



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

Directorate of Vocational Reviews

Review Report

Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group
Seef District – Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 31 October - 3 November 2016

VO014-C3-R041

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Introduction

The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA), conducted this review over four days by a team of four 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 provider and met with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group (TAG) was judged as satisfactory as were the aspects of its provision.

This Report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider 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	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)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)
Overall effectiveness	Good (2)

Review judgements

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 Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group (TAG) is good, as are all aspects of its provision. The vast majority of learners develop effective managerial and insurance related knowledge and vocational skills related to their profession, with well-structured and planned programmes that responds to labour market needs and learners' interests.

Most learners make effective progress considering their starting point. They are offered effective support by the administrative staff and trainers in achieving their qualification and the intended learning outcomes. Dedicated revision classes and many opportunities for reviewing samples of past and mock examinations papers guide them in preparing for their final examinations. As observed during the majority of sessions, learners' attainment is good; they are involved, enjoy the productive discussions and are encouraged to provide examples from their own workplace. However, a few learners do not develop their knowledge sufficiently.

Programmes are delivered by qualified and experienced trainers who are certified in the subject they teach. Most of them use suitable lesson plans to deliver sessions and a range of effective training methods and activities to engage and motivate the vast majority of learners, such as lecturing, brainstorming, classroom discussion, case studies and individual activities. However, in a minority of the observed sessions trainers do not motivate learners sufficiently, particularly in the theoretical aspects.

TAG management is guided by an effective strategic and action plans, with challenging and realistic targets which are monitored very closely. The management maintains and monitors records on learners' achievement and progress for various courses and groups. High success rates have been maintained since the inception of the current programmes, with effective analysis being carried out in order to make continuous improvements.

Capacity to improve

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

Grade: Good (2)

TAG has good capacity and resources to expand and improve its provision, with effective support extended by the corporate office. Improvement efforts are evident from the number of initiatives taken by the management team, such as improving the Centre's approach for seeking the views of learners and employers. The strategic and action plans have challenging but realistic targets that are monitored by the corporate executives. The management has been very responsive over the past three years to the local labour market requirements through its close relationship with stakeholders; as a result, it has successfully introduced a new range of training programmes specifically targeting the insurance sector, which has significantly increased enrolment during 2014 and 2015, and sustained repeat business with its major clients. Learners' achievement across the vast majority of courses and enrolment over the past three years have been maintained at a high level.

The Centre has sufficient resources to take forward its improvement plans. Staff are competent and qualified trainers with suitable vocational experience and backgrounds are deployed. TAG has recently moved to new premises that provide better facilities and learning resources. The management has also enhanced its internal quality assurance procedures to guide its training methodologies, with improvements in its programme offerings. However, the verification and moderation process are not fully streamlined, and the process to quality assure teaching and learning is not sufficiently critical.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

The vast majority of learners develop effective managerial and insurance related knowledge and vocational skills relevant to their profession and meeting labour market requirements. Most learners make effective progress from their starting point. Employers and various groups of learners acknowledge that attending courses at the Centre is beneficial to their work assists them in improving their skills, and enhances their career path. Learners' attainment is good in the majority of the sessions observed, with learners being involved in productive discussions and encouraged to provide relevant examples from their own workplace.

However, a few learners do not develop their knowledge sufficiently and do not reach the pass criteria.

Most learners attending TAG courses are professionals in their fields or university graduates. Overall retention rates remain high at 99%. The analysis records of learners show that 74% of them are enrolled in the externally accredited programmes, with 89% achieving the course requirements at the first attempt and a few at their second attempt. The majority of learners are able to successfully complete the programme modules and obtain the qualifications they aim for in the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Life Office, Management Association (LOMA). Likewise, on the local completion short courses, most learners meet their course objectives successfully and receive course certificates after completing the required guided hours and course assessment. The learner's achievement is measured through an effective range of formative and summative assessments specifically relevant to the course objectives.

The vast majority of learners are highly self-motivated, with a positive attitude toward their learning and showing real interest. They are able to work independently and as team members, and reflect critically on what they need to do to improve further by questioning the trainers and sharing their knowledge with their colleagues. This is evident from the sessions observed and scrutiny of their work.

