



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

## ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in the Electrical Training Trust

Report of an Inspection  
in October 2010

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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%

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by the Electrical Training Trust.

### **Grading System**

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

<b>Performance Level</b>
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## **PART ONE: SUMMARY**

### **1. CONTEXT**

1.1 The Electrical Training Trust (ETT) is a private company, limited by guarantee and is registered for charitable status. The Electrical Training Trust is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to supply training for the ApprenticeshipsNI programme at level 3 in the professional and technical area of electrotechnical services, across Northern Ireland. The organisation is situated in modern, well-equipped premises on the Galgorm Industrial Estate, just outside Ballymena. The Electrical Training Trust is guided by a Board of Directors representing local electrical contractors, the SummitSkills sector skills council and the Unite trade union. The Chief Executive manages the provision, supported by six full-time office staff, a senior training officer, four training officers and a manager for the Achievement Measurement 2 (AM2) assessment centre. The Electrical Training Trust has the only National Electrotechnical Training approved AM2 test centre in Northern Ireland.

1.2 The majority (52%) of apprentices entering the programme are under 18 years of age and progress directly from post-primary schools or from further education colleges. A significant minority (47%) of them are between the ages of 18 and 25 on entry to their programme, with the remainder over the age of 25. Since 2007, all of the apprentices entering the programme have met the minimum entry requirement set by the electrical industry, of 16 points at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level or equivalent, including a minimum of a GCSE grade C in both English and Maths. Less than 1% of the apprentices are female.

### **2. PROVISION**

2.1 At the time of the inspection, the Electrical Training Trust was providing level 3 training for 601 ApprenticeshipsNI apprentices, and for 258 Jobskills apprentices who were almost at the end of their programme. As a result of the downturn in the construction industry, recruitment to the apprenticeship programme has declined sharply in recent years, from an intake of 398 in 2007 to 69 in 2010.

2.2 All of the Electrical Training Trust apprentices follow a City and Guilds four year apprenticeship programme. This includes the vocationally related technical certificate in Electrotechnical Technology at levels 2 and 3 which is completed by the apprentices during years one and two, and the Electrotechnical Services National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3, completed by them in years three and four. In addition, to qualify as a graded electrician, fourth year apprentices must pass the AM2 time-controlled three-day practical assessment, which includes a short on-line test. A majority (57%) of new entrants to the programme do not hold a recognised qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) and they complete the ICT Essential Skills qualification at level 1 as part of the apprenticeship framework.

2.3 The Electrical Training Trust subcontract off-the-job practical, technical certificate and ICT Essential Skills directed training to five of the regional further education colleges. Most (81%) of the first year apprentices attend their designated college for two days each week for training, with the remainder completing alternating four week blocks of college and workplace training. All second year apprentices attend college for one day each week for technical certificate training. The Electrical Training Trust is responsible for monitoring the apprentices' progress throughout the programme and for the assessment of the NVQ in the workplace, and the AM2 assessment in years three and four.

### **3. THE INSPECTION**

3.1 In October 2010, the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) carried out a two-week inspection of the Electrical Training Trust's ApprenticeshipsNI provision. A team of seven inspectors and one professional associate observed 129 apprentices in 32 directed training sessions, 23 apprentices in 20 NVQ monitoring and assessment sessions, and visited 73 apprentices in their workplace training. Discussions were held with the Chief Executive, the AM2 centre manager, the senior training officer, training officers, office manager, senior college managers, college programme coordinators, college lecturers, employer representatives, apprentices and their workplace supervisors. The inspection team examined samples of the apprentices' work, their Personal Training Plans (PTPs), the organisation's self-evaluation report, and other relevant documentation.

3.2 The arrangements for the inspection of care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups includes the opportunity for apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings by the inspection team with groups of apprentices across the provision. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to the apprentices, 109 (73%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate; three of these contained additional written comments. The returns show that the apprentices' experiences with the Electrical Training Trust are very good. Almost all of the apprentices reported that they appreciate the very good support they receive from staff, the very good match between workplace training and their target qualifications, and the clarity of the information the organisation provides about their training programmes. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaire and the discussions held with apprentices to the Chief Executive.

### **4. MAIN FINDINGS**

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by the Electrical Training Trust is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- effective links and partnerships with employers and the further education colleges to provide an electrotechnical apprenticeship that meets well the employers' training needs;
- excellent management information system and rigorous monitoring processes which are used effectively to manage the apprenticeship programme;
- very good to excellent specialist training resources and equipment provided by most of the colleges and the Electrical Training Trust for apprentice training;
- excellent success rates, standards of work, and high levels of motivation demonstrated by most of the apprentices;
- innovative on-line electronic portfolio system which is used efficiently to support the rigorous assessment of apprentices in the workplace; and
- excellent range of training experiences provided for almost all of the apprentices in the workplace.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- further strengthening of the quality assurance processes; and
- updating of safeguarding and pastoral care policies and procedures.

