

# Pera Training Limited

## Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		09 – 13 March 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- a high proportion of intermediate apprentices are successful in gaining their qualification within the planned timescale
- apprentices develop good vocational skills that enhance their current and future employability
- apprentices quickly contribute to improving the quality and profitability of their companies, competently taking on additional responsibilities
- the vast majority of apprentices receive good teaching, learning and assessment that help them make good progress and work to high standards
- apprentices benefit from very effective information, advice and guidance that ensure they are participating in the appropriate apprenticeship and have a sound understanding of future progression opportunities
- close working relationships with major companies, industry bodies and local enterprise partnerships make certain Pera Training Limited (Pera) carefully matches its apprenticeship offer to employment opportunities and skills shortages.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- advanced apprentice success rates require improvement, and along with intermediate apprentices aged 16 to 18, the proportion who complete by the planned end date is not good enough
- apprentices do not benefit from teaching, learning and assessment that is outstanding
- a small number of apprentices with additional learning needs do not receive well-timed support that promotes their progress.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure managers fully implement existing and planned measures to raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment experienced by all apprentices.
- Ensure trainers make full use of initial assessment outcomes to plan learning that meets the needs of individual apprentices and provides appropriate learning support so all apprentices complete within the planned timescale.
- Improve the effectiveness of progress reviews by ensuring trainers both set and monitor challenging and inspiring targets for all apprentices.
- Introduce arrangements so all trainers consistently provide training that effectively promote apprentices' understanding of diversity within the context of their work role and personal life.
- Further strengthen the quality improvement process through effective collection and use of learner and employer feedback.
- Introduce arrangements so managers make better use of quantitative data to monitor and evaluate the impact of quality improvement initiatives that drive up standards, particularly for intermediate apprentices aged 16 to 18 and advanced apprentices.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Pera provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships for learners who are predominantly aged over 19 years. The vast majority of training is at intermediate level with around two thirds of apprentices training within the manufacturing technologies sector. Most of the remaining learners are intermediate apprentices in retailing and wholesaling, with a very small number undertaking subcontracted training in the administration, optical retail and public service vehicle sectors.
- Overall, intermediate apprenticeship success rates are high though the rates for the relatively small number of advanced apprentices require improvement. Rates for learners who achieve within the planned timescale are high for intermediate apprentices aged 19 and older. However, comparable rates for learners aged 16 to 18 and those at advanced level require improvement. Other groups of learners achieve at similar rates that are good or better.
- The significant majority of learners gain good vocational skills that they effectively apply in the workplace. For example, contact centre based learners develop a good standard of specialist and general vocabulary which they use effectively to trace and correct distribution errors quickly, leading to better customer satisfaction and productivity. Apprentices' sound problem-solving skills secure gains in efficiency for their employers. For example, suggestions to improve the delivery of components to the production line have raised productivity and reduced overall cost, while better walkway marking has reduced avoidable production shutdowns.
- Apprentices' personal and social skills development is good. They particularly report significant improvements in confidence and self-esteem because of participating in apprenticeship training. This often motivates learners to apply themselves within new areas of work or participate in additional training to improve future employment prospects. Employers confirm that these improvements have allowed them to give apprentices greater responsibility within the workplace and led to measureable gains in productivity, customer loyalty and repeat business.

