

Unique Training North East Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		9–12 July 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Learners, especially the more experienced and able learners, are not challenged sufficiently to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment are good or outstanding; the quality of on-the-job training requires improvement.
- Tutors and assessors do not use the results of learners' assessment of their starting points well enough to plan training in the classroom and in the workplace. They do not encourage learners sufficiently to take more responsibility for their own development and learning.
- Unique Training North East Limited (UTL) does not have sufficiently effective systems to monitor the quality of the provision and to improve it.
- Managers and staff have not evaluated the provision accurately; they have overestimated the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of UTL's leadership and management.

This provider has the following strengths:

- A good proportion of apprentices complete their programmes in hospitality and catering, and administration and business management.
- Learners enjoy participating in learning and gaining qualifications while in work and employers value the training which learners receive.
- Many learners have progressed to higher-level courses and/or have progressed in their employment, for example, to team-leading and management roles in businesses, restaurants and bars.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners by:
 - using data and information effectively to monitor reliably all learners' progress and provide effective support for learners most at risk of falling behind
 - setting learning targets that provide more challenge for learners, so that they achieve more than minimum levels of competencies.
- Ensure assessors plan for individual learning effectively so that all learners progress well by:
 - using results of initial assessments to plan in detail learners' off- and on-the job training; ensure learners are clear how off- and on-the-job training link together
 - ensuring learners have detailed and clear medium- and short-term learning targets so that they can take ownership of their learning and develop good independent learning skills.
- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning sessions by:
 - ensuring tutors and assessors use good questioning techniques which extend and test learners' knowledge and understanding of theory and practice
 - developing tutors and assessors to use information learning technology (ILT) creatively
 - ensuring tutors and assessors receive effective professional development so that they can confidently promote equality and diversity matters relevant to learners' lives and employment through teaching, learning and assessment.
- Develop quality improvement arrangements by:
 - ensuring the observation of teaching and learning processes gives an accurate and balanced view of learners' experience; use the findings to share best practice between tutors and assessors
 - monitoring the quality of learners' training plans and progress reviews to ensure the information included is detailed, accurate and meaningful to learners
 - improving the rigour and accuracy of the self-assessment process by ensuring sound evidence is used and judgements are based on high expectations about learner outcomes, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
------------------------------	------

- Outcomes for apprentices are good. In 2011/12, the first year that UTL offered apprenticeship training, overall success rates for learners were good. Overall success rates for hospitality and catering apprentices were good; the success rates for administration and business management apprentices were high. The majority of learners completed successfully within the planned time. However, these rates for some groups of learners were low, for example, for advanced apprentices on hospitality and catering programmes.
- Hospitality and catering apprentices gain a good range of relevant additional qualifications, for example, in food hygiene, which significantly helps their progress within their employment. They develop a good knowledge of health and safety at work, for example, how to move heavy food or ingredients' deliveries.
- In 2011/12, across all programmes, females achieved better than males. There were too few learners from different heritage groups or learners with physical disabilities or learning difficulties to compare their outcomes with those achieved by learners overall. Managers have started to use data to monitor performance gaps between different groups of learners; it is too early to judge the impact of this analysis and the planned actions to reduce this gap.
- Learners enjoy learning and gaining qualifications while in work. Current learners, including learners on employability courses, are making satisfactory progress towards completing their

qualifications. They acquire sufficient skills in English and mathematics to complete their qualifications through effective support which they receive from tutors and assessors.

- Most learners have good prior attainment levels. They have good work experience; some have completed other National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) or parts of an NVQ before starting their training with UTL. However, as teaching, learning and assessment practices are not sufficiently challenging, learners, including the more experienced or able apprentices, do not extend their skills and knowledge beyond the minimum levels of competency required by their qualifications.
- Most learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and confidently apply this understanding to their job roles. The development of their broader understanding of equality and diversity requires improvement.
- Many learners have progressed well through intermediate- and advanced-level programmes to responsible positions with their employers or within the industry.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement; this does not reflect the good learner outcomes. There is too much variation between the standard of off- and on-the-job learning. Overall, tutors plan off-the-job training skilfully; they take both individual learners' needs and qualification requirements into account effectively to ensure the pace of learning is brisk.
- Too much on-the-job training and individual coaching in the workplace is planned poorly. Assessors do not negotiate and set detailed, ambitious and clear short- and medium-term learning targets for learners. Consequently, learners are not encouraged sufficiently to take responsibility for their own pace of learning and some groups of learners are not progressing well.
- Learners, including employability learners, value the high level of individual coaching provided by their tutors and assessors to progress through different aspects of their qualifications or personal objectives. Assessors work hard; they visit learners frequently and respond promptly to their support needs. However, as the result of excessive coaching, learners rely too much on their assessors and consequently do not develop a sufficient level of independent learning skills.
- Tutors and assessors have good industrial experience which they use well to provide learners with relevant, timely and interesting information, for example, about consumer rights when buying goods and services online or by mobile phone. Tutors and assessors use ILT to present learning points or to record digitally aspects of assessments. However, they do not have sufficiently developed skills to use ILT innovatively; for example, to show relevant interesting video clips to bring alive the learning.
- Assessment practices are satisfactory; some assessors rely too much on the completion of written question and answers. They often use topical questions to extend learners' understanding. However, the standard of questioning varies too much in the level of challenge that it provides. Written feedback and setting clear improvement targets following assessments are not consistently detailed and effective.
- Initial assessment is thorough. However, most tutors and assessors make insufficient use of the results of initial assessment when planning for individual learning. They have a clear knowledge of learners' progress. However, as the consequence of weak individualised learning targets, learners cannot monitor their own progress reliably. Managers cannot rely on the management information system to analysis the progress of different groups of learners systematically.
- Tutors provide specific and effective teaching sessions to improve learners' skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology. However, not all tutors and assessors reinforce and develop learners' skills in these areas effectively in vocational teaching or training. Too many tutors and assessors fail to correct learners' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

