



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MARCH 2000

# Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd

## SUMMARY

Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd provides good engineering training, particularly during the first year off-the-job phase. Achievement and retention rates are high. Trainees are employed in companies which provide a wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace. Opportunities for work-based training are actively promoted. Trainees are satisfactorily supported during their training programmes but initial assessment and individual training plans are weak. Promotion of training to young women has improved their involvement to 17 per cent. Staff are well supported through developmental training and their performance is monitored. Some employers are insufficiently involved in training programmes. Internal verification is weak, as it is dominated by the examination of portfolios, although quality assurance arrangements for the monitoring of training are good.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good range of learning opportunities in work placements
- ◆ high-quality engineering foundation training
- ◆ good retention and achievement
- ◆ comprehensive review process at foundation level
- ◆ effective staff development programme

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed assessment
- ◆ over reliance on witness testimony
- ◆ inadequate review process for NVQ level 3 trainees
- ◆ weak internal verification
- ◆ inadequate involvement of employers in training programme

## INTRODUCTION

1. Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd (GTG) is a registered charity based in Gloucester. GTG is owned by a membership of 24 local engineering companies. These companies range in size from small to medium enterprises together with two large multinational corporations. The companies are located across a wide area of Gloucestershire. The group management board has 12 members, comprising senior executives as representatives from the member companies, the group training manager and the company secretary.

2. GTG has contracts from The Link Group, which is the training and enterprise council (TEC) in Gloucestershire for work-based training for young people. GTG has a total of 127 trainees. Training is offered in engineering for 118 modern apprentices and four trainees on other work-based programmes for young people, and in business administration for five trainees. Trainees work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3. GTG also offers management training to local engineering companies on a commercial basis. Business administration and management training were not inspected. In 1996, GTG started training for modern apprentices. During that year, the number of modern apprentices was 17 compared to 139 young people on other work-based programmes. Since 1996, the total number of trainees has reduced slightly but the proportion of apprenticeships has increased significantly. Currently, there are 122 modern apprentices and only five trainees on other work-based programmes. Most trainees are recruited by the engineering companies with GTG's assistance. Each year, GTG also recruits and selects a small number of youth trainees on engineering foundation training. Since April 1999, GTG assumed direct responsibility for the training of 23 trainees in one local large engineering company. Previously, the contract with the TEC was directly with the company. The TEC requested that the company's staff continue to undertake the formal review of trainees' progress. GTG counts these trainees within its total of 127 trainees.

3. In 1999, the proportion of 16-year-olds staying in full-time education in Gloucestershire was high, at 73 per cent. Of those leaving full-time education, only 9 per cent progressed into government-funded training. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 56.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. GTG is in competition with two further education colleges for engineering trainees in the Gloucester area.

4. Unemployment in Gloucestershire, at 2.7 per cent in March 2000, is lower than the national average of 3.9 per cent. The largest employment sector is public administration, education and health with 24 per cent of the county's workforce. The manufacturing sector is next largest with 23 per cent. This latter figure compares with a national proportion of 17 per cent for manufacturing. There is a continuing reliance on manufacturing in the local economy. Local economic

forecasts on the manufacturing sector predict a reduction in demand for traditional craft skills and an increased requirement for professional engineers and technicians. The increased demand is expected to be mainly in electronics and motor vehicle engineering.

5. At the time of the 1991 census, people from minority ethnic communities represented 1.9 per cent of the population of Gloucestershire. This figure is significantly lower than the national average although it is in line with most of the Southwest. Employment in the distribution, hotels and restaurant sectors is popular with those from minority ethnic groups.

6. GTG is currently involved in a government-funded skills development project. The long-term objective of the project is to create a training centre of engineering excellence owned and managed by the industry. It is planned that the training centre will provide access to engineering training and education through the use of information and communications technology. Through this, it is proposed that trainees will learn all their off-the-job, theoretical knowledge to support the practical skills they learn on the job. A working party was established in autumn 1999, under the management of GTG. The working party consists of representatives of local engineering companies, local colleges, the regional development agency, the engineering awarding body and GTG's trainees.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. GTG undertook the self-assessment process for the first time in November 1999. The process involved all of the training centre's staff in providing information for the group training manager's report. Information obtained from an analysis of trainees and employers' questionnaires was also used in the report. The initial report failed to identify strengths and weaknesses in equal opportunities and quality assurance and did not set the training in context by including local socio-economic data. However, these omissions were rectified at the start of the inspection process. The report accurately identifies some strengths and weaknesses but not others. The action plan in the report did not address all of the identified weaknesses.