The provider has a clear policy on attendance which is shared with learners. Learners demonstrate high commitment to their learning, reflected in regular attendance and prompt return to their sessions. Attendance is recorded and rates for the last three years are high, ranging from 94% to 100% for most programmes. Nevertheless, punctuality is inconsistently recorded and is an issue in a few cases where learners arrive late for their sessions.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of training at TAG is good overall. Trainers are qualified, certified and have relevant international experience in the field they teach. This is evident in their precise explanations and use of relevant real-life cases while inviting learners to discuss their own experiences with their peers during sessions. Trainers use relevant lesson plans to deliver the majority of their courses, which vary in level. However, lesson plans for externally-accredited courses are better structured than for the local courses, which are not always updated on the

basis of learners' prior or continuous assessments. The vast majority of sessions are well managed and most start on time with sufficient time allocation for activities and assessments.

A range of effective training methods and activities are used to engage and motivate the vast majority of learners, including lectures, brainstorming, classroom discussion, case studies and individual activities. However, in a minority of the observed sessions trainers insufficiently motivate learners, particularly in the delivery of theory. In order to assess learners and measure the achievement of objectives, trainers use a range of vocationally relevant summative assessments through short and well-structured quizzes, group and pair work, exercises, final examinations and a range of case studies. Formative assessment is also carried out, including individual and group exercises and in-class activities for most courses. In a significant minority of sessions trainers enhance learners' critical thinking by further questioning techniques and promoting self-learning and life-long learning through productive and challenging discussion of case studies and videos.

As evident from the observed sessions, learners' different needs are effectively addressed within the class delivery. Records are kept on learners' performance and trainers provide effective verbal feedback during sessions. However, a few instances of written feedback seen on learners' work and records on formative assessments are insufficiently detailed, with a few having subjective remarks. Trainers utilise the available resources effectively in their training, including white boards, data show, flip charts, audio and videos.

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

Grade: Good (2)

The effectiveness of programmes in meeting the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders is good overall. TAG serves a niche market very effectively by offering externally-accredited programmes including a wide array of insurance programmes and an Islamic finance qualification. These programmes lead to international qualifications from well-respected awarding bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) for Islamic finance qualification, and a wide range of insurance qualifications from the Life Office Management Association (LOMA). The Centre also offers a range of soft skills and management courses.

Programmes are based on in-depth knowledge of local market requirements, obtained through a number of well-structured independent market surveys conducted during 2014 and 2015. TAG utilises the outcome of these to review its current offerings. Additionally, for major clients, TAG's management periodically meets and conducts a detailed Training Needs Analysis (TNA) in order to meet the stakeholders' specific requirements and to customise courses accordingly.

TAG maintains relevant policies and procedures for designing, approving, updating and reviewing programmes. The externally-accredited programmes have the up-to-date version of the approved course material, resourced with the original course manual and videos and supported by clear PowerPoint slides and a number of mock examinations. These, as well as the local courses, are planned and structured effectively with course outlines that indicate the main course outcomes, teaching and assessment methods.

Programmes are supported with only a few of extra-curricular activities to enrich learners' knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. TAG utilises the entry requirements specified by the awarding bodies for the externally-accredited programmes. The local courses are based on the target audience and the outcome of the TNA.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Good (2)

Administrative staff and trainers of TAG Center are approachable, cooperative and supportive. At the start of a course the Center provides useful induction session for learners, covering the TAG procedures and policies. Learners are provided with detailed documents that familiarise them with aspects relevant to their studies, such as general instructions, assessment criteria and the attendance policy as well as information on health and safety. Each learner has to sign a learner's contract declaring that he/she is fully aware of this information.

Learners are offered the support essential to achieving the best outcomes. Those attending the externally-accredited programmes receive continuous support from staff and trainers, who arrange for dedicated revision classes and preparation for their final examinations through a range of mock examinations. This has positive results in raising learners' achievement and experience. For CIMA courses learners have access to a range of tests and materials via the user-friendly online portal. For ease of reference and to help learners get over language barriers for common insurance terminologies, TAG has developed a very useful insurance glossary guide. In spite of all this, the support and guidance mechanisms are not well documented.

TAG maintains effective communication with employers of those on the local completion courses by updating them on their employees' performance via a performance report upon course completion. This includes clear statistical analysis of the assessment results and percentage of growth. However, comments about individual learners are not clearly stated. On the other hand, learners attending the externally-accredited courses are made aware of their own progress through a well-structured end of course report. Learners and stakeholders also have access to information about courses through brochures and the Centre's website. TAG is highly flexible in scheduling programmes that match learners and employers' specific needs.

