

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 1999

Craven College

SUMMARY

Business administration at Craven College is good, providing modern apprentices and other youth trainees with excellent opportunities for learning and developing occupational skills. Training in health, care and public services is satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is promoted and rigorously enforced through all aspects of the training programme and it is guaranteed for all trainees. Support systems are comprehensive and meet trainees' needs. They help trainees to further their personal development and to succeed. The management of the programme is good. Monitoring systems for tracking individual trainees' progress are particularly effective. Quality assurance is well structured and is understood by staff and employers. However, there is insufficient analysis of feedback from trainees and employers, or of achievement data, for the purposes of planning continuous improvement.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	1
Health, care & public services	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent pastoral support
- ◆ well-planned and effective training
- ◆ well-managed and effectively promoted equal opportunities policies and practices
- ◆ detailed monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ regular and well-documented course team meetings

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ the failure to assess trainees' key skills on entry
- ◆ insufficient evaluation of the training programme
- ◆ the failure to use trainees' destination data in the planning of continuous improvement

INTRODUCTION

1. Craven College was established in 1894 and has its centre in the market town of Skipton, Yorkshire, although it serves a wide expanse of the Yorkshire Dales. A specific business support unit, Craven Business Liaison Unit (CBLU) was created in 1994, and it is responsible for government-funded work-based training programmes in the college. Day-to-day management of the unit is the responsibility of the unit co-ordinator, supported by five other staff, two of whom are part-time employees.

2. Most of the college's work is funded through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college also operates a commercial training division, providing a wide range of courses, including those leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs), primarily for the local business community. Craven College contracts with North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council (NYTEC). During inspection, there were 73 young people in government-funded work-based training. Thirty are on modern apprenticeships, two are on national traineeships and 41 are on other work-based training for young people. There are also two trainees on the full-time training and education (FTET) option of New Deal. Training is available in agriculture, transportation, business administration, retail and customer service, hospitality, hair & beauty and health, care & public services. Trainee numbers were very low in most occupational sectors, and the scope of inspection was limited to business administration and health, care & public services.

3. Craven College serves a rural community of 51,000 people, covering an area in excess of 5,000 square miles, which includes Wensleydale and Nidderdale. One-third of the population lives in the market towns of Skipton and Settle. The remainder are widely dispersed throughout the Dales, where the rural nature of the area presents problems to individuals in getting to employment and training opportunities. Unemployment in the district is low, at less than 2 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. There has been a significant shift in recent years away from agriculture as the main employer, and the economy now focuses on tourism, recreation and leisure and related services. Over 93 per cent of firms employ fewer than 25 people, and 25 per cent of the workforce is self-employed. Almost 50 per cent of firms employ fewer than five people.

4. In 1998, 76 per cent of pupils aged 16 stayed on in full-time education. The number of young people entering youth training and modern apprenticeships is around 15 per cent. In 1998, the number of school leavers in the district achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 66.3 per cent, compared with an average for the county of 56.3 per cent and a national average of 46.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The co-ordinator of the CBLU produced the self-assessment report, supported by the college's quality manager. The college has had previous experience of self-assessment in respect of FEFC inspection requirements. All staff in the unit were consulted and involved in self-assessment, as were relevant academic and support staff throughout the college. Trainees and employers were also approached.

6. A team of three inspectors spent nine days at the college in January 1999. They visited thirteen employers, interviewed 18 trainees and 10 workplace supervisors. Fourteen college staff were interviewed. Inspectors examined a broad range of supporting documents, including trainees' portfolios, assessment records, reviews, files and internal and external verifiers' reports. Three sessions of learning were observed, all in business administration. These were all awarded a grade 2.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 1

7. There are 28 trainees following programmes in business administration, working towards NVQs at levels 1 to 3 in administration and information technology and accountancy. Twenty-two are on modern apprenticeships; one is on a national traineeship and five are on other work-based training for young people. All modern apprentices are employed. Off-the-job training takes place at the college, and most trainees attend weekly. Although inspectors agreed with some of the strengths in the self-assessment report, they considered that others were no more than normal practice. They found both strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified and they awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality, properly-structured and well-presented portfolios
- ◆ well-planned and effectively-delivered training
- ◆ the opportunity for trainees to take additional qualifications
- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent working relationships among college staff, trainees and employers
- ◆ regular course team meetings to monitor all aspects of off-the-job training and assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some incidence of failure to make key skills integral to the programme

GOOD PRACTICE

A memorandum to all trainees from the course tutor sets out the schedule for the forthcoming term. It lists the type of evidence to be provided from the workplace and details the units and elements to which this evidence relates. It also reminds trainees of what they should have completed and been assessed in during the previous term, and outlines what can be expected of trainees in the next term, but one. This document is copied to placement monitoring staff in order to help them in carrying out progress reviews.

GOOD PRACTICE

A simple and user-friendly protocol advises trainees on how to compile their portfolios, what to include and how to structure them. Trainees are able to present consistently good quality portfolios in a common easy to follow format.

