



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

Vocational Review Unit Review Report

**Safety Training Centre
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date reviewed: 23rd-25th February 2009

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The Vocational Review Unit

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 five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

The Safety Training Centre (STC) is a training and consultancy company established in 2000 in The Kingdom of Bahrain. It offers 23 different courses in the area of safety, health and the environment, covering subjects such as loss prevention, fire prevention, first aid and food hygiene. During 2008, courses were offered on nine of the different topics covered by STC, attended by 252 learners in total. Apart from a National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH)-accredited programme on safety, the provision comprises short, non-accredited courses.

The company has a managing director, who is also the only full-time trainer, a marketing manager, a finance manager and two administrative staff. STC draws from a pool of part-time trainers, recruited from within Bahrain and internationally.

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 qualifications learners achieve and the courses they complete and talked with the managing director, trainers, administration and support staff, learners and employers.

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 3: Satisfactory

The overall effectiveness of provision at STC is satisfactory. Learners' achievements, the range of programmes and the quality of training, support and guidance offered to learners are satisfactory. The company's leadership and management are below satisfactory.

Learners achieve good vocational skills at STC, especially on forklift operation, first aid, food hygiene and fire prevention programmes. Employers reported noticeable improvement in their learners' performance at work after courses. Trainers successfully assess learners' progress in developing practical skills but do not record this progress, or learners' achievements, consistently or fully. Initial assessment is not conducted routinely for all courses. Where it does take place, it is not used effectively in planning training sessions.

STC trainers are well qualified, with good hands-on experience in their areas of specialism. The programmes meet the needs of existing employers and learners satisfactorily. In the more successful programmes, trainers work closely with employers to identify their needs and enrich the programmes with vocationally-relevant practical exercises and case studies. Some courses are tailored to the specific needs of individual employers.

Learners receive satisfactory support and guidance. STC helps employers and learners to select courses through course leaflets and its website. Learners are not sufficiently guided on the available levels of courses. STC offers a safe environment for learners, keeping them aware of safety procedures inside the premises and regularly maintaining safety equipment. STC also uses a special checklist for courses held on employers' premises to ensure that health and safety issues are well covered.

STC lacks robust strategic plans based on learners' achievements or on feedback from learners and employers. Although learners' views are collected and analysed through end-of-course questionnaires, it is not evident how STC uses them to improve the provision. STC has not yet carried out effective labour market research to help it identify the need for additional courses. The performance of staff is not sufficiently monitored.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4: Below satisfactory

STC has a mission statement, but the mission is not translated into clear and robust strategic plans. Learners' achievements are not consistently monitored and records are not fully kept. Even for the few courses for which records of learners' achievements exist, there is no evidence of monitoring or analysis of trends. Data on learners' achievements are not used to plan further improvements. Assessment records are mainly used by trainers to track learners' progress during the course.

STC has increased the range of courses run in recent years, from five types of programme in 2005 to seven in 2006 and in 2008. Enrolments are also increasing. There is, however, no clear rationale for which courses are run each year. Managers do not effectively measure the extent to which programmes meet the needs of learners and employers. There has been no structured and purposeful market research. The company recognises this as an area for improvement and plans to recruit another marketing officer. Managers also acknowledge the need to recruit additional trainers to enable STC to expand its range of programmes. No clear plans have been set to achieve this objective.

Managers show insufficient ability to diagnose or address weaknesses in the provision. The self-evaluation form over-estimates the quality of the training offered. It fails to identify appropriate and relevant areas for improvement, except the need for initial assessment to be consistently carried out. Although learners' post-course questionnaires have been improved to include learners' recommendations, completed questionnaires are not consistently analysed and learners' suggestions are not used to plan improvement. A new form to record employers' feedback has just been developed but it has yet to be effectively used.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 3: satisfactory
Capacity to improve	Grade 4: below satisfactory
Review findings	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective is training?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How well are learners guided and supported?	Grade 3: satisfactory
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade 4: below satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Learners' vocational skills.** Many learners demonstrate improved vocational skills. New skills are learnt and existing ones improved in fire fighting, rigging, fork lift training and food hygiene. NEBOSH learners demonstrate their new knowledge in identifying hazards and clearly explain how they anticipate reducing the risk from these hazards.
- **STC's trainers.** Trainers are well qualified and have good vocational experience in their field. They have wide-ranging theoretical knowledge. Useful and purposeful vocational examples are used to enhance learners' understanding.
- **The use of practical examples and case studies.** Trainers effectively link theory to practice. They use different resources and techniques to reinforce knowledge, including videos, pictures and reports of real accidents. For example, photographs taken at their workplace are used to demonstrate a particular point or activity.
- **Links with professional health and safety organisations.** STC maintains effective links with professional organisations in the safety and health area and uses these links to enrich training programmes with good vocational examples. Relevant use is made of practical case studies linked to the Bahraini legal system.

Areas for improvement

- **Recording of learners' progress and achievements.** Records of learners' progress are not kept. STC is not able to analyse the progress or achievement of individuals or cohorts of learners, or of individual trainers.
- **Initial assessment.** Information about learners' experience, prior attainment or individual needs is not gathered on all courses, and even when it is, it is rarely used in planning training sessions.
- **The level of detail in lesson plans.** Lesson plans are not detailed enough, as they do not cover what will be learnt, how it will be taught and what techniques will be used.
- **The use of learners' and employers' feedback.** The gathering of learners' feedback is inconsistent. Most learners fill in end-of-course evaluation sheets that are analysed.

There is no evidence that STC uses these analyses to improve its provision. STC's efforts in seeking employers' views are limited to verbal contacts, the outcomes of which are not recorded. They are held randomly and are not part of a clear marketing strategy. A new form for gathering employers' feedback has been developed but it is yet to be fully implemented.

- **Monitoring of trainers' performance and development needs.** Trainers' performance is not systematically monitored or improved. There is no structured scheme for observing training sessions. STC does not carry out systematic training needs analyses of its staff and has no staff appraisal system to set clear targets linked to the provider's improvement plans and objectives.

Recommendations

In order to improve, STC should:

- maintain accurate records of learners' achievements and ensure that the Learners Performance Data (LPD) workbook is completed accordingly
- ensure that initial assessment is carried out for all learners, and that learners' individual needs are met
- improve lesson plans, making them more detailed
- use feedback from employers and learners to drive improvement
- devise a system of internal lesson observations, linked to regular staff appraisals