



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 2000

Burnley College Training

SUMMARY

Burnley College Training offers good training in construction and manufacturing and excellent training in foundation for work. In construction and manufacturing, both on- and off-the-job training are well delivered, with thorough assessment and internal verification. Foundation for work trainees are well supported by staff and have good resources. Training in business administration, retailing and care is satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough in business administration and achievement rates are good. Retailing work-placement supervisors are very supportive, but workplace supervisors in retail and business administration have little understanding of the NVQ process. In care, training and work placements are good, but assessment and internal verification practices are weak. Burnley College Training has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and provides good learning and pastoral support to trainees. Management of training is good, with effective communication systems and staff development opportunities. Quality assurance is also good, with a strong commitment to continuous improvement through self-assessment.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2
Manufacturing	2
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Health, care & public services	3
Foundation for work	1

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ highly supportive work placements
- ◆ exceptional personal support for trainees in foundation for work
- ◆ strong commitment to equality of opportunity
- ◆ effective learning and pastoral support
- ◆ good internal communications
- ◆ extensive staff development programme
- ◆ strong commitment to continuous improvement

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little understanding of NVQ process by employers in most areas
- ◆ some inadequate assessment and internal verification activity
- ◆ no formal monitoring of on-the-job training in most areas

INTRODUCTION

1. Burnley College Training (BCT) is Burnley College's managing agency responsible for work-based youth and adult training programmes. Burnley College is a community college, with extensive links within Burnley and the wider community of East Lancashire. Each teaching subject area forms a division of the college; BCT is one of those divisions, with the division manager responsible to one of the college's assistant principals. BCT's training centre for young people is on the main college campus. The training centre for adults is located in a newly refurbished centre (Skillspoint) in one of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Burnley. BCT has provided work-based training since 1990, when the organisation was known as Spectrum. At this time, the training was provided in a sheltered environment; this changed to using work placements between 1993 and 1995 and the numbers of youth trainees increased. In 1998, BCT began providing training for adults, continuing the expansion of training which has been encouraged over the last three years. The contract for work-based training is with East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (ELTEC), which was the co-ordinating TEC for this inspection. Burnley College is a member of a New Deal provider consortium, comprising the four East Lancashire colleges, ELTEC and local private training providers. New Deal training is integrated into the college's further education provision, rather than into the work-based training division. Training is provided to a total of 296 trainees and New Deal clients in the occupational areas of construction, business administration, engineering, manufacturing, retailing and customer service, media and design, health, care and public services and foundation for work. Engineering and media and design, with 12 trainees, did not form part of this inspection. BCT employs 24 members of staff.

2. Burnley is one of six boroughs in East Lancashire, with a population of 91,000 out of a total population of 0.5 million. Burnley is a stable community, although some young people have moved out of the area in recent years. Unemployment stands at 3.5 per cent, which is lower than the national average. Approximately 35 per cent of jobs in Burnley are in manufacturing and many of these are low-status, part-time and low-paid jobs. A high proportion of local large employers have their head offices outside the area, which reduces the number of jobs available in finance, personnel and management. The average wage in Burnley is only 83 per cent of the national average. Women make up 51 per cent of the active workforce. Recently, there has been a slight increase in jobs in service industries as a consequence of new retail activity, linked to a new motorway. The local aerospace industry has also seen some expansion. There is a shortage of engineers, sales personnel and information technology specialists in the area. Members of minority ethnic communities form 7 per cent of the population; the majority of these are of Asian backgrounds. Within Burnley College, 17 per cent of full-time students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. One in five students is from a disadvantaged area.



3. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 43 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In some parts of the town, this figure is as low as 18 per cent. Only 56 per cent of pupils remain in some form of further education after year 11, compared with a national average of 68 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. BCT produced a self-assessment report which was specific to work-based training and complementary to the main college's report. Staff in BCT all contributed to the report, by either identifying or validating the strengths and weaknesses listed in the report. The report was drawn together by the manager of BCT. A number of the identified strengths represented no more than normal practice and the self-assessment report failed to identify some weaknesses, although others were correctly reported. BCT was over-critical of its performance in two generic areas.

5. Eight inspectors spent a total of 40 days with BCT. The team worked jointly with a team of Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectors during this time, sharing information and each other's findings. The occupational areas inspected jointly were the information technology component of business administration and foundation for work. Inspectors interviewed 108 trainees and made 32 workplace visits. They carried out 63 interviews with trainers and 30 with supervisors or employers. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted with off-the-job management staff and seven with internal verifiers. Sixty-one trainees' files and 83 portfolios were reviewed. Other documents reviewed included TEC contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance documents, minutes of meetings and promotional materials. Inspectors observed 12 training sessions and graded ten of them. They also observed 10 assessments and 11 reviews.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		1	1			2
Business administration		2	2			4
Retailing & customer service			2			2
Health, care & public services		1				1
Foundation for work		1				1
Total	0	5	5	0	0	10

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

6. There are 75 trainees and New Deal clients in construction; of these, 47 are modern apprentices, 17 are national trainees, two are on other training programmes for young people, and 10 are on the full-time training and education option of New Deal. All trainees attend college on a day- and block-release basis for NVQs at level 2, and on a day-release basis for level 3. The occupations provided for include carpentry and joinery, plumbing, brickwork, painting and decorating, plastering and electrical installation. All trainees are employed and are pursuing NVQs at either levels 2, 3 or both. New Deal clients are following programmes at level 1 and 2. All trainees receive induction training, which informs them about their course programme, their training agreement and their responsibilities for health and safety. All off-the-job training and assessment is carried out at the college for all trades, with the exception of electrical installation, which is carried out at the workplace. New Deal clients are assessed on completion of each assignment or project and complete a short period of relevant work experience. The college's training and development officers visit trainees in the workplace at six-weekly intervals during their first year, and thereafter every 12 weeks to carry out training reviews to monitor progress. All modern apprentices and national trainees follow a GNVQ foundation course in construction and the built environment in their first year, alongside the NVQ programme. Trainees' retention and achievement have improved significantly over the last two years and both now stand at 70 per cent, compared to 20 and 30 per cent respectively in 1996-97. The head of BCT completed the self-assessment report, with the involvement of the training and development officers and some departmental specialists. Staff involved in the process have received training in self-assessment. The report identified some strengths which were agreed by inspectors; others represented no more than normal practice. Weaknesses identified in the report were agreed. The inspection grade is the same as that given. The numbers of trainees working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3 is shown in the table below.

Qualification	NVQ level 2	NVQ level 3
Bricklaying	12	
Electrical installation	10	
Carpentry and joinery	21	1
Wood machining	1	
Plastering	1	
Plumbing	13	2
Painting and decorating	4	

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ rigorous and well-recorded assessment and internal verification

- ◆ interesting and well-presented trainees' portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient emphasis on work-based recording and assessment
- ◆ lack of employers' understanding of training programme

7. Off-the-job training is effectively planned, with clear objectives and good use of learning opportunities as they arise. Standards are met across all trades. All modern apprentices and national trainees benefit from the broader experience offered by simultaneously following the GNVQ course alongside their NVQs, thus gaining two qualifications. Key skills are effectively identified and integrated through the trainees' assignment work, and development of key skills assessment has now also begun. On-the-job training is also well managed. Trainees are working in a variety of workplaces, with employers who are committed to offering a useful, structured experience.

8. Accredited assessors carry out assessment at the college. They plan assessments well and perform them systematically; records are comprehensive and well maintained. Trainees are clear about the standard they must achieve and are aware of their rate of progress. Some trainees are given the opportunity to self-assess, which helps their understanding of the process. Appropriately qualified verifiers conduct the internal verification process; the systems and processes are carried out rigorously and consistently across all trades.

