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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews
Review Report

Regal Gulf Training Centre (RGTC)
Sanabis
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 27 February – 1 March 2017

VO107-C3-R054

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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 five reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications that learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the Centre and met learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of the Regal Gulf Training Centre (RGTC) was judged as satisfactory as were all other aspects of its provision.

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

Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of teaching / training and assessment	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of programmes	Satisfactory (3)
Quality of support and guidance	Satisfactory (3)
Leadership, management and governance	Satisfactory (3)
Capacity to improve	**Satisfactory (3)**
Overall effectiveness	**Satisfactory (3)**

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

The overall effectiveness for the Regal Gulf Training Centre (RGTC) is satisfactory, as are all aspects of its provision. Learners gain relevant vocational skills, knowledge and competencies in the field of IT and soft skills, and the majority make sufficient progress considering their prior attainment. However, a minority do not master the required skills upon completing their courses and their progress is minimal. Learners display a positive attitude towards their learning, and the majority enrolled in the local completion courses achieve the course requirements and receive their certificates in a timely manner. The majority of learners in the externally accredited courses achieve the certifications they aim for, though a minority do not succeed at the first attempt or do not sit for their final examinations, particularly in the Microsoft professional courses such as Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate (MCSA) and Microsoft Certified Solution Expert (MCSE). Learners are provided with adequate support and guidance which helps them to improve but not necessarily to reach their full potential.

RGTC trainers are qualified and use their professional experience to enrich training by providing practical real-life examples and deploying a range of training methods and learning resources to facilitate learning. Adequate formative and summative assessment methods are used to evaluate learners' understanding and measure the achievement of the course objectives, though assessment methods in a few courses are not sufficiently rigorous.

Local market needs are adequately reviewed and the outcomes are properly used to inform the provision. The externally accredited courses are well-structured, planned and regularly updated to meet the stakeholders' and learners' requirements. Although the local completion courses are suitably planned and structured, the mechanisms for designing, updating and reviewing are not sufficiently systematic and the relevant policies and procedures are insufficiently detailed.

The Centre has a strategic plan which is translated into an action plan. Learners' performance is adequately monitored and appropriately recorded, though the results are not aggregated or analysed to monitor trends over time. Trainers' performance is regularly monitored through class observation and learners' feedback, though the completed forms are not critical enough. Quality assurance systems are insufficient and the verification and moderation

processes are ineffective. Appropriate partnerships are maintained with various IT vendors and others awarding bodies.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

RGTC has a satisfactory capacity to improve its provision. The management team and staff are competent and have a vision focused on improving the provision further. The Centre has sufficient physical resources and a fit-for-purpose organisational structure, including access to a pool of experienced and qualified trainers. A useful SWOT analysis is in place, which has resulted in the development of strategic and operational plans to address the key areas identified for improvement. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for this review is fairly informative, but grades are overestimated.

The previous BQA review recommendations have been partially addressed. For example, local market needs are currently gathered and the outcomes are sufficiently utilised to improve the offerings. The management has carried out a range of development initiatives, including installing more computer stations in the laboratories. The Centre's offerings have been broadened by introducing a range of new courses, specifically in commercial, administrative and management soft skills. The range of externally accredited IT courses has been expanded, with the Centre becoming an approved training centre with international training providers who provide the Centre with the trainers and training materials needed to offer courses such as Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA); as an example, a COBIT-5 Foundation course. There are plans to provide more courses, mainly in IT and languages, implement a Learning Management System (LMS) and to upgrade the application laboratories.

Quality Assurance (QA) arrangements have been improved and a QA manual is in place. However, the available policies and procedures are insufficiently detailed and not effectively implemented. The number of enrolments decreased in 2016, though adequate repeat business is maintained over the past two years.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

Learners gain knowledge and develop relevant vocational skills and competencies in the field of IT and soft skills. This is evident from learners' levels of understanding in the sessions observed and the few samples available of their work. However, a minority still struggle to complete the tasks required by the course level and their added value is minimal. Learners' achievement is suitably measured by formative and summative assessment tools. The standard of learners' work reflects an adequate level of understanding and achievement. The comparison between pre- and post-course assessments reveals that the vast majority of learners make sufficient progress considering their prior attainments, with the majority scoring reasonable marks in their final results. Learners in the Microsoft application externally accredited courses show better grades in their final examinations compared to COBIT and Microsoft professional courses. Most learners and employers interviewed find the courses beneficial for their workplace.

