



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

# **Directorate of Vocational Reviews**

## **Review Report**

**Procloud Training Centre**  
**Manama**  
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 14-17 May 2017**

VO118-C3-R065

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## Introduction

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The Directorate of 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 institution 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 provider should do to improve.

## 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	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)
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Good (2)</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good (2)</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: Good (2)**

The overall effectiveness of Procloud Training Centre (Procloud) is good, as are all other aspects of its provision. Most learners enrolled in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) programmes acquire and develop effective vocational knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to their profession which ultimately helps them to enhance their performance and careers. Learners are attentive and participate well during sessions, remain self-motivated and maintain a positive attitude towards their learning. The vast majority opt for internationally accredited courses and obtain certificates in a timely manner. The Centre provides inspiring learning in a conducive environment that is well equipped with spacious laboratories. The training is presented by qualified trainers who come from wide ICT backgrounds. They support delivery of the training with a range of real-life examples and case studies and respond effectively to learners' questions, enriching their understanding. Most sessions are based on a learner-centred approach that provides ample opportunities for activity-based exercises to motivate and engage learners, though trainers do not provide constructive written feedback to inform learners how to improve further. While the majority of lessons are well structured with clear objectives, a minority are not always updated according to learners' varying needs.

A wide range of externally accredited and locally designed ICT programmes are offered that lead to professional qualifications and are based on a thorough understanding of market needs drawn from reliable locally published studies. The externally accredited programmes, which represent two-thirds of the total programmes, are periodically and consistently reviewed and updated following the instructions of the awarding bodies. These are well planned and structured, following the awarding bodies' directions, and are sufficiently resourced to meet learners' needs. On the other hand, although the design, review and approval of the locally designed programmes are useful, they are left to trainers' own experience and style, and the written procedures relating to these programmes are not detailed nor consistently implemented.

Procloud management has clear mission and vision statements and a challenging strategic plan that focuses on improving learners' vocational skills, mainly in the area of ICT. The current plan is based on a SWOT analysis and a detailed feasibility study. Although accountability is defined, deadlines and completion dates are not clearly indicated for all

targets. Procloud has a useful range of quality assurance procedures to assure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment standards, most of which have been recently introduced. However, the Centre's arrangements for internal verification and moderation are not well organised.

## **Capacity to improve**

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

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

Procloud has a good capacity to expand and improve the quality of its provision. The strategic plan has challenging but realistic targets that match its operation capabilities; these are closely monitored by the management team, which has a firm commitment to drive continuous improvement. The plans are based on a systematic approach of ongoing self-assessments and are focused on responding to the rapidly emerging local market needs for a wider range of professional ICT programmes. Productive links are maintained with the local marketplace as well as with stakeholders and globally recognised ICT vendors. The Centre is an authorised Cisco Academy and Microsoft silver partner.

Since its inception in 2014, the Centre has maintained learners' enrolment and high success rates on most of the ICT externally accredited programmes. Learners' achievement and progress relative to their starting points are closely monitored by the management team, trends are produced and reports are circulated for driving improvement initiatives. A suitable range of quality assurance procedures are in place, but these are underdeveloped and not fully cascaded through daily operations. Although it has recently improved the effectiveness of lesson planning, the procedures for verification and moderation of learners' assessment and achievement are not sufficiently implemented.

## **Learners' achievement**

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

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

Most learners acquire and develop effective vocational knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to their profession and meet market requirements well, particularly those enrolled in the externally accredited programmes in the field of ICT which comprise over two-third of total enrolment. Most learners achieve the professional qualifications they aim for. They

confidently demonstrate the skills they gain within training period in fulfilling course projects as well as at their workplace. From the interviews and learners questionnaires, generally, learners are highly satisfied with the programmes and how these assist them to gain employment in ICT. Learners enrolled in the locally designed courses develop suitable skills and knowledge. These comprise one third of enrolment mainly soft skills and Mobile Native Applications Development.

From the Learners' Performance Data (LPD) provided and learners' grades for the externally accredited programmes, the retention and success rates are high and learners achieve their course outcomes and certificates in a timely manner. This was also evident in the better observed sessions, where learners actively participated in class activities and interacted well with their trainers and peers. The attainment of the vast majority of learners is comparable or higher than the international passing scores. However, a number of learners do not achieve their qualifications in a timely manner.

Learners progress well throughout their courses from their starting points over the modules of the long programmes such as the Certified Network Professional (CCNP) and Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate (MCSA), and from mid to final examinations where applicable. They also progress well over the higher or specialised courses, as in the case of learners progressing successfully within the Computer Information System Company programmes (Cisco) professional learning path. Additionally, a few learners progress from Cisco to MCSA, or within Certified Internet Webmaster (CIW) courses.

Learners are attentive and participate well during their classes. They are generally self-motivated and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are keen to gain their international certificates, with the vast majority (80%) of the course completers attempting the externally accredited examinations and successfully gain their international qualifications. The more able learners reflect critically on their level of attainment, justify their answers and, whenever instructed by the trainer, are able to correct their peers' class work or provide them with further explanation.

