

# **E.ON UK Engineering Academy**

## **Inspection report**

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**Unique reference number:** 58731

**Name of lead inspector:** Elizabeth Warriner HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 09 December 2011

**Type of provider:** Employer

**Address:** Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station  
Nottingham  
NG11 0EG

**Telephone number:** 02476 191529

## Information about the provider

1. E.ON UK is one of the largest energy generation and supply companies in Britain, employing 11,000 people throughout the UK. It launched the Engineering Academy (EA) in March 2007, acquiring Empower Training Services and two training centres in April 2008, following Empower’s inspection. E.ON recently sold its distribution division and the other two centres, and now concentrates its training activities in Ratcliffe-on-Soar. Following the split, 127 learners remain under a contract with East Midlands Skills Funding Agency (SFA), working towards apprenticeships in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, control and instrumentation. A quarter of learners are E.ON employees; the remainder work for other companies. Most off-the-job learning takes place in a training centre at the power station. Generation learners recruited before 2011 attend Loughborough College for their technical certificate. This year’s learners have all their lessons in the centre, where lecturers from Warwickshire College teach some modules. Thirteen teaching staff, three learning and skills coordinators and nine assessor/verifiers support learners. Funded training forms 20% of the EA’s turnover.
2. The 2008 inspection of Empower Training graded all aspects good except Equality of Opportunity, which was satisfactory.
3. In 2010, 71% of Nottinghamshire pupils gained five good GCSE passes, five points lower than the national average. The proportion of adults qualified above level 3 is also low; although fewer than average have no qualifications. In September 2011, 8.9% of Nottinghamshire 18-24 year olds claimed jobseekers allowance compared with a national average of 8.1%. However, unemployment among older workers is lower than average.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of EA:
  - Warwickshire college (Engineering)
  - Loughborough college (Engineering)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	101 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	2

## Overall effectiveness

5. The E.ON Engineering Academy provides very good provision for learners. Success rates are consistently high, and learners develop very good personal, vocational and employability skills, including a high level of awareness of safe working. Teaching, coaching and assessment are good. Learners use a wide range of relevant equipment on-and off-the-job and their qualifications meet industry needs exceptionally well. Many take extra courses to enhance this further. The EA uses its outstanding partnerships locally, regionally and nationally to influence and design engineering training. It supports learners very well, although staff are not always proactive enough in advising them on their next step. Leadership, management and governance are exceptional, with very good strategies to develop the provision, and clear challenges from the board. Arrangements to safeguard learners are extremely thorough and detailed, with an uncompromising and all-encompassing approach to health and safety understood by all. E.ON has a high level commitment to promoting equality and diversity, which permeates its work. The EA has succeeded in recruiting more women learners, but the overwhelming majority are still white males. Managers make good use of quality improvement arrangements, including consultation with learners, employers and partners. However, these arrangements are insufficiently consistent and the sharing of good practice is not always systematic.

## Main findings

- Overall success rates continue to be substantially above the national average, particularly for power industry learners, although these have declined slightly over the last three years. Conversely, rates for completion within planned end dates, which were low, have increased and are now above average.
- Learners achieve a very wide range of relevant and additional qualifications. They develop well, attaining good social and employability skills, and a high standard of vocational competence. Many employers offer additional industry relevant training and support further qualifications. Portfolio work is of a high standard, well organised and contains a wide range of evidence. Learners enjoy going to work and learning.
- The planning of well-structured programmes is particularly effective. The emphasis on safe working is strong. Learners receive good individual coaching. Trainers establish useful working relationships and manage learning sessions well. Learners particularly value trainers' guidance on how to build on their existing experience. Highly relevant activities extend learners' knowledge and skills in workshop sessions. They are encouraged to think for themselves and to overcome problems.
- Resources at employers' premises are good. They are of high quality and of the standard found in industry allowing learners to gain relevant and worthwhile skills. Resources in the Academy's workshops are relevant and appropriate, enabling learners to develop good basic engineering skills.
- Very detailed and thorough assessment provides good support and guidance to learners. Learners have clear targets for their next assessment. Internal verification is satisfactory. Effective questioning checks learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners receive constructive and timely feedback. Learners' files are well organised and detailed. Some employers have excellent systems to manage learners' development to meet specific local needs.
- Employers are fully involved in the thorough learner progress reviews. Short-term target setting in progress reviews is satisfactory. Staff have extensively revised review documents and processes to improve the detail recorded for this area. It is too soon to judge their effectiveness. Reviews reinforce safety and safeguarding well, but reinforcement of equality and diversity is insufficiently developed and inconsistent.
- Programmes meet employers' and learners' needs and requirements fully. Learners focus clearly on developing their skills in a well-resourced off-the-job environment. At employers' sites, they develop further to a high commercial and industrial standard. Qualifications match learners' work extremely well. E.ON and other employers have developed frameworks to match the industry's needs closely.
- Partnership working is outstanding. The EA exercises powerful leadership in an exceptionally diverse set of national, regional and local initiatives to promote training opportunities in engineering. Regional partnerships with other large employers and schools have been very successful in attracting more young women into the apprenticeship scheme.