According to the analysis of the Learners' Performance Data (LPD) and the attainment records for the past three years, the vast majority of learners complete their course requirements and achieve their qualifications in a timely manner in the local courses. A minority of the local courses are attendance-based, where a certificate of attendance is awarded for completing at least 70% of the required guided hours. The overall success rate for the externally accredited courses is reasonable at 72%. However, a minority of learners underachieve or do not obtain their certifications in a timely manner, particularly in the MCSA and MCSE modules.

Learners are attentive and the majority demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning, especially during the practical activities. On the other hand, only a few learners are self-motivated and able to reflect on their level of understanding and what they need to do to improve further. This is evident during the observed sessions through questioning their trainers and sharing relevant cases from their work experience. Learners are required to complete a 'Progress Sheet' where they reflect on their learning experience, though some of the completed forms are insufficiently critical and the utilisation of the results is not fully evident. While the majority of learners are generally able to work independently to complete in-class activities and discussions, a minority remains dependent on trainers' directions and support to move forward and complete the given tasks.

RGTC has a written policy on attendance and punctuality, which is suitably implemented. Attendance is regularly monitored across all courses, with action occasionally taken against frequent absenteeism or lateness. However, punctuality is inconsistently recorded. From the

sessions observed and the attendance records it is evident that most learners do attend regularly, but there are a number of cases where learners arrive late.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

Trainers are qualified and have relevant subject knowledge and training experience. Those teaching the IT professional courses are certified in the subjects they teach. This is evident in lessons, where they provide accurate explanations, respond knowledgably to learners' questions and provide a range of vocational examples and real-life cases to link theory with practice. The majority of courses have suitable schemes of work, with clear objectives which generally outline the topics covered with an allocation of time, though only a few plans have further details such as the training and assessment methodologies including the resources to be used. However, these plans are insufficiently based on learners' prior attainment or continuous assessment. The majority of sessions have appropriate time and class management, with proper pacing; they usually start on time, with recapitulation of the previously covered material and sharing the current session's objectives with learners.

A number of training methods and activities are used which engage the majority of learners. These include PowerPoint presentations, discussion, questioning techniques and practical demonstration. Trainers occasionally use approaches that enhance learners' thinking and encourage self- and life-long learning; this is done specifically in the IT professional courses, for instance through further questioning and the use of techniques to resolve real-life cases or scenarios. However, during the sessions observed and in a minority of cases, trainers do not sufficiently stimulate learners' higher order thinking skills or motivate them to participate effectively throughout the session, particularly during the delivery of theoretical elements or the demonstration of practical activities. During the delivery, trainers accommodate learners' varying needs with sufficient individual support provided to the less-able learners. However, the more-able learners are not always adequately challenged. Trainers utilise the available learning resources and materials appropriately to deliver courses and facilitate learning.

Learners' levels of understanding and their abilities to complete the in-class activities are adequately assessed through a variety of practical and theoretical assessment methods. These include question and answer, in-class activities, hands-on practical exercises, pre- and post-course tests, external on-line examinations and sometimes quizzes or projects. However, in a few courses learners are not rigorously assessed as either they do not adequately cover the course objectives or are not up to the course's level. Trainers mostly record learners' marks in

their summative assessments, but the Centre has limited records of formative assessments carried on throughout the course and the records that are kept are not sufficiently detailed. Each trainer has his/her own rubric to evaluate the practical work of learners, but again this is not implemented effectively. Trainers regularly provide instant verbal feedback to help learners improve, but those given on learners' individual performance reports are generalised and do not help them to understand where and how they can improve further.

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

RGTC provides training in IT and a variety of soft skills for the workplace. The majority of the courses are externally accredited, which along with an adequate range of internally accredited courses generally meet the requirements of learners and stakeholders. The Centre has proper arrangements for interpreting the needs of employers and learners. These include research in the form of a local survey targeting different organisations to assess their needs, with the results being utilised. The information is gathered from various sources, including locally and regionally published studies, to gauge the market's needs. This persuaded the Centre's management to offer more IT courses such as COBIT 5 and a number of soft skills courses, which have now been conducted several times.

