

# Qdos Training Limited

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 58397

**Name of lead inspector:** Maxine Mayer HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 06 October 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** The Business Box  
Oswin Road  
Leicester  
LE3 1HR

**Telephone number:** 0116 279 5080

## Information about the provider

1. Qdos Training Limited (Qdos) is a private training provider established in 2005 as part of the Qdos Consulting Group. Since a management buy-out in February 2011, it now holds directly a Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contract for the provision of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the workplace (previously known as Train to Gain) and apprenticeship training. The company provides, under the guidance of the two directors, the diploma for IT users and apprenticeship training in IT application specialist at intermediate and advanced levels. The provider also offers a small programme in business administration. Due to the low numbers of learners, the inspection only covered information and communications technology (ICT). Of the 295 learners following the diploma for IT users, the majority are at intermediate level and of the 51 apprentices, 22 are on advanced level apprenticeships. Qdos conducts training at its own and employers' premises and through e-learning. Staff visit learners in the workplace quarterly to review their progress. Qdos is based in Leicester. It recruits learners from the East and West Midlands. SFA funds most of the company's business. Unemployment rates in the East Midlands are around the national average of 7.9%. The percentage of the population with no qualifications is around 1.4% higher than the national rate.
2. Since the last inspection, the provider no longer offers programmes in preparation for life and work.
3. The following organisation provides training on behalf of Qdos in business administration and key skills:
  - Mitre Training

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	565 learners 80 apprentices

## 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>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Information and communication technology	2

## Overall effectiveness

4. Qdos is a good provider of ICT work-related training. Most learners succeed in their programmes and with the exception of the apprentices succeed within the planned duration of the programme. Pass rates on tests are high. Learners acquire very good ICT skills and gain increased levels of confidence, which are helping them in their employment.
5. Qdos provides good training. Learners receive a good initial assessment that clearly identifies the most appropriate course and level for the learner to undertake. Those learners who are not quite ready for an intermediate level programme receive good support and learning materials to prepare them for the course and help them succeed when ready for enrolment. The provider arranges training flexibly around learners' work and personal commitments. The training programmes consider employers needs well. Staff support learners well during training. However, the support for apprentices whilst undertaking their key skills is under-resourced.
6. The leaders and managers of Qdos set high standards. Staff are particularly well qualified and experienced. The quality of learning resources is good. Qdos pays good attention to the health, safety and welfare of its learners. It promotes equality and diversity particularly well and most groups of learners achieve as well as each other.

## Main findings

- Success rates, completed within the planned duration of programmes in the NVQ for the workplace programmes are high and have increased in the last two years. Overall success rates are high for apprentices and well above national rates. However, only 56% of apprentices succeed by the agreed end date of their programme.
- Learners make good progress. Staff provide learners with low levels of prior achievement good pre-course learning, which enables them to participate well in their chosen course. The majority of learners progress very well and pass their tests first time, often with high scores.
- Learners are developing good ICT knowledge and application software skills. They are able to transfer their learning from the training workshops to their workplaces very well. Learners increased knowledge and skills are improving their confidence levels, productivity and general effectiveness in their jobs.
- Tutors deliver lessons at a good pace. Lessons focus very well on the learners' role in the workplace. Tutors are knowledgeable with good experience. They use a suitable range of teaching resources to provide ICT training programmes that relate well to the workplace. However, learning does not take account of the needs of a few learners sufficiently, including the more able.
- The programmes meet the needs and interests of users very well. They prepare learners well for ICT related work. Feedback on learners' performance clearly helps them to identify and improve their work, but is not undertaken consistently well enough when communicating results of tests.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. Communications with employers are good and they speak positively about the flexibility of arrangements to meet their business needs. Partnership working with schools is under development.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Initial assessment is particularly good and links well to a good range of additional training resources. The review process overall is satisfactory. However, effective key skills support for apprentices is under-resourced.
- Qdos strategic leadership and management are good. Managers share very effectively with staff the company's vision and purpose. This ensures that Qdos's staff understand the high expectations and ambitions of the company to meet learners and employers' IT training needs within industry. The company has an open and supportive management culture.
- Managers have handled the recent re-organisation well. Its impact on learning and outcomes for most learners and employers is positive, including the steady increase in success rates and employers' high satisfaction with the quality of the provision.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Qdos provides all staff with good safeguarding training. All staff receive a Criminal Records Bureau check and a central list is held. Staff promote safeguarding well to learners and risk assessments are good.