- Information, advice and guidance prepare learners for their programmes well, ensuring they and their employers have a clear understanding of apprenticeships and the contribution expected from them. Useful information about progression opportunities are regularly shared, which has contributed to learners' good progress within employment or industry.
- Learners feel safe. They have a clear understanding of safe practices at work, their rights and responsibilities with respect to equality. However, assessors and tutors do not develop, check or reinforce sufficiently learners' understanding of broader aspects of equality and diversity.

Hospitality and catering Apprenticeships Other work based learning

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. It does not reflect apprentices' good success rates in 2011/12, but has contributed to learners' adequate skill development and current learners' satisfactory progress towards completing their qualifications.
- Learners benefit from good personal and training support from employers and assessors. Assessors work flexibly to respond to learners' and employers' needs swiftly. They are successful at resolving personal and social problems which apprentices experience, for example, to clarify the range of responsibilities that they have to perform in restaurants' kitchens. Employers support learners well by providing them time for training during working hours.
- Assessors have a good rapport with learners and work hard to help them learn and achieve. However, they do not produce clear plans for individual learning and often do not set clear and challenging targets for them. Consequently, learners rely excessively on assessors to guide them through their tasks; they do not develop independent learning skills and confidence to plan their own development. This has contributed to the satisfactory progress of current learners.
- Assessors offer regular one-to-one coaching for learners in bars and restaurants to ensure they develop the skills that meet the competences required by their NVQ. However, they do not routinely plan, develop and extend learners' understanding of the relevance of theory to practice. This hinders learners' development of an in-depth understanding of the vocational area. For example, learners in one session did not gain a good understanding of the effect of different fish preparation techniques on methods of cooking.
- Assessors have good experience of the hospitality and catering industry that they use effectively in teaching and assessment. They use digital recorders in their assessment practices; however, they do not have sufficient experience of using ILT innovatively to provide breadth and encourage independent learning.
- Assessment practices are satisfactory. Assessors make good use of a range of evidence sources. However, assessment plans do not provide learners or employers with sufficiently clear actions for development. Some assessors check learners' skill development well, for example, by requiring apprentices to produce recipe sheets with portion control and costing.
- Initial assessment of learners' English, mathematics and vocational skills is satisfactory. However, assessors do not routinely use the results of initial assessment effectively to plan for individual learning. Progress reviews are not sufficiently clear; not all learners use or have easy access to their progress reviews for reflecting on their progress. Progress reviews fail to record adequately apprentices' vocational skill development.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is effective. Tutors and assessors develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills well through tasks which are relevant to the hospitality and catering industry, for example, the production of recipes and menus. However, some assessors do not check routinely learners' skills in using English well; they fail to inform them on how they can improve their English, punctuation and grammar.
- Learners receive clear and effective advice and guidance resulting in learners starting on suitable courses. Learners benefit from assessors' advice about progress to higher-level courses.

- Learners have a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities to maintain health and safety at work. They feel safe; assessors routinely check on learners' well-being during reviews and visits to the workplace. However, they miss too many opportunities to promote sufficiently equality and diversity during teaching, learning and assessment.