- Assessors provide good support, care and guidance. Employers are committed to supporting learners' progress. Learners feel their voice is relevant and staff listen to their views. E.ON is very supportive when learners' personal circumstances threaten achievement. Induction is memorable and useful. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. E.ON is not always proactive in giving advice on progression and higher education to learners completing their programme.
- The EA has a very good strategy for developing its apprenticeship programmes. Senior managers set high standards in safety and safeguarding, as well as meeting the needs of learners and employers to support industry developments. The EA board and the advisory board provide excellent leadership and accountability and use performance monitoring very well to drive up standards.
- All staff, employers and learners are aware of the prominent and exhaustive approach to risk assessment and safe working. Arrangements to safeguard learners are extremely thorough and detailed. Policies are comprehensive, regularly updated and well promoted and monitored. Learners feel safe and are encouraged to challenge unsafe practices. Staff alleviate parents' fears through visits to block release accommodation.
- E.ON has a strong, comprehensive and clearly articulated commitment to promote equality and diversity. A culture of open communication and respect permeates its apprenticeship programme. Procedures to remove recruitment bias are effective, and staff assist other employers to ensure the recruitment of learners is fair. Despite some success in increasing the participation of underrepresented groups, most learners are white males.
- Managers make good use of quality improvement arrangements, including learners' and employers' views, to evaluate and improve apprenticeships. A revised system helps learners to understand their progress better and employers now contribute routinely to progress reviews. However, managers do not fully coordinate these arrangements to ensure greater consistency throughout the provision and further opportunities to share good practice.

### **What does E.ON need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the rate of completion within planned end dates by monitoring learners' progress, identifying issues and taking appropriate action.
- Ensure that learners and employers are fully aware of relevant, measurable short-term targets set in reviews.
- Fully and accurately record learners' depth of knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews.
- Improve the coordination of quality improvement arrangements and share good practice to ensure all learners have equal opportunity to make good progress and succeed in their apprenticeships.

## **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What learners like:**

- knowledgeable, helpful and skilled trainers who take a personal interest
- the friendly and welcoming training centre and its professional approach
- pleasant learning experience in a good atmosphere
- the very safe environment and good working conditions
- prompt, effective and respectful help with personal problems
- good integration between what they learn and the job they do
- earning and learning at the same time
- learning to get on with people from all backgrounds while on block release
- the good efforts to put their parents' minds at rest when they are away.

### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- longer in-depth courses for some topics
- more new equipment in the centre (learners from newer power stations)
- information to supervisors on curriculum and schedules
- better facilities during breaks between sessions at the centre
- longer canteen opening hours so learners have somewhere to wait for the train.

## **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What employers like:**

- brilliant trainers who have good relationships with learners and a good learning environment
- excellent match of qualification to requirements
- effective relationship and constant communication with E.ON staff
- the excellent standard of training facilities
- E.ON listens, responds flexibly and acts promptly on comments or issues
- the professional approach which focuses on business, high standards and tight deadlines
- how the programme builds learners' character by living away from home
- good support for in-house assessor to update and develop practice.

### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- no improvements suggested.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

6. Learners outcomes continue to be at a high level and well above those found nationally. Although a low proportion of learners previously completed within agreed timescales, the rate of progress for current learners is good. Most are on track to achieve on or before the planned end date.
7. The EA has managed the streamlining of its apprenticeship provision very well, retaining its focus on providing good quality industrial training. It has successfully maintained and built on the strengths at the previous inspection, especially arrangements for safeguarding learners and developing their skills when operating in a high-risk environment. Resolving previous weaker aspects, employers are now fully involved in progress reviews and observations of learners at work are good.
8. All staff contribute to the thorough and informative self-assessment report, which incorporates users' views very effectively. Managers used the resulting quality improvement plan well to raise standards. Recent action includes developing a colour-coded progress tracking system, replacing day-release for panel wiring learners with two-week block-release, and revising technical certificate training through a new subcontract with Warwickshire College. However, the use of targets in progress reviews is inconsistent. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of recently revised systems.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

9. Overall success rates are high. The rate for E.ON's core business, electrical power is excellent. A slight three-year decline is balanced by rising completion rates within agreed timescales, which are now satisfactory. E.ON showed great tenacity, taking over electrical installation apprentices from a failing provider, at the LSC's request, and ensuring their achievement, despite considerable difficulties. However, their delayed progress reduced aggregated success rates substantially between 2009/10 and 2010/11.
10. Learners achieve a wide range of relevant additional qualifications, developing excellent personal, vocational and workplace skills. Well-organised portfolios demonstrate high standards and a good variety of evidence. Learners confidently apply a well-rounded understanding of engineering principles. They enjoy going to work and learning. Many employers offer extra training and support progression to higher education, which is good. Some learners achieve advanced technical positions after apprenticeships.
11. Learners feel very safe both on- and off-the-job. Health and safety, including accident reporting, take extremely high priority. Workshops have prominently displayed health and safety notices and learners use personal protective

equipment well. Assessors check annually to ensure employers' premises remain safe. Risk assessments reinforce learners' development of good work based health and safety discipline very effectively. Learners feel safe in local block release accommodation. Learners are very aware of healthy lifestyles, and successfully requested healthier menus in the canteen.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. The well-planned, well-structured and particularly effective training programmes place a strong emphasis on safety. Trainers establish useful working relationships, managing learning sessions effectively with good individual coaching. Learners particularly value guidance building on existing experience. Useful workshop activities using good resources extend learners' knowledge and skills, encouraging them to think independently to overcome problems.
13. Assessment is good. Assessors use questions effectively to check learners' knowledge and understanding. Learners receive constructive, timely feedback. Internal verification is satisfactory. Learner files are well-organised and detailed. Very thorough workplace assessment gives learners good support and guidance and clear targets. Some employers have excellent systems to develop learners' knowledge in specialist areas.
14. Progress reviews involve employers very productively. Extensively revised review paperwork and processes are now more comprehensive, supporting good progress monitoring and recording, but the effect of changes is not fully evident. Target setting is satisfactory. The reinforcement of safety and safeguarding is highly effective. Processes to reinforce equality and diversity are insufficiently developed and inconsistent.
15. Programmes are exceptionally responsive to employers. They value the programme highly. The training allows learners to focus on developing skills in a safe off-the-job environment. Qualifications match the range of learners' work extremely well. In one power station, plant managers' calendars record details of each unit learners study, so they can plan workplace tasks to match college work. Employers offer a very wide range of jobs and activities to ensure learners can complete their qualification. High quality equipment at their premises helps them gain relevant and worthwhile skills.
16. Partnership working is outstanding. The EA exercises powerful leadership in an exceptionally diverse set of national, regional and local initiatives to promote training opportunities encouraging people from all backgrounds to become engineers. Managers lead high-profile working groups developing specialist qualifications providing progression routes that meet industry needs. E.ON collaborates effectively with large regional employers, developing coherent strategies and projects attracting learners into the sector. Successful, creative pilots in secondary schools have attracted more female learners. The EA trained

40 young E.ON employees as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) ambassadors to extend this work.

