



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

EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY AUTHORITY

STRATEGY 2023–2026

June 2023



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Chairman's Statement

H.E. Mr. Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki

The BQA along with its strategic partners in the development process, has created a plan to support the aspirations of the government for providing high-quality education and training, and lifelong learning opportunities, to form a competitive generation, with its qualifications and skills commensurate with the actual requirements of the labour market.

BQA has developed and enhanced its aspirations and vision to implement its strategy for the next four years, in line with the government's program, based on its previous achievements and successes. The plan represents the basis for our next steps to improve, overcome challenges, and take on opportunities for growth and development.

I welcome this extended and innovative plan, to refresh our country's frameworks for reviews, enhance our evidence and research base, and explore partnership with the private sector to support expansion and establish the BQA as an international organisation of merit, supporting Bahrain's learners and education providers.



Chief Executive's Statement

Dr. Maryam Hassan Mustafa

Since its establishment, the Education and Training Quality Authority has supported the development and growth of the education and training systems in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Today, is a new chapter with the launch of our strategy, this roadmap for the next four years, aims to continue and extend our role in the assessment of the quality of performance in the education and training sectors, to support learning and improve outcomes for the Kingdom's education system.

This strategy has been developed in collaboration with our staff, focusing on our role in the field of performance evaluation, implementation of national examinations and the processes of the National Qualifications Framework, as well as the review processes across the different cycles from Early Years to Higher education.

The strategy is based on achieving 7 priorities, from which 3 main objectives emanate, namely achieving an effective impact on national education and training policies, building enabling structures (enablers), and increasing participation.

In addition, a key feature of this plan focuses on managing the authority's resources and functions, expanding knowledge and digital investment, and providing additional expert services to the system. We aim to achieve financial sustainability, and expanding the provision of consultations.

We look forward to delivering this plan, collaboratively with our stakeholders, in order to secure an enhanced role for the BQA and deliver further impact on educational planning and outcomes across the Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION

Leading education and training systems do three things to raise quality. First, they set clear standards for education and training institutions, based on good practices, to create a picture of what quality education and training look like. Second, they carry out frequent checks so that the institutions know where they stand relative to the standards. Third, they publish the results to create transparency over performance.

In Bahrain, the Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA) has been playing this critical role for over a decade, providing learners, parents, employers, education and training institutions policymakers and relevant stockholders with an objective assessment of the quality of education and training. BQA performs this critical role through three key functions:

- Carrying out Reviews of institutions and programs
- Conducting National Examinations
- Administering the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

BQA helps in improving the quality of education and training in the Kingdom of Bahrain by:

- Helping all institutions to identify areas of success so, that they can build on them, and to identify areas of improvements, so that they can address them
- Providing information on the quality of education and training in Bahrain to policymakers, and the public, enabling them to set better policies to improve both sectors and make informed decisions
- Setting clear standards and indicators that describe the characteristics of a good educational institution or qualification ensuring that all institutions are aware of good practice
- Creating greater accountability among educational and training institutions for their performance
- Enabling students/learners and parents to make informed choices about which institutions/ programs in which to enroll in, based on an objective independent assessment of the quality of those institutions' performance and the qualifications/ certifications they award

- Encouraging the spread of good practices and innovations by reporting on the strengths so they can be replicated by others

BQA's remit applies to all types of education and training institutions licensed to operate and award qualifications in the Kingdom of Bahrain: preschools, schools, vocational institutes, special needs institutions, and universities. Today we review around 300 schools, 90 vocational institutions and 16 higher education institutions. We administer national exams for more than 25,000 students in grades 9 and 12 in public schools and work to evaluate more than 1000 academic and vocational qualifications.