- The vast majority of current apprentices are making good progress towards completing their qualification. They take pride in the standards of their completed work that is usually good or better. The few apprentices training through subcontracted arrangements make appropriate or better progress towards achieving their qualification aims. Managers have been particularly rigorous in identifying and quickly applying corrective actions where success rates are not high enough within subcontracted provision that has led to improved outcomes for learners.
- Apprentices' development of their English and mathematics skills is good. However, managers and trainers recognise that pass rates for apprentices' first examination attempt for information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics at level 2 require improvement, as trainers do not always adequately prepare learners for the tests.
- A significantly high proportion of apprentices take up permanent full-time employment on completion of their training. Although Pera has ceased to offer traineeships, it continues to track learners with available data showing good progression rates to employment, further education or training. Within a very large car manufacturer, around a third of employed group leaders were previously manufacturing technology apprentices. However, managers recognise they do not systematically collect the full range of appropriate data from all the provision to evaluate the impact of training on apprentices' progression.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The two subject areas inspectors selected for inspection and grading were manufacturing technologies and retailing and wholesaling which together comprised the vast majority of apprentices. Inspectors also sampled the experience of apprentices working in administration, optical retail, public service vehicle and call centre operations.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision is good and reflects the good outcomes apprentices achieve. Apprentices readily engage in learning due to the high expectations of trainers and benefit from good care and support that helps them to make good progress.
- Trainers focus particularly effectively on providing good teaching and individual coaching which promotes learning and the development of a broad range of employability skills. As a result, apprentices rapidly become reliable members of their work teams, improving the efficiency and profitability of their companies and competently take on additional responsibilities. For example, apprentices working on car production lines quickly learn several work tasks so that they can provide absence cover; apprentices in optical retail confidently analyse customers' needs, provide advice on the selection of spectacle frames and correctly dispense multi-vision spectacles.
- Using good quality learning resources, trainers make very effective reference to commercial relevant theory that helps apprentices to think independently, generating improvements in their workplace that are valued by employers. For example, an apprentice devised a tool to correct damage to vehicle bonnets as they came onto the assembly line while another identified a time and cost saving for each processed car linked to existing inefficiencies in removing and disposing of the protective backing from adhesive stickers.
- Trainers are effective at encouraging and motivating apprentices to learn outside the planned teaching sessions. The use of online training materials benefits apprentices who can access these resources remotely and very effectively allows them to synchronise their learning with other time demands. However, electronic-based resources are not currently available to support the training activities required for all apprenticeship frameworks.
- Workplace assessment is good, well planned and usually very aptly timed to maximise opportunities for apprentices to demonstrate competence. Trainers engage apprentices in probing and exploratory questioning that challenge them to consider wider contexts. All

apprentices receive thorough and constructive verbal feedback that supports their progress, though for a small minority of apprentices, written feedback is less effective in identifying how they can improve.

- Apprentices' progress reviews effectively allow them to reflect on their progress, identifying success and long-term priorities that require action between visits by the trainers. However, trainers do not consistently set apprentices sufficiently detailed short-term targets that adequately resolve any slow progress. The vast majority of workplace supervisors monitor apprentices' achievement very closely, but they do not always receive sufficient information on learners' targets and actions to support their development.
- Trainers provide very effective support to learners who need to improve their English and mathematics to pass the functional skills requirements of their apprenticeship and gain confidence in applying this to their work roles. For example, administration apprentices are able to use graphical data proficiently to analyse costs and production efficiency while optical retail apprentices can calculate the costs and percentage discounts of spectacles with specialist lenses. Trainers encourage and support apprentices well to work at an English and mathematics level above the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.
- Apprentices receive comprehensive information, advice and guidance throughout their training that help them make realistic and informed choices. Induction is comprehensive and highly effective in introducing apprentices to the demands of their programme and potential promotion and career opportunities. This and the input they receive from trainers and workplace supervisors are particularly strong in the two largest sector areas and motivate apprentices to complete their programme.
- Apprentices gain a good understanding of equality and diversity that trainers promote well at induction, with particularly strong emphasis on their application to working practice. For example, public service vehicle apprentices apply their learning to meet the requests of passengers in wheelchairs and optical retail apprentices are able to understand better and resolve the needs of customers with visual impairment or those who speak English as a second language. However, in a minority of cases, trainers do not always explore equality and diversity in sufficient depth to ensure apprentices consistently develop a wider understanding.