9. Trainees work productively on their portfolios and are well motivated to accumulate evidence. A wide range of different types of evidence is found in portfolios, which are also well organised. Trainees are proud of their portfolios and can explain their contents to others.

10. Health and safety has a high profile in all trades. Trainees receive extensive information on safe working practices and understand their responsibilities well. Training and development officers, who are responsible for setting up and monitoring work placements, are qualified in health and safety. They carry out regular review and monitoring visits of health and safety, using an extensive checklist. Where employers experience difficulties in meeting the required standard, they are offered assistance to improve their practice.

11. Many opportunities to gather evidence and undertake assessment in the workplace are currently being missed, except in the area of electrical installation. Some trainees undertake pieces of work in the workplace, but then have to repeat the same work in the college, in a less realistic environment, for assessment purposes. More work-based assessment is now being planned.

12. Training and development officers visit trainees in the workplace to undertake regular reviews. The review meetings also involve the workplace supervisor, in most cases. At the meetings, trainees' progress is discussed and pastoral issues are

dealt with. However, short-term targets are not set, which reduces the ability of the employers and supervisors to ensure that there is a match between on- and off-the-job training. On-the-job experience offers a good range of well-structured learning opportunities, but in many cases these are not related to the training programme at college. While employers are very supportive, they are not always aware of the content of the training programme and are hence unable to match the workplace experience to the college's training. Employers have little awareness of the structure of the NVQ awards and the mechanisms for assessment.

Manufacturing

Grade 2

13. There are 10 trainees in manufacturing; all are on a training programme for young people, all are classed as having special training needs, and all are working towards a level 1 NVQ in performing manufacturing operations. Trainees are recruited from local job fairs, referral by the careers service and personal recommendation. All trainees undergo assessment in numeracy and literacy on entry, and during their first five weeks have their comprehension and basic manual skills assessed. Trainees spend their first eight weeks in college developing basic skills and acquiring theoretical knowledge for their NVQs and key skills. They are then placed with local companies such as furniture, window-frame and computer manufacturers. At the time of inspection, seven trainees were placed with companies, and three were undergoing initial training. While on work placements, they continue to attend college one day a week to carry out supported NVQ portfolio-building activities. As part of their training programme, trainees pursue three key skills units at level 1 and undergo a certificated employment skills programme. Three qualified members of staff carry out internal verification, assessment and training activities. Assessment is carried out in the workplace and in a training workshop at the college. Seventy-five percent of leavers achieve an NVQ, and many also gain wordpower and numberpower qualifications, and the employment skills certificate. The self-assessment report identified some of the strengths found during the inspection but failed to identify the weaknesses that inspectors found. The inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good development of basic skills
- ◆ good-quality NVQ portfolios
- ◆ thorough work-based assessment
- ◆ rigorous, well-recorded internal verification practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some inappropriate work placements

- ◆ little understanding of the relevance of key skills by trainees
- ◆ delayed opportunities for progression

14. Trainees begin their training programme by carrying out between six- and eight-weeks supported training in the college. Training is well planned and takes place in comfortable surroundings. Trainees begin to develop three portfolios, one each for the performing manufacturing operations NVQ at level 1, key skills and the employment skills certificate. Training for the NVQ consists of developing theoretical knowledge and learning basic manufacturing skills in the college's workshop. Much good work is carried out to develop the necessary level of ability to achieve key skills at level 1 in communication, application of number and information technology. Trainees pursue several projects such as calculating the size of rooms, booking holidays, organising and carrying out trips to local places of interest, such as the fire station and football ground, and reporting their findings. Basic skills in application of number, information technology and communications are developed and provide evidence to go into portfolios. Numeracy and literacy tests are also carried out and the results kept in the portfolios. The employment skills certificate consists of five units covering personal development, self-awareness, personal effectiveness, occupational skills and job-search skills. A further sixth unit is relative to workplace assessment, and is undertaken when a work placement is achieved.

15. The NVQ portfolios are well produced and include a broad range of evidence consisting of work-based assessments, photographs, witness testimonies from managers and colleagues, records of responses to oral and written questions and assignments. They are clearly laid out and all evidence is easily accessible and cross-referenced into the NVQ standards. Trainees are very knowledgeable about the contents of their portfolios and the requirements of the NVQ. They take pride in their portfolios. During their eight-weeks initial training, trainees develop a portfolio of evidence based on the projects and exercises they have carried out to develop their key skills. The evidence in these portfolios is of very good quality, and demonstrates a significant improvement in their skills over a period of time.

16. Trainees undergo regular assessment in the workplace. This is carried out, on average, every three weeks; assessment is thorough and well implemented. Trainees are observed carrying out their normal duties and are asked questions either to test their understanding, or to check what they would do under different circumstances. Supervisors are involved in this process and are asked to confirm that work-based and NVQ standards are being met consistently by the trainee. The observation process is comprehensively recorded in the trainees' portfolios. Trainees are involved in deciding which element the evidence will contribute to, and understand how this will be allocated against certain performance criteria and areas. This assessment practice is supported by a rigorous internal verification process, which assures its effectiveness. This system is well documented and a minimum of 25 per cent of all assessment practice is verified. The internal verifier regularly observes the assessor carrying out assessments in the workplace and

gives both verbal and written feedback. Assessment decisions in portfolios, for individual units and completed NVQs, are regularly verified and again written and verbal feedback is given to the assessor. Feedback has led to improvements and standardisation in the assessment process. Internal verifiers hold group meetings with assessors on a monthly basis. These are well attended and recorded.

17. BCT's staff are conscious of their obligations to the health and safety of their trainees. This begins with a rigorous audit of work placements by specially trained and qualified members of staff. This audit activity is repeated each year. If a requirement for any health and safety improvement is identified, staff draw up an action plan. The work placement is not used until the action plan has been implemented and checked by BCT's programme manager. Trainer/assessors and training development officers follow up health and safety requirements on work-placement visits. Any problems that are identified are fully recorded and a copy kept in the trainee's file. Part of the performing manufacturing operations qualification is a unit in health and safety. Trainees receive good training in health and safety requirements as part of their initial training programme. All trainees have a high level of knowledge before they are placed. BCT's staff reinforce this during their visits.

18. Seven of the ten trainees in manufacturing have work placements. Three trainees are in work placements that are inappropriate to their NVQs. One trainee is placed in a company that carries out mainly retailing activities, another is engaged in refurbishment work in a factory, and the third is labouring on a building site.

19. When trainees begin to develop their NVQ portfolios, evidence from these is cross-referenced into the key skills portfolio. The assessor carries out this activity and trainees are not involved. All trainees believe their key skills are completed in their first eight weeks of training and do not see the significance of key skills relative to their work-based activities. Trainees have little understanding of the significance of key skills for their future employment prospects.

20. One trainee has completed the training programme quickly in 18 weeks. Training and assessing staff have encouraged this. Most trainees who start at the beginning of the academic year (September), will expect to complete by March or April. The normal route of progression for further training is within the college. Trainees completing their programmes early will finish between January and April, but will have to wait until September of that same year before they can enrol on their next choice of programme. The proportion of trainees who gain employment at the end of the programme is increasing, but is still under half.

