



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE/JULY 1998

# Technical Training Enterprise Ltd

## SUMMARY

Technical Training Enterprise Limited (TTE) provides good engineering training for first- and second-year trainees. The training for third- and fourth-year trainees is on employers' premises and is not as well structured. Trainees are given excellent support throughout their training. The work in personal development is highly effective and is much valued by trainees and employers. The company has clear plans and business objectives and these are regularly reviewed in order to improve the quality of training. Trainees at TTE have good prospects of achieving the qualifications at which they are aiming and of securing employment.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	1
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	2

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly skilled and experienced training staff
- ◆ effective development of trainees' personal skills
- ◆ effective recruitment of female engineering trainees
- ◆ comprehensive interviewing, testing and selection procedures
- ◆ good use made of trainees' feedback
- ◆ well-planned and well-managed training at phases one and two
- ◆ effective business planning

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unplanned training at phase three
- ◆ no named person responsible for equal opportunities
- ◆ no account taken of trainees' prior learning or achievement
- ◆ lack of central management information

## INTRODUCTION

1. TTE is a company limited by guarantee, which was formed in 1990 by ICI Chemicals and Polymers Ltd, Shell UK (Stanlow) Ltd and The Associated Ocel Company Ltd. The company is based in Ellesmere Port in South Wirral and has office and training accommodation at a local college. TTE provides technical and personal development training for the manufacturing industries, primarily in the northwest of England.

2. The core business of TTE is training modern apprentices to maintain and operate chemical, pharmaceutical allied process plants. The company was instrumental in helping to develop the current modern apprenticeship framework together with the Chemical Industries Association (CIA). It is also currently piloting a new modern apprenticeship framework, in conjunction with the CIA, for laboratory skills trainees.

3. At the time of inspection, TTE had 232 engineering trainees, all of whom were on modern apprenticeship courses. Trainees undergo training in engineering maintenance and process operations or laboratory skills and are typically classified as being in one of three phases. Phase-one trainees are in the first year of training and are based at TTE's Ellesmere Port site for basic training. Phase-two trainees are based at the same site and are in the second year of training, working towards a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in chosen specialist areas. Phase-three trainees are located on sponsoring companies' sites, working towards an NVQ level 3. TTE employs all the trainees, although sponsoring companies are involved in their recruitment because they take over the employment of the trainee when the modern apprenticeship has been completed. Phase-one and -two training takes two years to complete and includes some industry-based experience to help trainees to acquire foundation skills and knowledge. Phase-three training is based at sponsoring companies' sites where the trainees develop more business-specific skills. Throughout the modern apprenticeship training, trainees attend further education courses to support the skills gained.

4. TTE has contracts to deliver modern apprenticeship training with Chester, Ellesmere Port and Wirral Training and Enterprise Council (CEWTEC), North and Mid Cheshire TEC and Merseyside TEC. It subcontracts the further education support to local colleges of further education.

5. The borough of Ellesmere Port and Neston covers 33 square miles and has a population of 81,200. It is situated between the cities of Liverpool and Manchester and is within easy reach of the coast of North Wales. Major national and multinational companies have chosen to make their base in Ellesmere Port. The industrial scene is dominated by the manufacturing industry which accounts for more than two out of every three jobs in this sector.



6. Unemployment in the area was at 6.4 per cent in November 1997, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. People from ethnic minorities account for less than 1 per cent of the population. The proportion of 16-year-old school leavers achieving five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades, at grade C or above, is 71 per cent which is well above the national average of 53 per cent. TTE competes for trainees with further education colleges, sixth form colleges and other training providers in the area.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. TTE produced its first self-assessment report five months before inspection. The report was clear and concise and provided the inspection team with useful information about the company and its training. The process of self-assessment enabled the company to identify its key strengths and weaknesses, and action-plans have subsequently been developed to address areas of weakness. Inspectors largely agreed with the findings of the self-assessment report, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

8. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at TTE during June and July 1998. They inspected engineering training which included electrical engineering, instrumentation, fitting, machining, fabrication and chemical processes. Inspectors examined company and awarding body documents. They interviewed 23 staff and 63 trainees, visited the two subcontracted colleges and observed nine training sessions at TTE, and one college-based workshop session. They also examined assessment records, trainees' portfolios and their work contributing to their NVQs.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 2

9. At the time of inspection, TTE had a total of 232 modern apprenticeship trainees in engineering disciplines within the three phases of training. In phase one, there were 66 first-year trainees following a general course in engineering and 10 working towards a laboratory skills modern apprenticeship. In phase two, there were 84 trainees in their second year of training who were specialising in areas which included electrical and instrumentation, mechanical fitting and process operations. In phase three, there were 82 trainees working towards NVQ level 3 of their modern apprenticeship in employers' premises.

