



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب  
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

# **Vocational Review Unit Review Report**

**Safety Training and Consultant Center  
Khamis  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 23 - 25 January 2012**

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## The Vocational Review Unit

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The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a four-point scale:

<b>Grade description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

## **Introduction**

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### **Description of the provision**

The Safety Training and Consultants Centre (STC) was established in 2000 in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The centre is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) to provide vocational training in a range of health, safety and environmental programmes such as fire prevention, first aid, food safety, forklift safety and environmental management. The majority of STC courses are short and non-accredited. STC also offers a range of courses which are accredited externally by international organizations such as the National Board Examination for Occupational Health and Safety (NEBOSH), the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health (CIEH-UK) the Emergency First Response (EFR) First Aid and the National Safety Council (NSC). In the year 2011, a total of 489 learners attended various courses, most of whom are sponsored by their employers.

The centre operates from one location in Khamis, where it delivers some of its courses, but the majority of courses are either conducted at employers' premises or at a suitable hospitality venues.

The centre's staff comprises a managing director who is also the owner, an administrator, a health and safety project manager, a marketing and sales manager and a pool of part-time trainers.

### **Scope of the review**

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed training sessions, 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 talked with staff, learners, employers and trainers.

In the previous review, overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory as was learners' achievement, the quality of training, programmes and support provided to learners. Leadership and management and capacity to improve were judged as below satisfactory.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what STC should do to improve.

## Table of review judgments awarded

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<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade 2: Good
<b>Learners' Achievement</b>	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 2: Good
<b>Quality of Provision</b>	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade 2: Good
How well do courses meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade 2: Good
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade 2: Good
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 2: Good

## 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 2: Good**

The overall effectiveness of Safety Training and Consultants Centre (STC) is good, as are all other aspects of the provision. Most learners develop broad vocationally-related skills and knowledge in the health, safety, hygiene and environmental profession according to industry requirements and standards. These courses are well structured, come with progression and a few with external accreditation. They are effectively delivered by trainers who are well qualified and specialised in their field and most are members of professional bodies. STC provides a safe learning environment and effective support that promotes the good achievement of learners. The management has a clear strategic plan that is focused on providing a safe and high quality learning environment, improving learners' achievement and meeting local market needs. Most learners make good progress across the levels and achieve their personal goals, especially on the well-structured, planned and very well resourced non-accredited courses. However, the pass rates on the NEBOSH externally accredited courses are below international rates. Measurement of learners' progress is effective, however feedback to learners is not always consistent across all courses.

STC has good capacity to improve, as improvement plans implemented by the management since the last review have successfully addressed the review recommendations. Recently developed high-quality strategic and operational plans include having an appropriate focus on collecting, measuring, monitoring and following up on learners' achievements and identifying trends. STC's newly introduced quality management manual is detailed with clear processes and job responsibilities. This includes an internal audit report to highlight any non-compliance. In 2011, the centre successfully gained accreditation to run Highfield Awarding Body for Compliance-UK (HABC) courses and started new courses with NEBOSH such as Fire Safety and Risk Management certificates, Environmental Management certificate, Occupational Health and Safety Certificate and Emergency First Response (EFR) first aid accreditation certificate. The centre has put in place an effective system to recruit and monitor highly qualified trainers. Enrollment during 2011 has increased by 31 per cent over the previous year.

## **Learners' achievement**

### **How well do learners achieve in their academic work?**

#### **Grade 2: Good**

Most learners develop and gain good vocationally-related skills and knowledge in the health, safety and hygiene profession according to industry requirements and standards, and progress well from their starting point; they use these skills well at their workplace as indicated by most employers. Learners enjoy attending and are highly motivated and interact effectively with each other during sessions. The centre's pre- and post-course tests which are currently used on the non-accredited courses are not always thorough in measuring individual learners' acquisition of knowledge and skills against the pre-set course objectives; however, this issue has recently been addressed well by STC management.

Learners' achievement during years 2010 and 2011 on the non-accredited courses, which represent around 80 per cent of the total courses on offer, are very high ranging between 96 and 100 per cent. Likewise, on accredited courses such as the CIEH level 2 and 3 courses, the pass rates are high at nearly 100 per cent which is comparable to international rates. However, on the NEBOSH externally accredited courses, which represents about 6 per cent of STC business, the pass rates are low on all three levels of the National General Certificate. Pass rates for levels 1, 2 and 3 are respectively 30 per cent, 32 per cent and 72 per cent, all of which are lower than international pass rates.

Most learners enjoy attending STC courses and find interacting with their trainers and other learners very effective, as most learners highlighted the added value of group work and practical activities and discussion of relevant vocational examples that are linked to their workplaces. Some good examples were cited where learners were promoted to higher posts within their current role after attending STC courses.

Learners' attendance is high and records are well maintained, however, there is no clear policy on attendance. Although lateness is challenged, punctuality is not always recorded.

## **The quality of provision**

### **How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?**

#### **Grade 2: Good**

STC Trainers are well qualified and highly specialized to teach their subjects and hold permanent jobs utilising the same specialization. Some are members of well reputed international professional bodies. Trainers plan sessions well using detailed lesson plans, share course objectives and goals with learners and use various effective training methods to enhance learning. Learners' progress is checked, although feedback to learners is not always robust and learners' classwork is not consistently assessed on the non-accredited courses.

Trainers customise course materials to accommodate the needs of all learners in the group by translating materials in Arabic where required and allowing learners to write down their notes and answers in Arabic. This was particularly important for the non-accredited courses where most learners' have lower level skills.