Business administration

Grade 3

21. Trainees are referred to BCT through the careers service, by their employer or through direct application. BCT formally assesses all applicants at their initial

interview, and the results are used to advise the trainees on their choice of programme. The initial assessment is also used to identify learning support needs and to assist with selection of the appropriate occupational area and level. College staff help trainees in preparing their curricula vitae and in finding suitable employment, which can be immediate or, on occasions, take several months. On starting, each trainee attends a full-day induction at the college, which includes information about health and safety, grievance procedures, NVQ processes and equal opportunities. Most trainees join the college in September, some having been in employment for several months and having started their NVQ work during visits from the assessor. The 67 trainees in this occupational area, including three New Deal clients, are following an administration or information technology programme. Thirty-four of the administration trainees, and 13 of the information technology trainees, are modern apprentices. There are eight national trainees in administration, and one in information technology. Two administration trainees, and six information technology trainees, are following another training programme for young people. All modern apprentices and national trainees are employed. They attend college up to one day per week for off-the-job training and assessment. About half of those on the other training programmes for young people have work placements. All administration trainees are working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3. Of the information technology modern apprentices, six are working towards the implementing information technology solutions NVQ at level 3, two towards the use and support of information technology also at level 3, and the other five are working towards the install information technology products NVQ at level 2. The information technology national trainee, and five of the six young people on other programmes for young people at level 2, are working towards the using information technology NVQ at level 2. One trainee is working towards the same qualification at level 1. There are 37 women and seven men in administration and nineteen men and one woman in information technology. All trainers have a teaching or training qualification, and all assessors have the assessor award. There is at least one qualified internal verifier in each of the two curriculum areas but there are no work-based assessors. For each of the last three years (1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99), the percentage of young people leaving programmes achieving an NVQ was 59 per cent, 78 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. The self-assessment report listed several examples of strengths, which the inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. However, there are other strengths, which the report failed to identify. The inspectors identified three weaknesses, two of which were not identified through self-assessment, and the grade awarded is lower than that given.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good initial selection and guidance
- ◆ regular and effective visits
- ◆ good achievement rates for levels 2 and 3

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak internal verification processes

- ◆ key skills not yet integrated
- ◆ no involvement by employers in the NVQ process

22. Trainees undergo thorough initial testing, which takes place at their first interview. The results of the psychometric test are shared with the trainee and are used, together with the interview discussion, to advise trainees on the selection of appropriate programmes. In the few cases where the trainee would be better served elsewhere, BCT does recommend alternative training providers. Trainees have the chance to take other short courses offered by the college itself and to gain additional appropriate qualifications, such as a basic course in computing for those following administration programmes. Trainees are employed in a variety of occupations for companies ranging from small firms to large local public organisations, all of which provide good opportunities to gain valuable work experience.

23. Their assessor, who visits the trainee in the workplace every four to six weeks, sets all trainees' assessment plans. The actual plan is usually created by the assessor in the presence of the trainee. These are satisfactory for the purpose and are referred to at subsequent meetings, but do not involve the employer. All level 3 assessment takes place in the workplace and is carried out by BCT assessors. The progress reviews are also carried out regularly in the workplace every six weeks, but by the training development officer in conjunction with the trainee. Comments from both the training development officer and the trainee are included and the employer, although not present at the discussion, is then asked to add his/her comment on the trainee's progress and a signature. Copies are not always provided for the trainee and employer.

24. These two documents, the assessment plan and the progress review, form the basis of what the trainees do to accumulate evidence and achieve the NVQ award. Trainees often complete a level 2 in five to six months. Work placements are good with a broad range of interesting activities, so trainees can gather meaningful work-based evidence of their competence. Employers support their trainees fully, and encourage them to attend and participate every week at the off-the-job training.

25. The internal verification process for levels 2 and 3 in both administration and information technology was inadequate for most of 1999. There was no qualified internal verifier to co-ordinate assessors or develop the standardisation of assessments. No recorded meetings took place and internal verification sampling was random, with little formal feedback to assessors. These facts were reported by the external verifiers, but at the time of inspection are only just beginning to be addressed by BCT. The two members of staff who now have responsibility for internal verification in each of the curriculum areas are planning to implement new processes and procedures.

26. Key skills are not integrated into the programmes for administration or information technology and, in both subjects, are being taught by a different member

of staff from the one tutoring and assessing the trainees in the occupational area. There is an intention to use evidence gathered in the occupational area as evidence also for key skills but this has not yet been implemented.

27. Employers are generally unclear about the weekly off-the-job training, and do not arrange work schedules for their trainees which would reinforce and support the topics as they are being taught in the college. Similarly, the on-the-job training lacks planning and co-ordination with the tutor, and opportunities are being missed for greater involvement of the work-based supervisor and for the eventual work-based assessor.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

28. There are currently seven trainees working towards the NVQ at level 1 in distributive operations, all of whom are on other work-based training programmes for young people. All trainees are unemployed and attend work placements as part of their training. Employers supporting the programmes include a local pharmacy chain, a small independent bakery and a national high street retailer. Most trainees are referred to BCT from the careers service, and some are recruited from careers fairs at schools. Trainees are recruited to the programme continually throughout the year, with most new trainees starting in the summer months. All the trainees on this programme are considered to have additional support needs in terms of literacy and/or numeracy skills. Trainees attend an induction at the start of their programme which is held at the college. Trainees with additional support needs spend the first eight weeks of the programme at the college, where they undertake a series of tests designed to assess their needs, and complete an employment skills certificate. During this period, trainees discuss their work placement options with the college's staff and attend interviews with potential work-placement providers. They also attend classes in health and safety, information technology and communication, in addition to lessons which are concerned with the NVQ. When a work placement has been secured, trainees attend the place of work for the remainder of the programme. They continue to attend college one day each week to build their portfolio and develop their skills and knowledge. Learning resources used to support their learning include outlines for projects and exercises relating to the distribution NVQ. The NVQ assessor visits trainees regularly in the workplace, usually once a month. At these visits, the assessor carries out assessments and completes progress reviews with both the trainee and their workplace supervisor. Workplace supervisors provide on-the-job training for trainees. This covers such areas as accepting deliveries, security procedures and using the till. Trainees are assessed by a range of methods, including observation of work activities, verbal questioning and examination of written work. Two members of BCT's staff work in this occupational area: the training development officer whose role is to place trainees with suitable workplace providers, and the NVQ assessor whose role is to review and assess progress towards completion of the NVQ. The number of trainees in this area has increased slightly over the last three years. Fifteen trainees have

started the programme so far this contract year, compared with 21 in 1998-99 and 20 in the previous year. Many of the strengths claimed in the self-assessment report were not validated through inspection, as several were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report identified no weaknesses in this programme area, and BCT was not sufficiently self-critical. The grade given by inspectors is lower than that given by BCT.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive work-placement providers
- ◆ well-designed learning activities and resources
- ◆ good development of trainees' key skills
- ◆ good progression from training into employment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of the programme by workplace supervisors
- ◆ inflexible off-the-job training programme
- ◆ weak internal verification

POOR PRACTICE

This is an example of assessors leading the trainees in their choice of evidence for portfolios. At the start of the programme, all trainees receive a portfolio which contains an evidence chart for each element of the qualification. This chart is already filled in, stating what evidence they will present and which performance criteria each item of evidence will cover. This process discourages trainees from presenting unique evidence, and denies them the opportunity to develop skills in building a portfolio of evidence.

29. Work-placement providers involved in the programme in this sector are particularly supportive and committed to helping the trainee to succeed. Some employers allow the college to take groups of potential trainees round their premises, on a regular basis, to gain an insight into their industry. Other employers also support group visits for trainees so that they can complete projects in a realistic environment. Workplace supervisors are committed to helping disadvantaged young people to gain experience and a qualification with their assistance, and provide the same training opportunities afforded to their other members of staff.

30. There is a wide range of lesson plans and other training materials available to support the off-the-job-training programme. These have been developed by the NVQ tutor and are particularly well designed, with good links to the NVQ. There is a resource pack for each unit, and some individual elements, of the level 1 NVQ. These packs contain an exercise booklet, reading material and videos, where appropriate. There are also projects, which require trainees to visit different retailers and complete a survey of facilities available. This gives trainees a valuable insight into how different retailers operate, and provides them with evidence for both the NVQ and the key skills units. In the work placement, trainees learn the different skills required for the qualification.