10. TTE places a strong emphasis on developing individuals' personal skills. Phase-one and -two trainees complete residential training courses each year to develop such skills as teamwork, communication, problem-solving and effectiveness. The company believes that this, together with the occupational training, helps to ensure an appropriate balance of technical competence. Core values are developed to provide effective transfer of these skills in the future.

11. Although the strengths of engineering training outweighed the weaknesses, inspectors felt that this aspect of provision had been overgraded in the self-assessment report. Consequently, a lower grade was awarded than that proposed by the company.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective personal development training
- ◆ training staff have current industrial expertise
- ◆ well-equipped training workshops
- ◆ training often exceeds NVQ requirements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of teamwork between provider and subcontractors
- ◆ no monitoring of NVQ pilot course
- ◆ some dissatisfaction with work-based training

12. TTE has an effective policy to develop the trainees' personal skills. From the start of training, this area is emphasised, and trainees are given specific training to develop them as responsible individuals. Personal development residential courses help them to become more confident and mature. Trainees are keen to learn and have a very positive approach to all aspects of their work.

13. Trainees have a high regard and respect for their tutors at TTE. They value tutors' recent knowledge of the industries from which many of them have been seconded. TTE training staff are occupationally qualified and trained as NVQ assessors. The standard of work which trainees complete for their NVQ level 2 portfolios exceeds the requirements of the qualification. Trainees attend further education courses at a subcontracted college. The theoretical work from these courses is not used as suitable evidence for the NVQ. In ensuring that trainees can meet NVQ requirements, tutors often repeat work undertaken at college.

14. The progress of phase-three trainees is of a variable standard. There is an over-reliance on the support received from workplace supervisors. There is no planning for the collection of evidence and the assessment required for NVQ level 3. Achievement of the NVQ is given a low priority.

15. The laboratory skills required for NVQ achievement focus strongly on theoretical aspects. Little or no consideration is given to the assessment of practical work even when the course is well under way.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 2**

16. TTE takes its commitment to equal opportunities seriously and has taken action to improve this aspect of its training, particularly in relation to gender issues. In recent years, it has employed external consultants to analyse female applicants and female trainees' perceptions of the company. An external consultant has also run awareness-training courses on equal opportunities in relation to current legislation. The company's self-assessment document highlights its female recruitment initiative. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective policy statement on equal opportunities
- ◆ female trainees are positive about equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ steps taken to recruit more female trainees
- ◆ external consultants provide training and feedback
- ◆ any instances of harassment are dealt with firmly

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no one person responsible for equal opportunities policy
- ◆ no data held on ethnic minority groups
- ◆ no access facilities for disabled people

17. Staff and trainees are aware of the company's equal opportunities policy and are committed to making it work. The policy is stated clearly in documents issued to employees and to trainees. Female trainees are very positive about their experiences in the workplace and are happy to assist with recruitment at schools and careers events. Reports have been commissioned to find out what image female applicants have of the company and its selection process, the results of which have been positive. Recently, a series of half-day seminars on equal opportunities awareness was delivered on site by an external consultant.

18. No one person within TTE has a clear responsibility for equal opportunities policies or for updating and monitoring their effectiveness. Staff are, therefore, not clear who in the company provides the focal point for any issues raised. Contracts with colleges and employers do not specify the need to adhere to TTE's equal opportunities policies. The company has not developed data on the minority ethnic communities as a means of identifying those who may be under-represented in training. There are no access facilities or routes within the company's building for disabled staff.