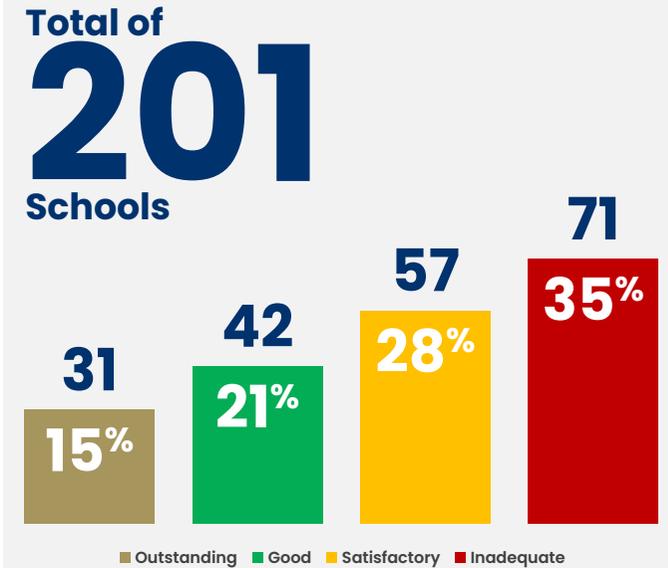
Locally, BQA's reviews and NQF operations have helped tertiary institutions improve, in higher education, for example, the exercise of self-evaluation and preparation for institutional and program reviews as well as NQF listing, placement and operations built internal capacity over years. We fully believe that the system has now reached the maturity to raise the bar. We are collaborating closely with our partners at the Higher Education Council (HEC) to upgrade our institutional and program review frameworks to focus more on quality and employability.

Similarly, there has been a steady improvement in the quality of the vocational education and training institutes' performance and providers acted upon the results of the BQA. This success can be seen in the many institutes that have improved their performance and are now providing good or outstanding services. It is a testament to our collaborative work with the Ministry of Labor and the Labor Fund (Tamkeen).

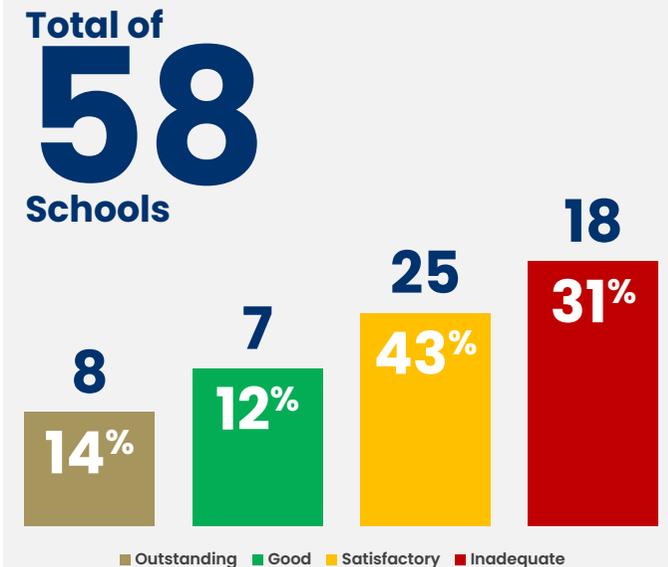


Government and Private Schools:

Government Schools' Overall Performance:



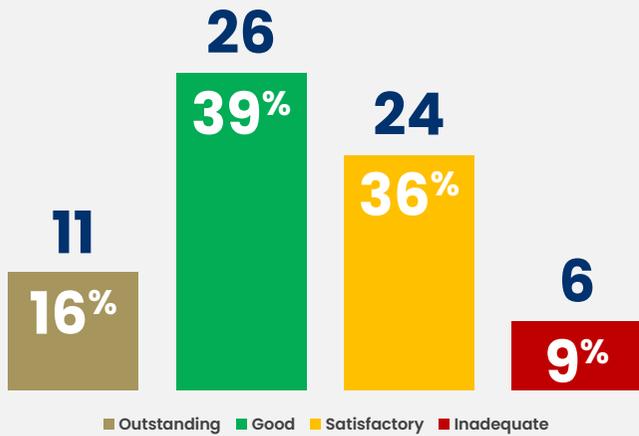
Private Schools' Overall Performance:



Vocational and Tertiary Education Institutions:

