



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1998

Intuitions School of Hairdressing
and
Harrogate School of Beauty Therapy

SUMMARY

Intuitions School of Hairdressing and Harrogate School of Beauty Therapy offers good training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Training groups are small, allowing for considerable individual attention to be given to trainees. This is further supported by good resources and good-quality accommodation. Trainees receive an annual training plan. However, trainees are unable to collect evidence towards assessment or to be assessed in the workplace. Equality of opportunity is well documented and related issues are efficiently addressed, but there is no system to ensure that it is a regular item on staff meeting agendas. There is a lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The internal verification system is thorough. However, many other systems have been introduced too recently to be effectively evaluated.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ low trainer-to-trainee ratio
- ◆ good accommodation and resources
- ◆ equal opportunities issues effectively addressed
- ◆ effective and through internal verification system

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient work-based assessment
- ◆ lack of co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ recent implementation of many systems prevents evaluation



INTRODUCTION

1. Intuitions School of Hairdressing and Harrogate School of Beauty Therapy (ISHHSBT) was established in 1992 to deliver training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. It is a limited company and offers privately funded programmes, in addition to those funded through North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). All training is delivered by the company at its specialist accommodation in Harrogate. In addition to the two managing directors, the company employs eight part-time staff.

2. Over the last six years, ISHHSBT has expanded from being a small training school, based in a hair salon, to larger specialist training premises in the town centre. At the time of inspection, there were 27 trainees, all of whom are employed in either the company's own salon or by 12 local employers in Harrogate and the surrounding area.

3. Although the company recruits trainees from a wide geographical area, most trainees live in Harrogate and the surrounding area. Harrogate has a working population of 60,000. Unemployment in May 1997 stood at 2 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. The number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 56.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 44.5 per cent. The percentage of the population within the Harrogate area from ethnic minority groups is 0.9. Harrogate is an attractive spa town, close to many of the tourist attractions of the Yorkshire Dales. Much employment is seasonal, the main industry being leisure and tourism. Harrogate is also a popular conference centre, with facilities for up to 2,000 people. This helps to boost trade for hotels and service industries.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. ISHHSBT produced its first self-assessment report in August 1998. All staff participated in training before the production of the report and all contributed to the self-assessment process. The report was accurate in identifying some strengths and weaknesses. However, other strengths are no more than normal practice. In some areas, the self-assessment report identified future action-plans, rather than current weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded for both the occupational area and all generic areas.

5. Two inspectors spent a total of eight days at ISHHSBT during October 1998. They met trainees, training staff and employers, and spoke with representatives from the local TEC. They interviewed 10 employees/supervisors in the workplace, all members of the training staff and 16 trainees, and observed eight training sessions and two reviews.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty		3	5			8
Total	0	3	5	0	0	8

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

There are 27 trainees following hairdressing and beauty programmes, working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 3. There are 13 modern apprentices, four national trainees, two NVQ level 2 trainees in hairdressing and eight NVQ level 2 trainees in beauty therapy. Hairdressing trainees attend the centre once a fortnight. Beauty trainees attend once a week. Training covers both practical and theoretical aspects for all trainees. The rest of the time is spent in employment, where they are visited regularly by the company's managing director. Assessment is carried out at the centre. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice. The report failed to identify weaknesses, but inspectors identified other strengths and awarded the same grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive annual training plan given to all trainees
- ◆ low trainee-to-trainer ratio
- ◆ good accommodation and resources

- ◆ exceptionally good cross section of clients available to trainees
- ◆ additional support provided through an evening revision class

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped information technology training
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment

6. Trainees undergo an initial assessment, covering basic skills, preferred learning styles and manual dexterity. During induction, all trainees receive a training plan which guides them through the timetable of topics. This ensures that they are aware of how the programme is to develop and able to measure their own progress against identified targets. Trainees clearly understand the process of assessment and portfolio production. They are given responsibility for producing their own practical assessment plan. Subsequently, they are required to liaise with staff at the centre's reception to ensure that suitable models are made available. There are sufficient clients for each trainee to achieve the wide and varied tasks demanded by his/her programme. The training experience is enhanced by the low number of trainees being coached and assessed by each trainer. Generally, the ratio is one trainer to six trainees. In these circumstances, trainees receive considerable one-to-one instruction, enabling them to develop commercial skills at an early stage in the programme. A regular revision class is held in the evening; this is open to all trainees and is designed to enable the individual to either practise skills or obtain further help with theoretical aspects of his/her programme. The session is structured to meet the needs of the individual in order to build his/her confidence and ensure that each trainee remains on target. The training centre is bright, colourful, well equipped and compares favourably with other salons in the industry.

7. Currently, all practical assessments are carried out at the centre. However, trainees spend most of their time in their salons, where they are unable to gain accreditation towards competence. This results in missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace, and the use of witness testimony in the workplace is rare. Therefore, trainees rely on being assessed once each week or once each fortnight. Four of the five key skills have been introduced to hairdressing. A plan for the introduction of key skills in information technology has been produced but not implemented. The company has limited information technology resources, comprising one computer in the reception at the centre, two in the general office and one in the financial director's office; this, together with the fact that not all trainers are confident in the delivery of key skills, has resulted in little progress in this area.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

8. The company has a clear equal opportunities policy which meets contractual requirements and current legislation. The policy was reviewed in 1998 to incorporate the latest legislation and to review and make the first amendments since 1992. The number of trainees from minority ethnic groups reflects the percentage of those in the local population. However, male trainees are underrepresented in what is traditionally a female-dominated industry. Promotional material is not used to automatically target underrepresented groups. The self-assessment report accurately identified some strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors identified others and awarded the same grade as that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-documented equal opportunities policies and procedures
- ◆ any problems efficiently addressed and resolved
- ◆ trainees have good understanding of equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ equal opportunities not systematically addressed at meetings
- ◆ no routine monitoring of statistics

9. Recent evaluation and rewriting of the equal opportunities policy has resulted in an easily understandable document, covering all current legislation. The policy is included in the information handbooks produced for both employers and trainees. Trainees easily recall equality of opportunity from induction and can clearly explain what it means in practical terms. Employers are aware of their responsibilities, but there is no documented evidence of monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. Recently introduced questionnaires used to obtain trainees' feedback create an effective procedure for ensuring that complaints are promptly addressed. When a case of discrimination comes to light through questionnaires, the relevant steps are taken and the matter satisfactorily resolved.

10. Although data are easily accessible, they are not routinely collected or used to monitor performance and inform future plans. The company does not monitor and compare trainees' achievements against their cultural and social background. The main forum for key issues is the monthly team meetings. However, equal opportunities is not a standing item, meaning that new policies, documents and possible issues are not discussed or addressed routinely with staff.

Trainee support

Grade 3

11. The training environment at ISHHSBT is friendly and supportive. Every trainee receives an induction at the training centre, followed by regular tutorial and salon reviews. The company tries to meet the needs of individual trainees, but response is constrained by the level of staff expertise. Changes to company practice are being made in the areas of the trainee interview and career counselling. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors but they awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured and informative induction arrangements
- ◆ strong welfare and personal support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no recognition of trainees' prior experience
- ◆ lack of counselling at the end of training

12. All trainees have a comprehensive two-day induction programme, covering their rights and responsibilities and company policies. At the same time, trainees complete an initial assessment which is subsequently used to ensure that trainees are supported throughout their NVQ. Working relationships between trainees and centre trainers are positive and supportive. However, when trainees require specialist assistance, this is limited by the staff's lack of experience and qualifications. Trainees' welfare and social support has been strengthened by the recently introduced trainee mentoring system. The personal mentor, a person chosen by the trainee, provides a route through which trainees can raise confidential issues and have them addressed sympathetically.

13. A policy and a set of procedures for the accreditation of prior learning exist, but are not systematically implemented. The training programmes for trainees with considerable salon experience are not adjusted in recognition of this fact. Although trainees have access to trainers for frequent informal counselling, no formal end-of-training counselling takes place. New procedures for this purpose have been put together, but have not yet been implemented.

