



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 1999

Inter Training Services Limited

SUMMARY

Inter Training Services Limited provides good-quality training in hospitality and hair & beauty. Trainees are assessed against the NVQ standards very regularly and, in many cases, achieve their qualifications ahead of planned schedules. Most training is well planned and all is conducted in the workplace. Equality of opportunity within the company is satisfactory. Trainees have access to good support from the company's staff at all levels. There is an open management style, and the management of training is good. Quality assurance arrangements are sound, although self-assessment is not fully integrated into the system at present.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hospitality	2
Hair & beauty	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ rigorous and effective assessment systems
- ♦ NVQs achieved ahead of planned schedule
- ♦ frequent, good-quality reviews for trainees
- ♦ excellent working relationships and effective team work
- ♦ appraisal leads to effective staff development
- ♦ clear and comprehensive statement and procedures for quality assurance

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ♦ key skills not fully integrated
- ♦ lack of integration of employer-led training into NVQs
- ♦ trainees lack awareness of equal opportunities
- ♦ good practice is not systematically shared

INTRODUCTION

1. Inter Training Services Limited (ITS) was established in Fareham, Hampshire in 1996, to specialise in delivering training and development to small- and medium-sized companies within the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) area. In its first year of operation, Hampshire TEC awarded it the top supplier award for the Skills for Small Business programme. In 1997, ITS moved into its current offices in the High Street in order to diversify its training portfolio. This consists of supplying whole, or units from, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in youth training, national traineeships, modern apprenticeships and manager & employer development services (MEDS) programmes covering five occupational sectors: management & professional, business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality and hair & beauty.

2. In 1998, ITS was successful in obtaining an additional contract with Surrey TEC. At the time of inspection, there were 87 trainees undertaking training funded through the Surrey TEC contract in the occupational sectors of hospitality and hair & beauty. Forty-two are modern apprentices, 19 national trainees and 26 are on other work-based training programmes. Owing to the small number of trainees in business administration (five) and retail & customer care (six), these areas were not inspected. The Hampshire TEC contract was not inspected as it falls under subcontracting arrangements within the Employer Direct contract of that TEC. ITS has 33 staff: nine are full-time and 24 are part-time trainers/assessors. The management team comprises the director of operations and the managers of quality and development, finance and administration and products and services for the purposes of this inspection, Surrey TEC acted as the co-ordinating TEC.

3. The unemployment rate in Surrey is very low, at 1.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent. Since 1997, the unemployment rate in Surrey has fallen by 35 per cent. There are some 40,000 businesses in Surrey, of which 80 per cent are in the service sector. The main growth area is computing and business support, and more than two-fifths of companies expect to take on additional staff in the coming year. Most of the workforce has some form of recognised qualification, and the proportion is increasing annually, with 15 per cent holding a degree compared with 13 per cent in 1996. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 53.6, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.7 per cent of the population, and there are 11.5 per cent of residents with disabilities. The number of 16 year olds in Surrey staying on in education is high at 75 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. ITS began its self-assessment process in April 1998. The quality and development manager attended three half-day training sessions run by Surrey TEC in April and May. The first draft report was produced using the self-assessment tool kit in June 1998. All staff were involved in the process and production of the report. Trainees, employers and subcontractor's views were not specifically collected for this purpose. No quantitative data were used to inform the judgements in the report. A feedback meeting with the TEC in November resulted in the report being revised within 14 days to its present format. The staff had difficulty in critically evaluating the provision they offer. Some of the strengths identified were no more than normal practice, and others were omitted from the report. Weaknesses were not clearly identified and related to the occupational areas and generic aspects. Inspectors agreed with five of the six grades proposed in the self-assessment report, while one was graded higher.

5. Four inspectors spent a total of 15 days at ITS during May 1999. They visited 13 employers, interviewing 24 trainees. A total of eight sessions of training and assessment were observed. Meetings were held with the director of operations, three managers, eight trainer/assessors, two career and recruitment co-ordinators, the office manager and 10 of the employers visited. A wide range of documents were examined: management files and quality assurance procedures, TEC contracts, audit reports by external agencies, trainees' achievements and progression data, trainees' files and portfolios, schemes of work, assessment and internal verification documents and staff qualification details.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