## Manufacturing technologies

### Apprenticeships

Good

### Teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technologies are good because:

- a large majority of apprentices complete their programmes successfully and progress to sustained employment; trainers and employers challenge and inspire high performing apprentices to participate in more complex work and roles that offer the potential for promotion and further progression opportunities
- apprentices benefit from working with highly commercially experienced and knowledgeable trainers and group shift leaders who support and motivate them to develop skills rapidly through well planned and structured learning activities
- trainers encourage apprentices to provide particularly helpful solutions to manufacturing problems that employers routinely adopt to improve efficiency and safety on assembly lines
- apprentices develop good quality improvement and business productivity skills, working accurately and efficiently; apprentices move routinely between sections and teams using their training to develop personal self-confidence and resilience while becoming reliable and valued members of the manufacturing workforce

- trainers use strong partnership working with manufacturing employers to ensure programmes meet their needs and are particularly good at providing apprentices with support, training, assessment and progress reviews that fit their work patterns while minimising disruption to vehicle production
- trainers skilfully link theory and practical tasks to ensure that apprentices develop high-level production line skills and knowledge that meet the demands of working in a modern highly automated manufacturing setting producing prestigious car marques
- trainers develop apprentices' mathematics skills to a particularly high standard through apprentices evaluating their business improvement projects using statistical analysis to calculate efficiency, cost, reliability and delivery within the manufacturing industry; apprentices are able to apply newly acquired knowledge to the workplace quickly, for example, in the manufacturing paint shop where they accurately calculate spray rates for paint finishes
- the large majority of apprentices are developing a high standard of English skills and the everyday use of technical vocabulary; trainers encourage the minority with better skills in these areas to continue at a higher level.

### **Manufacturing technologies is not yet outstanding because:**

- a minority of apprentices do not receive help early enough in their programme to resolve identified learning needs or their low level of written English skills
- trainers do not appropriately direct all apprentices to online learning materials or the internet webpages that would allow them to develop their learning outside the classroom.

## **Retailing and wholesaling**

### **Apprenticeships**

Good

### **Teaching, learning and assessment in retailing and wholesaling are good because:**

- a high proportion of intermediate retail apprentices, who form the large majority of learners, successfully complete their qualifications; current apprentices are making good or better progress
- trainers use their high expectations of apprentices to motivate them to develop and apply their retail skills such as when dealing with customer enquiries and resolving complaints; as a result apprentices become more confident in their job roles and take on additional work responsibilities; for example, one learner reorganised the promotion and display of products at a golf club shop that increased sales significantly
- trainers plan and provide good individual workplace learning sessions, using an appropriately wide range of learning materials as well as effective coaching and questioning skills; apprentices improve their knowledge of retail practice such as that linked to current legislation and payment transactions; trainers develop apprentices' functional skills in English and mathematics appropriately using relevant vocationally contextualised activities
- apprentices achieve a useful range of additional sector specific qualifications; for example, learners working on licensed betting premises can gain three additional programme units to increase their knowledge of the gaming industry
- employers provide good learning opportunities in workplaces of a high standard; trainers encourage apprentices to undertake additional well-structured in-house training programmes to help them broaden their skills and in one example an employer seconded an apprentice very successfully to a team leader role

- trainers use their detailed knowledge of the apprentices' retail workplace to set relevant and useful short-term targets as part of comprehensive action plans to help apprentices successfully achieve elements of their qualification; apprentices are clear about what they need to do to improve between assessor visits
- apprentices benefit from good use by trainers of probing questions during training and assessment to check and extend their understanding; for instance, apprentices are able to give practical examples of how they apply their knowledge of health and safety and equality and diversity within a retail outlet to ensure customers and staff are safe and treated fairly.

