



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

Vocational Review Unit Review Report

**Neovartis Training Centre
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain**

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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 Labor 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:

Grade description	Interpretation
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

Description of the provision

Neovartis Training Centre started its operation in 2010 to offer a range of vocational, competency-based programmes, leadership and management and language courses. Most of the courses are non-accredited and short and last from one to two days. During 2011 the centre had 671 learners enrolled and in the year-to-date the centre had registered 1193 learners on various courses. Most of Neovartis learners are sponsored and come from the private sector. The centre maintains links with several international, accredited bodies such as the Institute of Certified Professional Managers (ICPM), Saville Consulting and the Strength Development Inventory (SDI). Most of the Neovartis courses are held in their offices in the Bahrain Financial Harbour. Neovartis has a pool of trainers selected from local, international and from other Neovartis branches, who work on a part-time basis.

The centre is managed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is also a board member, and employs on a full-time basis a Chief Operation Officer (COO) who is also responsible for international branches, an office manager, one senior consultant and two junior consultants.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of three 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.

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

Table of review judgments awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 2 Good
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 2 Good
Quality of Provision	
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
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade: 2 Good

Review judgements

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 Neovartis is good, as are all aspects of its provision. The majority of learners make good progress in the acquisition of vocationally relevant, competence-based skills. This is as a result of the effective teaching they receive from very experienced, specialist trainers and individualised support, although this latter is usually only given when requested. The range of well-planned courses on offer, some of which are customised, meet the needs of learners and employers well. The management of the institute has a clear focus on the continuous improvement of the quality of their provision but plans and procedures are not always routinely updated. Courses and trainers are evaluated effectively and learner and employer feedback collected, although the latter is not as systematic as it could be. The well-resourced premises provide an attractive and inspiring environment for learners.

Neovartis has good capacity to improve. The centre maintains an effective learning environment and recruits sufficient, qualified human resources that are developed well. Neovartis has a range of highly detailed plans in place to improve the provision further and for this they have lately improved links with government organisations such as Tamkeen. They have been successful in conducting a few sponsored competency-based programmes under the Career Progression Programme (CPP2); this has significantly increased learners' enrollment during 2011 and 2012. Additionally, in another instance they have increased their network of affiliations with international accredited bodies such as the London Middle East Institute. In order to improve their internal performance management further, the centre is in the process of adopting the Balanced Scorecard approach.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 2 Good

The majority of learners develop particularly effective vocational work-related skills and knowledge which meet industry standards in their chosen field. They make good progress considering their prior attainment and perform well on the courses. Most of the employers stated that their employees' work-related behaviour skills have improved significantly after completing several different courses with Neovartis. The majority of learners highlighted that the courses were highly beneficial and very useful. A few learners found the courses below their expectations or of a basic nature with little added value.

Most learners achieve the planned course objectives or the external qualifications they aim for. From the Learners' Performance Data (LPD) and the observed sessions, the achievement rates reflect the standards of knowledge and understanding gained by the majority of learners and according to the level they are at. Additionally, learners' achievement in these courses is effectively measured through different types of formative assessments and closely linked to the planned course learning outcomes. The institute uses pre- and post-course assessments which are in the form of simple, straightforward questions; they also measure learners' achievement by an end of course assignment.

The vast majority of learners enjoy their learning experience and are self-motivated. They respond positively to their trainers. Whilst the majority of learners show good interest in attending the courses there is a small minority of learners who show a low level of enthusiasm. Most learners are able to work collaboratively and some are able to reflect well on how well they are progressing or what they must do to improve. This is evident in the observed lessons and is reflected in the 'learning journal form' where the individual learner highlights what has been learnt from the course and what needs to be improved during and after the course.

Whilst learners' attendance is generally high and recorded well on most of the courses, their punctuality varies, as some learners arrive late to a course but this is not always recorded. The institute ensures that learners are well aware of the attendance policy.

The quality of provision

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

Grade: 2 Good

Trainers are appropriately qualified and have vast vocationally-related professional experience. They provide a range of relevant vocational examples, often drawn from their own experience. Most trainers succeed in engaging and motivating learners through effective questioning, pair and group work and by encouraging learners to present their outcomes to the team and maintaining an interactive approach with all learners during sessions. Trainers accommodate the needs of most learners' varying abilities although this is not always well planned.

Trainers use summative and formative assessment and constructive feedback effectively to evaluate and monitor learners' understanding and progress. Most trainers assess learners understanding through various techniques including direct questioning, role play and stimulators such as 'mimics' and 'energisers'. Detailed and useful feedback is provided on all learners' assignments that are submitted within seven days after course completion with final certification linked to the grading of these assignments.

In the majority of sessions observed, these were well planned with objectives and course content clearly shared with learners. Most sessions are well-structured and cover all aspects including clear instructions on assignments. Sessions generally start with an effective recapitulation on previous sessions that links to the current class well.

