Education and Training Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Engineering Training Services

Report of a Re-Inspection in December 2014

The Education and Training Inspectorate - Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CSE

Contents

1. Context

Engineering Training Services (ETS) is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to deliver ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in engineering, at levels 2 and 3. Currently, 87 apprentices are registered on level 3 programmes; they are employed by a wide range of employers across Northern Ireland and are following specialist engineering pathways. Of the 87 apprentices, eight of them (9%) are on an electrical engineering pathway, seven (8%) on fabrication and welding engineering, 24 (28%) on maintenance engineering, 27 (31%) on mechanical engineering, 18 (21%) on production engineering and 3 (3%) on technical engineering support.

Almost all (92%) of the apprentices hold level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy on entry to their programme. A minority (10) of them are undertaking essential skills training in literacy and numeracy. In addition, 27 of the apprentices are targeting a level 2 essential skills qualification in information and communication technology (ICT). The initial assessment process has been completed for almost all of the apprentices across the three essential skills. Training is currently in place for the essential skill of ICT, and while training for literacy and numeracy has yet to commence, it has been scheduled and resourced.

Almost all of the apprentices are in work roles that provide them with adequate opportunities to apply their training and successfully complete the apprenticeship framework. Engineering Training Services has, however, identified a minority of the apprentices for whom the directed training provision is not matched sufficiently to their specialist work roles, and is not adequately meeting their needs. This has been confirmed by the inspection and is a concern; these apprentices are mainly in electrical engineering.

2. Overall findings

Overall, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is satisfactory.

Summary of key findings

Overall performance level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Quality of Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory
Areas of Learning performance levels	
Engineering	Satisfactory
Essential Skills	Satisfactory

What does Engineering Training Services need to do to improve?

- Address as a matter of urgency the inadequate provision in the electrical engineering pathway.
- Set realistic milestones that are shared with all the key stakeholders, against which the progress of all the apprentices can be measured and evaluated effectively.
- For leadership and management to conduct, for each apprentice, a comprehensive, detailed audit and review of their curriculum provision.

- Complete a strategic overview of the provision to ensure that the training and employment needs of the apprentices and employers are met in a more coherent, timely and effective manner.

3. Key findings of the inspection

3.1 Achievements and standards are satisfactory.

Almost all of the apprentices are developing good or better occupational skills. In the workplace, they are able to carry out a suitable range of practical tasks to the appropriate industry standard, commensurate with the stage of their training and development. In many instances, this involves the manufacture of precision engineering components, fabrication and welding of steel structures or the maintenance and repair of complex electro-mechanical systems. The inspection, however, identified a small number of apprentices in the electrical engineering pathway who have not acquired sufficient competence and confidence to work independently in higher risk occupational areas, and this is a concern.

The standard of the apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills is mainly good. They are able to communicate effectively with their workplace supervisors and colleagues, use instruction manuals and engineering drawings competently and present most of their work in assessment portfolios to a good standard. Their numeracy skills are mostly effective; they are at the appropriate standard to complete adequately numeracy-related occupational tasks.

The progress of the apprentices in their learning and training is just satisfactory. Most of them, within their workplace, are making good progress in developing their occupational competence. Their progress, however, in completing the units for their technical knowledge and skills, and the essential skills qualifications, within directed training is overly variable. Significant disruptions in the staffing complement of ETS during the past year have adversely affected the apprentices' progress. Based on feedback from the apprentices and their employers during the inspection, most of them are now making better progress in their learning. It is a concern, however, that revised milestones to track, monitor and evaluate the apprentices' progress in their learning and achievements have not yet been set. There is an immediate need to set realistic milestones, shared with all the key stakeholders, against which their progress can be measured and evaluated effectively.

Over the last four years, based on the information supplied by ETS, most (77%) of the apprentices are retained and all of those who remain achieve. Over the same period, although outcomes for the essential skills have been very good, there is a noticeable decline in achievements over the last year due to the limited provision and the fragmented delivery models, and this needs to be addressed.

3.2 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

The quality of the workplace training is mostly good. Most of the apprentices, as well as their employers, have an appropriate understanding of the vocational competence units and the associated range of workplace tasks required to achieve these. They are provided with supportive opportunities to achieve the occupational competences in a timely manner. In addition, most of the apprentices have well-structured practical training provided in the workplace. An experienced and well-placed workplace mentor facilitates on-the-job practical activities across a range of occupational skill areas, which are mapped to their level 2 vocational competence qualification. In the best practice, the apprentices are provided with regular, specialist off-the-job training in the employer's own training area, to develop and assess occupational skills.

