearly identified. The Institute has had a steady enrolment since 2014 to date, and has a suitable organisation structure and qualified teachers who are deployed effectively. Learners, especially on the piano programmes, achieve well. While learners' achievement is monitored at course level and internal verification of learners' work is effective, trend analysis of learners' achievement is lacking. The Institute has a new website and has started offering new courses in Cello. LIM has yearly operational objectives that list the organisation's aims; these are shared with the staff providing an adequate sense of direction. However, the Institute lacks proper strategic planning based on rigorous understanding of its provision to impact continuous improvement. Although, the Institute uses meetings, networking with stakeholders and feedback from examination officials to continuously improve the overall quality of its offerings, quality assurance policies and procedures are not fully streamlined.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Learners' achievement at Life in Music is good overall. Learners develop effective music and art skills relevant to the programmes they are enrolled in and to their grade levels. They acquire a sound knowledge, essential skills and make consistent progress throughout their courses. This is evident from learners' performances during the observed sessions, examination results and feedback gathered from parents and learners. Talented learners participate in the local, regional and international concerts and events. Learners achieve high levels and usually win awards.

Almost one third of learners are enrolled in the music programmes, which include piano, violin and vocal. The rest of the learners are enrolled in art and ballet courses. The vast majority of them show considerable progress over the levels, particularly in the piano programme where learners achieve high levels of mastery. Nevertheless, a few learners in the lower level courses are slower in developing technical skills. Learners' performance and progress are thoroughly monitored by teachers using individualised on-going assessments of their musical and technical skills. In addition, learners are provided with ample opportunities to gain confidence and showcase their gained skills through performing in concerts and participating in local events. Learners receive a rating and a clear evaluation of their performance. A significant minority of learners are enrolled by their parents in the local attendance course of ballet to improve general posture and coordination. Moreover, learners enrolled in the art courses gain appropriate knowledge related to different art schools, skills and techniques.

Scrutiny of learners' achievement and progress reports show that the vast majority of learners successfully achieve the course objectives and level requirements. According to the learners' performance data (LPD), the overall success and retention rates have been 83% on average for the last three years. All learners attempting the external examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the Russian Music School achieve the qualifications they aim for, with approximately half of them scoring a distinction grade.

Learners are able to work well independently during sessions and when performing on stage. They can also work collaboratively when provided with the opportunity during events and concerts. The majority of them are able to reflect critically on how well they are performing and identify areas to improve further by practicing more. LIM has an attendance policy and

sessions schedules are individualised to suit learners' and parents' preferences. Records of attendance show that learners attend sessions on a regular basis.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of teaching at LIM is good overall. Teachers are actual artists and performers. They are highly qualified and have extensive international experience in teaching music and art. Their knowledge and expertise is evidenced in their choices of teaching strategies and interactions with learners. For example, teachers share relevant examples, choose repertoires that are appropriate to their learners' age and proficiency and, in most lessons, are able to identify the specific difficulties faced by learners and provide them with appropriate practice.

Lessons are carefully planned, conducted and managed effectively for individual learners, where teaching strategies are modified as required based on a detailed ongoing evaluation of the learners' musical and technical goals, particularly in the music programmes. Teaching is learner-centric and lessons start on time with warming up activities and include a balance between technical, theoretical and musical concepts, prioritised according to the learners' needs as in the piano and the art lessons. Teachers use a variety of interesting and highly effective instructional styles to explain and teach musical concepts or techniques. These include questioning the learners, giving demonstrations, pacing (shorter episodes for beginner levels) and sequencing (beginning with the learner's favorite piece). Moreover, teachers also do breathing, relaxation and hand movement exercises to help learners perform better. However, in a few of the observed lessons, teachers were not able to engage learners effectively.

Learners are assessed accurately and rigorously through continuous in-class assessments and theoretical and practical examinations. Especially for the music programmes, assessments are personalised for individual learners and linked to the programme objectives and marking of learners' work is accurate, with clear rubrics. For the piano programmes, the final examinations results are externally verified.

Teachers mostly provide highly relevant and explicit verbal feedback during lessons to correct learners' mistakes and help them improve. Written feedback on homework assignments is very precise and indicates the areas for further practice. The year-end reports are detailed and inform the learners and parents of the learner's strengths and the specific areas for development. However, in a minority of lessons observed, the verbal feedback was minimal.

Teachers encourage learners' critical thinking through further questioning techniques and discussions during the lessons, in addition to encouraging learners to critique their own performance and identify their mistakes to self-improve. Learners are also provided with opportunities to participate in concerts and events to improve their self-confidence in giving public performances. High quality musical instruments and relevant music and art resources are provided and deployed effectively by the teachers to stimulate and enrich the learning experience and advance the learners' progress during lessons.

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of the programmes offered in meeting the needs of learners and parents is good overall. LIM offers a range of externally accredited programmes for instruments such as piano, violin, cello and for vocal. The Institute also offers a range of local completion and other attendance courses including ballet and art. The Institute offers the Russian and the British syllabus and most of the accredited courses are designed to offer progression routes. LIM management gathers information about their niche market through their own international and local professional networks, feeder schools and direct course requirements received from parents and learners during musical and art functions and events. Collected information is used well to influence course offerings.