8. Four inspectors spent a total of 15 days with GTG. Inspectors interviewed 33 trainees and made 10 workplace visits. They met 13 supervisors or employers. Seventeen interviews were conducted with GTG's staff. The internal verifier for the foundation training was interviewed. Twenty-four trainees' files and portfolios were examined. Other documents reviewed included contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance processes, minutes of meetings, promotional arrangements, and management and quality assurance evidence. Inspectors observed and graded four training sessions in engineering, awarding one a grade 1, one a grade 2 and two at grade 3.

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 2

9. There are 122 engineering trainees of whom 118 are modern apprentices. The remaining four are on other training programmes for young people. Currently all trainees are employed. Most trainees are employed in medium to large engineering companies. Many of these companies operate in areas of advanced technology, including aerospace and telecommunications. All trainees work towards the NVQs at foundation level 2 during their first year of the off-the-job programme in GTG's training centre. Currently there are 21 trainees based in the training centre. Successful trainees move on to an additional three technical units to satisfy the modern apprenticeship framework requirements. These three additional units are chosen in consultation with employers. Appropriately qualified training staff assess the foundation level NVQ. Towards the end of the first year programme, the trainees work in small teams on 'design and make' projects. Second-year modern apprentices go to their employers for on-the-job training towards level 3 qualifications. GTG provides monitoring, assessment and verification services during this phase of the training. GTG has one member of staff who is responsible for assessing in the workplace. Since September 1999, the use of the single workplace assessor from GTG has been supplemented with some support from other training

centre staff. There are few workplace assessors. Approximately 38 per cent of level 3 modern apprentices are working on engineering production, 36 per cent are involved in technical services and 17 per cent are in mechanical or electrical maintenance. Apprentices also attend day-release training each week at one of three local colleges to study for a vocational qualification. Most modern apprentices are following the traditional four-year programme leading to national and higher national certificates. The self-assessment report identified five strengths and six weaknesses. Several of the strengths and weaknesses were not relevant to the occupational sector. The report did not clearly recognise most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement
- ◆ high-quality engineering foundation training
- ◆ occupationally relevant additional qualifications gained
- ◆ good range of learning opportunities in work placements
- ◆ good documentary evidence in portfolios

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ over-reliance on witness testimony
- ◆ delayed assessment
- ◆ inadequate tracking systems at NVQ level 3

10. Over the last three years, the retention and achievement rate for the level 2 foundation programme has been 89 per cent. GTG began direct entry to modern apprenticeships in September 1997. Retention at the level 3 stage for the 1997 and 1998 groups was 83 per cent. GTG's first group of modern apprentices consisted of 23 transfers from other youth training programmes in 1996. Two trainees have since completed the apprenticeship, eight left after completing level 3, seven left before the completion of level 3 and six are still in training.

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*A group of sixth form students from a local school are designing and manufacturing a fibre-optic link. A modern apprentice in the tool room of an engineering company is acting as a technical consultant for them.*

11. There is a well-planned and structured scheme for teaching the engineering foundation training. Entry to the scheme is through an introduction to basic engineering skills which occurs within the two-week induction period. The skills developed during the programme are highly valued by both the trainees and their employers. After each stage, there is a comprehensive progress report prepared for each trainee. Good feedback is given on an individual basis. Accurate records are kept of attendance both in the workshop and at individual lectures together with grades for knowledge and practical work. Individual progress is recorded on wall charts which are readily accessible to trainees.

12. Satisfactory equipment is used in teaching the mandatory and optional units in the programme. Additional specialist resources such as computer-controlled

machine tools, hydraulics and pneumatics are available for additional units during the foundation year. There is an excellent resource for computer-aided design and software-programming work. All of the current group of first-year modern apprentices undertake a further two units above that required by the modern apprenticeship framework. The choice of units is a joint decision between the trainee and employer.

