



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

Origin Training Centre
(Seef District)
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 13-16 November 2017

VO122-C3-R074

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Introduction

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 five 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 Centre and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

It is worth mentioning that this is the first review for this Centre. This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the Centre 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	Outstanding (1)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Outstanding (1)
Quality of support and guidance	Outstanding (1)
Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding (1)
Capacity to improve	Outstanding (1)
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding (1)

Review judgements

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 the Origin Training Centre (OTC) is outstanding, as are all aspects of its provision except the effectiveness of training and assessment which is evaluated as good. Leadership and management are focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of the provision. The operational plan is based on regular and rigorous evaluation of practices.

OTC management selects trainers meticulously and monitors their performance carefully to ensure continuous quality improvement. Trainers are highly qualified and use their professional experience to enrich learning. They deploy a variety of methods, activities and learning resources which in the good and better sessions succeed in engaging and motivating the vast majority of learners. Trainers assess learners' performance rigorously and provide them with constructive feedback. The courses/programmes are well structured and designed, purposefully planned and delivered using interactive training strategies. Programmes match learners' needs and abilities, and the Centre is responsive to stakeholders and learners' specific requirements. Learners receive highly effective and well-structured support and guidance throughout their learning journey to help them achieve better outcomes. The Centre's environment is pleasant and safe.

With the robust management and the highly effective practices relating to the quality of provision, learners gain knowledge and develop effective skills and competences that are relevant to their professions and duties. They show high levels of confidence and abilities in completing their course tasks, performing well during in-class activities where the majority achieve high proficiency rates. This shows up well in their achievements and the progress they make from their prior attainment. Achievement data is always kept and frequently analysed as the basis for further improvement.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The provision has been continuously improving since the Centre's inception, accurately achieving almost all of its targets. The Centre is led by competent management team that has taken considerable steps towards driving continuous improvement initiatives. An example of this development is the introduction of the London Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) preliminary course in English for Business as a bridging course to level 1. This has a positive impact on improving learners' achievement in the later intakes, with the success and retention rates being maintained at a high level in the vast majority of the long externally accredited programmes. Other significant developments include the expansion of affiliations with a number of awarding bodies such as the Institute of Leadership and Management (ilm). The Centre has also broadened the range of its offerings by adding new specialised externally accredited courses such as the Foundation in Travel and Tourism Diploma of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and recently a range of well-structured soft skills courses. These developments and expansion in the courses/programmes offered have led to the recruitment of more staff and acquisition of an additional floor with two more classrooms to accommodate the significant increase of the total enrolment, which has improved from 236 learners in 2016 to 1,043 in 2017. The Centre has improved the expansion of its learning resources through upgrading its e-library and purchasing training kits, which are utilised effectively to enrich the learning experience.

OTC uses systematic and critical self-evaluation to ensure sustainable and continuous improvement which results in highly effective strategic planning that is closely monitored. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) provided for this review is informative and identifies a range of improvement actions. The Centre maintains very well organised documentation with a detailed quality assurance manual. Policies and procedures are relevant and regularly reviewed. Records of learners' achievement and progress in all courses are consistent and meticulously monitored, and to improve this further the management is now in the final stage of implementing a comprehensive Customer Relations Management (CRM) system for better monitoring and controlling of the training process.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Most learners consistently acquire and develop effective and relevant vocational knowledge and skills, and confidently apply these competences at their workplace. This reflects well in the standards of learners' work and their levels of attainment where the majority of learners achieve a high level of proficiency. Most learners and employers express their high level of satisfaction and find the courses enormously beneficial, with a positive contribution to improving work-related skills; there are a number of success stories of learners employed or promoted after achieving qualifications at OTC.

The Centre has a well-structured assessment process, where learners' achievement is accurately measured and verified effectively. Most learners achieve their course objectives and/or the qualifications they aim for successfully and in a timely manner, with overall achievement and retention rates at 92% and 98% respectively, the rates being toward the high end for the long duration programmes. Achievement rates for the externally accredited programmes, which constitute 92% of the total enrolment, are either comparable or higher than the international averages. Learners' progress is continuously monitored and they are provided with comprehensive support to ensure that they progress well and reach their full potential. From the performance records, the vast majority of learners make considerable progress throughout their course/programme, with a significant majority making extremely good progress considering their levels of entry and backgrounds. The majority of learners advance through the levels and maintain their high levels of achievement. However, a few of learners do not master the required skills upon course completion and struggle to achieve the minimum pass criteria, specifically in the LCCI English for Business certifications which form 7% of the total enrolment. Nonetheless, the rates of learners taking LCCI English certifications have increased significantly following introduction of the preliminary bridging level.

