



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1998

PETA Limited

SUMMARY

PETA Limited offers training in engineering, business administration, information technology and foundation for work. Engineering training is satisfactory. Trainees are in good work placements, and off-the-job training is carried out in a well-resourced engineering workshop. Key skills are not being assessed as part of the programme. Business administration training is good. Levels of achievement are high, and several trainees are gaining more than one qualification. Information technology training up to NVQ level 2 is good. Trainers delivering NVQ level 3 in information technology are not experienced in all the appropriate systems, this adversely affecting the quality of training. Foundation training is good, and a high proportion of trainees progress to mainstream training programmes or to employment. The company is committed to equal opportunities, but procedures for monitoring policy and practice in the workplace are inadequate.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Business administration	2
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ an effective initial assessment process
- ◆ systematic recognition of trainees' prior knowledge and skills
- ◆ one-to-one training support in business administration
- ◆ good rates of progress from foundation to mainstream provision
- ◆ clear lines of communication throughout the company
- ◆ good work placements

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of continuous assessment in engineering
- ◆ no key skill development and assessment in engineering
- ◆ inadequate resources to deliver information technology
- ◆ no monitoring of employers' equal opportunity policies
- ◆ fragmented quality assurance procedures

INTRODUCTION

1. PETA Limited was originally formed in 1970 by several local engineering companies. In 1982, the company became limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. PETA is directed by an executive council of representatives elected from the membership. The member companies vary in size, employing from five to over 2,000 employees, and together embrace a wide range of business activities. Some of the companies are privately owned, while others are part of national and international organisations. The training for young people which PETA provides through its contract with Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) forms slightly less than half its business. The remaining 55 per cent is commercial training.

2. The company operates from three training centres, two in Cosham and one in Havant. Trainees also attend local colleges on day-release for the theoretical aspects of their training. All trainees in engineering, business administration and information technology are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3, some through modern apprenticeship programmes. A number of trainees are referred by VT Southern Careers Limited for foundation training. Foundation trainees work towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. At the time of the inspection, there were 154 people in government-funded training.

3. Unemployment in the Portsmouth area, including Cosham, is high at 4.9 per cent compared with Hampshire's average of 2.3 per cent. The proportion of 16 year olds who stay on in full-time education is high at 69.4 per cent. Of those leaving full-time education in 1997, 10.9 per cent obtained full-time employment, 4.1 per cent entered training and 4.9 per cent were unemployed. Those starting jobs work primarily in engineering, science and technology, retailing, care, hotels and catering, administration and information technology. PETA offers a high proportion of the engineering training in the Portsmouth area. It competes for engineering trainees with three local colleges and, in the case of business administration trainees, with the colleges and other providers.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. PETA Limited produced its first self-assessment report one month before inspection. Staff from the company attended a training course on self-assessment, and the information gained was disseminated to other staff through a series of training sessions. The whole company was involved in the self-assessment process, which resulted in a detailed review of procedures. Two business administration modern apprentices also contributed to the self-assessment. The self-assessment report picked out strengths and identified several areas in need of development. Some of the strengths were judged by inspectors to be normal practice or contractual requirements. Weaknesses were not always clearly identified. Inspectors confirmed three of the grades proposed by the company, awarded a higher grade for business administration and foundation for work and a lower grade for equal opportunities.

5. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 17 days at PETA during June 1998. All the occupational areas offered by the company were inspected. Inspectors examined company records and awarding body documents. They met staff from the company, employers and trainees; they visited 21 workplaces and the company's own training sites; interviewed 43 trainees and observed both on- and off-the-job training sessions.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		1	2			3
Business administration		4	1			5
Foundation for work			1			1
Total	0	5	4	0	0	9