#### **Performance Levels**

	<b>Performance Level</b>
OVERALL	Very Good
Contributory Areas: Leadership and Management Achievements and Standards Quality of Provision for Training	Very Good Outstanding Very Good

## **PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

### **5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

5.1 The overall quality of the leadership and management is very good. The Electrical Training Trust has well-established and effective links with local employers and the organisation is led by a very effective Chief Executive who uses his expert knowledge of the sector to match the electrotechnical apprenticeship well to the needs of the apprentices and their employers. The Electrical Training Trust has an effective organisational structure, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all staff. The organisation has achieved Investors in People and Charter Mark accreditation. All of the staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and work hard to support the apprentices and maintain high standards of work.

5.2 The Electrical Training Trust makes outstanding use of technology to promote and support the delivery of the apprenticeship programme. This includes a secure off-site electronic document storage system, and an on-line apprenticeship application process, including appropriate facilities for self-assessment which are both linked to the management information system (MIS). Other innovations include an effective electronic portfolio system, and a comprehensive website with relevant blogs, videos, and excellent advice, support and guidance. The MIS is used effectively to record, monitor and manage all aspects of apprenticeship training. The document storage system provides secure storage of all apprentice records combined with fast on-line access and search tools which are used very efficiently to record the apprentices' progress and achievements.

5.3 Communication between the Electrical Training Trust, individual colleges, employers and apprentices is effective and is facilitated by the training officers who engage regularly with college course teams, apprentices and their supervisors to monitor each apprentice's progress and performance, and to resolve problems when they arise. In addition, employers, parents and apprentices are provided with high quality information about the apprenticeship programme in a variety of formats including electronic resources available on-line, leaflets, magazine articles and apprentice progress reports. The opportunities, however, for collaboration and the sharing of best practice across the further education colleges involved are limited, and there is no forum for the Electrical Training Trust to meet regularly with cross-college representatives as a group to consider strategic and curriculum planning.

5.4 The quality improvement process is very good, and a culture of continuous improvement is embedded within the organisation. The Electrical Training Trust has an effective self-evaluation process which identifies accurately most of the main strengths and areas for improvement, and leads to the production of an annual development plan with appropriate actions for improvement. The quality improvement process includes the effective use and analysis of a range of learner and employer questionnaires at key points in the quality cycle, and after training events. In addition, the process is further informed by apprentices' views from focus groups, and the training officers' knowledge of their allocated college and workplace training. The apprentices' training records are efficiently maintained and rigorously checked through auditing processes which meet International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) quality assurance standards. The Electrical Training Trust's service level agreements with the colleges are, however, under-developed, and there are particular gaps in communication and reporting requirements in relation to the self-evaluation processes. This leads to the colleges not being fully involved in the quality improvement process, and only limited opportunities for Electrical Training Trust to effect ongoing improvement in the quality of the directed training the colleges provide.

5.5 The quality of the physical resources and equipment provided to support the delivery of the apprenticeship programme by most of the colleges and the Electrical Training Trust are very good. The college's training workshops are mainly bright, spacious and well-resourced with appropriate quantities of consumable materials, tools, test equipment and dedicated practical training booths to simulate a wide range of electrical installation activities. A small number of the theory rooms used in the colleges are, however, untidy and poorly maintained. The Electrical Training Trust provides outstanding, well-managed resources to administer the programme and to support the apprentices in their training, including: well-resourced practical assessment workshops; bright training rooms equipped with very good ICT resources; and specialist electrical tools and equipment.

5.6 The Electrical Training Trust provides outstanding services and support for those apprentices facing redundancy, to help them find alternative employment. This service includes one-to-one support and advice from the apprentice's training officer, and an on-line employment section on their website which provides a job vacancy advertising place for employers, and a location for apprentices to post their availability for employment.

5.7 Most of the Electrical Training Trust's policies and procedures are appropriate and widely available in a range of formats, although there is a need to update the safeguarding and pastoral care policies to reflect the current legislation.

## **6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

6.1 Almost all of the apprentices achieve outstanding standards of work which are in line with industry standards. They demonstrate very high levels of occupational competence and technical knowledge in a variety of settings. Apprentices are able to install accurately a wide range of electrical circuits using domestic, commercial and industrial installation techniques to specific dimensions. They frequently source and interpret information from drawings and schematics accurately to connect and test electrical circuits. Almost all of the apprentices are highly motivated, enthusiastic, very flexible and adaptable. They operate with high levels of health and safety knowledge and are aware of their own limitations, seeking assistance when necessary. The apprentices have very high levels of professional pride, which is demonstrated through the high standards of their work and the good quality tools and equipment they purchase and maintain to support their work and training.