From the sessions observed and scrutiny of learners' work, the vast majority of learners are able to work well independently and collaboratively when given the opportunity. They show a high level of confidence in completing given tasks and perform well above average during in-class activities, though in a few cases some learners require further support and direction to move forward. Most learners are self-motivated and show a very high level of enthusiasm towards their learning. They show interest in demonstrating their understanding and presenting their work. The majority reflect critically on their learning and extend what they have been taught during sessions, sharing work-related experiences, and questioning and defending their ideas assertively with their trainers and colleagues. The Centre has a clear attendance and punctuality policy which is rigorously implemented and followed up

effectively. Learners show high commitment to their learning, with the vast majority attending their sessions regularly and punctually, though a number of learners do arrive late.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Good (2)

Trainers are highly qualified, with extensive subject knowledge and relevant experience. This is evident in the sessions they deliver, with most of them providing on-site vocational examples and real-life cases, giving accurate explanations and knowledgeable illustration of points, and responding well to learners' questions.

The vast majority of training sessions are learner-centred, delivered in a systematic way to reinforce topics covered in previous sessions as well as allowing sufficient time for activities, assessments and summing up. Trainers use a variety of effective training methods to engage and motivate learners, including discussions, role plays, group activities, questioning techniques, presentations by learners and peer evaluation. These methods widen learners' knowledge and improve their level of confidence. Several examples were cited where trainers succeed in linking topics to real life, thereby attracting the attention of learners. Sufficient time is allocated during discussions and group activities for learners to interact and reflect on their understanding, with a majority of learners participating extremely well throughout the sessions. However, in a minority of sessions, a few learners are less engaged and do not participate actively. Trainers accommodate learners' varying interests and needs effectively by providing more advanced activities to challenge high achievers' abilities and through individual support when required by the less able. Training sessions always focus on pre-defined and clear objectives which are shared with learners; these are well managed throughout, along with useful recapitulation to link topics and with effective summary at the end. Trainers use well-structured lesson plans, which are mostly detailed and informed by prior and continuous assessments of learners. These plans are modified by using various approaches and adding relevant activities that usually stimulate learners' higher order skills and critical thinking, thereby promoting life-long learning and self-confidence. Trainers utilise the available learning resources and materials effectively to promote learners' understanding and enrich their learning experience.

Accurate and rigorous formative and summative assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding. These are structured to measure the achievement of course objectives throughout the course, and include individual and group tests conducted through presentations and case studies, mock examinations and end of course assessments. However,

in a very few cases, marking of formative assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. Trainers use clear, well-understood rubrics and provide very useful verbal feedback during sessions. Constructive written feedback is provided at the end of the courses, mostly critical and highlighting strengths, areas for improvement and suggested actions for improving skills. Although the Center records the end of course results, it does not maintain sufficient records of the formative assessments carried out to monitor learners' progress.

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Courses/programmes on offer are based on a profound understanding and precise sensing of local market needs. The Centre has very effective and consistent systems to gather and analyse feedback from learners and stakeholders to inform the provision of its courses. The management surveyed a wide range of learners in the local community in order to identify potential learning needs, for instance in the legal field. Besides that, OTC has a comprehensive set of initiatives based on market trends and derived from – and clearly mapped to – locally commissioned strategic studies. Based on that, the Centre has offered and conducted a number of specialised courses/programmes such as travel and tourism. Customisation is very effective, as tailored content is designed and delivered to carefully match clients' specific needs and requirements.

Externally accredited courses/programmes, which represent 92% of the total intake, are expertly structured, rigorously planned and have effective design mechanisms; they are regularly reviewed and updated. The varying components of the local short courses are carefully structured and planned with clear course objectives. Both the local and externally accredited courses/programmes have clear scheduling of tasks and assessment criteria, and the information delivered is in a sequence that encourages progressive acquisition of knowledge and skills. Course outlines are detailed and are shared with learners and stakeholders. The local courses are periodically updated and reviewed, with a written policy and procedures in place, though these only cover the design and approval phases.