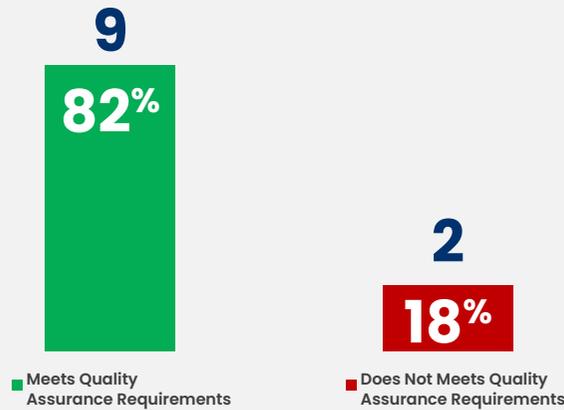
Vocational Training Institutions' Performance:

Total of **67** Institutes



Higher Education Institutions' Performance:

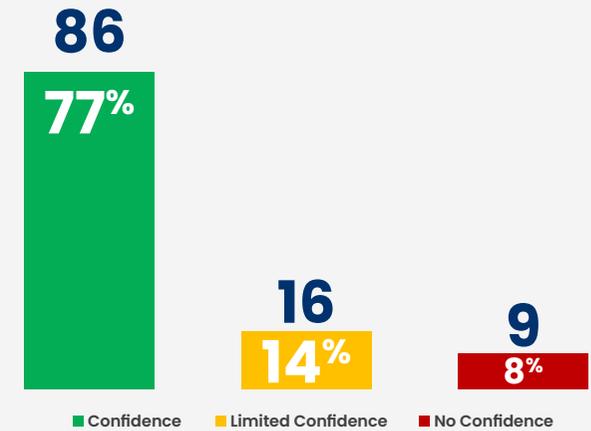
Total of **11** Institutes



Academic Programmes:

Higher Education Academic Programs' Performance:

Total of **111** Programmes Reviewed



National Qualifications Framework 'NQF':

Qualifications Placed/Aligned by NQF level:



Total No. of Qualifications (Academic and Vocational) as date in Bahrain 693 National Qualifications, & Foreign Qualifications

38%

Local Higher Education and Vocational Qualifications have been "placed" on the NQF

16%

Foreign Higher Education and Vocational Qualifications have been "Aligned" to the NQF



National Examinations:

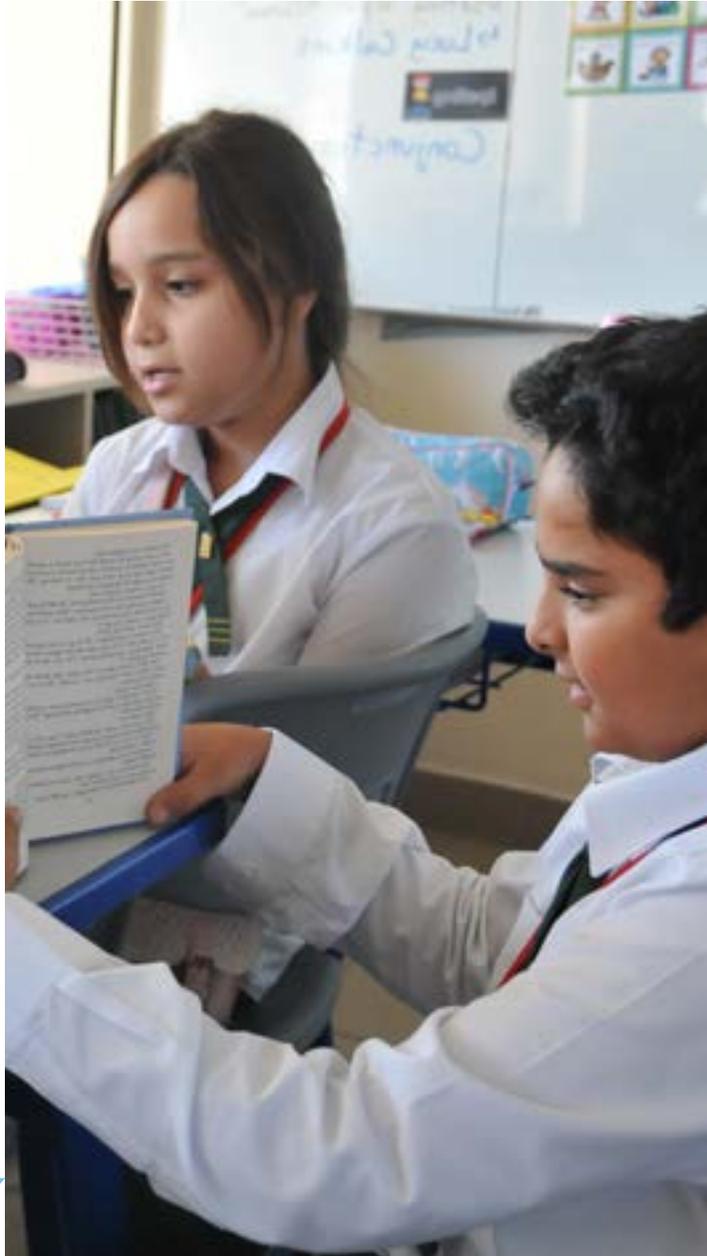
2008	3&6
2009	3&6
2010	3,6&9
2011	3,6&9
2012	3,6,9&12
2013	3,6,9&12
2014	3,6,9&12
2015	3&12
2016	6&12
2017	9&12
2018	6&12
2019	6&12