The learning environment is fit for purpose, with proper facilities and a sufficient number of classrooms. Each classroom has sufficient resources including internet-enabled wide monitors, a white-board, flip charts and a comfortable arrangement of learners' desks. There is a learners' lounge which has a number of technical books and an open area for learners' refreshments. TAG has developed a general policy for supporting learners with special needs, which is adequately implemented; however, it is only focused on disabled learners.

Leadership, management and governance

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

Grade: Good (2)

TAG has clear mission and vision statements that focus on improving the quality of teaching, training and learning. There are detailed strategic and operational plans covering the years 2014-2018, with clear priorities linked to key performance indicators (KPI's). Realistic and challenging targets are in place. The corporate office maintains an effective governance policy and procedures and the regional training manager provides improvement recommendations and strategic support. To run its daily operations, the Centre deploys human and physical resources effectively to suit the nature of its business and meet the aims of its provision. Clear job roles and responsibilities for each member of staff are detailed and fully embedded throughout the operation. TAG has a detailed recruitment policy and procedures which are utilised effectively. Staff are qualified; trainers with international vocational experience are recruited, inducted and deployed according to their specialisation. Development opportunities are provided for full time staff.

The management maintains clear health and safety procedures and practices to ensure the well-being of learners and staff. Risk assessment and evacuation drills are carried out periodically, and at the start of a course, learners are provided with clear guidance on health and safety aspects. For external training venues, the Centre ensures that the venue is suitable and risk free.

The management approach to self-evaluation is detailed and systematic. Several SWOT reviews have been carried out over the past three years and an external consulting body used to evaluate operations, with several areas for improvement being identified and acted upon. The SEF provided for the review is detailed and provides very useful information about the operation. Grades provided mostly match those of the review team except for the overall judgement.

TAG has a clear and detailed handbook that includes training policies and procedures and covers various quality assurance sub-procedures. Learners' prior attainment and background is sufficiently assessed in all courses as per the awarding bodies' requirements, and the outcomes are used to place learners at a level suitable to their abilities. However, the internal arrangement for verification and moderation is not consistent across all courses. The effectiveness of quality of training is assured through a random lesson observations scheme. However, although the quality officer visits training sessions and identifies areas where trainers should improve further, only verbal feedback is shared with trainers. TAG's management maintains and monitors records about learners' achievement and progress for the various courses and groups. Success rates are maintained at a high level since the inception of the current programmes. Effective analysis is carried out and used for determining improvement initiatives.

Effective links are maintained with employers, external awarding bodies and sections of the community within the relevant industries, both locally and internationally. Feedback is regularly sought from learners and employers and is aggregated and analysed, then used to improve the provision support and offerings. For example, TAG conducted several free awareness programmes for non-profit organisations as part of its social responsibilities.

The provider's key strengths

- The effective development of vocational knowledge and skills by the vast majority of learners.
- The qualified trainers with relevant vocational and educational backgrounds that enable them to use a relevant range of vocational examples effectively to enrich the learning experience.
- The highly effective approach for determining local market needs through detailed and independent market surveys.
- The systematic support and guidance provided to learners throughout their learning experience.
- The effective strategic and action planning with challenging but realistic targets that are monitored very closely.

Recommendations

In order to improve, TAG should:

- ensure that learners achieve the intended course objectives fully and gain the required vocational skills
- ensure that extra-curricular activities are provided for all courses to enrich the learning experience
- improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - constructive feedback is provided to trainers in writing to further improve the quality of teaching and training
 - the quality of moderation and verification processes are consistent across all courses.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Talal Abu Ghazala Training Group (TAG) is a member of Talal Abu Ghazala Organisation (TAGorg), which provides services in various fields such as training, accounting, management consultancy, legal services and translation. TAG has been operating in Bahrain since 1976 and is licensed by the Ministry of Labour. Initially, TAG offered non-accredited short courses in insurance, finance, accounting and management. In 2014, the institute added a range of externally-accredited qualifications, namely Islamic Finance by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Life Office Management Association (LOMA), and the Arab Certified Quality Manager (ACQM) programme which is endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

TAG employs a training manager who, in addition to working as a trainer, manages the training centre and reports to the executive director. The Centre also employs a senior quality officer, a training coordinator, an accountant, a receptionist, one full time trainer and a caretaker. All staff are recruited on a full-time basis. TAG draws from a large pool of part-time trainers through the corporate office, as needed.

During the last three years TAG has enrolled a total of 294 learners, 22 and 134 learners being enrolled in 2014 and 2015 respectively and 138 enrolled during 2016 to the date of this review. 74% of the total learners enrolled attended the externally-accredited programmes. Learners are adults, employed by private and government organisations.