## Trainee support

## Grade 1

19. TTE is committed to supporting its trainees and helping them to achieve their full potential, a point made clear in its mission and value statements. Trainees receive good personal and professional support from tutors and other staff. The provider identified many strengths and few weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors confirmed several of these. They also found some additional strengths. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ relevant and objective advice given to potential trainees
- ◆ interactive and challenging trainee reviews
- ◆ comprehensive interviewing, testing and selection procedures
- ◆ personal mentors are easily accessible for counselling and advice
- ◆ trainees, parents and employers kept fully informed of trainees' progress
- ◆ extra support and training available for trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ effective complaints and grievance procedures

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no assessment or accreditation of trainees' prior learning
- ◆ poor support for trainees in laboratory operations

20. Managers and staff demonstrate their commitment to trainee support by example, and support procedures are subject to rigorous quality assurance. Trainees' progress is reviewed every three weeks, using a formal procedure involving self-assessment and assessment by their tutors. A summary of these assessments is recorded along with any differences between trainees and tutors. These are then discussed and, where possible, resolved. Trainees have the right to appeal against assessments, using established procedures.

21. Trainees have a personal mentor who may or may not be their tutor. Trainees have good access to their mentors who make themselves widely available. Regular progress reports are given to trainees, their parents and sponsoring employers. These provide an informed and effective source of support. Students have access to a carefully considered and creative programme of personal counselling, outward-bound training and personal development.



22. Tutors and managers have a genuine interest in trainees' opinions, and trainees' views are used to influence changes to procedures, training and use of resources. Trainees are encouraged to play a part in trainees' committees and can raise concerns or complaints using a simple procedure which provides anonymity.

23. Trainees who come to the company with NVQ and other relevant attainments are not offered accreditation for their prior learning. This has led to some duplication of training. Trainees undertaking the modern apprenticeship laboratory operations based at a local further education college do not receive the same level of support as those trainees who are based at TTE. This can result in a lower awareness of the NVQ assessment process. There is also uncertainty about the planned outcome of their higher national further education studies.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

24. TTE operates as a private limited company, with a board of directors which comprises mainly representatives from sponsoring companies. As well as modern apprenticeship training, TTE operates full-cost recovery training business for industry. TTE staff are responsible for managing the training which takes place within the training centre, the colleges of further education and on the premises of process companies. Inspectors considered that there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses in this area. They awarded a lower grade than was proposed in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective business and operational plans
- ◆ effective organisational policies and values
- ◆ good internal communications
- ◆ well-planned and well-managed training for phases one and two

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ unplanned training at phase three
- ◆ unclear contractual responsibilities for phase-three training
- ◆ lack of central management information
- ◆ poor transfer of information to subcontractors

25. The training in phases one and two is professionally managed. It is planned in detail, and there are clear objectives for each part of the training. At phase three, the trainees move on site and are encouraged to take a greater level of responsibility for their own training. TTE does not ensure that the training for phase three is sufficiently planned and monitored. The quality of training is, therefore, more inconsistent. However, a new member of staff has been appointed to address this issue, and a structured planning approach is being developed. It is too early to evaluate the success of these measures.

26. Records of trainees' progress are not held centrally – this makes access difficult. The responsibilities of TTE and the companies providing the on-site training are not fully defined, and this has led to confusion. Colleges do not receive sufficient relevant information about individual trainees. For example, those with dyslexia have not been identified, which makes it difficult for trainers to provide the necessary support.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 2

27. TTE has a quality assurance system which is certified as meeting the quality standard ISO 9002. The quality procedures in place reflect the work carried out and are suitable for ensuring a consistent quality of training. All staff are aware of the quality assurance procedures, and audits show compliance through internal and external quality checks. The company's self-assessment grade for this aspect of provision was higher than that awarded by inspectors.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clear and operational quality systems which are regularly audited
- ◆ frequent reviews and continuous improvement
- ◆ effective use made of trainees' feedback and evaluation
- ◆ effective self-assessment procedures
- ◆ relevant and effective action-plans

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some key processes missing from quality assurance system
- ◆ internal verification procedures not fully defined or recorded
- ◆ evaluation of provision not routinely followed up

28. The quality assurance system is used effectively as a management tool for ensuring the quality of training. The system is internally and externally audited. There is ample evidence of effective reviews leading to improvement throughout the organisation. The quality assurance system does not cover all the key training processes. For example, it does not include the planning of on-the-job training.

29. Feedback from trainees is sought at appropriate stages of training and yields valuable information. There is no systematic approach to completing the training evaluation cycle by acting on the provided information from this feedback. Progress is assessed against the work of a company with comparable key processes.