8. Craven College has a good reputation with local employers for business administration training. There are excellent working relationships among trainees, their trainers and assessors and work-placement providers which enhance the trainees' experience. Trainees show appropriate levels of competence for the workplace. Training is very well planned and delivered. Day-release training is planned in detail before the start of each term, and trainees know the content of all sessions in advance. Individual tutorial sessions are similarly planned. Planning is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes to meet individual trainees and employers' requirements. Trainers and assessors speak regularly to employers on workplace visits. Their knowledge of workplace requirements enables training staff to ensure that off-the-job training is clearly related to the activities carried out in the workplace. Assessments are completed continually and are carried out by college staff in the workplace. Assessment and action-planning are clearly documented, and trainees have a clear understanding of the progress which they are making towards completion of their qualification and the evidence which they must produce before the next planned assessment. Assessors meet trainees frequently, often fortnightly, to discuss progress and agree about what evidence the trainee should produce by the time of the next visit. Assessors use a variety of evidence, including observations and witness testimonies from the workplace. Assessment and internal verification are rigorously executed. There are regular course team meetings to review and monitor individual trainees' progress and off-the-job training and assessment. Training facilities and resources are good, particularly the information technology hardware and software, which have recently been upgraded. Trainees' NVQ achievement rates are satisfactory, and the number of trainees leaving the programme without achieving qualifications is low. Trainees are encouraged to complete additional qualifications to complement their NVQ.

9. The integration of key skills with the vocational programme is complete. Where appropriate, evidence is used for both key skills and the NVQ. There are, however, a few trainees for whom key skills are still delivered in isolation, as they have already completed their NVQ.

Health, care & public services**Grade 3**

10. There are 20 trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 or 3 on work-based training for young people. Fifteen are following programmes in childcare, the remainder in direct care. All the trainees are on full-time placements, and a little over half are employed. All the trainees attend the college for day-release one day a week. Additional tutorial sessions are arranged for those trainees requiring further help. Inspectors considered that most of the strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. They did not agree with some of the weaknesses and they found both strengths and weaknesses which had not been identified by the college. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and flexible planning and delivery of off-the-job training
- ◆ regular course team meetings to monitor all aspects of off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ the opportunity for trainees to take additional and relevant qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ the failure to provide employers with sufficient information about off-the-job training
- ◆ some instances of failure to set trainees demanding targets
- ◆ ineffectively managed group tutorial sessions

11. Trainees attend one day's off-the-job training at the college each week. Sessions are well planned, with clear aims and objectives relating directly to the knowledge required for the NVQ. Trainees are well motivated and have a good understanding of the NVQ, the assessment process and their progress towards completion. Those trainees unable to attend weekly day release do so less frequently and are given workbooks and assignments to complete in their own time. All trainees are able to gain further qualifications, such as first aid at work and basic food hygiene certificates, in addition to their NVQ and these are particularly relevant to the environments in which trainees work. Meetings of the course team take place regularly. At these, all aspects of the programme are reviewed and action is taken, where necessary, to address problems quickly and effectively. In addition, the progress of individual trainees is monitored. Trainees who need further help are given additional tutorial support. The trainees' NVQ results are satisfactory and they have improved in recent years.

12. Employers are not given sufficient information about the content of the day-release training programmes and are unable to ensure effective co-ordination of work-based activities to complement the off-the-job training programme. Most assessment takes place in the workplace. Trainees, however, are not always set sufficiently demanding assessment targets. Trainees on the two programmes leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3, respectively, attend joint tutorial sessions. This arrangement is unsatisfactory because trainees on neither programme receive enough guidance on the requirements of the qualification for which they are aiming and they make slow progress.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 1

13. Craven College has a comprehensive range of well-documented equal opportunities policies and procedures which meet current legislative and NYTEC contractual requirements. There is an equal opportunities committee which meets regularly to review all aspects of equal opportunities policy. The inspectors agreed

with the strengths in the self-assessment report. They found some strengths, however, which the college had not identified. The college had addressed all the weaknesses it had identified before the inspection took place. Inspectors did not agree with one of the weaknesses. They considered that the college had underestimated the effectiveness of its promotion of equal opportunities and they awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and well-documented policies and procedures for equal opportunities
- ◆ regular review of equal opportunities practices and policies
- ◆ excellent promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ the encouragement given to staff and trainees to raise issues
- ◆ good access for trainees with mobility difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ the failure to promote and monitor equal opportunities systematically in the workplace

GOOD PRACTICE

Access for trainees with mobility problems is good throughout most of the college, where the availability of classroom space is always at a premium. When off-the-job training is due to take place in areas with limited or no access, alternative arrangements are made to move the whole group to another location in order to ensure trainees with mobility problems are not disadvantaged or excluded.