17. EA staff provide very good support, particularly when personal circumstances threaten progress, maintaining close contact throughout programmes. Assessors support and guide learners well to develop exemplary portfolios. Strongly committed employers give the support learners need, including shop floor mentors, to achieve their qualification and excellent industrial skills. Learners are confident their views are heard and acted upon. Induction is memorable and useful. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory overall, but E.ON is insufficiently proactive in advising on progression and higher education.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

18. The EA's very good strategic focus on developing apprenticeships maintains its strong priority to support good quality industry-linked training, even in a climate of business restructuring. In particular, it has increased its outreach to smaller employers; only a quarter of learners are E.ON employees. Managers continue to contribute to national electrical engineering and regional strategic bodies to influence training strategies and respond to global technical, economic and industrial developments. Greater flexibility within the provision is broadening options for learners, with a particularly strong focus on developing behaviour, attitudes and wider employability skills to meet high industry standards. Well-qualified staff take a particularly wide range of highly relevant training to update their skills, helping them to develop and improve their practice.
19. Governance and accountability systems are excellent. The EA board members represent E.ON's six main areas of work, providing a broad overview. They rigorously monitor the academy's role in developing the industry, ensuring high calibre skills across E.ON and providing good training, including that to external companies' employees. The EA board very effectively complements an advisory board representing exceptionally diverse expertise, including further and higher education, schools, engineering companies and industrial bodies. They interrogate and challenge the EA's strategic direction. Both boards use thorough performance monitoring and careful scrutiny of detailed reports well to raise standards.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough and detailed. Policies are comprehensive, regularly updated, promoted and monitored well. E.ON vets and regularly trains all staff and subcontractors working with apprentices. Employers and accommodation providers are very aware of their responsibilities. Learners and employers fully understand E.ON's very thorough, uncompromising and prominent approach to risk assessment and promoting safe working practices. Many learners take extra courses to improve their safety, for instance safer driving. Staff resolve parents' concerns during recruitment when they invite them to the centre and accommodation where

their children will stay on block release. Reported bullying incidents are extremely rare. Staff deal with these sensitively, providing good support to all parties involved.

21. E.ON's strong, comprehensive and clearly articulated commitment to promote equality and diversity is implemented through their high-level Diversity Leadership Group. Well-focused working groups to improve awareness and practice report to E.ON directors. The EA sets and monitors clear diversity targets. A culture of open communication and respect permeates all provision. E.ON has rigorous processes to remove bias in recruiting its own employees, and provides effective assistance to other employers to help them to recruit fairly. E.ON has had some success in increasing the participation of under-represented groups, for instance raising aspiration for unemployed young people through programme led apprenticeships. Although the proportion of female apprentices is rising, white males form the vast majority, and the participation of ethnic minorities is low.
22. The collection and use of learners and employers' views are excellent and managed very effectively. Most staff are involved in consulting with learners, employers, internal and external customers, including those providing accommodation and subcontractors. Examples include individual interviews during workplace visits, group interviews during induction and off-the-job training, course evaluations and questionnaires. Staff promptly collate and analyse results thoroughly to improve provision. Responsive senior managers resolve issues promptly. Stakeholders interviewed by inspectors considered that EON values their views and contributions.
23. The EA uses a very wide range of activities to monitor, evaluate, revise and review their apprenticeship processes. Recent examples of developments include revised progress reviews, improved safety records, improved use of feedback from learners, employers and other partners. Staff involvement in the highly effective self-assessment is much improved. Broader observations of staff now cover induction and reviews, as well as training, but records focus insufficiently on impact of training to meet all learners' needs. Despite wider-ranging quality procedures, managers identified a need for further integration to improve consistency and generate opportunities for sharing good practice.
24. The EA provides good value for money. Outcomes are good and learners develop very good vocational and industry-relevant skills. Financial management is good. The EA uses resources effectively and efficiently.

## Information about the inspection

25. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's head of quality and funding, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report (as Empower Training), and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each aspect of the subject area the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**E.ON UK Engineering Academy**  
**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	127	127
Part-time learners	0	0
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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