Exam Subjects:

Grades 3, 6, & 9: Arabic, English, Science, & Math

Grade 12: Arabic, English, & Problem Solving

*Pilot exams



Nationally, BQA is a unique organisation, with a whole system perspective, engagement and evidence base on the quality of education across the Kingdom. The range of data and performance evidence that we hold, enables us to support national perspectives on educational policy, educational areas of success and areas requiring further improvement.

Regionally, BQA is a pioneering model of an independent entity that ensures fair, objective, and transparent quality assessment. Over the years BQA has exported expertise to the region including spearheading the work on the unified GCC Qualifications Framework, advising on the development of qualifications frameworks in KSA and Oman, participating in regional review panels, and working with entities like the Gulf Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and the UAE's National Qualifications Center.

Internationally, BQA has become a recognized and active member in several global organizations and networks like the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), the International Association for Education Assessment (IAEA), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME).

Going forward, our role remains to provide an objective evaluation of the education and training system. Providing quality education and training, and lifelong learning opportunities leading to employability are key principles of the government's priorities for the education and training sector. Strengthening our collaborative partnerships with regulators, funding agencies, and providers will help us fulfil our role effectively and provide policymakers with the evidence base for future education and training national policies.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Our 2019–2022 strategy helped us to identify the things we could do to improve. Our strategy for the next four years builds on our achievements and the lessons we have learnt. Our strategic review showed that 88.6% of previous KPIs were met by December 2022, which is a testament to BQA's commitment to excellence in spite of the various challenges and barriers to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shifts in the education landscape. Our most important achievements over the past 4 years included:

- **Continuing institutional and program reviews during the pandemic** and introducing the exceptional reviews' frameworks and processes. The 'Exceptional Reviews Framework' was developed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to assess whether schools and vocational education & training institutions had the minimum components in place to manage distance learning. The outcomes show that public schools responded just as well as private schools in being able to quickly offer online modes of learning. Furthermore, rapid response and adaptation of the management team of the majority of vocational providers to the needs of the emerging exceptional circumstances resulted in resuming the regular reviews.
- **Launch of 'Proportionate Review Cycles'**, wherein schools most in need of support for improvement would be reviewed more frequently than 'Good' or 'Outstanding' schools. This will direct the necessary resources to the schools based on need and will also help build trust among the higher-performing schools.
- **More than 300 reviews had been conducted between 2019–2022:**

Government Schools

187 Reviews

Private Schools

57 Reviews

Vocational Institutes

31 Reviews

Higher Education

11 Reviews

Academic Programs

85 Reviews

- **Receiving the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Recognition**, which serves as a global mark of recognition for the BQA as a credible accreditation and quality assurance agency for medical schools and programs.
- **Launching of the Online Reviews Hub and the E-Training portals** which were accessed by over 6,000 participants, improving the efficiency of their evaluation submissions and their user experiences with the BQA processes.
- **Implementation of the Grade 12 National Examinations Pilot** on a sample of 5,000 students from all government schools, in the subjects of Arabic, English, and Mathematical skills. The exams were conducted between October 30th to November 1st, 2022.