The externally accredited programmes are well designed, with updated versions being provided by the relevant awarding bodies which include ABRSM and Russian Examinations. Local courses have clear outlines which include objectives and materials to be used. Although there is no policy for periodically reviewing programmes, scrutiny of materials provided and sourcebooks confirms that most are valid and of good value. Likewise, there is no policy on structuring and planning courses, however, teachers are responsible for developing teaching methods, structuring local course assignments and choosing the most appropriate resources. For example, the ballet course has a fit for purpose assessment structure. Programmes are effectively resourced with different materials to suit the different age groups and the musical instruments are maintained well and are to international standards.

LIM has general mechanisms for access and entry level to its programmes. Local courses such as the art and ballet are open to all learners. Learners planning to join music programmes are interviewed by teachers to evaluate their skill levels and obtain information on which syllabus is relevant to them. The outcomes determine the learners' starting points. The Institute utilises a wide range of enrichment activities which include local, regional and international events and concerts. These activities motivate learners, build confidence and poise, and add valuable experience.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

Support and guidance provided to learners to help learners achieve better outcomes is satisfactory overall. Teachers and administration staff provide fit for purpose support and guidance, which include a short induction when learners first join a course, makeup classes, concerts and examination rehearsals. In addition, LIM shares with learners and parents information on local, regional and international events. Upon request, learners are provided with information on further education opportunities and progression routes. Recently, the Institute developed a basic policy on support and guidance. Learners and parents have access to useful information about the Institute and its offering through leaflets, website and social media accounts. However, a few parents and learners stated that the shared information is not always sufficient.

LIM maintains effective communication with parents about learners' behaviour and performance progress through meetings, student evaluation forms which are shared at the end of each academic year, and a smartphones social messaging service (WhatsApp).

The learning environment is fit-for-purpose with sufficient classrooms, rest rooms and learning resources. The Institute provides parents and learners with very flexible arrangements for scheduling the sessions, with parents or learners being able to change the dates and timings, subject to availability, within a notice period. Although LIM enrolls few learners with special needs, there is no clear policy that specifies procedural information to support these learners in meeting their goals.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

LIM's management is satisfactory in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision. The Institute has a general vision, a mission focused on uncovering learners' music talent at an early age and building a strong foundation. However, they are not inclusive to include art and ballet learners. The Institute keeps adequate yearly objectives in which teaching and learning matters, events, concerts and examinations are discussed and shared

with staff. Regular daily activities are efficiently managed. Nevertheless, strategic planning is not fully developed to allow for better organisational progress evaluation, determining accountability, and defining timelines and success indicators. Considering the enrollment and the size of the operation, LIM has a suitable organisation structure.

LIM utilises daily interaction with parents and learners, meetings with teachers and feedback provided from examination officials, such as with the ABRSM and Russian external examinations, to continuously improve the overall quality of provision in terms of teaching and achievement. However, the Institute lacks a regular holistic self-evaluation process to assess its strength effectively and address areas that needs further improvement. In addition, important aspects of internal quality assurance policies and procedures are missing or are not deployed effectively to guide standardisation in operational activity and maintain consistency. Learners' prior attainment is sufficiently assessed in the majority of cases, especially in the music programmes where learners' previous knowledge and skill levels are evaluated by teachers and effective feedback is provided about their levels. Art and ballet courses are open for all learners to join.

Learners' achievement is fairly monitored, and data on learners' performance is kept at a course level for all courses. Achievements in the externally accredited courses are closely monitored and appropriate actions are taken. Internal verification of learners' progress is critical and outcomes are used to improve the quality of teaching, especially in the piano programme.

Highly qualified teachers and staff are recruited, inducted and deployed effectively. Teachers' performance is suitably monitored through session observations, though the process is not streamlined to improve efficiency. Feedback provided by management is highly effective but it is not systematically documented in order to be followed through thoroughly. LIM benefits well from the master classes capacity building sessions and the Russian examination official notes, which identify areas for improvement and remedial actions. Teachers are required to participate in events, concerts and attend training to improve their skills. Effective links are maintained with stakeholders, local schools and nurseries, and international affiliations such as the Russian music conservatory. LIM's management gathers general feedback during functions and daily interactions with stakeholders, addressing any issues raised.

The premises are regularly maintained, fire detection equipment and extinguishers are current. A general health and safety policy is in place. Fire exit and assembly point are defined by means of signs. However, even though the Institute is free from obvious hazards and is a secure learning environment, fire drills, risk assessments and evacuation plans are not in place and there is no first aider on the premises.

The provider's key strengths

- Learners attempting the ABRSM and Russian external examinations achieve the qualifications they aim for, with approximately half of them securing distinctions.
- Qualified teachers with extensive international experience in teaching and stage performances.
- Programmes are supported and enhanced with a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Life in Music Institute should:

- devise a clear mechanism to review, approve and regularly update all locally designed courses
- improve leadership and management by:
 - developing strategic planning and self-evaluation processes to guide the organisational goals and aid evaluation of their performance
 - enhancing the internal quality assurance policies and procedures to include all aspects of the provision.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Life in Music Institute (LIM) is licensed by the Ministry of Education and has been in operation since 2006. The Institute offers courses in piano, guitar, voice, cello, ballet and art. Learners on the music programmes are offered the option of external assessment through the ABRSM or Russian curriculum. The Institute operates from a single premise located in Nuwaidrat and is managed by a full-time director and an administrator. The provider maintains professional links with various private schools locally. In the year of 2014 the Institute enrolled 335 learners, 377 in 2015 and 308 in 2016 up to the date of the review.

LIM has seven teachers who are deployed on a full and part-time basis.