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

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hospitality

Grade 2

6. ITS has a total of 25 trainees in this sector. Nineteen are modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 3 and key skills in a variety of specialist areas within the hospitality and catering industry, one is a national trainee working towards NVQ level 2 and key skills in food preparation and cooking. There are also five trainees working towards NVQ level 2 on other work-based training. The range of qualifications offered by ITS in this sector are: serving food & drink, food preparation and cooking, kitchen supervision, on-licensed premises supervision, restaurant supervision, accommodation supervision and multi-skilled. All trainees

are employed status and ITS has training agreements with 15 employers from the Surrey area. All training and assessment is work based and is fully supported by two trainer/assessors. Staff are well qualified and occupationally experienced. They regularly visit the trainees in their workplace. The company's self-assessment report recognised strengths and weaknesses with which inspectors agreed. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous and effective assessment systems
- ◆ well-planned on-the-job training and assessments
- ◆ NVQs achieved ahead of planned schedule
- ◆ regular monitoring and feedback on trainees' progress
- ◆ high calibre of employers and trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ key skills not fully integrated
- ◆ inconsistent approach by trainer/assessors to training and assessment
- ◆ lack of integration of employer-led training into NVQs

7. Assessments are well planned and documented and trainees are fully involved in the whole planning process. Trainees have a very good understanding of NVQs and their relevance to the workplace and trainees' career progression. Trainees are provided with feedback following assessment and future action plans are agreed on. Trainer/assessors work unsociable hours and often work evenings and weekends in order that assessment opportunities are not missed. For example, a trainer/assessor carried out assessments in the evening at the request of the employer. This was because the original arrangements conflicted with the employer's business schedule. On another occasion, the trainer/assessor conducted an observation at the weekend so that the trainee's involvement in a large function could be observed. There are very good working relationships between ITS' staff and employers. Resources in work placements are good, offering trainees the opportunity to use a wide range of industry-standard equipment.

8. Employers train trainees in the workplace when they are learning new tasks. In addition, they receive regular one-to-one coaching and training sessions away from their normal workstation by ITS' trainer/assessors. Training and coaching sessions are supported by comprehensive schemes of work, resource packs to aid the development of theoretical knowledge and exercises to further enhance the learning experience. For example, as part of the kitchen supervision NVQ level 3, trainees are expected to be able to contribute to the design and development of menu items. To assist trainees to achieve this they are given two exercises to complete. One helps the trainee to develop new dishes and the considerations associated with the task.

The other practises calculating the cost and gross profit margins of each dish. However, opportunities are being missed to integrate employer-led training into the NVQ programme. There is inconsistency in the approach by trainers to training, assessment and the provision of information to trainees.

9. There is an awareness of key skills among trainees. Many have started to either cross reference key skills from their NVQ achievements or have them integrated when commencing NVQ level 3. However, some trainees either think they have finished their key skills or think they are working on key skills at a level higher than they actually are. In many cases, NVQs are achieved ahead of planned dates. This is partly because of the high calibre of trainees and employers participating in the programme and also because of the regular assessment visits made by ITS' staff. Visits are usually made every two weeks, but are often weekly. Some trainees commented that they would like their employer to take more interest in their progress and to be more active in their training. In 1998-99, 13 trainees achieved NVQ level 2 and two achieved NVQ level 3.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

10. ITS currently has 57 trainees in hairdressing and five trainees in beauty. There are 23 modern apprentices, 18 national trainees and 21 on other work-based training programmes. All trainees are employed status and are in 46 work placements. ITS holds youth contracts with Surrey TEC and subcontracts through another training provider with Hampshire TEC. It also works with four subcontractors. All training is salon-based and most trainees are placed in hairdressing salons, which also offer beauty treatments. The teaching of theory is assisted by the use of resource packs linked to the NVQ units. All trainees are visited in the workplace at least every two weeks by the trainer/assessors. In some cases, trainees are visited on a weekly basis. The trainer/assessors have the responsibility of carrying out the theory training as well as the practical assessments. ITS' staff work closely with salon trainers who carry out the practical training. There are currently seven part-time trainer/assessors in hairdressing and two for beauty. Most of them are working in the industry. Eight salon staff have gained assessor awards and assist in the assessment process. The beauty trainees attend a beauty centre one day a week for theory and practical training, and assessment. Inspectors agreed with all the strengths identified in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as the one given in the company's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of well-designed learning packs
- ◆ good-quality salon-based training
- ◆ good progress in NVQ achievements
- ◆ regular and productive work placement visits by trainer/assessors

- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ effective schemes of work used consistently

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress in the integration of key skills into vocational programmes
- ◆ opportunities missed to involve employers in programmes

11. ITS delivers all hair and beauty training in the workplace. Theoretical training is assisted by use of the in-house workpacks, which are well designed to interest and motivate trainees as well as to facilitate learning. All the units have an accompanying workpack for trainees and trainers to use. These packs also have an appropriate project and assignment for completion by trainees. They are clear and well produced. Trainees can work through them at their own pace. Clear targets are set and most trainees make good progress in their theory work. Theory sessions are taught in small groups or one-to-one by the visiting trainer/assessors. The sessions are well planned and within the schemes of work.