The development of our strategy for the next four years departs from our previous achievements and builds on the lessons we have learnt. The process started in February 2022 following a comprehensive review of the progress against our past strategic objectives and an analysis of our areas for improvement, challenges, and growth opportunities.

Over the past 12 months, we held several conversations and consultations with:

- Representatives from government and private schools, universities, vocational training providers, and members from the private sector representing employers in the labor market.
- Parents and community members.
- International partners and strategic networks, including Cambridge Assessment International Education, and Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) for National Examinations planning.
- BQA's International Advisory Board (IAB), which consists of experts in various areas of education and quality assurance.

We workshopped the plan internally, culminating with an entity-wide strategic planning workshop attended by all BQA staff and the new Board.

We consulted international expertise and conducted benchmark studies of good practices.

As a result, we identified 7 priorities that we then translated into 3 strategic goals, that will direct BQA's initiatives and efforts for the next 4 years.



OUR STRATEGY FOR 2023-2026

This document details BQA's strategic plan for the next 4 years. Starting from our vision and mission statements and values and building on our strategic development exercise. In this section, we describe what we want to achieve, how we will achieve it and the specific outcomes we will seek to achieve during 2023-2026.



VISION

To be an effective partner in driving continual quality enhancement for a world-class education and training sectors in Bahrain.



MISSION

To play a critical role in advancing quality and raising trust in the education and training sectors, by providing reliable insights in a timely, responsive, and transparent manner.



VALUES

- Fairness
- Competitiveness
- Sustainability



OUR PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We identified 7 priorities that translate into 3 strategic goals.

Strategic Objective

Priority

CREATE A HIGH IMPACT ON NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

1

Adaptive organization

We will build on our success and ensure we are responsive to national needs and aspirations.

2

Streamlined for value

Our frameworks and processes will be streamlined to deliver value for the government and our partners in the education and training sectors.

3

Outputs that improve regulation and quality

Our reviews, exam results and NQF operations will form a critical part of regulation and will support the systemic improvement of education and training.

BUILD ENABLING STRUCTURES

4

A skilled workforce

We will ensure we have the knowledge and expertise we need through a flexible recruitment strategy, a talent retention program and capacity building activities.

5

Sustainable growth

We will develop a sustainable plan to enable our growth and expansion.

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

6

Outreach and engagement

We will be open and accessible to our different audiences, understand their needs and respond to them through improved client-facing communications.

7

Insights that improve national policies

We will utilize the rich database we have acquired over the last 15 years, going beyond technical reporting, to support national education and training system development.

Strategic Objective 1

CREATE A HIGH IMPACT ON NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICIES

The education and training sectors have changed dramatically over the past 15 years, and this change was accelerated by COVID-19. We have learnt many lessons on what works and what we need to focus on.

Our frameworks and processes that guide our reviews, exams and NQF operations will be updated based on evidence gained over the years and international good practices to be more focused on promoting sustainable quality and help our partners focus on the right things.

And to fulfill our role, we will expand our operations to review early childhood education and special education providers.

What we will do

We will evaluate the performance of our frameworks and review them to help education and training institutions focus on the right things. Our processes will be redesigned to ensure the timely delivery of relevant performance assessments at all levels.

We will work closely with the awarding bodies' regulators to ensure qualifications students/learners receive are of good quality and that employers and higher education institutions get trustworthy information as they make decisions. We will also work on embedding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Flexible Learning Pathways in the NQF validation standards to ensure qualifications are relevant to the market and learner needs.