The externally accredited IT courses are well-structured and planned, with specified contents and the expected learning outcomes as required by the vendors. The materials used are up-to-date and well designed by internationally recognised professional vendors and training partners, and are regularly reviewed. These include sufficient numbers of practical exercises and activities, and sometimes include projects to ensure the attainment of skills. Local courses represent 58% of the total enrolment and are adequately structured and planned, with proper course outlines. However, the structure of assessments in a few courses is not always mapped to properly cover the course objectives, and the mechanisms for designing, updating and reviewing them is not systematic but is left to the individual trainers. Furthermore, the available policy covers only the update of courses which is also insufficiently detailed.

Courses are sufficiently resourced with teaching aids and materials such as textbooks and PowerPoint presentations by vendors, published by third parties or designed by RGTC's trainers. The Centre has a sufficient number of laboratories which are equipped with updated hardware and software to meet the requirements and setup guides specified by the IT vendors. Only a few IT courses are enriched with extra-curricular activities to enhance learners' experiences, such as opportunities to join an on-line external course and using examples of external links to enrich and improve their knowledge; these have been made available only to a few selected learners.

Access and entry requirements, and the intended target audience, are clearly specified for most courses in the course outlines. However, the mechanism of entry level is not always adequately implemented, particularly in the IT professional courses where there have been a few cases of learners being enrolled in advanced levels and not having the necessary key skills to participate in these courses.

How well are learners supported and guided?

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

RGTC has adequate arrangements to support learners to achieve better throughout their learning experience, using a useful support and guidance mechanism. However, a comprehensive policy and procedures for this that covers all categories of learners, including special needs, has not been developed. Trainers and staff are friendly and approachable. Learners receive adequate advice and guidance on courses on offer and are provided with detailed information about the technical and professional options and their progression paths. This is done through various methods including telephone calls, emails, the Centre's website, posts on social media, and promotional brochures and leaflets. However, the website is not updated frequently. The Centre also makes a few presentations to educational centres and organisations in Bahrain, providing initial guidance on course choices and reinforcing the importance of professional certificates. On commencement of training, a learners' guide is provided along with an induction session on policies and information. This includes, for example, the attendance and punctuality policy and assessment methods. For the externally accredited courses learners receive guidelines for the various courses and the certification path.

Recently, learners enrolled in the externally accredited courses have access to practice tests, additional materials, with useful website links and YouTube videos for Microsoft professional certificates, and mock examinations for the COBIT qualification. When needed, learners are provided with extra revision and support sessions, during the course or if they fail the external examination. They can also use the laboratories outside the sessions' timings for more practice. Nevertheless, the support provided is not sufficiently systematic to help learners reach their full potential or impact positively on learners' achievement, for instance with the underachievers in the MCSA certification.

Appropriate communication with stakeholders is maintained to inform them about the learners' performance and about attendance throughout the course. Upon course completion stakeholders are also provided with individual final performance reports which include learners' results with general feedback. Arrangements for course delivery are highly flexible to suit the needs of learners and stakeholders. Course scheduling including timings, dates, days or the choice of venues may be changed upon learners' or stakeholders' requests. Trainers provide bi-lingual instructions whenever required. The learning environment and

the chosen venues are pleasant and appropriately equipped. The laboratories are fit-for-purpose and have sufficient computers with essential training aids and resources and a few inspirational educational posters such as certification pathway maps. RGTC has suitable arrangements to support learners with special needs, though the policy is not sufficiently detailed.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Satisfactory (3)

RGTC has clear vision and mission statements which are focused on business positioning and improving the learning experience. The management team has developed a five-year strategic plan with a set of objectives that are sufficiently challenging and aligned towards continuous improvement. However, there is no explicit focus on raising learners' achievement. The plan is translated into yearly action plans through which the strategic objectives are cascaded into actions with clear accountabilities. However, a number of the identified Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are neither well-defined nor clearly mapped to ensure rigorousness of performance monitoring and achievement. Environmental scanning and a SWOT analysis were conducted and used in developing the strategic plan, though the self-evaluation process is not regularly carried out to trigger further improvements. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for the review is fairly informative, though the areas identified for improvement are not critical enough and the grades overestimate the provision.