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

6. PETA had 104 trainees in engineering training at the time of inspection, of whom 55 were working towards NVQ level 2 and 49 were on modern apprenticeship programmes. Of the trainees undertaking NVQ level 2 qualifications, 89 per cent are employed. The percentage of trainees achieving NVQs has increased over the last three years, from 29 per cent in 1995-96 and 33 per cent in 1996-97 to 51 per cent in 1997-98. The local engineering industry, having suffered a significant decline in traditional marine-related engineering jobs over the last decade, has started to make a recovery. Many local firms have reported growth over the last few years, and the demand for engineering trainees is currently higher than the number of young people applying for training. PETA has developed good working relationships with many local engineering employers. Off-the-job training takes place in its engineering

training centre. Trainers are highly experienced and hold appropriate assessor qualifications. All modern apprentices attend PETA's training centre for 20 weeks to achieve NVQ level 2, before progressing to employment. Trainers visit trainees in the workplace every four weeks to monitor progress. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ a well-resourced training centre
- ◆ trainees work competently, without the need for constant supervision
- ◆ trainees identify and plan their own learning opportunities
- ◆ effective working relationships between PETA and local employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ the lack of detailed progress reviews
- ◆ no continuous assessment for NVQ level 3 trainees
- ◆ trainees without copies of their individual training plans
- ◆ failure to integrate key skills with other aspects of training

7. PETA's training centre has a fully equipped workshop with a wide range of well-maintained equipment, including computer numerical control (CNC) machinery. Trainers make good use of their expertise and extensive knowledge of the engineering industry to identify appropriate training programmes for trainees. Off-the-job training sessions are well structured. Trainees follow individual programmes, which are challenging and which encourage the continuous development of skills. Trainees have a clear understanding of the qualifications for which they are training and they identify potential opportunities for learning, in conjunction with their trainers and workplace supervisors. Training in the workplace is rigorous. Tasks are set on a regular basis and are carried out, with minimal supervision, by trainees. Staff are careful to ensure that trainees follow appropriate training routes and that the programmes meet their own and local employers' needs. The good relationship between trainers, trainees and employers helps to ensure that training programmes are comprehensive and that trainees are well supported.

8. Trainers carry out progress reviews with their trainees, but these reviews are not detailed enough, and the targets for learning are not specific. Reviews inform the trainees' individual learning plans, but these plans are kept by staff and not by trainees and employers. At NVQ level 2, trainees are predominantly workshop based. Their skills are continuously assessed. Once they have progressed to level 3 and are based wholly in the workplace, assessment is neither planned nor carried out with sufficient regularity. Trainees' successful completion of units is not recorded as part of the modern apprenticeship programme. Modern apprentices have been issued with the awarding body's key skills booklets, but they have little understanding or knowledge of key skills or of how these skills will be assessed.

Business administration (information technology)

Grade 2

9. PETA has 33 trainees studying for NVQ levels 1 to 3 in administration and information technology. Trainees are initially assessed to determine the appropriate levels of training for them. All of them take part in an induction programme, either in small groups or individually. At the start of the training programme, trainees attend PETA's commercial training centre in Portsmouth for a two- to four-week block. During this time, they are trained in basic administration procedures and agree on their individual training plans with their trainers. There is a comprehensive system for accrediting prior learning. Trainees transferring from other programmes are assessed and current evidence reviewed. Once the trainees are placed with employers, they return to the training centre once a fortnight for assessment and additional training. The majority of the training, however, takes place in the workplace. Many of the strengths identified by the company in its self-assessment report were judged by inspectors to be normal practice. The report failed to identify some of the weaknesses in information technology training.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective development of individual action-planning
- ◆ effective monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ support for individual training and assessment
- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ high rates of achievement
- ◆ effective integration of key skills with other aspects of the training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of appropriate training materials in information technology
- ◆ lack of qualified trainers in some areas of information technology

10. Trainers and trainees discuss skills development and assessment on a regular basis. Trainees produce comprehensive action-plans and are closely monitored by trainers and employers. Workplace supervisors play an active role in developing trainees' on-the-job training plans. When training gaps are identified, additional training is arranged. Trainees produce work of a high standard. Their progress is well monitored, and effective documentation enables trainees and trainers to see, at a glance, how well a trainee is progressing. Regular progress reviews keep trainees focused on their training objectives, the majority achieving qualifications within the timescales set. Sixty-four per cent of trainees achieved at least one NVQ in 1997-98. Some trainees gain more than one NVQ. Key skills are effectively integrated with other aspects of trainees' programmes and are identified for assessment as part of the action-planning process. Trainees map their own progress in acquiring key skills. A few, who find this process confusing, are given additional support.