31. Trainees are very enthusiastic about the key skills classes which they attend at college. They find the content useful, particularly in information technology if they have no previous experience, and they enjoy the way the tutor teaches them. They receive plenty of individual support and guidance from supportive tutors. Trainees

undertake college-based key skills projects in which they measure classrooms and conduct surveys to develop their skills and generate evidence for their portfolios.

32. There are regular and effective visits to the workplace by the assessor, and trainees make steady progress towards the achievement of the NVQ. In the contract year 1998-99, two thirds of those who started the programme completed their individual training plans and secured employment. This level of performance was expected to continue in the current contract year.

33. Workplace supervisors do not understand the NVQ programme and trainees' progress within it. One employer mistakenly thought that the trainee was working towards a qualification in production packaging, and that the day-release course at college was focused on packaging techniques and processes. None of the workplace supervisors interviewed were able to say what progress the trainee had made towards completing their programme, other than a vague notion of when the programme was due to end. In one case this was of particular importance, as the employer wanted to employ the trainee at the end of the programme and needed authorisation from within the company to recruit. Since the workplace manager did not know when the trainee was likely to complete the programme, they were unable at the time to go ahead with the recruitment of the trainee. Employers are not aware of the content of the off-the-job training held at college every week. Trainees have to explain their own on-the-job training requirements to workplace supervisors in preparation for attending college. This unplanned approach does not allow the trainee to assimilate information over a period of time or allow for the development and practice of new skills. Employers also lack an overall understanding of the content of the qualification and on-the-job training is opportunistic, unless specifically requested by the trainee. There is no specific guidance from BCT to help workplace supervisors to plan appropriate training activities. BCT does not discuss with employers what training they should be providing to assist trainees.

34. Trainees receive a great deal of support and guidance from their tutor, who is well respected by both trainees and workplace supervisors. However, the pace of the programme is determined by the assessor, rather than the trainees. The portfolios are kept at college and are managed by the assessor. This means that trainees are unable to refer to their NVQ standards while they are in their work placements, to give them guidance on what evidence to collect when the opportunity arises. Trainees' portfolios are almost identical, and there is little reflection of individual effort or experience. During off-the-job training sessions, there is too much copying out of handouts as a method of learning. There is some unimaginative training, such as the trainer reading from a handout, explaining the key points, before asking the trainees to then copy out the text. This technique is regularly used at these sessions. The off-the-job-training programme is inflexible in that groups of trainees work through a series of pre-determined day-release sessions in key topic areas. This means that groups of trainees all tackle the same unit at the same time. This prevents flexibility in linking off-the-job training, the on-the-job experience and the NVQ assessments. For example, a trainee may be

studying the topic of security on day release, and be learning about customer care at work; these arrangements impede the smooth linking of theory and practice.

35. The internal verification process is weak, as the internal verifier is not following correct procedures. The internal verifier has not observed the assessor in carrying out observation, and there has not been enough monitoring of assessment practice. The internal verifier judges the accuracy of assessment decisions without having observed the assessor's performance. Assessment records are relatively brief and give no indication of the quality of assessment. For example, the record of oral questioning consists of a tick against a list of questions about theory, and the assessor's signature and date; this system does not provide the internal verifier with evidence of the standard of the trainee's answers. The internal verifier's records of portfolio verification contain no detailed feedback to the assessor and trainee. Typical feedback remarks include "good use of photographic evidence" and "well-presented evidence" with little or no comment to further the development of either the assessor or trainee. Some assessment records in use were unfamiliar to the internal verifier. The internal verifier failed to identify the poor practice occurring in assessment recording. There are firm plans in place to revise the internal verification arrangements for this programme, and a new internal verifier is going to take responsibility for the programme in the near future.

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

36. BCT has 62 trainees in health, care and public services. The occupations within this area include care of the elderly, childcare and housekeeping. Of these trainees, there are 26 modern apprentices working towards level 3 in care, 20 national trainees and two on other training programmes for young people also working towards level 2 in care. Six trainees with additional learning needs are working towards housekeeping at level 1 and eight trainees are working towards childcare awards. The focus of the inspection was on trainees in care of the elderly, although some housekeeping trainees on work placements in care homes were also interviewed. Training in childcare was not inspected. There are also four New Deal clients on the full-time education and training option, who are integrated into the mainstream college system. All trainees in elderly care are employed and work in one of 30 privately run care homes. Assessments take place in the workplace by work-based assessors or peripatetic assessors employed by BCT. Most off-the-job training is subcontracted to the health and social studies division of the college and takes place within the college. Some training is offered in Blackburn twice a week for care trainees in that area. Trainees in work placements or employment attend off-the-job training one day each week. Achievement rates for youth trainees in 1998-99 are just below the local average of 61 per cent, with 56 per cent achieving their NVQ. The proportion of those leaving early, at 57 per cent, was slightly below the average local figure of 58 per cent. There is a higher proportion of people from minority ethnic groups on the programme, at 21 per cent, as opposed to the average local figure of 15 per cent. Achievement by trainees from minority ethnic communities in gaining employment and in gaining NVQs is also above the local

average. The self-assessment report identified nine strengths and one weakness. Different strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors; the identified weakness was confirmed. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ imaginatively delivered training programmes
- ◆ trainees highly valued by committed employers
- ◆ good progression into jobs in housekeeping

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak internal verification practice
- ◆ missed opportunities for progression
- ◆ key skills not fully integrated

37. Training in elderly care is provided by well-qualified, committed staff, who have good working relationships with trainees. Sessions are imaginatively delivered to encourage trainees to think about care in a wide range of settings, in addition to the one in which they are working. Trainees are also encouraged to appreciate the clients' experiences, and appropriate resources are used to explore these issues. Training is planned to be interactive and use the trainees' own experiences in the work environment. Training is well planned and recorded, and most trainees are very positive about the value of the sessions. Lesson plans are very detailed and a new system is being piloted where the scheme of work is recorded for every ten-week period. This includes the content and method of training, learning outcomes, class work covered and assessment and evaluation of class sessions. Trainees are asked for feedback on classroom sessions and their comments have been taken into account in drawing up training programmes. One example of this is the training which has been developed on a second site, partly in response to trainees' difficulties in travelling to Burnley College.

38. BCT uses employers who have the facilities to offer the trainees good opportunities to demonstrate skills. Trainees are valued, as employers consider that having trainees is a positive experience. In the working environment, trainees are able to demonstrate an improved level of care, and keep other staff updated. One manager described how a new procedure had been instigated following learning carried out at college and brought back to the home by the trainee. Managers also see training as a way of developing staff and their careers. Trainees with additional learning needs undertake housekeeping at level 1; sometimes this is used as a foundation course before the trainee moves on to undertake care at level 2. BCT's staff ensure that work-based supervisors understand the trainees' particular needs. Managers are supportive of trainees and provide good work opportunities, which are valued by the trainee. Managers are asked to complete testimonials to provide evidence for the trainees' portfolios. The assessor visits every two weeks for

observation and questioning of the trainee, and takes photographs of the trainee at work to support other portfolio evidence.

39. In housekeeping, trainees' progress into jobs and achievement rates are particularly good. Most of these trainees have not been in employment previously and have significant additional learning needs. Seven trainees have already gained employment this contract year, and ten have achieved their NVQs. Only one trainee has left the programme early.

40. Each internal verifier is responsible for the assessment practice in a group of care homes. Forty eight per cent of assessment is carried out by work-based assessors. A peripatetic assessor, who is not occupationally qualified and has little hands on care experience, carries out forty five per cent. The remaining assessments are undertaken by a newly appointed registered nurse. Individual assessors are given some feedback on specially designed forms, but internal verifiers have little time to devote to providing this support. Contact usually takes the form of a short visit or telephone call, which is briefly recorded. Assessors do not meet on a regular basis for updating, sharing of good practice in assessment and planning, or for standardisation purposes and common interpretation of the standards. Internal verifiers' meetings tend to be informal and not recorded.