The quality of the directed training across the specialist engineering pathways is overly variable. For most pathways, mainly those relating to mechanical and manufacturing engineering, there is a satisfactory range of general engineering units to develop the apprentices' understanding of engineering principles. The quality of the teaching, training and learning observed during the inspection was good. There is, however, an important need to extend the range of optional units, and to better match these to the apprentices' work roles, in order to underpin more effectively the development of their specialist technical knowledge and skills. The quality of the provision for electrical training is inadequate, predicated mainly on the poor quality of the planning to develop the apprentices' occupational competences in a coherent manner. As a result, the provision of off-the-job practical training to develop the apprentices' essential technical knowledge and skills for working safely and effectively with electrical systems is insufficient.

The quality of the essential skills training is satisfactory. In the workplace, most of the apprentices have good opportunities to apply and develop further their essential skills to an acceptable standard. Going forward, these opportunities should be utilised better by ETS to embed and extend the apprentices' ICT, literacy and numeracy skills. While the apprentices have recently commenced directed training for the ICT essential skill, training is scheduled and resourced for literacy and numeracy. The organisation should continue to implement the appropriately revised schedule of delivery for the essential skills and ensure the training takes place in a timely manner..

3.3 The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.

The senior management team have established and maintained a wide range of links and partnerships with high profile employers in the engineering sector across Northern Ireland, which is strength of the provision. Over the last two months, there has been significant communication with most of the employers to agree and implement realistic, achievable actions to address the significant and unacceptable quality of, and disruptions and delays to, the apprentices' training during the past year.

While work is underway, in consultation with the employers, to clarify and consolidate the curriculum provision for the apprentices, there is an immediate and urgent need for a more detailed audit and review of the curriculum provision for each apprentice to be completed promptly. Subsequent revised milestones and training arrangements need to be clear and shared with and agreed by each apprentice and their employer.

Recording, tracking, monitoring and review arrangements are satisfactory. With the recent appointment of an administrative officer, work has begun to collate all the key data into a central management information system. Presently, this is rudimentary and further work is required to facilitate better collation, analysis and regular reporting of key performance data. The organisation has identified a bespoke system, which is timely.

Overall, the quality of the training resources is satisfactory. For a majority of the apprentices, mainly those on the mechanical and manufacturing pathway, the quality of the training resources provided by the employers for practical off-the-job training is at least good, and on occasions very good. For the remainder, ETS relies too heavily on the employers' workplace mentors to provide one-to-one coaching. This provision is not always well enough co-ordinated or monitored. Critically, there is an insufficient range of specialist, industry-standard training equipment within ETS to facilitate and underpin good quality training, particularly to develop the apprentices' key specialist technical knowledge and skills.

Staffing arrangements are satisfactory. An acceptable complement of tutors and support staff is now in place to deliver the core units of the apprenticeship provision. A programme of professional development is required to up-skill the tutors and assessors in a broader range of specialist knowledge, skills and pedagogy.

While an action register is in place to monitor ongoing actions being taken to improve the quality of the training, there is insufficient strategic oversight of the provision to ensure the required quality improvements are achieved and sustained. The ETS senior management team, in partnership with the board of directors, needs to complete a strategic overview of the provision to ensure that the learning and training needs of the apprentices and employers are met in a more coherent, timely and effective manner.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards and achievements, the quality of the training and learning and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the apprentices are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

5. Inspection method and evidence base

The inspection focused on:

- the achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision for training and learning;
- the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation; and
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of training supplier organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-iqrs-work-based-learning.htm

A team of three inspectors observed the ongoing directed training and spoke with 12 apprentices in directed training. Inspectors visited or contacted ten employers and interviewed 15 apprentices. The inspectors also held discussions with a representative of the board of directors, the chief executive, training manager, tutors and assessors. In addition, inspectors examined samples of the apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans and the apprentices' personal training plans. The organisation's improvement plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

The inspection also focused on the arrangements for care, support and guidance and safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

6. Information about Engineering Training Services

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	87	100%

7. Quantitative terms used by the ETI

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments at week 4 of year one who completed their occupational training framework, measured over the full duration of their course.
Achievement	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed their occupational training framework and who fully achieved their framework qualification.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.