13. The engineering employers provide workplaces with a wide range of learning opportunities for the trainees. Many of these companies work in areas of advanced technology, including aerospace and telecommunications. Trainees work in different sections of the company. Most of the companies have structured training plans for their trainees which ensure that they receive a range of good on-the-job training.

14. Trainees' portfolios contain well-presented and high-quality documentary evidence, particularly at level 2. The quality of evidence at level 3 improves as trainees progress, with better, new evidence being substituted for poorer, old evidence on occasions. During the foundation training, the trainees develop a good understanding of the NVQ process. Trainees at work are able to take responsibility for the identification and production of evidence for the NVQ and key skills. Some trainees are well supported by workplace mentors in the development of NVQ and key skills evidence.

15. Portfolios at level 3 are dominated by the use of witness testimony. Inadequate use is made of evidence from direct observations of trainees' performance at work. Direct observation by assessors does occur in some work placements but it does not usually result in an observation report by the assessor. Witness's signatures on the trainee's written report from work are often not supported by detailed statements from the witness or evidence of questions asked of the trainee. Where the assessor is working outside his specialist area of competence, the current communication links with the expert witness are unsatisfactory. Since September 1999, GTG has increased its number of instructors. This strategy is aimed at increasing the number and range of specialist staff making assessment and support visits to the workplace.

16. During the frequent visits of the GTG assessor to the workplace, the trainees present written evidence for assessment. It is common practice for this evidence to be examined and accepted by the assessor. This acceptance and storing of evidence is not recorded as an assessment process. The 'formal' assessment process occurs at a late stage in the trainee's programme when a sufficient quantity of evidence has been stored and trainees' competence is judged to be 'ready for final assessment'. This delay in the workplace assessment process is prevalent in both the NVQ level 3 and key skills work.

17. GTG does not have an adequate tracking system to monitor the progress of individual trainees doing the level 3 training. Trainees and employers are unclear of progress made and of what is left to do.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 3**

18. GTG has an equal opportunities policy, which meets the requirements of the TEC and the relevant awarding bodies. The group training manager has overall responsibility for equal opportunities. The policy was last reviewed in September 1998. Equal opportunities is a standing agenda item on staff meetings and on the modern apprentices' committee meeting. There are no trainees from ethnic minority groups or with a declared disability. One member of the training staff, who is an ex-trainee, is from a minority ethnic group. The self-assessment process identified eight strengths and two weaknesses. Some of the claimed strengths were not directly relevant to equal opportunities. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness by trainees of the complaints procedure
- ◆ effective collaboration to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ good recruitment of women in training programmes

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of systematic monitoring in the workplace
- ◆ incomplete recording of procedures

19. Trainees are aware of how to complain if they have a concern. This awareness is initially developed in a session on equal opportunities during the induction programme. Trainees' awareness is raised by the use of displayed procedures on noticeboards around the training centre. Foundation trainees have a further opportunity to raise concerns through the formal meetings of the modern apprentices' committee. GTG's management uses this committee for providing guidance on equal opportunities and receiving feedback from trainees on its implementation. Trainees are represented on the committee, which recognises an equal status for both unemployed trainees and employed modern apprentices. Many trainees are employed in medium-sized companies which have personnel and training staff with particular responsibility for the welfare of trainees. Trainees are aware of their company's procedures for making a complaint, in addition to the access they have to GTG's staff. The working relationships between trainees and GTG's staff are open and effective. There are no written records of complaints.

20. GTG is actively involved in promoting work-based training through collaborative arrangements with other groups. For example, GTG was a founder member of a group promoting engineering as a career in the Gloucestershire area. This group now includes 22 engineering companies in association with other training providers and the local careers organisation. The group attempts to raise the profile of



engineering as a career. It works with local schools through the Science and Technology Regional Organisation, which co-ordinates projects between educational establishments and industry, and with the engineering national training organisation. GTG is managing the steering group of the skills development project, aimed at widening training opportunities through the use of information and communications technology. Two women who are currently modern apprentices represent trainees' interests on this steering group.