Administration and business management

Apprenticeships

Other work based learning

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, which does not reflect apprentices' good success rates in 2011/12. This standard of training, learning and assessment has contributed to the young advanced apprentices who make slow progress towards completing their qualifications, and the satisfactory progress of current learners. Many apprentices' knowledge and skills are not sufficiently extended.
- In the better training sessions, tutors use a range of strategies to encourage apprentices to participate and make good progress. For example, in an individual coaching session focusing on database construction, an apprentice quickly progressed from little experience to producing database tables, fields and reports; she identified how she planned to use these skills in the workplace.
- In the weaker training sessions, tutors do not use the results of learners' initial assessment to plan effective learning. The teaching is uninspiring and too reliant on the use of worksheets. Tutors do not use questioning techniques skilfully to check or expand learning. They do not use peer and group assessments to encourage apprentices' participation or develop their personal learning and thinking skills sufficiently. In these sessions, apprentices do not receive timely feedback on the work they produce.
- Assessors have constructive rapport with apprentices and use their industry experiences well. For example, they advise learners about how they can be more productive in the workplace, or how to address issues of conflict at work.
- Assessment practice is good; assessors use a good range of assessment methods. They have a clear knowledge of learners' progress and keep employers well informed. However, they do not record apprentices' progress clearly and accurately; this has contributed to the slow pace of progress for some learners.
- Assessors test learners' skills in English and mathematics prior to the start of their courses. However, they do not plan and include the development of learners' skills in English and mathematics routinely in their training. Not all tutors and assessors provide effective feedback on how learners can correct their spelling and grammatical mistakes.
- Apprentices receive good information and guidance at induction and during progress reviews to enable them to make informed choices about further study and career progression. Learners value the support provided, which motivates them to achieve and progress to higher-level qualifications. For example, a learner who completed his team-leading award, with the support of his tutor, applied to study at a university.
- Learners develop their awareness of equality and diversity and inclusion as part of the course. The promotion of the wider cultural aspects of equality and diversity requires improvement; some assessors do not have sufficient insight into how to promote equality and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- UTL's subcontractors, who are the only two constituents of the company, with equal shares, work together well to offer provision to employers. However, the company does not have a set of clear, well-communicated and demanding targets at the organisational and staff level, for example, about the level of learners' success rates or the quality of teaching, learning and

assessment. Senior managers recognise the links between UTL's strategic and operational plans are underdeveloped, which has resulted in the slow implementation of some of the company's improvement actions, for example, the improvements required in the collection and use of data.

- The company's strategy to improve the quality of provision is not developed sufficiently. Managers do not review and develop the performance of tutors and assessors effectively. The link between results of monitoring of the quality of teaching, training and learning processes and staff appraisal is not robust, which has contributed to some teaching and training practices which are weak, for example, the use of questioning techniques to extend learners' understanding. The arrangement to develop tutors' and assessors' teaching, learning and assessment expertise requires stronger focus.
- Quality monitoring and improvement systems are not established sufficiently. The observation of the teaching and training process is not sufficiently accurate to identify all the areas for improvement. Observations often overestimate the quality of teaching and learning. As the senior managers recognise, monitoring of the quality of learners' training plans and portfolios has not always identified weak practices.
- The self-assessment has not fully recognised the impact of weakness in the provision on learners; it overestimates the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management. The resulting action plan has correctly identified the slow progress of some improvement actions, for example, the development and implementation of a unified and single quality assurance system.
- Senior managers collect and use learners' and employers' views satisfactorily to improve the provision. However, learners and employers are not informed routinely about the impact of their suggestions.
- The company has invested in a new management information system, which is being used adequately. However, the collection and use of accurate and timely information about learners' progress through various stages of their programmes, and their progress towards completing their qualifications, require improvement.
- Senior managers use their good knowledge of the skills shortages in the north east of England to plan and offer the provision which meets the needs and interests of employers particularly well. Although learners benefit from the provision, too few find it sufficiently demanding to extend their competencies.
- Managers, tutors and assessors are successful in protecting learners from bullying, harassment and discrimination. Policies to promote equality and diversity actively require improvement. Tutors and assessors have not had sufficient training to equip them with the skills to promote equality and diversity well. Managers analyse the achievements of different groups of learners satisfactorily. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies to close performance gaps between different groups of learners.
- Assessors focus well on health and safety at work. The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and manages risk appropriately.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Unique Training North East Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Hospitality and catering	3
Administration	3
Business management	3

Unique Training North East Limited

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16-18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 450
CEO	Mr Barry Evans
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Website address	www.uniquetraining-ne.co.uk

[illegible]

Additional socio-economic information

The company was established in August 2011, with Lifeskills Central and PSB Training Limited (PSB) as its only constituents, to offer provision in the north east of England. The two organisations are subcontractors to UTL and jointly employ 20 staff of whom 14 are tutors and assessors. Lifeskills Central is part of Lifeskills Centres Limited with its head office in South Lanarkshire, Scotland. Prior to 2011, PSB had a direct contract from the Skills Funding Agency. PSB specialises in offering provision in hospitality and catering. Lifeskills Central offers provision in retailing and wholesaling, hairdressing and beauty therapy, administration, and business management. Unemployment rates in the north east of England are significantly higher than the national averages. A lower proportion of school leavers in the north east achieve GCSEs at grades A* to C in English and mathematics than the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Shahram Safavi HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the managing director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013