### **Retailing and wholesaling is not yet outstanding because:**

- assessment practice requires further improvement as not all apprentices make sufficient use of their electronic portfolios, which slows their progress; in a minority of cases, assessors do not use observation to assess competence enough, particularly during busy retail periods
- trainers do not always routinely review and share individual learning plan goals with store managers to improve apprentices' progress.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Leaders and managers have set and communicated an aspirational and clear vision that translates into ambitious expectations for the achievement of their apprentices through high standards of quality and performance. Their in-depth analysis of strategic aims has resulted in major restructuring of Pera, including the divestment of non-core business and refocusing on the manufacturing sector that fits their business aims well. Although making good progress, senior managers understand they need to implement further improvements so that trainers can provide learning and outcomes of a high standard across all the provision.
- Operational management is good and has significantly improved over the six months prior to the inspection. Substantial investment in new quality assurance systems, careful recruitment of well-qualified and skilled staff aligned to good training and development has developed a culture of accountability and improvement. Managers provide staff with challenging individual performance targets and have robust systems in place to manage underperformance.
- Inspectors agreed with the provider's own findings that too little teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Managers are working hard to improve teaching and learning using more rigorous management of staff performance and professional development of trainers. However, these new initiatives have not had time to impact fully on the quality of training sessions.
- Following a major investment in computerised information systems, managers and staff now make effective use of well-presented, accurate and up-to-date reports to inform their decisions. Managers have appropriate plans in place to develop the use of data further, particularly better linking quality improvement and action planning to quantified benefits for learners. The well-managed internal quality assurance process meets awarding body criteria.
- Managers effectively oversee the work of subcontractors and rigorously resolve any underperformance when subcontracted apprenticeship programmes do not meet a high standard. Recently recruited managers have significantly improved subcontracting arrangements including communication, quality assurance and monitoring, and experiences and outcomes of apprentices. However, the use of data needs improving because managers do not have current and detailed information relating to the progress of all subcontracted learners.
- Managers evaluate and develop provision through robust self-assessment that is particularly detailed and evaluative, although the process makes insufficient use of feedback from learners

and employers. Quality improvement planning is thorough and includes an effective use of staff focus groups to support the implementation, monitoring and development of actions to raise standards. However, the process does not include sufficient arrangements to measure the effect of these actions.

- Leaders and managers successfully plan, establish and manage learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers and the specific requirements of the skill sectors. They use close and effective partnership working with businesses, industry bodies and local economic partnerships to promote the benefits of apprenticeships. Leaders and managers have been highly successful in providing specialist development of skills within the manufacturing sector including the sponsoring of a study into the economic benefits of apprenticeships and the establishment of links between schools and manufacturing companies to increase apprenticeships.
- Inspectors agreed with managers that the provision of English and mathematics is not consistently good enough. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the recently introduced arrangements to improve the development of all learners' English, mathematics and functional skills alongside better support for learners with additional learning needs.
- The management of equality and diversity is good with all staff dealing effectively with the few incidents of concern raised by learners. Managers and leaders place a high priority on promoting equality and diversity throughout Pera. However, trainers do not always extend apprentices understanding sufficiently during programmes using, for example, in depth discussion tailored to a learner's particular job role or personal circumstances.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good and meet statutory requirements. Managers have taken great care in strengthening safeguarding arrangements. They make good use of external expertise and links to raise the awareness learners and trainers have of safeguarding that includes very effective promotion of e-safety. Designated staff have thorough and appropriate training to ensure a high level of knowledge and understanding that they use to identify apprentices suffering or at risk of harm. Managers are developing strategies to counteract radicalisation and extremism and have planned 'Prevent' training for all staff.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Pera Training Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2						2		
Outcomes for learners	2						2		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2						2		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2						2		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Manufacturing Technologies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Retailing and Wholesaling</b>	<b>2</b>



Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,720							
CEO	Mr Richard Grice							
Date of previous inspection	June 2012							
Website address	www.peratraining.com							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	435	3874	27	101	1		0	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>First Group plc</li><li>Investing in Development</li><li>KF Training Ltd</li><li>NTG Training</li><li>Right Track Social Enterprise Ltd</li><li>Specsavers Optical Superstores.</li></ul>							

## Contextual information

Pera Training Limited is based in Melton Mowbray and provides apprenticeship training nationally, though predominantly within the West Midlands and North West. Since the previous inspection, Pera has significantly expanded its provision of manufacturing technologies apprenticeships with a very large vehicle manufacturer, ceased offering traineeships and will shortly transfer its retailing and wholesaling provision to another provider. The number of learners trained using subcontractors is small and primarily focuses on the transportation operations & maintenance and optical retail sectors. The large majority of apprentices are adult, with 30% female and 14% from minority ethnic groups.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Nigel Bragg HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of Funding and Contracts 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 relevant 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.

## 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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