Neovartis maintains and updates progress reports for most of the courses, especially for those that are conducted under the Tamkeen project. These have appropriate details of pre- and post-course tests, attendance, assignments and final grades with appropriate written comments. Resources are used well to promote learning and include the effective use of a data show and smartboard.

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

Grade: 2 Good

Neovartis offers a variety of vocational competency-based programmes, leadership and management and language courses in addition to a few externally-accredited courses from awarding bodies such as Saville Consulting, London Middle East Institute (LMEI) and SDI that match the needs of most learners; some courses are offered with progression levels. A well-structured competency-based programme is conducted, in coordination with Tamkeen,

for two major clients that comprises seven modules including problem-solving and decision making, communication and interpersonal skills, followed by a practical assignment that is linked to their workplace.

Most of the courses on offer are well planned, structured and resourced to meet the needs of stakeholders. All training manuals are of an original quality and include clear course outlines and objectives. Neovartis offers effective course customisation to meet employers' specific requirements; an example was cited where the centre ran a course in Arabic to satisfy specific group needs. Whilst the management ensures that courses are regularly reviewed and updated in terms of validity and content, they depend on government authority studies as the basis for introducing new programmes rather than conducting their own independent market survey. Relevant additional activities are not used well enough to enhance courses and the learning experience as most trainers rely solely on course material.

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

Grade: 2 Good

Support and guidance at Neovartis is good overall. Trainers and administrative staff are supportive, approachable and responsive to learners' or stakeholders' enquiries. Whilst the centre keeps a detailed policy and procedure about support and guidance, learners are only provided with support when they request it. At the start of a course, learners are provided with a useful induction on the premises and facilities that includes a comprehensive briefing on health and safety precautions. Learners are provided with clear instructions on course requirements, such as in-class activities and end of course assignments.

Most learners are provided with a report to inform them of how well they are progressing and they have the opportunity to discuss this individually with their trainer, but this latter support is only done on request. The reports are also shared with relevant stakeholders. The provider is sufficiently flexible in arrangements to accommodate stakeholders' varying needs. However, some learners complained that course timings were not always suitable for them.

Course outlines are detailed, updated with clear learning objectives and content and made available in advance to all learners and stakeholders. Learners are provided with access to proper media resources for course selection. The centre's website is user-friendly and course promotional materials are well structured and informative. Additionally, the centre offers thorough occupational testing, assessment and course recommendations when requested by employers; these tests measure learners' varying training and development needs. Recently Neovartis activated a Moodle system for a web-based free e-learning portal.

Neovartis premises are inspiring and provide a very pleasant learning environment; training venues are well equipped with proper training aids and comfortable furniture, although a few classes were too congested. The library has a range of relevant and useful books and journals.

Leadership and management

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

Grade: 2 Good

The centre has clear mission, vision and value statements that are well-focused on spreading best practices and raising learners' vocational skills; these are posted on the centre's website and shared with the staff. Although the centre has strategic initiatives and plans, based on a SWOT analysis, these are not regularly updated. The centre's management structure is organised and managed well with most jobs having clear descriptions of relevant roles and responsibilities. A well-defined employee handbook that includes how to deal with learners is shared with all the staff. Neovartis maintains an effective performance monitoring approach. Various records about learners' achievement are maintained on the course tracker database and are saved at an off-site website and are accessible by staff. Learners' records are regularly monitored and analysed.

The centre seeks learners' feedback at the end of each course. The outcomes of this is aggregated and analysed to inform improvement actions with several examples cited where the provider has appropriately addressed concerns based on these evaluations. A system for assessing learners' prior attainment is in place for most of the courses with the outcome reflected in effective planning and delivery of these courses. The institute maintains an effective recruitment and monitoring procedure with trainers employed who have local and international qualifications and background. The quality of their performance during courses is measured through management assessment visits and any trainer who scores below 85 per cent on the satisfaction grid is not hired again. New trainers are required to fill in a useful post-course evaluation form. Whilst the centre obtains employers' feedback during a follow-up meeting, this approach is not sufficiently systematic to fully capture employers' views. The self-evaluation form was informative, critical and provided a range of valid evidence to support their judgments, although the grades provided overestimate the provision.

The provider's key strengths

- Particularly effective vocational, work-related skills and knowledge developed by the majority of learners which meet the standards in their chosen fields
- The achievement of course objectives on the external qualifications by most learners
- The vast, vocationally-related professional experience of trainers who provide a range of relevant vocational examples, often drawn from their own experience
- Supportive and approachable staff who are responsive to learners' or employers' enquiries
- Highly organized and well-structured provision with effective management systems in place
- A very effective system for gathering and analysing learners' end-of-course feedback to inform improvement actions.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Neovartis should:

- establish a robust system to deal with poor punctuality
- ensure that learners' individual differences are effectively catered for in all lessons
- enhance the courses with relevant additional activities to enrich learning
- ensure that the strategic and improvement plans are routinely updated.