12. Trainees are appreciative of the very regular visits they receive from their trainer/assessors. All are visited at least fortnightly, but some every week. At these visits, activities or progress review forms are completed. The trainer/assessors work well with the salon trainers to ensure co-ordination of the practical and theoretical training. The salons used are of a high quality and offer the trainees the opportunity to work with and observe top-quality stylists. All salons offer practical training sessions and model nights. Most employers enhance the training by sending their trainees on a wide variety of specialist manufacturers' courses. The trainer/assessors attend evening sessions when requested by trainees to offer assessment and support. The trainers/assessors are flexible in the hours they work to help and support their trainees. All are still working in the industry so have up-to-date knowledge and skills on which to rely.

13. Trainees make good progress in their NVQ achievements and most achieve NVQ 2 within two years of starting their training. For 1998-99, achievements were 9 NVQs at level 2, three at level 3, plus two modern apprenticeships and one national traineeship. However, the company has been slow to integrate key skills. Although some work has been completed to assist their delivery, there is little evidence in trainees' files that trainees have started this process. In discussions with trainees, there was a lack of knowledge of key skills and their place in the training programmes. Relationships among all involved in the trainees' programmes are good. Employers are not always involved in the changes in the training requirements. There are few opportunities for employers to meet ITS' management staff to discuss such issues as key skills.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

14. There is a comprehensive set of policies and documents relating to equal opportunities which meet the requirements of the TECs with which ITS contracts. The equal opportunities policy is reviewed on an annual basis and this document has clear links to other policies and procedures. These include recruitment and selection and NVQ trainees' appeals procedures, grievance procedures for staff and trainees, and policies for the disabled and for discrimination. ITS has also produced an appendix for the equal opportunities policy which covers a vocabulary of 'politically correct' terms. This is to help staff and trainees in avoiding the use of potentially offensive words. All these documents form part of the induction handbook for trainees and the work placement book for employers. In Fareham, less than 1 per cent of the population is made up of people from minority ethnic groups, so there are few trainees from minority ethnic groups. Only one trainee in hairdressing is from one of these groups and none of the staff. Twenty-two per cent of the hairdressing trainees are men, which is well above the national average. There is also a good gender balance in catering and hospitality, but trainees are working in traditional areas: men training as chefs and women in housekeeping. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that identified in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ all marketing materials display equal opportunities statement
- ◆ effective staff training to raise awareness of equal opportunity issues
- ◆ excellent complaints procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees lack awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ equal opportunities not promoted to employers
- ◆ no procedures to monitor equal opportunities policy

15. The company is in the developmental phase of raising awareness of equal opportunities issues among staff trainees and employers. This process started with well-planned staff development sessions this year. There have been two sessions for staff. One session covered racism, and there was good use of the issues raised by the Stephen Lawrence case concerning the murder of a young black man for which no one has yet been brought to justice. The second session focused on the new disability act and covered all the legal issues raised by this document. Both these sessions were effectively evaluated. The evaluation identified that staff found these sessions very informative and useful with awareness raised of issues not previously considered. The company has a complaints procedure of which trainees, employers and subcontractors are aware. Information about any dissatisfaction is actively sought from the three parties. The senior managers take responsibility for

investigating adverse comments or complaints. Complaints are recorded and action promptly taken to remedy them.

16. Although equal opportunities documentation is included and mentioned during induction, trainees questioned during the inspection demonstrated no awareness of equal opportunities issues. This was also the case with employers who receive documentation from ITS, but have little equal opportunities awareness. ITS has plans in place to work with trainees and employers in the next development stage to address this lack of awareness. Although there is no access to all floors at ITS' training centre for trainees with mobility difficulties, almost all work with trainees is carried out at the workplace. If needed, staff arrange to meet trainees at venues to suit trainees' needs.

17. All leaflets used for marketing and promotion carry an equal opportunities statement outlining the commitment of the organisation to equal opportunities in all aspects of its work. Although the equal opportunities policy is reviewed each year there are no procedures to monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy itself. There is, however, monitoring of trainees and staff by gender, ethnicity and disability, but little use is made of these data at present.