Courses/programmes are impeccably resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. The materials are reinforced with a range of high quality, thorough and very relevant learning resources and training aids. OTC supports the courses/programmes well, with an experience-enhancing range of constructive, engaging and carefully planned extracurricular activities. These include, for example, discussion sessions with expert speakers, mind-mapping, tongue twisters and individual and group presentation techniques that enhance critical thinking and team building skills.

The requirements for access and entry to courses/programmes are effective in identification, implementation and adjustment in line with learners' needs and levels. Different placement tests with specific criteria are used to ensure that learners are placed accurately. The target audience and the programme prerequisites are clearly specified in the outlines for all courses/programmes.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

OTC has a systematic and comprehensive mechanism to support and guide learners throughout their learning journey to achieve better outcomes. The Center has clear policies and procedures relating to learners' support and guidance that are embodied in the quality manual. Learners and stakeholders have access to extensive and updated information about the courses/programmes on offer and are provided with good advice and guidance on course selection through different marketing channels, including the Centre's user-friendly website, very useful brochures, newsletters and different social media networks. The trainers, management and administrative staff are extremely supportive, friendly and have close relationships with the learners.

Learners at OTC are provided with a well-focused and highly effective range of support and guidance throughout their courses; this significantly influences the levels of learners' attainments and improves their knowledge. On the first day of the course learners receive a thorough induction session to familiarise them with aspects related to their learning. Those enrolled in the majority of the externally accredited programmes have inclusive programme overview documents, with the learners' handbook provided including holistic information about the key aspects of training. There are a significant number of learners where the support provided has helped them to successfully achieve their certificates with high marks having made outstanding progress. A 'trainee guidance form' helps learners to declare the type of support needed. Various actions are taken to support learners who face difficulties, including an individualised learners' support plan which usually provide extra sessions, one-on-one sessions, and access to additional materials that are of extreme benefit in helping learners to achieve better. Learners are provided with opportunities to practice through on-line mock examinations with effective follow-up and constructive feedback. They are also motivated through various rewarding system and an awarding ceremony. Effective arrangements are in place to accommodate learners with special educational needs. Clear procedures under the name of 'Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration' are in place for the majority of the externally accredited courses, which are implemented effectively. Learners with particular needs are identified prior to their enrolment.

Closed communication is maintained with stakeholders to keep them informed about learners' performance throughout the course. Thorough individual learners' feedback reports are shared with relevant stakeholders; these clearly indicate learners' strengths, opportunities provided and actions to be taken. The Centre is highly flexible in the scheduling and delivery of courses to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders. The learning environment and the chosen venues for training are inspiring and well equipped with learners at the Centre having access to sufficient learning facilities, such as a fit-for-purpose library with updated books, which are used effectively to enrich the learning experience.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Outstanding (1)

The Centre has highly focused strategic planning with well-defined vision and mission statements which are shared with staff and learners and included in the managements' strategic direction. The strategic plan developed for 2018/2019 is more coherent and has a more structured set of objectives compared to the previous plans developed during the Centre's establishment, currently being more focused on the continuous improvement of learners' achievements and raising the standards and quality of OTC's offering. A critical SWOT analysis has been carried out and translated into an effective and detailed operational plan. Plans since the Centre's inception have been based on the continuous and rigorous self-evaluation processes. These plans have been translated into yearly operational plans which are comprehensive and comprise all training activities and the Centre's business. The SEF provided for the purpose of this review is informative. However, the judgements made on a number of criteria slightly overestimated the provision.

The organisational structure is fit for purpose and is excellent in suiting the nature of the provision operations and meeting its aims. Staff and trainers have clear job descriptions with specific roles, responsibilities and core competency expectations. Regular meetings are held by the management team, the sales team, trainers and the quality improvement committee to follow-up and closely monitor the provision and achievements of the Centre's targets. Highly effective governance arrangements are in place which contributes positively to the Centre's operation and development. Board members are kept aware of the overall situation at OTC through regular meetings.