6.2 Although almost all of the apprentices make very good progress in achieving competence in occupational skills and technical knowledge, there are only limited opportunities in the majority of the colleges for them to make progress in the development of their ICT skills, within the professional and technical element of their programme.

6.3 The apprentices' employability skills are very good; they are good time keepers and effective team workers. They are industrious and are given responsibilities by their employers to complete tasks to industry standards and to resolve problems independently, according to their abilities.

6.4 Almost all of the apprentices speak confidently, fluently and accurately about all aspects of their work using appropriate technical language and they are able to negotiate effectively with other trades, customers and contractors in the workplace. Most of the apprentices have very good numeracy skills which they use frequently to perform complex calculations, estimations, and to take accurate measurements and record test results, in directed training and in their workplace. Most of the apprentices' literacy skills are very good; they are able to write regularly and effectively in their electronic portfolio responses, course notes and in technical reports. All of the apprentices are able to use and apply their technical knowledge and practical experience to solve problems and make decisions in the workplace. The standards and the range of the evidence submitted by most of the

apprentices in their electronic portfolios are very good. They include written statements, photographs and scanned images, videos and various other pieces of documentation collected on-site. The standards of ICT skills demonstrated by most of the apprentices observed in the directed training sessions are good. A small number of the apprentices, however, demonstrate poor levels of literacy in completing the electronic portfolio, or exhibit learning support needs and would benefit from targeted, additional specialist support.

6.5 Almost all of the apprentices demonstrate high levels of competence through the AM2 three day industry recognised practical test, undertaken in the fourth year of their apprenticeship. The apprentices demonstrate competence in a range of timed activities, including: risk assessment and safe isolation; composite electrical wiring systems installation; inspection and testing; safe isolation of a test unit; and fault finding. Their application of technical knowledge is assessed through an online test.

6.6 The average success rate over the period of 2003-2006 is excellent at 97%, over the four years of the apprenticeship programme. Average retention over the same period is satisfactory at 77%, which needs to be considered in the context of a severe economic downturn which is particularly difficult for construction sector trades. First attempt success in the AM2 assessment has improved from 83% (2004) to 88% (2006), with almost all of the remaining apprentices successfully completing the AM2 in a re-sit.

## **7. QUALITY OF THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

7.1 The curriculum provision is very good with an appropriate balance of practical, theoretical and workplace training, which is matched well to the individual needs of the apprentices and employers.

7.2 The quality of most (80%) of the directed training sessions observed in the colleges was good or better, with a majority (61%) of them very good to outstanding. The Electrical Training Trust workplace monitoring and assessment sessions observed were all good or better; most (84%) were very good to outstanding. A majority (50%) of the ICT Essential Skill sessions observed were good or better with the remainder evaluated as satisfactory. The good directed training sessions are well planned and supported with appropriate training manuals, textbooks, and presentations. In the best sessions, the lecturers plan well to engage the apprentices with well-developed question and answer sessions, integrated theory and practical teaching, and the use of embedded videos, animations and web links. A minority of directed training sessions were, however, overly directed by the lecturer with only a limited range of teaching approaches used to engage apprentices in their learning. This is a particular problem in combined ApprenticeshipsNI and Programme-Led Apprentice directed training sessions, and leads to a slower pace of learning and reduced stretch and challenge for a small number of the employed apprentices. Almost all of the apprentices receive very good off-the-job practical training in the colleges; sessions are very well planned, and supported with very good learning resources. The Electrical Training Trust provides all of the apprentices with very good additional learning resources, including an electrical theory textbook and an on-site guide to electrical wiring regulations.

7.3 Almost all of the apprentices have excellent opportunities to gain and develop a very good range of practical electrical installation skills and knowledge in the workplace. Apprentices develop their practical skills in a variety of settings including domestic, commercial and industrial installations and install a wide range of wiring systems and specialist equipment. They are given additional responsibility as their practical skills and knowledge develops, including the planning and installation of larger, more complex electrical installations and inspection and testing of installed electrical systems.

7.4 The five participating regional colleges are subcontracted to deliver the Essential Skill of ICT, with current first year apprentices being in-filled to existing courses. As a result, although the colleges make appropriate use of initial assessment to identify the ICT skills needs of these apprentices, most of the provision is insufficiently contextualised or matched well enough to the apprentices' needs, and there is no reference to the electronic portfolio. In addition, in two of the colleges, the timetabling arrangements for the Essential Skill of ICT are not appropriate and result in a minority of the apprentices missing part of their electrical theory classes. In one college, good use is made of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to support the Essential Skill qualification. The procedures currently in place for the planning and monitoring of the ICT essential skills across the colleges, by the Electrical Training Trust, are under-developed and need to be strengthened.