The Centre has a set of quality assurance policies and procedures, but these are insufficiently detailed and are not well implemented, particularly those relating to the quality of training and assessment. Appropriate pre-course assessments are used to evaluate learners' prior attainment in the majority of courses, but the outcomes are insufficiently utilised to inform lesson planning. Furthermore, the Centre lacks effective and holistic moderation and verification processes. Learners' achievement is monitored to an appropriate level; while adequate records on learners' performance are kept for various courses, these are not aggregated to monitor trends over time. On the other hand, results of the externally accredited courses are regularly monitored and appropriately utilised to inform decision making.

The current RGTC organisational structure is sufficient to meet its objectives, considering the size of the centre and the range of courses offered. Clear roles and allocated responsibilities for staff are in place. Senior management and staff members are qualified and have relevant experience. The available governance arrangements are adequate in setting the centre's

strategic direction and decision making. Qualified trainers are recruited, appropriately inducted and deployed effectively according to their specialisations. Candidate trainers are requested to conduct a demo session to evaluate their training competences. Once trainers are selected, their performance is regularly monitored through session observations and analysis of learners' feedback. Nevertheless, the completed session observations forms are not sufficiently detailed and do not highlight clear areas for development or follow-up actions to ensure continuous quality improvement. Staff performance appraisal is in place and IT trainers are provided with opportunities for training and development through upgrading courses. Learners' and employers' feedback about the provision is regularly gathered, analysed and suitably acted upon. RGTC has a number of partnerships with international awarding bodies and IT vendors.

The premises are free from obvious hazards, and essentials of health and safety measures are in place. In addition, health and safety instructions and precautions are displayed all around the Centre and shared with learners at the start of their courses. Regular risk assessment and periodical fire drills are carried out. However, the relevant policy is not sufficiently detailed.

The provider's key strengths

- The effective deployment of qualified trainers.

- The fit-for-purpose learning environment and facilities.

- The well-structured, planned and regularly updated externally accredited courses that meet the needs of learners and employers.

- The appropriate links with partners, various IT vendors and awarding bodies.

Recommendations

In order to improve, RGTC should:

- ensure that learners develop relevant vocational skills and competencies, and achieve their course objectives and/or the qualifications they aim for in a timely manner

- improve training and assessment by:

  - utilising effective training methodologies to engage and motivate learners

  - ensuring that learners are rigorously assessed and records of their performance are accurately maintained throughout the course

- improve the internal quality assurance system to include comprehensive policies and procedures that incorporate all aspects of provision and effective monitoring of trainers' performance.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Regal Gulf Training Centre (RGTC) is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and has been in operation since February 2012 as a subsidiary of Mohamed Bin Eshaq Group. In August 2015, the licence of the Centre has been updated to include Administrative and Commercial activity and therefore approved as a training organisation that provides training in management, business and Information Technology (IT).

The Centre has caters to adult learners and offers externally and internally accredited courses. It provides IT vendor based training programmes such as IT certifications covering basic and advanced professional certifications and IT customised training packages. RGTC is an authorised training centre of Microsoft and CompTIA and is a Certiport partner and testing Centre. In addition, it has Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with a number of professional organisations including Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA). Apart from IT, RGTC provides training courses in the field of commercial, administrative and management soft skills as per market needs and requirements, which can be customised based on employers' specific needs and requirements.

RGTC operates from a single centre located in Sanabis. It is run by a general manager, a training manger, administrative staff, and sales and marketing staff. All staff members are employed on a full-time basis. A pool of part-time trainers are utilised as and when needed, as is the training manager who takes part in training. The Centre management reports to a Board of Directors and an advisor.

Since the last BQA review the Centre has enrolled a total of 770 learners in different courses. These comprise 65 in 2014, 385 in 2015, 236 in 2016 and 84 in 2017 to the date of this review. Externally accredited courses mainly include Microsoft and COBIT, forming 42% of the total enrolment. The rest are completion or attendance certificate courses in IT and soft skills fields.