21. GTG's staff promote work-based training at school open days. This promotion includes talks and presentations to local girls' schools. Several years ago, GTG produced a video on opportunities in local engineering companies. This video featured a trainee who was a woman from a minority ethnic group. Of the current engineering trainees, 7 per cent are women. In 1999, the intake of women as first-year trainees was 17 per cent. The national average for the intake of women onto engineering modern apprenticeships is 3 per cent. GTG has not set targets for recruitment of women or people from minority ethnic groups.

22. GTG checks a company's compliance with equal opportunities requirements before it contracts with this employer. However, other than asking trainees during the review process, GTG does not have a method for regular monitoring of equal opportunities at work. Some trainees are not fully aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding equality of opportunity in the workplace. Recently, the trainees' review process in the workplace has included some reference to equal opportunities. The training officer performing the reviews has not received training on equal opportunities for several years.

23. The procedures used by GTG for the implementation and monitoring equal opportunities are not fully recorded. The company statements refer to strategies and action plans for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy but these are not formally disseminated to staff.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 3**

24. GTG carries out an initial assessment of trainees' knowledge and skills. The tests measure engineering aptitude, reasoning and mathematical ability. The results are used to determine suitability for entry into the training programmes and inform potential employers of applicants' ability. Once a trainee has gained employment or has joined the training programme with no sponsoring employer, the test results are used to determine additional training needs. Most trainees have a two-week induction. The first two days are used for the completion of administration data, to provide information on the training programme, to give initial guidance on health and safety and to provide team-building opportunities. The rest of the induction time is spent developing basic engineering skills, such as engineering drawing and the use of measuring instruments, before they start work towards the NVQ at level 2. Those trainees who join the programme late have an individual induction to the programme of training and to rules and regulations. Reviews are carried out at the

end of every seven-week training block during the foundation training and then every six weeks when the trainees are working towards level 3 with their employers. GTG's staff help to find employment for those trainees who enter the training with no sponsoring employer. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Others were more appropriate to other aspects of the report or were found to be no more than normal practice. The report did not identify any of the weaknesses found by inspectors. The inspection grade is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good support for trainees to secure employment
- ◆ celebration of trainees' achievement
- ◆ comprehensive review process at foundation level

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate review process for level 3 trainees
- ◆ no use of initial assessment information to develop individual training plans
- ◆ no assessment of ability in key skills on entry

25. The few trainees who are not initially employed when starting the training are given extensive help to find employment. GTG's training officer contacts employers to encourage their interest in employing these trainees. Any interested employer is sent copies of the trainees' foundation reviews to help them determine the suitability of the trainee. The trainees are helped to complete personal profiles which accompany the reviews sent to the employer. GTG also organises work placements for up to two months on completion of level 2. This activity provides trainees with further experience to enhance their employability and the possibility of employment from the work-placement provider. Among the trainees starting in 1999, there was a group of five unemployed trainees, two of whom left the programme early after failing to get jobs. The other three have completed the qualification. One is now in employment and the other two are receiving additional help to find work. Fifty-five per cent of the unemployed entrants from 1998 are currently employed.

26. Many employers have a strong company culture which fosters training and professional development. They treat trainees as equal to any employee and take care in ensuring that trainees have all the necessary experience and support they need to progress.

27. GTG ensures that trainees' achievements publicly highlighted through staging a celebration of achievement of level 2. Parents, employers, trainees and GTG's staff attend an event at a local hotel. The event is well attended every year. GTG also enters trainees each year for a local chamber of commerce award for technical and craft apprentices. This and other trainees' achievements are publicised in the local press.

28. The reviews carried out by GTG's instructors at the training centre during the foundation training are comprehensive. They contain detailed information on the trainees' progress in completing practical work with marks for quality, accuracy and time. They also show the instructor's judgement of the trainee's general attributes of work, behaviour and attitude. All these reports are discussed in detail with each trainee. Copies of the reviews are sent to the trainees' employers. Reviews at level 3 are inadequate. Approximately half of employers' representatives are not present during the review process. There is insufficient input from the training officer, trainee and the employer in the written record of the review. Written reviews do not include a satisfactory record of progress towards the NVQ or key skills units. Reviews do not clearly identify an action plan for the next stage.

29. The initial assessment process identifies trainees' additional learning needs, but this information is not used to update the individual training plan. The plans contain no information on the type of support needed or how it will be given. There are no records of any additional learning support to be provided or on the progress made by the trainee. GTG does not systematically assess the key skills level of trainees on entry.