GOOD PRACTICE

A group of five modern apprentices completed their NVQ at level 2 one academic year before their target date. The programme was re-organised in order to allow them to have time to continue to develop their skills in the workplace to level 3, while also continuing to work towards completing their individual training plans. This opportunity was used to pilot key skill projects in information technology and application of number.

41. Where trainees miss the start of a college course, they can be on programme for several months before starting their theory training. Some trainees who start in September are not assessed for several months while they settle in and become familiar with clients, staff and routines in the work placement. In this period, reviews take place every six weeks, but do not specify actions to help the trainee develop new skills which they need for their work in care. Employers in care are not provided with copies of the trainees' programme and reviews are not specific to trainees' NVQ training needs. Consequently, managers or work-based supervisors are not alert to maximising opportunities in the workplace to observe the trainees' practice. Accreditation of prior learning is not used except for units transferred from level 2 to 3.

42. Key skills are being developed imaginatively, and attempts have been made to relate project work for information technology and application of number to the workplace. However, key skills are not yet integrated into the occupational programme. Trainees are not fully aware of the key skills requirements and see them as separate to their NVQ training. Key skills assessment is not carried out continuously throughout the programme. Logbooks are provided for trainees to fill in, so they can keep track of their progress, but they are not used.

Foundation for work

Grade 1

43. BCT offers pre-vocational training to both adult and youth trainees. Adult trainees are prepared for employment in either administration or in information technology. The adult programme is in its second year of operation. It lasts from 16

to 28 weeks, depending on individual needs. Training for young people is for the NVQ at level 1 in administration, housekeeping, manufacturing or retail, and the programme lasts for six months in most cases. At the time of the inspection, there were 22 adult trainees and 37 young people on the programmes. Adult trainees are referred to the programme mainly from job centres and they are assessed to identify any individual training needs following a well-defined procedure. Where potential trainees show a lack of skill in either basic literacy or numeracy the basic skills unit assessment is administered prior to entry. Other assessments include information technology awareness and assessment of trainees' existing skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to the demands of employment. A standard induction pack is used and issued to trainees. Trainees' understanding is checked through the use of a questionnaire. The first of three trainee satisfaction questionnaires is also completed at induction. Two further trainee satisfaction questionnaires are completed at mid-point and at the end of training. Training takes place at a specially equipped training centre, the Skillspoint Centre, near to the main college. The initial training, lasting generally for six weeks, consists of a series of five-day taster programmes where trainees sample administration and information technology, and receive training in support activities such as job-search skills and telephone training. Following this initial training, trainees undergo 28 days in a work placement where they have the opportunity to develop their general skill levels in terms of confidence, reliability and punctuality and where they are assessed against the requirements of their chosen NVQ. The equivalent of five full-time members of staff are assigned to the programme to cover all aspects of the training, including interviewing, assessment, training and coaching, health and safety assessments, identification of training placements, and trainees' reviews. Young people are referred to the programme mainly from the careers service when they are identified as having particular training needs. An initial assessment process identifies existing skills, attitudes and achievements. Further skills and achievements may emerge during the first few weeks on BCTs' programme and these are fully recorded. The training offered comprises 35 hours in-house for the first six to eight weeks receiving timetabled instruction in key skills, health and safety, and employment skills and beginning work towards their chosen NVQ. The trainee is then placed with a suitable work-experience provider. Once in a work-experience placement, a six-month supported training programme is offered and trainees attend BCT for one day a week to continue their chosen NVQ, to develop their key skills and to generate evidence for an employment skills certificate, which is a local initiative aimed at certificating trainees' personal effectiveness, personal development, job-search skills, punctuality and attendance. Ten full-time members of staff are assigned to the programme to cover all aspects of the training process. During the contract year to date, of 74 young people who started the programme, 33 gained a vocational qualification and 26 gained employment. In 1998-99, adult trainees were leaving the programmes for the first time. Of 20 leavers, although none achieved an NVQ, 30 per cent were employed on leaving. The self-assessment report did not cover the foundation for work area separately.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ detailed and comprehensive recording methods
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ extensive range of highly supportive work placements
- ◆ exceptional personal support from staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no significant weaknesses identified

GOOD PRACTICE

Any trainee attending for interview whose personal presentation is poor is supplied with clothes, laundry and shower facilities, including the use of towels and toiletries, as appropriate.

44. Initial assessment is well recorded, as are review meetings. Notes are extremely detailed and used effectively to help trainee progress on both the adult and youth programmes. In addition to the standard documents, an additional sheet is used to record any other information which arises outside the formal meetings or reviews. This ensures that important details are not lost; the additional sheet is kept in the trainees' file and referred to, for example, during reviews to check that all relevant matters are addressed. Where applicable, the parents of trainees with special learning needs receive regular progress reports, to keep them informed and to help them to encourage the trainee in their programme.

45. Adult trainees are based at BCT's Skillspoint Centre where they attend full-time for the first six weeks of their programme. The premises have been recently refurbished, and are attractively decorated and furnished. Up-to-date equipment and a good range of interactive software are provided, which significantly enhance learning opportunities. The interactive software is particularly valuable in encouraging trainees who find more traditional teaching and learning approaches difficult.

46. Adult trainees are offered five-day tasters in both administration and information technology before they choose which of these two NVQs they wish to pursue. A work-experience placement is identified at a stage appropriate to the trainee and each trainee is accompanied, and personally introduced, to the work-experience provider. Where both the trainee and the work-experience provider are satisfied, the trainee enters into work experience for four consecutive weeks, with off-the-job training being arranged for one day a week. During this period, trainees develop their NVQ competence and their general skill levels. BCT's relevant tutors conduct frequent on-site assessments, and reviews and further support is offered by one of BCT's training development officers. There is a good range of supportive work-experience placements and workplace supervisors are involved in the reviews of the trainees' progress. Work-experience can be extended beyond the four-week period if it is felt that the trainee will benefit, and some trainees enter employment as a direct result of their work experience. Off-the-job training both during and at the end of the work-experience period is satisfactory, and is aimed at both completing the chosen NVQ and at developing other skills, such as telephone techniques and job-search skills.

47. For youth trainees, the training development officer, tutor and trainee discuss the type of work placement the trainee would like and which would meet the requirements of the chosen NVQ. The training development officer then identifies a suitable work-experience placement and the trainee is introduced to the work-experience provider. Work-experience placements are extensive and supportive. BCT's vocational tutors carry out frequent on-site assessments, as well as monthly reviews. Trainees continue to attend BCT for one day a week to continue to develop their vocational and key skills. After twelve weeks on the placement, the work-experience provider confirms the trainee's progress towards their achievement of the employment skills certificate. There is, in addition, a range of sheltered work-experience placements which offer specific support to trainees with particular problems.

48. Where trainees gain employment and leave before completion of their NVQ, arrangements are made for the NVQ to be assessed and verified as an additional unpaid service. Where trainees leave the programme without gaining employment, job-search facilities continue to be available. Trainees have access to all the student services of Burnley College and also receive exceptionally strong pastoral support. BCT's staff have a wide range of qualifications and experience which are used to support trainees; these include staff trained in counselling, social work, or other childcare. Very good use is made of external support agencies to provide help to trainees with problems with housing, sexuality, illegal drugs and general personal or emotional problems.