- Qdos trains staff well in equality and diversity, which they promote thoroughly to learners. Most groups of learners achieve as well as each other with the exception of the small number of black Caribbean learners who do not do as well. The provider has identified that it needs to improve participation of minority ethnic groups and early indicators are that this is improving.
- Qdos effectively collects and reviews learners' and employers' views and uses the information well to improve lessons. However, managers do not formally use learners' and employers' feedback to make strategic decisions.

### **What does Qdos Training Limited need to do to improve further?**

- Raise the standard of the provision of key skills for apprentices by improving resources to ensure that learners can complete their portfolio and succeed within the planned duration of their programme.
- Increase the availability of extension learning materials to challenge the more able learners and to ensure that the planning of lessons takes account of learners' individual needs.
- Develop the making of strategic decisions further by ensuring managers make formal and more thorough use of the analysis of the feedback from learners and employers.

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

#### **What learners like:**

- that the programmes really help with their work
- good quality training
- very approachable trainers
- well structured and prepared programmes
- useful CD-ROM with learning exercises issued prior to the start of the course
- relaxed, non-pressured learning environment.

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

- the amount of feedback from test results
- to have access to higher-level courses in the same format.

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

#### **What employers like:**

- the continuing support received from Qdos
- the good training that is well received by learners
- that learners come back to work with fresh ideas on how to use Microsoft Office

- the really helpful Qdos staff
- the way course materials are adapted to the requirements of employers.

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

- more communication about learners' progress.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

7. Qdos's capacity to improve is good. The provider, through very good use of key performance indicators, sets high standards for itself. Since the last inspection it has increased success rates each year on its main programme and these are now high and most learners achieve within planned timescales. In 2010, Qdos introduced an apprenticeship programme. Overall success rates on this programme are high. However, insufficient numbers of apprentices are succeeding within the planned duration of their programme. The availability and quality of resources are good. In particular, the provision of additional learning materials provided to learners prior to joining the programme and for apprentices to gain additional qualifications in health and safety and equality and diversity. Self-assessment includes fully the views of staff, learners and employers, but the current self-assessment report is insufficiently judgmental. Managers routinely review the company's thorough development plans that clearly highlight priority areas for improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

8. Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on NVQs in the workplace have increased since the last inspection and are now around the national rates. The proportion of learners achieving within the planned time are very high and well above the national rates. The success rates on apprenticeship programmes for 2010/11, at the time of the inspection, were high and were 14 percentage points above the national rates. However, the proportion of apprentices completing within the planned time was low.
9. Learners are making good progress. Staff provide those identified with low levels of prior achievement with good pre-course learning materials and initial advice. This helps these learners to make a better start and more able to participate on their course. The majority of learners progress very well and most pass their ICT tests first time, often with high scores. However, improvements in the provision for key skills for the apprentices has been hampered by changes to training arrangements. Employers would value more formalised feedback of their employees' progress.
10. Learners are improving their economic and social well-being particularly well. They are developing good ICT knowledge and specific application software skills. In most instances, this is specific to the systems their employers use. Employers support well the transfer of learning acquired in the training workshops to the workplaces. Learners improved knowledge and skills are raising their confidence levels and productivity, and leading to higher standards in their day-to-day jobs. Learners feel safe while in training.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors pace lessons well. Lessons are thorough and focus clearly on developing workplace skills. All training is at an appropriate level. In most sessions, tutors use good directed questioning to check knowledge and understanding. They encourage peer support and use this effectively to improve learners' understanding. Tutors have considerable knowledge and experience and use this well to support learning and consolidate understanding. They prepare learners well for tests. Tutors use a suitable range of teaching resources to provide effective IT training programmes, developed in-house by a dedicated team, which relate to the workplace. However, lesson plans do not identify extension activities for learners who finish tasks more quickly.
12. Programmes meet the needs and interests of users very well. Qdos staff identify employers' IT training needs effectively through comprehensive analysis. Staff design all training so that it is sufficiently flexible to accommodate working patterns, holidays and sickness absence. Learners report that they enjoy learning and are gaining skills to improve their future career prospects and meet their personal and job targets. Tutors written feedback on learning outcomes clearly helps learners to identify and improve their performance. However, feedback to learners who undertake on-line testing does not identify specific areas where further learning is required.
13. Partnership working is satisfactory. Qdos maintains good links with local employers and is thorough in finding suitable apprentice job vacancies. Employers speak positively about the flexible arrangements Qdos offers to meet their business needs. The training provision is coordinated well and communications are good. However, Qdos's partnerships with schools are under-developed.
14. Care, guidance and support are good. Initial assessment is particularly good and links well to a wide variety of additional training resources. Qdos is effective in identifying course levels, learning styles and additional support needs relevant to the starting points of learners. Learners receive good on-programme support from tutors who are also prepared to give freely of their own time to facilitate learning. Induction is satisfactory and provides learners with information on health and safety, equality and diversity, and safeguarding. Staff do not always formally monitor or record in reviews the promotion of equality and diversity for apprentices. Key skills support for apprentices is under-resourced.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