Trainee support

Grade 2

18. ITS has a systematic approach to the recruitment and selection of potential trainees to the programmes that it offers. All applicants are invited to attend for interviews and, in cases where distance from ITS' office presents a problem for applicants, arrangements are made for staff to conduct interviews at venues closer to where the applicants live. As part of the pre-entry assessment, prospective trainees complete an application form and a basic skills assessment exercise. This allows ITS to systematically explore with the applicants their basic numeracy and literacy skills, their career preferences and personal aspirations. The inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses from those in the self-assessment report. They agreed with the grade given by ITS in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexibility and availability of staff
- ◆ comprehensive additional support
- ◆ excellent student handbook
- ◆ frequent, good-quality reviews for trainees
- ◆ support fully documented and reviewed

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent delivery of induction by employers
- ◆ lack of key skills information for trainees

19. Trainer/assessors provide a high level of out-of-hours support to the trainees. Assessments are often carried out at evenings and weekends. For example, model nights in the hair and beauty sector. No trainees are able to attend day-release for off-the-job training. ITS arranges for each trainee to be visited every two weeks in the workplace. Work is set and reviewed, skill assessments are carried out and individual one-to-one coaching support is provided to support the trainees in the achievement of their training plan. In many cases, the assessors have set days at weekly intervals for visiting each placement where there is more than one trainee. This means that the trainees have regular access to the trainer/assessors outside of their planned assessment visit. All trainees interviewed were very satisfied with and appreciative of the support provided by ITS' staff.

20. Initial assessment of basic skills is systematically carried out, but not so for key skills. Additional supports needs are not identified at initial assessment. However, trainees with additional needs are well supported and are allocated additional time with their trainer/assessor. There are some good examples of individual support being given: trainees who are lacking in confidence, trainees who suffer with asthma and trainees who struggle with the requirements for key skills. The products and services manager closely monitors trainees who are allocated additional support to ensure that their needs are being addressed. Trainer/assessors record the support given on the assessment and activities report form and the progress review form.

21. An induction is carried out in the workplace by trainer/assessors with every trainee regarding the programme and ITS. However, not all of the employers are undertaking their part of the induction with the trainees. For example, a few employers are not covering adequately health and safety in the workplace. Trainees are issued with a handbook at the time of their induction. This contains clear and concise information on ITS as a company, details of the programmes, and the roles and responsibilities of each party. In addition to this, there is a very comprehensive section on 'looking after yourself'. This focuses on health issues and general lifestyle and is over and above the requirements for a trainee's handbook. There is a missed opportunity in including information in the handbook on key skills. ITS has produced some very good programme fact sheets to support the trainees' understanding of NVQs and the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship programmes. A weakness is the omission of any details on key skills. Again, the opportunity to raise awareness of the key skills requirements in programmes is missed. These fact sheets are not being used by all trainer/assessors to inform trainees of the requirements of their training.

Management of training

Grade 2

22. ITS has robust systems and procedures which meet its business requirements. It produces an annual business and marketing plan which sets out its mission and direction. Responsibility for the strategic management of work-based training lies with the management team. The products and services manager is responsible for the

day-to-day management of the training and its delivery. There is a very good relationship between the company and most of the employers and subcontractors with which it contracts. Lines of communication are clear, and staff meet regularly to share information. Monthly assessors' meetings include subcontractors' representatives. Staff are set realistic targets. Six-monthly staff appraisal is linked to staff development. The company has developed a very well stocked resource bank for staff use. ITS has recently been recognised as an Investor in People and has direct claim status with three awarding bodies. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors for this aspect was a grade higher than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clearly defined areas of responsibility and lines of management
- ◆ excellent working relationships and effective team work
- ◆ staff understand, and are committed to, the company's strategies and targets
- ◆ appraisal leads to effective staff development
- ◆ effective use of management information
- ◆ good management of health and safety

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ good practice not systematically shared
- ◆ staff not trained to meet all trainees' needs

23. Management and staff structures are clearly defined. Managers are readily available to assist staff and provide a high level of encouragement and support. The company places great emphasis on teamwork. The core values and objectives of the company are understood and promoted by staff at all levels. Staff are set individual, regularly reviewed targets, linked to the TEC contract. Amendments are discussed and agreed on by staff with the product and services manager. The management team meets formally every three months to review targets and monitor progress against the business plan. Staff recruitment, induction and appraisal are clearly documented and consistently applied, for both part- and full-time staff. All staff have detailed job descriptions. New employees receive a thorough induction mapped against an induction pack which includes company policies and procedures.