14. Equal opportunities are successfully promoted through all aspects of the college's work. Their promotion is well managed and staff and trainees are protected against discrimination and harassment. Staff are given comprehensive guidance, supported by well-documented procedures, to ensure that equality of opportunity is applied to all trainees from interview and selection through to the completion of training. A committee, attended by the CBLU co-ordinator, meets regularly to review all equal opportunities practices and policies. Where appropriate, practices and policies are updated and new policies are introduced, to ensure continuous improvement. The college encourages staff and trainees to raise any complaints or issues related to equality of opportunity and swift and positive action is taken on these. Most areas of the college are easily accessible for trainees with mobility problems. Where this is not the case, training is moved in the college to a more accessible location.

15. The promotion of equal opportunities is less effective in the workplace. Although employers are aware of their responsibilities, there are no formal procedures for the systematic promotion or monitoring of equal opportunities on employers' premises.

Trainee support

Grade 2

16. The college provides a supportive environment for trainees. Most trainees are referred from the careers service; some are already employed before they start the programme. Trainees must have a work placement or position with an employer before starting the programme, and all go through rigorous selection procedures with

both the college and, where appropriate, prospective employers. All trainees take a basic skills agency screening test in literacy and numeracy as part of their initial assessment. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-documented selection, induction and placement process
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ frequent, and well-documented progress reviews
- ◆ accessible specialist support for trainees with learning difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic assessment of key skills on entry

17. Trainees are well supported throughout on- and off-the-job training. Procedures for selection and induction are effective and well documented. Placement selection procedures are fair and rigorous. Detailed progress reviews are carried out frequently. Placement officers carry out regular visits to the workplace, often every fortnight, in order to maintain contact with the trainees. Pastoral support is good. Trainees have confidence in the staff and relate well to them. Trainees have access to the college's learner support unit which provides special support for trainees with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Initial basic skills assessment helps to identify those trainees who need additional learning support. Other college facilities are also used, where necessary, such as those providing additional support for the delivery of underpinning knowledge for key skills.

18. Although basic skills and previous experience are assessed on entry, accreditation of prior learning is not taken into account in the initial assessment of key skills. Modern apprentices form a significant proportion of the trainees on the programme, and new apprentices are assessed informally over a period of time, rather than on entry. Previous achievement of key skills is not recognised.

Management of training

Grade 2

19. CBLU is a semiautonomous unit in Craven College. Management of the unit is simple, with direct lines of communication to the senior management team of the college. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report. They awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ positive and successful working relationships with organisations involved in training

- ◆ well-managed and effective staff development programme
- ◆ detailed monitoring of individual trainees' progress
- ◆ effective and well-understood management structure
- ◆ effective deployment of staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient contribution by employers to initial individual training plans
- ◆ employers' lack of awareness of the organisation's values, policies and targets
- ◆ underdeveloped management-information systems

20. CBLU is responsible for all TEC-funded work-based training in the college. It is well managed, and all staff have a good understanding of their rôles and responsibilities. Lines of communication in the college are clear, and communications to the senior management team ensure that the unit is not isolated from the main college's provision. Staff in the unit are deployed effectively, and occupational specialists from the college are used to deliver, assess and verify trainees' work. Targets are set by the college rather than individual tutors. Formal systems to record individual trainees' progress are well established. They are effective in identifying problem areas requiring attention, and in ensuring that performance against the requirements of the TEC contract is monitored effectively. Staff development is well managed. The training needs of staff are identified during staff appraisals and they are linked to the training needs of the organisation. The staff appraisal programme, however, has fallen behind schedule. Links with employers are strong, and there are positive and successful working relationships with all organisations involved with the training programme.

21. There is no forum to share the organisation's values, policies and targets with employers. Despite the fact that all trainees must have a placement before joining the programme, employers are not consulted or involved in the formulation of trainees' individual training plans at the start of training. Accurate and current data are used to inform decision and actions by staff in the CBLU, and to monitor performance against the TEC contract. Management-information systems are underdeveloped, however, and are currently not accessible to all staff for planning purposes.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

22. Craven College meets the quality assurance standards of North Yorkshire TEC and the awarding bodies. The college is an Investor in People and is due to undergo reaccreditation for this standard in February 1999. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. They found both strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified and they awarded the same grade as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and well-documented quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ good understanding of quality assurance among staff and subcontractors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little evaluation of training programme
- ◆ no evaluation of trainees' destination data

23. The provider has comprehensive and well-documented quality assurance systems and procedures covering all aspects of the TEC-funded training provision. Many employers are Investors in People or hold the ISO 9000 quality standard. Staff and subcontractors have a good understanding of quality assurance arrangements, which are implemented throughout the organisation.

24. The college prepared the self-assessment report in November 1998 in preparation for inspection. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice or contractual requirements. They agreed, however, with many of the judgements in the report and with many of the strengths identified by the college. Inspectors found both strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the report. Several of the weaknesses detailed in the report had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

25. Good practice is not shared effectively, and the quality of training is better in some occupational areas than in others. The views of trainees and employers on the quality of training are sought but the process by which these are obtained is not systematic. There is no analysis of these views or of data on trainees' destinations to inform the continuous improvement of provision.