From the observed sessions and scrutiny of learners' work, learners demonstrate a good ability to work independently. Given the type and nature of the programmes learners, when given opportunities, engage in group discussions in a constructive and collaborative manner. The vast majority of learners attend their classes regularly, though a few arrive late to their sessions. The attendance and punctuality policy is communicated and is monitored by the administration staff and trainer. The Centre keeps a reliable record of attendance, but punctuality records are not maintained.

## **The quality of provision**

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

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

The effectiveness of training and assessment at Procloud Training Centre is good overall. Trainers are knowledgeable, experienced and most hold globally recognised certification in the subjects they teach. This is evident from their thorough explanations supported with real-life case studies and vocational examples and their informed responses to learners' questions regarding matters in their own workplace. They use a range of activity-based exercises and learner-centred approaches to engage and motivate the vast majority of learners and enhance their understanding, including presentations, discussion, practical real-life scenarios and some troubleshooting techniques to enrich the learning experience.

The majority of trainers use well-structured lesson plans, for the externally accredited courses following the awarding bodies' material. The lesson plans specify the learning objectives to be covered, the training material to be used, duration, activities and evaluation methods. However, they are not always updated according to learners' needs, and in a few courses the plans are less detailed. The vast majority of sessions are well organised and time is managed, with an effective balance of theoretical and practical activities. They start with sharing objectives and recapitulation of previous sessions. Nonetheless, they do not always start on time. During the observed sessions, learners' theoretical and practical understanding and achievement of course objectives are gauged effectively through direct questioning and theoretical and practical activities. Additionally, a highly relevant and well-structured range of summative and formative assessment tools are undertaken, including pre- and post-course assessments, individual projects, presentations, and mid-term tests to measure course outcomes.

Records on learners' achievement are maintained and regularly updated, including the pre- and post-assessment grades and the results of external examinations. Constructive and instant verbal feedback is provided on learners' performance, during and after completion of assignments. However, written feedback on how learners can improve their skills further is not sufficiently systematic.

Most trainers accommodate learners' different needs effectively. Learners who are found to be struggling in their class activities are provided with extended explanations and repeats of practical work. The more able learners are given the opportunity to take part in supporting their colleagues by providing guidance and simplified explanations to reinforce the information in learners' minds, plus the more able learners are challenged to present the information in a simple and understandable manner. In the vast majority of the observed

sessions, trainers stimulate learners' higher order and critical thinking through a range of critical questions, challenging activities and effectively linking the learning concepts with the world of work.

Trainers use a wide range of learning resources and materials that are used to facilitate and promote effective learning, such as smart boards, data show, wireless keyboards and textbooks provided by vendors, in addition to a range of virtual machines, web-based applications and information links.

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

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

The effectiveness of programmes offered in meeting the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders is good overall. A wide range of externally accredited ICT training programmes are on offer, including Microsoft, Cisco, CIW, EC-council and a range of IT security courses. The Centre also offers a number of locally designed and customised programmes such as Microsoft Office and Mobile Applications Development. Furthermore, it offers a few locally designed attendance-based soft skills courses which meet learners' and employers' needs. All of these programmes respond to local market requirements, being introduced following a thorough analysis of market needs and with reference to locally published studies and management's experience of the ICT sector.

The externally accredited programmes represent two-third of the conducted programmes and are periodically reviewed and updated following the instructions of the awarding bodies. Programmes are well planned and structured, reflecting the awarding bodies' requirements. The assessment structure is well organised, covering an effective balance of theoretical and practical assessments. Programmes outlines are detailed, with learning outcomes, methods of assessments and teaching methodology being clearly identified. Likewise, the design, review and approval processes of the local programmes are defined, these representing a minority of the total courses conducted, though these are left to the trainers' own experience and style. The written procedures related to these programmes are basic and are not consistent, as the content does not cover the programme objectives fully and the flow of the topics are not well organised.

All programmes are well resourced, following the vendors' specifications and in line with industry standards to ensure effective delivery and meet learners' needs. The Centre has three well equipped laboratories, virtual machines, vendors' approved programme materials and online resources and tools that are made available to help learners improve their learning

experience. The externally accredited programmes are supported with a range of extracurricular activities to enrich the learning experience, such as visiting speakers who share their real-life experiences in the ICT field, and access to a range of mobile applications. Clear entry requirements are determined in line with the awarding bodies' specifications and are accessible to learners in advance. The progression routes of the different IT programmes are clear. Learners' background and qualifications are verified to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements. There are various examples of cases of rejection based on the outcomes of the pre-assessment results.

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

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

Procloud has fit-for-purpose written procedures outlining the support provided to learners throughout their learning journey to help them achieve better outcomes and obtain their intended professional certifications. Administration staff and trainers provide effective verbal advice to learners, both on course progression routes and before joining the programme. Learners are made aware of the assessment procedures and attendance policy, helping them to settle quickly in their course. Procloud has recently developed a learners' manual, which contains detailed information about the provision and programmes. Trainers maintain direct contacts with learners through emails and 'WhatsApp' groups and provide them with verbal feedback during sessions, though no written progress reports are provided on their performance and communication with employers about learners' performance is limited.