11. Trainees working towards NVQs in information technology are in suitable placements; success rates are high. Learning resources are inadequate. The only learning material available to the trainees are the on-line computer 'help' units or manufacturers' manuals, both of which are written in complex language. Some staff at the centre are not trained to the appropriate level in all the software systems.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

12. The foundation training programme offers trainees the opportunity to achieve foundation training awards, including wordpower and numberpower. Full-time training is delivered in Havant. Tutorial support is available to trainees on work experience. The foundation programme is 12 weeks long, and may be extended for those trainees with additional learning needs. The average length of stay on the programme is 10 weeks. Data on trainees' achievements show a fall in the awards achieved by trainees over the last two years, from 58 per cent in 1996-97 to 43 per cent in 1997-98. However, rates for the achievement of units have risen from 41 per cent in 1996-97 to 70 per cent in 1997-98. Rates of progression to mainstream education or training have dramatically increased from 35 per cent in 1996-97 to 70 per cent in 1997-98. All trainees are referred by the careers service and undergo an initial assessment to determine the level of support which they require. Individual action-plans and learning targets are negotiated. There is a well-planned and thorough induction programme, with trainees' progress reviewed every four weeks. The careers service provides a weekly guidance and support service to trainees on PETA's premises. Resources at the Havant foundation centre are adequate, although access for disabled trainees is restricted. Inspectors identified strengths additional to those in the self-assessment report. The grade awarded is higher than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ training is effectively planned to meet the individual needs of the trainees
- ◆ relevant work-based training
- ◆ effective tutorial support for trainees on work experience
- ◆ good progression to occupational training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no involvement of employers in the training review process
- ◆ the failure to approve all work placements before placing trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

A trainee interested in hairdressing was given a work-experience placement with an employer which offered one-to-one mentoring and training. In order to help with the trainee's reading difficulties, the supervisor

13. Trainees' action-plans reflect their individual abilities. The programme length is flexible: it is designed to allow those trainees who are more able to 'fast track' through and those who need longer to take more than the standard 12-week programme. Trainees' progress is reviewed regularly, and achievement targets are negotiated between trainer and trainee. There are effective systems for recording

trainees' progress. Trainers use a variety of learning and assessment materials to help to motivate trainees. Resources are often designed to match trainees' individual interests.

14. Trainees who are vocationally unfocused benefit from work tasters in PETA's engineering workshops and administrative offices. PETA's close links with employers and external agencies help to ensure that trainees are put in appropriate placements. A few placements, however, are not visited by PETA's staff before the trainees work there, but are sent on recommendations from other providers. Sometimes, trainees are in a work placement for up to three days before they are visited. Trainers provide a high level of training and pastoral support for trainees during work tasters and throughout their programmes. Although regular reviews take place during these work tasters, employers are not part of the process and are not familiar with the training which is taking place at the training centre.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

15. PETA's equal opportunity policy is clearly written and covers the requirements of current legislation. The policy is not systematically reviewed except in the light of any changes in the law. Staff demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity by word and action. Equal opportunity is a standard agenda item for team meetings. The company meets the recruitment targets set by Hampshire TEC for ethnicity, gender and people with disabilities. The company's self-assessment report did not fully recognise or analyse the company's current practice in respect of equal opportunities. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective procedures for dealing with complaints
- ◆ annual training in equal opportunities for all staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ a failure to promote equality of opportunity effectively
- ◆ lack of staff awareness of discrimination
- ◆ no effective monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies

16. There are few recorded complaints. Procedures for dealing with complaints are well documented and effectively implemented. Where action is necessary, all parties, including trainees' families, are involved to ensure that solutions are fair and equitable. All staff have equal opportunities training and are updated on changes in legislation as appropriate. The training focuses mainly on disability issues.

17. Advertising and marketing materials make no reference to equality of

opportunity. Although the company is aware of imbalances between men and women among the trainees recruited to particular training routes, there are no plans to take positive action to redress this. There are no procedures for monitoring employers' equal opportunities policies or performance.