24. Staff appraisal is used to identify training needs. The training and development plan then details the areas on which the company needs to concentrate. It focuses on achieving individual, team and organisational objectives. In-house training has been provided to extend staff awareness and knowledge. For example, sessions have recently taken place on basic skills and equal opportunities. In addition, the company is running a course leading to NVQ level 3 in training and development. Five staff are following the course to improve their training delivery and strategies. However, staff have not been trained to meet all trainees' needs. There is a lack of

A modern apprentice working towards NVO level 3 in accommodation supervision was involved in an accident in the workplace, resulting in hospital treatment. The employer acted promptly in terms of first aid, accident and reporting procedures. ITS responded by contacting Surrey TEC, who provided a specialist health and safety consultant who investigated and reported on the incident a week later. The consultant made four specific recommendations. ITS and the employer worked together on achieving these in the time-scale. As a result, the employer has introduced new maintenance procedures, equipment, training and working practices for the safety of all trainees and staff.

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qualified staff in areas such as basic skills delivery and dyslexia.

25. The management-information system is well used to provide data for monitoring, analysing and reporting on the company's performance against the TEC contract on a monthly basis. In addition, data on trainees' retention, completion and achievement are analysed annually to inform strategic and operational planning. The company is in the process of developing a system to include tracking of trainees' recruitment, progress towards their qualification and destinations. These data are recorded manually at the moment. ITS takes its responsibility for health and safety seriously. A health and safety quality file is reviewed and updated annually. This includes a detailed environmental policy. The company's subcontractors and employers' premises are subject to thorough audits by the health and safety officer. The visits are monitored and recorded on a database to ensure that the six-monthly audits are carried out on schedule.

26. The trainer/assessors meet on a monthly basis to discuss trainees' progress, contract targets and current issues. These meetings offer the opportunity to share problems. However, there is no forum in which staff have an opportunity to share good practice within and across the occupational areas. For example, in the occupational area of hair & beauty the co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is sound. The strategies underpinning this good practice are not being shared with the hospitality sector.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

27. The company has a comprehensive quality assurance statement and well-documented procedures. Responsibility for the development and implementation of quality assurance procedures lies with the quality and development manager. The company has clear internal and managerial procedures, which are in addition to audit reports from the TEC and the awarding bodies. Documents make good use of flow charts for clarity. The procedures are understood by staff and reviewed on a regular basis. For this generic aspect, inspectors agreed with three of the strengths in the self-assessment report, although additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and comprehensive statement and procedures for quality assurance
- ◆ good monitoring of quality assurance
- ◆ views of trainees and employers sought and acted upon
- ◆ well-developed internal verification system
- ◆ effective monitoring and achievement of targets

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ new quality assurance procedures not yet established
- ◆ self-assessment not fully integrated into quality assurance system

28. ITS' quality assurance procedures are effective. An annual quality improvement plan, developed by the management team, is used to prioritise and to develop an action plan. There is a systematic programme of internal audits to monitor quality assurance. This includes the quality of training delivered by subcontractors. In addition, members of the management team carry out monthly spot checks on trainer/assessors and subcontractors. Written feedback on audit findings, and corrective actions to be taken, are shared with the appropriate person or subcontractor. Internal audit reports are used by the company to help address weaknesses. The products and services manager audits and monitors the completion of the trainees' activities report form and progress review to ensure training and reviews are of a high quality. The company has recently introduced observation of training sessions. At the time of inspection, three observations had been carried out. The company is planning a rolling programme of observations to ensure quality of delivery. It is also planned that new assessors are observed regularly. These plans are still at the developmental stage and not fully established into the quality assurance system. The benefits to training have yet to be seen.

29. Trainees and employers' satisfaction surveys are used to collect feedback from the company's customers. The results of these surveys demonstrate a generally high level of satisfaction with the provision. The outcome of a recent feedback questionnaire completed by trainees and employers was to adapt and refine the employers and trainees' handbooks. Both are now more user-friendly. The internal verification system is well planned and structured. One hundred per cent internal verification is in place to ensure that self-certification is granted by the awarding bodies. Three senior managers randomly cross sample the internal verification they have undertaken. An internal verification report form is completed to give feedback to assessors on their performance. Subcontractors are also included in this process. In addition, the products and services manager produces a quarterly summative internal verification report. This comprehensive system assures quality of assessment is consistent across the provision. Performance targets are routinely set to encourage compliance with contractual obligations. These are regularly monitored and often exceeded by staff.

30. The self-assessment process was rigorously undertaken by both staff and managers to assess the quality of their work. However, the format in which the report is presented does not make identification of weaknesses in each occupational area and the generic aspects transparent. Some regard to the views of trainees, employers and subcontractors were given when the analysis was made. Data on achievement, destinations and retention were not used to help evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes. Inspectors agreed with all but one of the indicative grades. The self-assessment process is connected with some of the other quality assurance arrangements operated by the company, although it is not yet fully integrated into the company's quality system.