## Management of training

## Grade 3

30. The 24 member companies which own GTG appoint representatives to sit on the group management board. The executive committee of GTG consists of four members of the group management board, the group training manager and the company secretary. The executive committee undertakes strategic management through monthly meetings. GTG's training is managed on a daily basis by the group training manager who has direct responsibility for the company secretary, the group training and safety advisor and the group training officer. The company secretary has line-management responsibility for the financial administrator and the training co-ordinator. The group training officer is the line manager of the chief instructor, who in turn manages six instructors in the training centre. The company has been assessed successfully on three occasions since 1992 for the Investor in People Standard. The company identified four strengths and two weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors validated three of the four strengths identified in the self-assessment report and noted that progress had been made to overcome the weaknesses in the report. However, two other weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment grade.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ open management style
- ◆ effective staff development programme
- ◆ productive links with external groups

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate arrangements with colleges
- ◆ inadequate involvement of employers in training programme

31. Monthly meetings are attended by all staff. The chief instructor chairs a monthly meeting of instructors. All meetings are minuted with actions clearly highlighted and followed through in the subsequent meeting. These meetings provide a forum to discuss trends and share ideas. All staff participate in the business-planning exercise by completing a critical analysis of their area and submitting this to the group-training manager. This analysis is then considered by the group training manager. This exercise informs the overall business plan of the organisation. The current business plan has been reviewed and amended on a yearly basis to meet changes in demand for engineering training.

32. All staff are appraised on a yearly basis and are given the option of a six-monthly review. The process is well established and has been used since 1992. The group training manager is appraised by both his staff and the executive committee of the training group. He circulates his self-appraisal to all staff. A staff representative is nominated to collect the staff views on the self-appraisal and feed back at a meeting with the group manager. The staff's appraisal of the manager is maintained in the group training manager's personal file.

33. All new staff are encouraged to take up training to enable them to perform their roles more effectively. Two recent recruits have been sent on 'train the trainer' courses and are currently working towards assessor awards. New staff are given the opportunity of shadowing an experienced staff member as part of their probationary programme. Every staff member has a staff development plan. GTG uses an overall skills matrix to identify gaps. Relevant staff are encouraged to undertake training to fill identified gaps in the company's skill profile. Staff are given a one-off bonus for taking up such additional training. GTG's staff work effectively as a team by sharing of training expertise through internal staff development sessions. Staff are also encouraged to take up additional personal development courses or tasks outside the organisation. GTG's management either pays part of the cost of these courses or provides a time allowance.

34. GTG has established links with many external organisations. The group training manager meets with other local training providers on a monthly basis. These meetings are a forum at which to share common concerns of training providers, latest trends in industry, changes to government funding, updates on legislation and to identify good and poor practice. The manager organises the working party for the skills development project. This group meets on a two-monthly basis and is attended by representatives from local employers, colleges, the engineering awarding body, the local TEC and trainees. This group is involved in the initial development of new learning and training resources.

35. Until the recent developments through the skills development project, the working relationships between GTG and the local colleges were poor. The colleges have provided termly progress and attendance reports directly to the employers of trainees attending its day-release theoretical courses. GTG does not systematically obtain copies of these reports. GTG has recently developed a contractual arrangement for quality assurance of college training. This contract has been agreed by one college but has not yet been implemented.

36. Some employers do not give priority to the modern apprenticeship training programme. The work for a few trainees is dominated by the production needs of the employer. In two companies, trainees have not been moved from a section because their expertise is required to meet production demands. A few trainees complain of lack of progress towards their NVQ owing to the demand of repetitive production tasks. Several employers do not give adequate time to GTG's staff during review visits and they do not contribute effectively to the review process. Several employers devolve full responsibility for the NVQ and key skills to the trainee and GTG's staff. Some trainees receive structured support from workplace mentors in modifications to individual training plans in accord with NVQ requirements, but many trainees do not get such support. In attempts to obtain increased involvement of workplace supervisors, GTG's staff have proposed many training opportunities to employers to familiarise them with the requirements of NVQs, key skills and the role of an assessor and expert witness. GTG has attempted to facilitate assessor training. The participation in these training activities has been poor. Some employers have allocated mentors for their trainees. Several of the mentors have not received the relevant staff training offered by GTG.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