To enrich learning, most trainers use a myriad of training methods and learning aids such as high quality training manuals from institutions like NEBOSH and CIEH, industry-relevant videos, Power Point presentations, equipment like extinguishers and first aid kits and CDs containing reference materials from professional bodies. Trainers also use a wide range of enrichment activities such as real cases from the Ministry of Labor and courts to illustrate the impact of accidents in safety related courses. Trainers also visit workplaces to demonstrate practical aspects of the courses, for example on the fork lift and crane operation courses. In firefighting courses, learners are shown all types of extinguishers and the practical use of them to put out fires.

Learners' progress is checked through pre- and post-course tests and where applicable practical tests. These are almost entirely multiple-choice questions of a descriptive nature and in many cases it was evident that learners had difficulty in understanding the questions. However, STC complements this by face to face assessment interviews in order to verify the understanding of the questions in the pre-course test, to determine the English language level and to customise course materials. The interview outcome is not always documented though.

Learners' classwork is not consistently assessed as the majority of classwork scrutinised was not fully annotated or had no indication of the correct answers and whether the learner answered wrongly. STC provides feedback at the end of the course to learners in the form of a report showing the pre- and post-course test marks but this does not always accurately

highlight the knowledge or skills gained. However STC recently put in place a more meaningful learners' assessment report.

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

### **Grade 2: Good**

STC offers a wide range of courses in the safety, health, and environmental fields that meet learners' and labor market requirement effectively. Most of the externally-accredited courses are well structured, planned and very well resourced. Most courses come with progression levels. In addition, good course material for the non-accredited courses is in place and learners are provided with course objectives in advance. The centre does not carry out an independent market survey but depends on input from the MoL, current clients and learners' feedback. Furthermore, the non-accredited courses are not updated on a regular basis.

STC offers a total of 34 programmes of which twenty seven courses are internally designed and seven are externally-accredited courses by CIEH (UK) and NEBOSH. Twenty per cent of the total programmes offered by STC are externally-accredited accounting for about 24 per cent of enrollment during 2011. Learners' and employers' are satisfied with the range of programmes on offer that are related to their jobs and match their needs; however, some learners were unaware of the range of courses on offer. Around one fifth of the courses conducted in 2011 were in scaffolding safety as a response to the number of accidents revealed by an MOL report. Course material, CD and presentations are updated by individual trainers' according to learners' needs and background. However, this is not always systematic or regular.

## **How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?**

### **Grade 2: Good**

STC's administration staff and trainers provide helpful support to all learners during and after a course including guidance on programmes, work issues and career progression. The institute makes available updated course outlines and content well in advance. STC is flexible in holding training events in suitable hospitality venues and work premises and they make appropriate resources available to accommodate learners' and stakeholders' training needs. The majority of learners are provided with individual progress reports and recently the institute added a commentary section to reflect learners' performance.

STC management is responsive and maintains good links with employers and learners and keeps them updated on their programme offering and act promptly on their concerns. During training sessions learners receive effective support in the form of extra materials, a list of references to aid them in obtaining additional information when needed and effective vocational advice about work related issues. They also receive guidance on how to implement relevant local government laws and codes of practice. In a few cases STC management also played an effective role in obtaining work opportunities for learners seeking employment in the fields of health and safety.

Administration staff monitor records of absenteeism and provide adequate information about examination dates, retakes for accredited courses and respond to learners' and employers' enquiries about courses. An individual achievement summary report, which covers the pre- and post-course test grades along with the practical grades on the non-accredited courses, is communicated to employers and learners at the end of each course.

STC always ensures that the chosen training venues meet the appropriate health and safety requirements. The centre's website is generally useful and friendly, provides good updated information about schedules and courses on offer. Additionally, highly useful articles about aspects of health and safety, both in Arabic and English, are posted at the site.

## **Leadership and management**

### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

#### **Grade 2: Good**

STC management has a clear strategic plan that is well focused on providing a high quality learning environment and improving learners' achievement. Improvement plans executed since the last review have fully addressed QAAET's recommendations. A recently developed quality manual is detailed with clear processes and job responsibilities. The centre only recruits highly qualified trainers with long practical experience as specialists in health and safety. Their performance is systematically observed. STC offers a safe environment for learners' and the premises are regularly maintained and fit for purpose.

The centre's strategic and operational plans clearly describe the methodology on how to monitor and measure learners' development and progress. The institute's management has in place a well-defined structure with clear job descriptions for each post and clear channels of communication. These are linked to the internal quality policy and procedure documents which were developed in response to the previous review's recommendations.

STC's procedure to recruit and monitor part-time trainers is effective and methodical, but although regular meetings are held with staff, there are no formal meetings with part-time trainers. Each trainer is monitored during a course and constructive feedback is provided and documented. The outcome is linked to the annual performance appraisal although their development needs are not always properly identified. STC has a suitable system in place to collect, monitor and verify learners' achievement. STC's management seeks learners' and employers' feedback after the completion of each course with the outcomes analysed and shared with employers and internal staff. Although STC's self-evaluation form is not sufficiently detailed, the management has effectively measured their strengths and where they need to improve. Most grades given were similar to those of the review team.

## The provider's key strengths

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- Most learners enjoy the sessions and actively interact with trainers and other members in the group
- Most learners develop good vocationally-related skills and knowledge in health and safety
- Trainers have very good practical experience and qualifications in their field and some are members of professional bodies such as CIEH
- Most externally-accredited programmes are well structured and planned and very well resourced
- Helpful and supportive administration and trainers who provide guidance on programmes, work issues and career progression
- Detailed strategic and operational plans that are well focused on learners' achievements
- An effective management structure is in place with clear job description for each post and clear channels of communication.

## Recommendations

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### **In order to improve, STC should:**

- improve pass rates for NEBOSH programmes
- ensure that all learners' work is assessed thoroughly and meaningful feedback is provided
- establish a system to review and update material on the non-accredited courses on a regular basis.