49. There are two members of staff who are occupationally competent to train and support trainees in information technology, with one member of staff available for every 11 trainees. However, some trainees have insufficient one-to-one time with specialist information technology staff and have to wait for individual attention. Other trainees, who are working towards their NVQs at level 3, can be approached for help or advice, but cannot offer the same level of assistance. The difficulty had been recognised by BCT's staff prior to inspection and proposals have been made at a recent team meeting to improve the situation by providing training sessions twice each week to smaller groups. However, the improvements are not yet in place.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

50. BCT uses the college's equal opportunities policy and disability statement, which comply with legislative and contractual requirements. Two policies are in use and each has its own procedures for review. One policy was updated in 1996, the other in 1997. Reference to equal opportunities is included in the staff and trainees' induction. In an area where 51 per cent of the workforce are women, 60 per cent of trainees are men. Twenty-two trainees are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and this is representative of the local community. Just over a quarter of the trainees

are recognised as having disabilities. In the construction and manufacturing sectors, all the trainees are men. Most of the trainees in business administration and care are women. Sixty-two percent of BCT staff are women. Two out of 24 members of staff have a disability. There are two staff from a minority ethnic background, which is more than representative of the local area's population. New staff follow an induction programme which includes equal opportunities. All middle managers have responsibility for equal opportunities included in their job specification. The self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the inspectors, and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong commitment to the implementation of equal opportunities
- ◆ good training for staff in various equal opportunities topics
- ◆ practical measures to promote training to under-represented groups
- ◆ good physical resources to meet needs of under-represented groups
- ◆ well-understood complaints procedure

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of employers' adherence to equal opportunities
- ◆ ineffective procedures for updating and reviewing equal opportunities policy
- ◆ occasional poor practice by staff

51. In the current year, two of the college's three strategic objectives are centred on equality of opportunity. These objectives relate to increasing the college's role with under-represented groups to help combat social exclusion in the local area. Equality of opportunity is viewed by management and staff as an appropriate method of working, rather than as a set of rules and regulations to follow. Data about ethnicity or disability are collected at recruitment but are not referred to during the interview process. New staff and trainees receive an induction, which includes covering equal opportunities. New staff are assigned a mentor and this system is generally effective in ensuring that they adopt the shared attitudes of the existing staff.

52. Staff development programmes in the past year have included equal opportunities within the local context. Induction identifies cultural differences as well as addressing disability and gender issues. Some of the sessions on teaching and learning have looked at inclusive learning, managing behaviour and confidentiality. Staff particularly learned from the sessions dealing with appropriate terminology and the significance of various religious festivals. Records confirm that staff from the training division have attended these sessions along with staff from the teaching divisions.

53. The college analyses recruitment and retention data by gender and ethnicity. The relevant data is sent to each division and staff are expected to incorporate any implications from the data into their annual course review. No one person is designated as having responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity as all managers have this responsibility included in their job specifications, but there is a minority ethnic development officer, whose task is to raise awareness of work-based training in the local minority ethnic communities. He has undertaken initiatives to inform the local communities about work-based training opportunities, and to increase the number of trainees from under-represented groups. These initiatives have included road shows to publicise BCT's services, where girls' schools have been targeted to encourage girls to apply for courses in construction, information technology, engineering and manufacturing. A mobile information technology classroom is used to promote work-based training to local communities. More than 500 year-11 students attended two recent events. These events have had only limited success, although three women started a construction training programme in 1998. The construction department has developed a project for disaffected young people to become builders in the community. The project aims to provide 15 young people each year for five years with training and qualifications in the building trade. The project targets women and members of minority ethnic communities for recruitment. Trainees work on the renovation of empty houses in a local area and they can achieve NVQs at levels 2 and 3 through the college's work-based programme.

54. There is excellent physical access to all the college's buildings for those with mobility difficulties, including ramps and lifts, and there are wheelchair-level counters at reception. Evacuation procedures take account of the needs of people with disabilities. There is a prayer room with a college chaplain and a college imam available to provide support to trainees. BCT has ensured that a work-placement provider will allow a Muslim trainee time for prayer in the workplace. Two Muslim women, whose fathers would not allow them to travel on public transport, were able to continue training as they were found work placements within walking distance of their homes.

55. A college complaints procedure is set out in a student handbook, which is issued to all trainees during their induction to the college. All people served and employed by the college have access to the procedures. There is a file of complaints in the training division for those complaints which are directly work-placement related and which can be resolved more easily by the training and development officers or the head of training. Formal complaints, or those which might relate to the head of training, go to an assistant principal of the college. All complaints follow set procedures. Complaints are logged on an accessible standard form, either by the complainant or by the member of the college's staff receiving the complaint. A complaints tracking sheet is used to monitor the progress of the complaint to resolution. A review of tracking sheets demonstrates that both formal and informal complaints are managed effectively, in a timely and courteous manner, to the satisfaction of complainants.

56. Since 1996, the college has analysed complaints by gender and ethnicity. Over three years, more women than men have made complaints. These have come from trainees who are mainly from white and Pakistani backgrounds, reflecting the ethnic distribution in the college. Most complaints across the college relate to the courses. Separate data for work-based training is not available.

57. The contract with employers states that they should comply with equal opportunities legislation. When monitoring visits are made to employers, the training and development officers check that they have an equal opportunities policy. During reviews, both trainees and the staff make note of any issues in relation to equality of opportunity. However there is no formal system in place to check that employers are adhering to their own or the college policy and not discriminating against trainees.

58. The college prospectus and handbooks make reference to the college's commitment to equality of opportunity but do not give details of the policy or procedures. The college's disability statement is produced in large print, Braille, Urdu and Bengali and is available on request through student services. The college policy on equal opportunities is given to staff and trainees at induction. However there are two versions of the policy, one in the staff handbook and the other in the quality assurance manual. Both policies refer to trainees and staff. The policy in the staff handbook is comprehensive and this is the one used by the training division. One policy states that review of the policy is the responsibility of the academic board; the other that the policy should be reviewed by an equal opportunities committee of college managers who meet three times a year. This committee does not have representation from training staff or trainees. The committee is not a sub-committee of the academic board. Records of the action plans drawn up by the equal opportunities committee show that the targets for the past three years have not been met in full.

59. There is comprehensive monitoring of data in relation to gender and ethnicity both at college and in the training division. Figures are analysed, by individual occupational area, for gender, ethnicity, and disability. Both recruitment and achievement figures are analysed in this way. BCT then compares the figures with local TEC averages, and where this benchmarking shows under performance, it makes efforts to improve in that area. The culture of the college depends on the mentor process to promote good practice. Although there is a generally good approach to equality of opportunity, occasionally some staff members use inappropriate language or slip into gender stereotyping.

Trainee support

Grade 2

60. Trainees are referred to Burnley College and to BCT by the careers service or the Employment Service. There are special programmes for trainees with learning difficulties, and for adults on basic employability programmes, as well as the mainstream occupational programmes. Trainees have access to all the student

services and support mechanisms in the college. They discuss their initial aspirations with a training adviser who keeps records of these interviews in the college. During their induction, trainees receive information on health and safety issues, and college policies and procedures. Trainees take basic numeracy and literacy tests on entry if they have not attained a GCSE at grade C or above in mathematics and English. BCT subcontracts training to the teaching divisions of the college. The training and development officers of BCT arrange work placements and conduct reviews. In some sectors, the occupational trainers conduct the reviews. A record of the review is kept on file in the college. Most trainees with additional learning needs have work placements and all mainstream trainees are employed. Trainees who have additional learning needs are offered extra support. Job-search workshops are provided for trainees who are not employed. There are clear lines of responsibility for trainee support. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses which were identified by the inspectors and the grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good integration of work-based trainees into the college provision
- ◆ effective support for trainees with additional learning needs
- ◆ well-planned induction
- ◆ excellent pastoral support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little individuality in some individual training plans
- ◆ poor target setting for some trainees

61. The college strives to present work-based training as an option alongside other choices within the college provision. The prospectus gives information about work-based training in a similar format to the information on other courses in the college. However the college's Internet site does not as yet give information on the work-based programmes, although they are listed alongside other courses. Trainees and New Deal clients are encouraged to use all the college's facilities for students. These include the refectory, learning resource centre, drop-in information technology centre, the fitness centre, a day nursery and the travel shop. Trainees use all the facilities with the exception of the day nursery.