The management selects staff and trainers judiciously and monitors their performance carefully. Selected trainers are qualified, with sufficient years of experience in the field. They

are inducted well and deployed effectively according to their specialisations. Staff and trainers are provided with meaningful development opportunities. Staff performance is well monitored and they are guided on how to improve with their training needs being acted upon. Trainers' performance is consistently and rigorously monitored throughout each course through a formal lesson observation process. The completed forms are critical and the written comments are constructive, but do not necessarily always highlight the key or priorities areas for improvement. The course managers closely monitor programme delivery and link the class observations with the outcomes from learners' satisfaction reports and their achievement. Continuous follow-up is conducted to ensure that implementation of the training process is rigorous, with trainers being provided with constructive feedback and being guided on how to improve further.

The Centre has systematic arrangements to quality assure its provision. The quality manual outlines the training and learning approach through a set of detailed policies and procedures; it is continuously updated and reviewed to match the requirements of the awarding bodies. The verification and moderation processes for the externally accredited programmes are effective and are consistently carried out on the summative assessment, where the outcomes are actioned in a timely manner. However, the verification processes for the locally designed courses which represent 8% from the total enrolment are not sufficiently thorough and are inconsistently implemented. Learners' prior attainment is mostly measured, with placement tests being carried out to ensure the eligibility of learners for the courses/programmes. Learners' achievement is meticulously monitored; the Centre maintains accurate records of learners' performance which are aggregated, analysed and closely followed up. Trend analysis over time is carried out to inform decision making, with the outcomes also being used to initiate prompt improvement actions. The Centre has established, and maintains, productive links with stakeholders, relevant parts of the local community and the awarding bodies. Learners' feedback is systematically sought, aggregated, thoroughly analysed and any concerns raised are addressed. Employers' feedback is occasionally collected.

There is a clear health and safety policy, with procedures and relevant forms in place. This is shared with learners and staff. The Centre extensively ensures a healthy and conducive learning environment through periodic risk assessments and frequent walk-throughs the checklist to ensure that the premises are suitable and free of any obvious hazards.

The provider's key strengths

- The acquisition and development of highly effective skills and competences by most learners, with the majority achieving high proficiency rates.
- The well-structured assessment process, where learners' achievements are accurately measured and verified effectively.
- The well-structured, planned and regularly reviewed courses/programmes that closely match the specific needs of learners and stakeholders.
- The comprehensive and systematic support and guidance provided to learners throughout their learning journey.
- The highly effective strategic planning and the well-structured operational plan based on critical self-evaluation processes.
- The close monitoring of learners' achievement and trainers' performance.

Recommendations

In order to sustain improvement OTC should:

- Further improve the training strategies and ensure that outstanding practices are spread across the Centre.
- Ensure that the verification and moderation processes of the locally designed courses are more thorough and are consistent across all courses.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Origin Training Centre (OTC) is licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MoLSD) and has been in operation since Jan 2015. It is a subsidiary of Origin Group which was founded 20 years ago to meet the market's needs for specific and unique unfulfilled skills. The Centre caters for adult learners, a mixture of employed and unemployed job-seekers who are mostly sponsored by the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), the MoLSD or their employers. OTC mainly offers a range of externally accredited programmes and various training courses, on-demand and in affiliations with a number of awarding bodies in the fields of accounting, sales and marketing management, customer service, leadership and management, English for Business, and Procurement & Supply Operations. Most of these are long duration programmes with staged modules. In addition, the Centre offers a number of local completion and attendance-based short courses in soft skills that meet market needs and fulfill training gaps; these can be customised to employers' specific needs and requirements. The Centre has Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and affiliations with a number of professional organisations and well-known awarding bodies such as the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), the London Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI), The Institute of Sales and Marketing Management (ISMM), the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS), and the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

OTC operates from a single centre located in Seef District, from where it mainly delivers its courses/programmes with only a few being held at hospitality venues. OTC is run by a general manager, a quality assurance officer, a health and safety officer, business development staff, customer relations staff and administrative staff. All staff members are employed on a full-time basis. The Centre has six full-time trainers and has access to a pool of part-time trainers who are used as and when needed. The Centre management reports to a Board of Directors.

Since its inception, the Centre has enrolled a total of 1,279 learners. These comprised 236 in 2016 and 1,043 in 2017. Currently, the Centre has enrolled 168 learners up to the date of this review, where they are enrolled in different modules within programmes. Externally accredited courses form 92% of the total enrolment. The remaining 8% are enrolled in the local completion or attendance-based courses in various areas of soft skills.