15. Qdos's strategic leadership and management are good. Senior managers very effectively share with staff the company's vision and purpose, ensuring that its high expectations and ambitions are understood, in order to meet learners and



- employers IT training needs within industry. The provider has a good understanding of its local community and promotes and implements national and local priorities well to the benefit of those employers with which it works.
16. The company operates an open and supportive management culture, creating a positive environment which supports the sharing of ideas and continued quality improvements. Annual staff appraisals clearly link to key performance indicators, ensuring each staff member is clear about how they contribute to improving training for learners and the organisation overall.
  17. Senior managers have effectively restructured the organisation with a clear focus on learners' achievements and meeting employers' needs. The management of change has been very good and it has impacted well on the learners' experiences. This has led to a steady increase in success rates and improvements in employers' high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the provision. Communication within and across teams are good with frequent structured meetings.
  18. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Qdos has appointed a designated safeguarding officer who has received high level training and all other staff have had recent refresher training including safer recruitment practices. All staff receive checks from the Criminal Records Bureau. The provider has well-devised systems for referrals to other agencies. It promotes safeguarding to learners particularly well and workplace risk assessments are good. At the start of their course all learners have a briefing and are given a safeguarding card which includes details of the designated officer and a confidential telephone number should the learner experience any safeguarding difficulties. Qdos pays very strong attention to e-safety during internet training. All apprentices undertake a level one health and safety accredited programme certificated by the British Safety Council.
  19. The promotion of equality and diversity is good, particularly in learning sessions and learning materials. The provider has recently introduced an additional requirement for all apprentices to undertake level two equality and diversity accredited training. Although staff promote equality and diversity well to apprentices, they do not accurately record this during the review process. A high percentage of the provider's staff are from minority ethnic groups and understand the needs of learners well. The majority of learners succeed as well as each other with only minor variations. However, the provider has identified that minority ethnic groups are under-represented on their programmes and is taking steps to resolve this issue. Early indicators are that more minority ethnic learners are now participating in Qdos programmes.
  20. Qdos thoroughly seeks feedback from its learners and employers to improve the quality of its provision. The company seeks formal feedback from learners following the completion of each unit of learning. Managers and staff use this effectively to improve provision. However, no formal strategy is in place to involve learners or employers in the decision making of the organisation.

21. Self-assessment is thorough with good involvement by all staff. Meetings take place throughout the year to discuss the self-assessment report. Qdos encourages staff team and individuals to identify strengths and areas for improvement within different parts of the organisation. Through this process individuals develop shared understanding and ownership of issues. Qdos makes very effective use of key performance indicators to identify, monitor and evaluate performance within teams and across the company. However, the current report though broadly accurate is overly descriptive and lacks critical analysis.
22. Qdos makes good use of its available resources to secure value for money. Learners continue to develop appropriate skills and knowledge well and the majority attain their learning goals by their target end date. Qdos manages staff and learning resources well to meet both the needs of learners and employers. The restructuring of the company has further improved the quality of provision.

## Information about the inspection

23. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Training Services Manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
24. 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, testing, and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Qdos Training Limited

**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	346	346
Part-time learners	0	0
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2	
<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?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>	n/a	
<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?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners'?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
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?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
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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