Management of training

Grade 3

14. The company's management and staffing structures are documented and understood by all staff. Staff and resources are effectively deployed. There are regular staff appraisals, followed by the production of personal development plans.

The self-assessment report identified several areas as strengths which represent no more than normal practice. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors who judged the self-assessment grade was accurate.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ staff procedures reflect good practice
- ◆ extensive staff development supported by management
- ◆ active involvement of managing director in all aspects of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ staff lack skills and experience to deal with trainees' diverse needs
- ◆ lack of measurable targets in the business plan

15. Staff recruitment, interview procedures and the process of induction are well documented and reflect good practice in the areas of resource management. Some of these procedures have recently been revised and their impact has yet to be evaluated. There are clear job descriptions, and staff know what is expected of them. Their performance is reviewed during annual appraisals. Company and individual staff development requirements are noted at appraisals. Staff development targets are wholeheartedly supported by management, and staff welcome the opportunity to update their skills or develop new ones. Staff's experience of dealing with trainees with diverse and challenging learning needs is limited. This has been identified by management and is about to be addressed through staff development. The managing director is actively involved in all aspects of training; this includes working at the training school and visiting salons to carry out reviews. She is aware of issues as they arise and responds effectively to identified problems.

16. The company business plan is written in accessible language. The company's aims are ambitious and are clearly spelled out. These have not yet become performance targets, which can be translated into individual staff goals, to be monitored at the time of appraisal. The business plan is not supported by a financial plan. There is effective communication between management and employers, through the use of a handbook, review meetings and the occasional employer evening at the centre. The handbook contains guidelines for placement employers, and includes a statement about their responsibilities regarding the training of trainees. However, there is a lack of co-ordination between the centre's training and that conducted in the salons. As a consequence, the benefits to be gained from a co-ordinated approach to training and assessment are lost.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

17. ISHHSBT's quality systems meet the requirements of its contracting TEC. The company also consistently meets external awarding bodies' requirements. Quality assurance systems, which have been in place for some time, are well developed and understood by all staff. However, much of the company's quality framework is a recent development and is not fully implemented. A recent full internal quality audit has taken place, resulting in the recognition of shortfalls in the system and an action-plan. The self-assessment report did not accurately identify all strengths or weaknesses. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors, and the grade awarded is the same as that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-designed quality assurance documents
- ◆ thorough internal verification system
- ◆ effective action taken to remedy weaknesses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ many systems are too new to evaluate
- ◆ no analysis of trainees' destinations on completion of training
- ◆ insufficient evaluation of training

18. Where quality assurance systems have been used over a period of time, they are well understood by staff and have been monitored and evaluated. Recently developed systems have replaced outdated or ineffective procedures and are easy to use. They are designed to ensure that accurate, useful information can be obtained and used to improve the quality of decision-making. For example, course evaluation forms indicate that trainees consider library facilities to be inadequate. This has resulted in a decision to gradually increase the number of books and to produce further support materials. However, many of the newly developed systems and supporting documents are too recent to have been used or have been insufficiently embedded to be evaluated. The company has an effective system for verifying the standard of trainees' work and the appropriateness of their portfolio work. The system is well planned and effectively carried out. The managing director informs staff of the action required in response to external verifiers' reports. Action to be taken is communicated through team meetings, and individual responsibilities are agreed on.

19. All staff work to agreed lesson plans, but the mode of delivery of training is left to the discretion of each trainer. Although there are informal exchanges and discussions about training methods, there is no systematic observation of the quality of training. It cannot, therefore, be used to improve trainers' performance or as a tool to plan staff development activities. When weaknesses are identified, action is taken to rectify them. A recent example concerns a lack of models for trainees at the



company's own salon, which resulted in trainees using their own promotional ideas; these are accepted and advertised by management. Trainees' destinations, on completion of their training, are not monitored. Subsequent information is not sought about longer-term career movements.