We will resume national examinations in 2023 for students in grades 9 and 12 to provide and report system-level performance. We will also work with higher education providers to assess the suitability of our G12 exams as an admission test.

We will ensure that we are activating all of our core functions so that children in their early years and students/learners with special needs are not left behind.

How we will do it

1. Redesign BQA outputs to inform regulatory processes, including:
 - 1.1. Integrating school review results in MOE regulations
 - 1.2. Integrating higher education review results in HEC accreditation and licensing processes
 - 1.3. Integrating vocational review results with licensing and funding processes
 - 1.4. Conducting Grade 9 and Grade 12 Exams
 - 1.5. Linking NQF operations to HEC, MOL and Tamkeen processes
 - 1.6. Developing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Flexible Pathways frameworks
2. Launch Early Childhood Education Reviews
3. Launch Special Needs Education reviews

What we seek to achieve

- All frameworks updated and all processes will be fully integrated with the regulatory processes of MOE, MOL, HEC and Tamkeen by 2026.
- 75% of Early Childhood Education providers licensed in the Kingdom of Bahrain will be reviewed at least once by 2026.
- 100% of Special Needs Education providers licensed in the Kingdom of Bahrain will be reviewed at least once by 2026.



Strategic Objective 2

BUILD ENABLING STRUCTURES

Over the next 4 years we will plan and manage our resources to deliver our core functions within our funding. We aim to introduce value-add services.

We need to have a flexible approach to recruitment. We have achieved a great record in developing national capacity internally and across the education and training sectors. We want to maintain that to ensure our staff and partners have the knowledge and skills to perform and improve quality of provision.

What we will do

We will ensure our workforce is motivated, engaged, and have the knowledge and expertise they need to do their job through flexible human resource policies and regulations, diversified capacity-building programs, and partnerships with the private sector locally and internationally.

We will achieve financial sustainability to enable our expansion. We will introduce value-add services and expand our consultation activities.

We will leverage technology to further efficiency and improve our services.

How we will do it

4. Introduce flexible recruitment strategies:

- 4.1. Utilize external expertise through partnership with the private sector
- 4.2. Launch secondment and fellowship programs

5. Develop skilled and satisfied team:

- 5.3. Diversify capacity-building strategies
- 5.4. Upskill all staff members (International credentials)
- 5.5. Restructure and enhance HR agility through flexible HR policies and regulations

6. Develop a sustainable financial plan

7. Utilize technology for efficiency

What we seek to achieve

- Ratio of part-time to full-time reviewers will be 40%-60% by 2026
- All of our staff will have international certification
- 100% automation of core functions



Strategic Objective 3

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

BQA has a comprehensive view of the education and training systems in the Kingdom of Bahrain. We have accumulated a wealth of knowledge through thousands of reviews conducted over the past decade and a half, and cycles of national examinations provided us with an insight on the system performance.

Over the next 4 years we will start sharing our findings and insights on good practices and lessons learnt locally, regionally, and globally.

We will develop the evidence base about what works in Bahraini schools, vocational institutions, and universities to inform system leaders and policy decisions.

What we will do

We will strengthen our BQA brand and identity externally and internally. We need to build a greater understanding among students, learners, teachers, parents, employers, education, and training leaders about BQA's role and work.

We will utilize our rich database to improve our client-facing communication through differentiated reporting to provide our partners with the information they need in an accessible and timely manner.

We will leverage our regional and international reputation and partnerships to create platforms to reach a wider audience and promote our work.

How we will do it

8. Strengthen BQA's brand
9. Improve reporting and information accessibility
 - 9.1. Introduce differentiated reporting
 - 9.2. Publish national thematic reports
 - 9.3. Distribute useful guides and manuals to educational & training institutions
 - 9.4. Collaborate on actionable research linked to national needs
10. Increase regional and international partnerships

What we seek to achieve

- BQA publishes at least 6 system-level reports by 2026
- Increase impactful regional and international partnerships
- Our NQF will be referenced with other international qualification frameworks





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