Trainee support

Grade 2

18. PETA is committed to providing the support necessary to help trainees to achieve their full potential. Trainees in all occupational areas are individually assessed on entry to the organisation. Initial assessment in engineering is specific to the sector. In business administration and information technology, generic tests are used. There are procedures for accrediting trainees' prior learning. Trainees who transfer to PETA from other providers have their work reviewed and, if appropriate, assessed. Staff provide pastoral support for trainees, and the careers service offers regular guidance. Inspectors confirmed the grade proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ initial assessment used effectively in forming individual training plans
- ◆ accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ good liaison between trainers and employers to support trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ progress reviews not formally planned in some occupational areas
- ◆ inconsistent recording of the support provided to trainees

19. Trainees' responses to their initial assessments are graded. Trainees are placed carefully on training routes which lead to appropriate qualification in jobs which are suitable. Accreditation of prior learning is particularly effective. Trainees who join PETA, having already carried out some training or who transfer to a different work placement, are given individual support to identify their competences from the evidence available.

20. The record of the support provided for trainees varies across occupational areas, from satisfactory to very good. Although progress reviews take place regularly, employers are not always involved, and trainees are not provided with copies of review documents. Reviews are not always held in the workplace.

Management of training

Grade 3

21. PETA has undergone significant staff restructuring over the last year. Rationalisation of training and reorganisation of management have resulted in staff changes. Organisational structures are clear, and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. There is a plainly written business plan which is communicated to all staff through training co-ordinators and on noticeboards. The company produces an annual staff development plan. There are regular sessions on health and safety and equal opportunities. Managers and staff hold team meetings once a week. The issues raised are minuted, and points for action are identified. A monthly newsletter is produced which informs staff of the latest developments related to training inside and outside the company. The inspection team validated the strengths and weaknesses identified by PETA. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear lines of communication throughout the organisation
- ◆ a well-developed appraisal process
- ◆ the involvement of staff in negotiating measurable performance targets
- ◆ an effective staff development programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ managers' failure to monitor and address outstanding issues
- ◆ lack of co-ordination in engineering and foundation between on- and off-the-job training

22. Communication in the organisation is good. The regular team meetings and the open style of management encourage staff to discuss issues openly to contribute to solutions. Staff are involved in the setting of realistic and achievable targets within their own departments. Any changes to policies are discussed and are publicised in the company's newsletter. There is a comprehensive staff appraisal system. Staff development needs are identified and are related to business objectives.

23. There is little or no monitoring of progress on action points which arise from team meetings. Some issues are left unresolved for months. The management of training on the engineering and foundation programmes is adversely affected by the lack of co-ordination between employers and trainers. Although work placements

provide good on-the-job training, this training is controlled by workplace supervisors without sufficient account of what trainees need to do to achieve qualifications.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

24. PETA meets the requirements of ISO 9002. It has also achieved the Investors in People Standard. The company is the holder of a silver quality award issued by Hampshire TEC. There has been a significant increase in the number of NVQs per 100 leavers over the past three years, and the company has now introduced targets for trainees' achievements. The company analyses information from leavers, and its findings contribute to a development plan to improve the quality of the training. The company's strong ties with local employers have produced good work placements, delivering effective on-the-job training. Inspectors confirmed the grade which the company awarded to this aspect of its provision.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rising levels of achievement
- ◆ information on leavers used to improve the quality of training
- ◆ all staff involved in the self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no evaluation of training programmes
- ◆ no feedback collected from trainees and employers
- ◆ weaknesses in quality assurance not identified in the self-assessment report

25. Managers and staff meet monthly to monitor recruitment against agreed targets. Where targets are not being met, corrective action is taken to redress the situation. Information from leavers' forms is collated and an analysis made of those leaving early and without qualifications. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process. They produced a detailed evaluation of the company's programmes.

26. There is no systematic evaluation of training. The company does not seek feedback from trainees or employers. PETA has quality procedures in place, but there is no overall quality assurance framework. Internal verification operates effectively in business administration, but less so in engineering and information technology.