62. There are a variety of aids and resources for trainees who have practical difficulties in taking full advantage of learning within the college environment. For those who have hearing difficulties, there is an induction loop system, radio microphone system, tape recorders and individual learning support. For those with visual impairment, there are tape recorders, closed circuit television, enlarged print photocopies and individual support. For those with physical disabilities there is excellent physical access, as well as car parking spaces and specialist equipment. Individual support can also be arranged for those using wheelchairs who require it.

Trainees who have encountered difficulties in their work placements have been moved to different or more sheltered places, at the discretion of the training staff.

63. Each trainee attends a full-day induction at the college at the start of their programme. This is well planned, and includes information on health and safety requirements, grievance procedures, the NVQ process and equal opportunities. During induction, the trainees are shown the full range of services available to them in the college. The trainees are given a handbook which doubles as a diary and contains a list of the students' services, the code of conduct, statements on equal opportunities and health and safety and useful telephone numbers. Most young people start their programmes in September when the main college induction is offered. However, those who start at other times during the year also receive a full induction. Young people who have special learning needs have a separate induction within the training division to allow for a different pace of teaching. Induction for adults on the work-based training programme is offered every four weeks.

64. There is excellent pastoral support for all trainees and an extensive counselling service. There are qualified counsellors in the training division itself and in the community centre used for adult training, as well as regular college counsellors. There are strong and well-used links with the probation services, housing associations for young people and Social Services. Trainees have been provided with counselling to help them cope with a variety of stressful events, such as the death of another student, family bereavement and accidents. Trainees with hygiene problems are, on occasion, visited by staff, who help them clean their accommodation and clothing, and advise them on their personal presentation so that these problems do not adversely affect their progress. Several trainees who dropped out of the school system have been encouraged and supported to train in a secure environment. Trainees who cannot work at home are given time and space in the workplace.

65. At the beginning of the programmes, mainstream trainees undergo psychometric assessment with a structured interview. This includes discussion of the trainees' national records of achievement, school reports and past experiences, part-time jobs and curricula vitae where appropriate. However, there is no use made of the college's procedures to assess trainees' prior learning in a systematic way, other than in a few isolated examples.

66. The college is developing a computerised screening programme for the initial assessment of key skills. It is accessed through the Internet and has been used this year by some work-based trainees. There is a set of simple feeder questions, which automatically directs the user to further questions on either basic or key skills. The answers are analysed on the system and reports are printed and sent to the tutors. However, the system is not fully developed and the results were not used for the current trainees' action planning.

67. In most occupational areas, there is a lack of individuality in the initial assessment process and the subsequent action planning. Individual training plans in

most areas are indistinguishable. They lack details in terms of individual assessed needs and a plan of how these needs could be addressed.

68. Reviews are generally frequent, but in four of the occupational areas, the process does not help trainees to progress towards their qualifications. In care and construction, blanks are left in the action planning sections of review forms. In care and business administration, the employers are not involved in the process. In construction and retail in particular, there are no specific intermediate targets. Copies are not given to the trainee or the employer.

Management of training

Grade 2

69. BCT is a division of Burnley College. Both trainees and staff have access to the facilities and support that this large organisation can provide. Over the last few years the training division has expanded significantly; new areas include adult training and areas vacated by other training providers, such as information technology. Some of this expansion has been opportunistic and some has been planned. The income from the training arm of the college is now almost 10 per cent of the college's total income. The training division is situated in a new, dedicated suite of offices and training rooms within the main college's campus. These training rooms are used for trainees with additional learning needs. Adult training is carried out on another site in a refurbished building. In addition, there is a business development office in the town that acts as an interface with employers. The organisational structure within BCT is split into four sections to manage trainees with additional support needs, trainees without such needs, adult trainees, and a section providing administrative support. The divisional team consists of a manager, whose line manager is an assistant principal, a deputy who also acts as the work-placement manager, two programme leaders, two administration officers, and seven training development officers. Their role is to act as a link with employers, to recruit trainees and to monitor trainees' progress in the workplace. In addition, New Deal is managed and run by the college's student services unit. All the New Deal clients are on the full-time education and training option and their training is fully integrated into programmes within the occupational areas of the college. The BCT manager has a dedicated budget. He meets his line manager every two weeks on a formal basis and many times more informally. The main agenda items are strategic planning and financial matters. Team meetings within the division are held every two months. All trainees who require additional support are catered for within the training division itself, while the training of most of the other trainees is subcontracted out to the college's specialist occupational divisions. Training in engineering and masonry is subcontracted outside the college. The training for motor vehicle programmes was also subcontracted out but has recently been handed over completely to another specialist training provider. Ninety-eight per cent of BCT's training takes place in the college. All subcontractors' activities and responsibilities are set out in service level agreements. The staff have job descriptions that set out their roles and responsibilities and to whom they report. Staff development is directly linked to annual appraisal. A full range of compliance

records and statistics is available to assist in strategic decisions. The management information system is used by the division for tracking New Deal clients and providing statistics to the New Deal co-ordinator. Burnley college gained the Investors in People Standard in 1995 and was re-accredited in 1998. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and correctly identified many strengths but was over-critical in the weaknesses listed. Other strengths and weaknesses were found by inspectors. The self-assessment report was written in November and actions to improve the management of training in the near future had been started by the time of inspection. The grade awarded by the inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-controlled management of training
- ◆ extensive staff development programme
- ◆ good internal communications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.
- ◆ no overall tracking of trainees' progress

70. BCT has an annual business plan which forms part of the college's strategic plan. It analyses local labour market, social and economic trends. The result of this extensive study is then used as a basis for influencing management decisions, aiming to ensure that the range and volume of the training will meet the needs of industry and commerce, and the expectations of school leavers. There is also an annual review of BCT's performance against contractual targets, which is used to inform targets for the following year. Targets are set for recruitment, outcomes and trainees' retention. A target achievement plan is devised, agreed and implemented at a section and individual level. Staff are involved in the process and highly committed to it. All staff are enthusiastic and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

71. The college's ISO 9002 quality standard procedures help to maintain a consistent approach to management. There are also detailed service level agreements for both internal and external subcontractors which clarify training requirements. These agreements were used effectively to address poor performance on the part of one subcontractor; when problems were identified, rapid action was taken, with remedial action identified and acted upon promptly.

72. The TEC has monitored significant improvements in BCT's performance over the last three years. BCT has moved from relatively poor performance, in comparison with other local training providers, to become one of the most successful training providers, both for mainstream trainees and for those with special needs. This is also confirmed by feedback from trainees and employers.

73. The college holds three training days each year which all staff are expected to attend. Those involved in teaching and training attend themed training days which form the college's 'Excellence in Teaching and Learning Initiative'. Other staff attend alternative training sessions. Staff use the new information and techniques gained in these sessions to improve their own performance and the effectiveness of their teaching. In so doing, they consult with trainees about their opinions of any proposed changes and their impact

74. In addition to these training opportunities, full-time staff undergo annual appraisals in which they identify their training needs. Although this system is not extended to part-time staff, they also have the opportunity to attend all relevant staff development opportunities. Staff from the training division have attended 13 training events in the past year.

75. Open debate by staff is encouraged in many different ways. The principal holds three staff meetings a year for all staff, where he reports on the college's performance against strategic targets and annual goals; he also meets with divisional staff in an open forum twice a year and meets all new full-time members of staff individually. Academic board meetings have only three agenda items, and staff are given prior notice of these so they may be discussed, and questions brought to the meetings by staff or departmental representatives. Academic board members are split into discussion groups for initial discussions on the agenda items. There is one major awards ceremony for the whole college and one for each division. Governors, tutors, recipients and their parents are invited together, with special guests on occasions. Such events celebrate success but also provide communication channels. Staff state that internal communications have improved considerably in the last 18 months and that they now receive information in a timely manner, so that they have the opportunity to influence debate.

76. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training in all but two of the specialist occupational areas. Co-ordination is not a problem in foundation for work or manufacturing, as the trainer acts as both the assessor and the progress reviewer, supported by the training development officers. In other areas, where this is not the case, trainees' progress is delayed by the employers' lack of understanding of what is happening at college. This means that employers cannot plan the on-the-job experience to reinforce the theory training their trainees are receiving.

77. BCT has no master tracking system to monitor trainees' progress. Progress, achievement rates and retention rates are not readily available for analysis or to spot where trainees are slipping behind. This reduces the accuracy of future planning. Individual training plans reflect standard dates for achievement. In both care and engineering, some trainees have not been assessed in the workplace for a period of several months and this problem has not been easily identified.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

78. BCT developed a quality assurance policy and procedure manual, and achieved the ISO 9002 quality standard in March 1995, as part of the TEC's requirements. BCT's procedures cover all aspects of the work undertaken with trainees and include recruitment, initial assessment, induction, training, assessment and verification. The college as a whole subsequently developed its own quality assurance management system in 1996. The quality assurance framework is extensive and BCT follows both its own ISO 9002 procedures and the relevant college-wide procedures. There is a document which makes clear the relationship between the two sets of procedures and there are agreed differences between them. BCT's operating procedures are under continual monitoring and review, and in 1999 further procedures were added to cover activities relating to the adult programmes. Responsibility for quality rests with several key people. An external consultant has supported BCT to develop and implement its procedures, and has a continuing role in terms of internally auditing procedural compliance. The college's quality assurance manager is responsible for the development and implementation of the college's overall quality assurance procedures. BCT's manager is also responsible for ensuring that the quality assurance management system is effectively implemented. There is an internal college inspection team whose role is to inspect the quality of training across the college, including BCT, and to identify areas for improvement. Internal inspection is a relatively new initiative, introduced in April 1999 and repeated six months later. Regular monitoring of BCT is conducted by the TEC to ensure contract compliance. Recent monitoring reports show favourable results, with a requirement for BCT to produce a joint action plan to address its findings combined with those from external inspection. Feedback is obtained from a variety of sources. Staff feedback was obtained through a survey conducted by an external consultancy in 1998. Staff feedback is also gathered regularly through the meetings programme, as well as through informal methods. Trainees, staff and employers' feedback is gathered from questionnaires using a proprietary software programme. Feedback is collected and analysed at different stages of the trainees' programmes and the key findings are summarised. The findings have informed the development of the self-assessment report. Self-assessment is now a routine feature of the college's quality assurance framework. The self-assessment process was conducted by each division within the college and all staff were involved in either developing or agreeing the proposed strengths and weaknesses. BCT produced a self-assessment report which was separate from the college report, but which complements it, and deals entirely with work-based training. BCT claimed several strengths in this aspect of training, and only two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed, in the main, with the strengths and found that the weaknesses were already being addressed at the time of inspection. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and well-used quality assurance arrangements

- ◆ good involvement by staff in development of quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ thorough self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some weak internal verification practice
- ◆ no formal monitoring of the quality of on-the-job training

GOOD PRACTICE

There is a three-tiered system for the observation of staff providing off-the-job training. Line managers observe sessions as part of the staff appraisal system. The college inspector observes classes as part of the college's quality assurance regime. The good practice lies in the peer observation of training whereby members of staff sit in on each other's classes and complete an observation record using previously laid down performance criteria. This peer observation is entirely confidential between the observer and trainer, and its purpose is personal development and a means of sharing good training practice. Staff find this system to be useful in helping them to improve the standard of their training activity.

79. The quality assurance management system in operation at the college and at BCT is very comprehensive and covers almost all of the activities which relate to trainees. There is a quality assurance policy, and detailed procedures, which clearly list the procedure, accompanying documents and responsibilities for a broad range of activities. The internal audit process is particularly rigorous. The internal audit schedule ensures that all procedures are audited annually by an external auditor, and some are audited up to four times each year. The audit results in a detailed and objective report, identifying any non-compliance and making recommendations for adjustments or additions to existing procedures and documents. The overall results from internal audits are formally reviewed at management level within BCT twice each year, and appropriate action taken as a result of the findings. There are many examples of BCT identifying and resolving problems which have been highlighted in this way. For example, staff and managers identified some difficulties and inconsistencies in the internal verification process, and firm plans are now in place to change the staffing responsibilities in some areas. Routinely, the internal audit process highlights areas where documents are not completed correctly, or on time, and managers then take corrective action to ensure that the same problem does not recur. The quality assurance management system includes an evaluation and improvement procedure, which stipulates how BCT monitors and evaluates the quality of its training, using a range of information and processes.

80. There are no procedures to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training, and the monitoring of the college's teaching divisions as subcontractors has only recently become formalised by BCT. There are detailed service level agreements between BCT and the teaching divisions responsible for the delivery of some aspects of the TEC-funded programmes. However, these are a relatively recent development as they were implemented in September 1999, and it is too early to assess their effectiveness in terms of the impact on improving the quality of training. There is no procedure for monitoring externally subcontracted training.

81. The quality assurance management system is well established within the organisation. Staff are closely involved in the development of procedures. There is a college quality assurance committee composed of a cross-section of staff, and its role is to initiate and approve developments in the quality assurance management system. There are opportunities for staff to suggest improvements through staff meetings and to request amendments to procedures. BCT's head of department reviews these personally. Staff understand and are committed to the quality assurance management system and to continuous improvement. The 'Excellence in

Teaching and Learning Initiative' is a college-wide approach to improving standards throughout the college. Part of this initiative involves a staff conference where best practice is shared, and new ideas developed and implemented by BCT.

82. The self-assessment process is a routine feature of the quality assurance management cycle at the college and BCT. The first self-assessment report was produced in July 1998 and identified many strengths and weaknesses across training and teaching. This resulted in a detailed and relevant action plan, with actions taken and the plan updated accordingly. There were many examples of weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report which have been dealt with and which have led to clear improvements over the last 18 months. For example, the first self-assessment report identified that there was a lack of trainees' feedback about the effectiveness of induction. This has been addressed by introducing a monitoring questionnaire for trainees. A computer-based programme has also been used to obtain feedback from both trainees and employers, and the results of this were used to inform the self-assessment report. BCT recognises that there was insufficient data analysis regarding trainees' destinations when preparing the self-assessment report. There was considerable staff input to the self-assessment process. Although the self-assessment process is the central feature of the drive for continuous improvement, inspectors found that there were some inaccuracies in the detail of the report. Many examples of no more than normal practice were cited as strengths and not all the key weaknesses were identified through self-assessment. BCT did, however, correctly identify some weaknesses, and was too critical of its training under two of the generic aspects.

83. There is considerable variation in the operation of the internal verification procedures across the training. In three programme areas, significant weaknesses were found in internal verification practice. Although a detailed procedure exists, some individual verifiers were interpreting it more loosely than others. In two programme areas, internal verification was found by inspectors to be particularly rigorous and effective, and in others there was serious concern about this important process.

84. The quality of on-the-job training is not adequately monitored by BCT. There are no procedures for establishing or maintaining the quality of this aspect of the trainees' programmes. The quality of this training is assumed to be satisfactory unless a problem is identified through the assessment or review processes. There is no formal method whereby BCT's staff can observe or identify good or poor practice in on-the-job training. There is a missed opportunity for BCT to review the quality of on-the-job training and use this to inform further continuous improvement activity.