7.5 The inspection team observed a small number of examples of good practice in the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning in a minority of directed training sessions across the colleges. These included the effective use of a commercial on-line electrical learning package, on-line formative assessments tools, support materials accessible through the VLE, and electrical circuit simulation software to enhance and support understanding and learning. However, most apprentices have poor access to ILT in the colleges and there is limited dissemination of best practice across the colleges, leading to an underuse of ILT across most of the college provision.

7.6 The arrangements for assessing the apprentices' progress and achievements are very good to excellent, across the provision. The Electrical Training Trust has effective arrangements in place to monitor each apprentice's NVQ achievements in the workplace, which includes the outstanding use of an on-line electronic portfolio system. The system provides electronic communication and tracking tools which are used frequently and effectively to set and review individual targets for each apprentice. All of the third and fourth year apprentices, and a small number of employers, regularly log-on to the on-line electronic portfolio remotely to review the apprentice's progress towards achieving their NVQ. Apprentices can easily upload electronic evidence in the form of digital photographs, scanned documents and written text. They receive very good, timely feedback from the training officers through the electronic portfolio system and almost all report that they find the system easy to use, and welcome the facility to complete the portfolio in their own time. Workplace assessment of the apprentices' NVQ achievements is well-planned and rigorous, with detailed feedback provided to apprentices, their employers and supervisors. The internal verification process for the NVQ is particularly robust and has resulted in continuous and on-going improvements to the NVQ assessment process. A formal report is issued to each apprentice, their employer and parents once a year, which includes benchmarking information on their performance and appropriate targets for further development.

7.7 The quality of the support for apprentices is good or better. Relationships between the apprentices and their training officers, college lecturers and workplace supervisors are good and promote a positive climate for learning. All of the apprentices have telephone and email contact details for their designated training officer and report that they feel well supported when issues arise. Outstanding apprentice support events are organised by the Electrical Training Trust to raise the apprentices' awareness of their industry and the work of relevant support organisations. The events include guest speakers from appropriate organisations such as Barnardo's, the Labour Relations Agency, local electrical employers, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The speakers address important topics such as career pathways, personal health, mental health, road safety, and drugs awareness. At these events, the apprentices are provided with high quality information packs which include contact details for each of the support organisations. Although monitoring visits by the training officers are carried out professionally and with an appropriate emphasis on pastoral care, it is inappropriate that a small number of the first year apprentices only receive a first workplace visit around six months after starting on the programme. This limits the

opportunities for the training officers to identify issues at an early stage and to provide the necessary support. A small number of apprentices report that they would welcome additional support to address concerns such as the identification of potential opportunities in their workplace for NVQ assessment, and preparation for the AM2 test.

7.8 The quality of careers, education, information and guidance is very good. Information and guidance is provided at key points throughout the year at Electrical Training Trust events and is supplemented by resources on the organisation's website and in information leaflets. The Electrical Training Trust offers very good pre-entry guidance and a comprehensive induction programme. Construction Skills Register training is provided free to all apprentices. Examples of good apprentice support include the provision of transport to events from pick up points across Northern Ireland, and very good hospitality arrangements for the apprentices during organised training activities. A minority of apprentices report that they are not well-informed of progression routes available to them beyond their level 3 apprenticeship training.

7.9 The quality of the apprentices' Personal Training Plans (PTPs) is satisfactory. The plans are too generic and they are not used effectively to capture and use the outcomes from initial assessments on entry to the programmes, and other assessments at key points in the apprenticeship programme. While there are some good examples of apprentices' setting their own wider goals such as passing a driving test or planning to work abroad, consideration needs to be given to linking the PTPs to the electronic portfolio and other electronic record systems in place to improve the quality of the plans and to record progress and achievements more efficiently.

7.10 While the arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, the following areas need to be addressed: the vetting arrangements for Electrical Training Trust staff, the safeguarding element of the service level agreements with the further education colleges and the organisation's safeguarding policy.

## **PART THREE**

### **8. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

8.1 The Electrical Training Trust has a very good development plan, which addresses most of the areas for development identified by the inspection. There is, however, a need for the Electrical Training Trust to revise its development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the further strengthening of quality assurance processes; and
- the updating of safeguarding and pastoral policies and procedures to reflect current legislation on safeguarding.

## OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2003-2010

Year Started	Started (Completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate	Success Rate	Progressed to relevant employment
2003 - 2004	425	77%	97%	100%
2004 - 2005	377	81%	97%	100%
2005 - 2006	340	72%	96%	100%
Overall totals	1142	77%	97%	100%
2006 - 2007	370	70	-	-
2007 - 2008	398	68	-	-
2008 - 2009	202	69	-	-
2009 - 2010	124	92	-	-

**Note:** The table is based on a four year apprenticeship; trainees starting in 2005 completed their programme in 2009.

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