37. GTG has quality assurance procedures covering some aspects of training. The training centre's staff are involved in the implementation of procedures, with overall responsibility resting with the group training manager. The procedures were revised in September 1999. GTG meets the quality assurance requirements of two awarding bodies and the local TEC. A member of staff from a local training provider is contracted to undertake the internal verification of the engineering foundation programme. Internal verification for the level 3 programme is performed by the group training manager. The self-assessment process identified six strengths and one weakness. Inspectors validated three of the strengths but considered the others to be no more than normal practice or invalid. Inspectors did not validate the given weakness but did identify three others. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good quality assurance of internal training
- ◆ effective use of trainees and employers' feedback
- ◆ influential apprentice committee

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient action planning
- ◆ weak internal verification
- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance of subcontractors

38. Training in GTG's training centre is rigorously monitored. The group training manager conducts spot checks on training sessions and completes a report. The instructor observed is given verbal feedback by the group training manager and a copy of the written record. The outcome of the monitoring process is followed through and any additional knowledge or skill required by the instructor is actioned with a target date. The progress and performance of the instructor is then monitored to ensure that there are no further concerns. This formal monitoring of training is performed on a quarterly basis. In addition, the group training manager undertakes informal monitoring of training, in particular with staff taking on a new area of work. The content of the portfolios produced by each foundation trainee is subject to quality monitoring. To supplement the standard assessment and internal verification processes, the group-training officer performs quality checks three times a year on all portfolios.

39. GTG has obtained formal feedback from employers and trainees by using a comprehensive set of questionnaires for the past two years. All responses to these questionnaires are analysed. This analysis has resulted in some remedial action. However, performance targets are not set and the analysis is not used to inform a continuous improvement strategy. GTG has used the analysis of the latest feedback to inform judgements made in the self-assessment report. This feedback was supplemented by views expressed by GTG staff in their analysis of the business. GTG's management obtains informal feedback from employers through frequent contact on visits and effective communication between members of the training group. Feedback from employers to GTG regarding concerns about inadequate progress reports from one college have been addressed by GTG's staff. Analysis of feedback from trainees and employers initiated GTG's current strategy to establish an information and communications technology based off-the-job programme of formal educational qualifications which will no longer require GTG to subcontract off-the-job training.

40. GTG encourages first-year apprentices to be actively involved in the management of the training centre. This is achieved through an apprentice committee, which is chaired by the group training manager. Apprentices are responsible for nominating representatives to attend the meetings, proposing meeting dates and setting agendas. The committee discusses general issues raised

by trainees relating to the working environment and the training given in the training centre. The committee also considers the manager's general concerns on trainees' performance. All discussions are minuted with actions which are monitored and reviewed in the subsequent meeting. The committee provides effective feedback from trainees to GTG's management and has influenced a range of improvements to the training.

41. GTG has taken action on several of the weaknesses identified by the self-assessment process. However, not all of the weaknesses were addressed in the report's action plan. GTG's staff analyses data on achievement, retention and the reasons why some trainees leave training early, but action towards further continuous improvement is not clearly identified. The action required by an external verifier in December 1998 was not fully implemented. The external verifier's report in January 2000 reiterated some of the required actions. GTG is currently addressing these issues. GTG is subject to external audits by staff from the local TEC. Action required from an audit in March 1999 had not been completed before the subsequent audit of October 1999.

42. Internal verification of the foundation programme is undertaken at three stages across the one-year programme. The verification process is dominated by examination of portfolio evidence and there is little direct observation of assessors. The internal verification findings and feedback are given verbally to a meeting of GTG's staff. Records of the internal verification process are inadequate. The internal verification of the work-based level 3 assessment is delayed until the near completion of the trainees' portfolios. There is little direct observation of assessors in the workplace.

43. Since April 1999, GTG has taken responsibility for the training of 23 trainees at a large engineering company. Qualified staff within the engineering company undertake all trainees' reviews and assessments. GTG does internally verify the assessment process. Copies of the reviews are sent to GTG, but no arrangements have been established to formally monitor the quality of the trainees' review process.