The Centre provides an inspiring learning experience in a well-resourced and conducive environment that meets the needs of learners, such as educational training posters, brochures, smartboards and data show. Although the vast majority of learners express their satisfaction with the learning facility, a few had concerns about the number of restrooms and the quality of chairs, which are not comfortable. Recently, Procloud has launched a friendly website that provides useful information about the programmes offered, but some data is not up-to-date and not all hyperlinks are functioning.

Various flexible arrangements are in place for the scheduling and delivery of programmes to suit the learners' and employers' needs. Extra training sessions are provided on request, and learners are allowed free access to the laboratories when needed. Procloud has fit-for-purpose written guidelines for supporting learners with special educational needs and proper arrangements are in place to identify these as they arise, though the Centre does not currently have any learners requiring this kind of support.

## **Leadership, management and governance**

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

**Grade: Good (2)**

Procloud Training Centre has clear mission and vision statements that focus on improving learners' professional skills, mainly in the ICT field. The current strategic plan is detailed, challenging, and links well to the implementation plan. Planning is based on a SWOT analysis and a detailed feasibility study that was conducted with the support of an external body. Although accountability is defined, deadline and completion dates are not clearly indicated for all targets. The Centre deploys sufficient human and highly effective physical resources that suits the nature of the provision and meets its aims. Job roles and responsibilities for every function are clear, with most staff having relevant experience in the field of training. The owner is well informed on the centre's plans and closely monitors their development. The management maintains a healthy and pleasant learning environment, with essential health and safety procedure and practices being strictly observed. Spacious laboratories and study areas are well maintained.

Procloud has a useful range of quality assurance procedures that include the approach to training, attendance requirements, appeal procedure, learners' feedback and special needs procedures. The Centre relies on the awarding bodies' predefined policies and procedures for controlling examinations in its test centres. However, the centre's arrangements for internal verification and moderation are not well organised. Other quality assurance practices are recently implemented and not fully deployed. Self-evaluation is systematic and is carried out using an internal exercise to identify areas that require further improvement. The SEF provided for the review is detailed and provides very useful information about operations, and the Centre's grades are similar to those of the review team. The management arrangements to monitor data about learners' achievement, progress and trends is comprehensive and highly effective, with data being aggregated and analysed and the outcomes used to trigger improvements actions such as improving the IT laboratories' resources to meet the increasing demands by learners.

Procloud has a clear recruitment policy and procedures in place, with systematic selection steps being undertaken before employing trainers and staff. Qualified staff are recruited and trainers are inducted and deployed effectively according to their respective specialisms. Some are provided with development opportunities and professional certification in their areas of specialisation. To quality assure training and learning, Procloud utilises a very useful class observation process with a detailed form to closely monitor training sessions. Areas identified for further improvement during these visits are acted upon and followed up with individual

trainer. The Centre maintains highly effective links with awarding bodies, major employers and relevant parts of the community. Over the past couple of years, it has widened its affiliation with major ICT awarding bodies such as Microsoft and Cisco. There is a systematic approach to ascertain the views of learners after the end of each programme, and relevant improvement actions are taken based on these. However, the views of employers are not systemically sought.

## The provider's key strengths

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- The highly effective vocational knowledge and skills developed by the vast majority of learners relevant to their profession.
- The knowledgeable, experienced and certified trainers in the subjects they teach.
- The wide range of ICT externally accredited and locally designed programmes that are widely meet learners' and employers' requirements.
- The comprehensive approach to monitoring learners' achievements, progress and trends, data analysed and the outcomes used to trigger improvements.

## Recommendations

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In order to improve its provision, Procloud Training Centre should:

- further improve the mechanisms for design, approval, review and update of the locally designed programmes
- improve teaching/training and assessment by:
  - ensuring that lesson plans are detailed and customised to meet learners' varying needs
  - ensuring that learners receive constructive written feedback on the areas that they need to improve further
- further enhance and implement verification and moderation procedures for quality assuring the standards of learners' assessment and achievement.

## Appendix

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### Description of the provision

Procloud Training Centre (Procloud) was established in 2014. The Centre is licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MOLSD) to offer a range of vocationally related ICT programmes. Externally accredited and internally designed programmes are offered, varying in duration. The Centre is a Microsoft Silver Certified Partner for learning, an authorised Cisco Academy, a Certified Internet Web Professionals (CIW), and approved test centre for Pearson VUE and CIW certifications. Since 2015, around 512 learners have attended Procloud's programmes. Most learners are self-sponsored and aged 18 and above.

Procloud operates from one centre located in Manama Diplomatic area. It is run by an executive director and employs on a full time basis, a quality and communication specialist, an assistant director, two course coordinators and a head of administration. The Centre has access to a pool of trainers who are utilised as required on a part time basis.