



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1999

# Tameside College: Tameside Quality Training

## SUMMARY

Tameside College's training unit, known as Tameside Quality Training (TQT), delivers a good standard of training in construction, business administration, hospitality and hairdressing. Training is well planned and stimulating, and makes full use of the excellent teaching resources. Trainees' achievement and retention rates are good and are improving. Links with employers are strong. However, some have little involvement with on-the-job training and assessment. Additional learning and pastoral support are comprehensive, accessible and effective. Equality of opportunity is strongly promoted. Management and quality assurance arrangements closely monitor, influence and improve the standard of training and assessment.

### GRADE

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2
Business administration	2
Hospitality	2
Hair & beauty	2

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned, stimulating off-the-job training
- ◆ good retention, achievement and progression rates
- ◆ excellent college teaching resources
- ◆ strong promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ wide variety of effective additional learning support
- ◆ robust management information systems
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements lead to continuous improvement
- ◆ off-the-job training comprehensively monitored for effectiveness

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little involvement in the training process by business administration employers
- ◆ few qualification progress targets in construction trainees' action plans
- ◆ little involvement with work-based assessment by employers
- ◆ weak co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

## INTRODUCTION

1. Tameside Quality Training (TQT) is the training section of Tameside College. The college was formed by the merger of Tameside College of Technology and Hyde-Claredon Sixth Form College in February 1998. The college has over 2,700 full-time and 10,000 part-time students, of whom 140 are trainees funded through contracts mainly with Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The college also has small training contracts with Stockport and High Peak, Oldham, Rochdale and South East Cheshire TECs and METROTEC in Wigan, for modern apprenticeship, national traineeship, New Deal and work-based youth and adult training. TQT subcontracts with Manchester and Stockport TEC to deliver the New Deal full-time education and training, subsidised employment and environmental task-force options. There are 55 New Deal clients of whom 38 are full time, two are on the subsidised employment option under direct contract with the employer, and 15 are on the environmental task-force option. Of the full-time clients, 15 are in construction, seven in hairdressing and 16 in business administration. Work-based trainees are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4 within the occupational areas of construction, engineering, business administration, hospitality, and hair and beauty. Of the 140 trainees, 18 per cent are identified as requiring additional learning support to achieve qualifications.

2. Tameside College is one of the largest employers within the Metropolitan Borough of Tameside, with over 450 full-time and part-time staff. Tameside College is located on four sites: one in Ashton-under-Lyne and three in Hyde. The Ashton centre houses eight schools, including art and design media, business education and training, telematics and computing, business technology, construction, curriculum support, engineering and automotive technology, food and hospitality management, and performing arts. The central services located at the Ashton centre are human resource management, finance, marketing and publicity, quality and corporate services, college management information systems, and computer technician support.

3. The three Hyde centres house the sixth-form centre for general certificate of education (GCE) A-level studies, the adult learners club, the school of care, counselling and community studies, the business and teacher education centres and the school of hair and beauty. The college holds various contracts with TECs and chambers of commerce, training and enterprise and does not run the provision as a separate business. The work-based training programmes are not discrete; trainees are integrated into the various programmes already offered by the college. For administrative and marketing purposes, trainees are identified as recruits of TQT. Daily co-ordination and management of trainees is the direct responsibility of individual heads of school. TQT has an identified organisational structure within Tameside College and senior staff have contractual and operational responsibilities for all the work-based training programmes. TQT has one full-time administrator,



two work-placement officers and four trainee-support officers.

4. Tameside College is located eight miles to the east of Manchester within the Metropolitan Borough of Tameside. Tameside has a population of 221,500, which is estimated to increase by 6,000 by the year 2001. Approximately 4 per cent of the population are from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi minority ethnic groups. The proportion of minority ethnic students at Tameside College is 7 per cent. Local employment opportunities are in clerical, retail, personal services, health and social work, wholesale catering and manufacturing. Unemployment in Tameside is approximately 4 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent. Unemployment rates among young people (to the age of 25) are 5 per cent below the national average of 31 per cent. Unemployment in the minority ethnic community is 8 per cent, and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 7 per cent.

5. The participation rate in post-16 full-time education is 11 per cent below the national average of 68 per cent. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 38 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The college has a well-established routine of self-assessment which links into its annual cycle for strategic planning and performance monitoring. The college's self-assessment report was produced to satisfy the requirements of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the Training Standards Council (TSC) and Manchester TEC's annual internal cycle of inspections. Each school within the college produced a self-assessment report using evidence from the college's end-of-year quality assurance reviews. The findings were matched against the quality statements from *Raising the Standard* and the final self-assessment report was produced following meetings of the college's quality assurance panel in July and August 1998. Consultation included the college governors and academic board. The college also visited another training provider in order to refine the self-assessment report further before submission.

7. Inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors over a total of 23 days. They interviewed 30 per cent of all trainees and 20 per cent of all employers/work-placement providers. Inspectors examined assessment procedures, subcontract agreements, trainees' files and portfolios, staff qualifications, and quality and management arrangements. They also interviewed college tutors, managers, support staff, workplace supervisors and assessors. Inspectors observed trainees' reviews, assessments and 13 off-the-job learning sessions. The grades awarded for these sessions are shown below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		1	2			3
Business administration		2				2
Hospitality		3				3
Hair & beauty		5				5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### Construction

#### Grade 2

8. There are 58 trainees in construction: 15 in electrical installation, 16 in carpentry and joinery, 17 in plumbing and 10 in bricklaying. Of these trainees, 17 per cent have been identified as requiring additional learning support in literacy and numeracy. Twelve trainees require significant additional learning support to achieve NVQ level 2. All trainees are working towards NVQ level 2. Most of the training and assessment is carried out in college. College tutors are occupationally experienced and hold a good range of teaching and assessor qualifications. Trainees

follow a weekly timetable of 30 hours in college, consisting of practical training, theory lessons, research and tutorials. Assessment opportunities are organised throughout the programme. Most trainees attend the college on a full-time basis for six months, after which Manchester TEC finds them jobs or work placements. One trainee receives work experience with an employer and attends college on a day-release programme. Numbers of trainees have remained constant over the past three years. The self-assessment report responds to each quality statement in *Raising the Standard* and identifies supporting evidence. An action plan to address identified issues was produced eight months prior to inspection and some issues have been addressed. Inspectors identified additional strengths. Weaknesses or issues were overstated in some areas. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent college resources for plumbing and electrical installation
- ◆ high-quality practical training
- ◆ effective monitoring of trainees' NVQ progress

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of effective target-setting in trainees' action plans

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*In brickwork, weekly meetings are held for trainees and staff. Trainees take turns in acting as chairperson. Trainees' issues are always on the agenda and the meeting provides them with evidence for their qualifications. The meeting also provides staff with valuable feedback on the quality of the training.*

9. Trainees undertake a well-planned programme of mainly off-the-job training. Assessments are programmed to occur at the end of each training period, and each trainee has clear records of progress towards their qualification. This individual tracking system also enables tutors to identify further assessment opportunities. Work-based training and assessment are limited to simulated work on realistic projects away from the college. The contract with Manchester TEC specifies that the qualification is to be gained off the job. Trainees are found work placements or jobs at the end of their training. Nevertheless, trainees miss the opportunity to develop skills and competencies as part of a commercial working routine. Plumbing trainees, as a requirement of the awarding body, are assessed in the workplace for certain elements of their qualification; this has been arranged and is operating satisfactorily. Training is structured to enable trainees to progress at their own pace, and individual and small-group work allows trainees to make full use of the staffing and physical resources available. Trainees display a responsible attitude to their training and are keen to achieve a qualification which will enhance their job prospects. Retention rates averaged 62 per cent and achievement rates 47 per cent across all crafts for the period 1997-98; both rates are steadily improving.

10. There are few work placements for trainees and, while every opportunity is taken to extend the network of firms, only five companies are listed on the management-information system as offering placements. Trainees' action-planning and reviews lack rigour. Reviews are not used to set achievable qualification targets for trainees in terms of whole units, individual elements, skills or tasks. Trainees are left with little to consider or plan for in terms of assessment planning or filling in any identified and agreed gaps in their learning. Internal verification is robust and is

being continuously developed. The paperwork is updated regularly to incorporate key features of verification, such as the range of evidence used by assessors, and the frequency of assessments.

## **Business administration**

## **Grade 2**

11. There are 45 trainees and New Deal clients on business administration programmes, 24 of whom are working towards accounting NVQs at levels 2 to 4, and eight towards NVQ level 2 in administration. The 13 New Deal clients are undertaking various information technology and administration vocational qualifications on the full-time education and training option. Of the administration trainees, 78 per cent have been assessed as requiring additional learning support in order to achieve an NVQ level 2. Twenty-seven trainees are locally employed, five are in appropriate work placements and the remaining 13 New Deal clients are being trained in-house. Most trainees attend Tameside College for six hours each week for portfolio development and formal training sessions delivered by college tutors. One full-time member of staff is responsible for providing ongoing support for trainees through regular workplace visits. Additional members of college staff visit trainees in the workplace to carry out assessment and verification. Numbers of trainees have remained steady since the college was awarded the contract in 1996. The self-assessment report describes existing practice and lists action points for improvement. It does not provide a summary of key strengths and weaknesses for this occupational area. Inspectors identified several strengths and some weaknesses and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good access to additional qualifications
- ◆ good college-based learning resources
- ◆ well-qualified and occupationally experienced staff
- ◆ well-planned and stimulating off-the-job training
- ◆ high levels of retention, progression to qualification and achievement in accounting

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little involvement by employers in the training process
- ◆ inadequate assessment planning
- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment

12. Initial assessment arrangements are comprehensive, ensuring that trainees are placed on vocational programmes which match their personal capabilities and career aspirations. All trainees are encouraged to take additional qualifications related to their NVQ. Most administration trainees are undertaking additional information technology and text-processing qualifications, and all accounting trainees are

working towards Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) examinations. The college is equipped with a wide variety of modern information technology hardware and software, textbooks and resource materials for open learning. Staff and trainees have access to this broad range of learning resources and well-produced materials for training support. All staff maintain a high level of expertise, are well qualified and have extensive occupational experience, which is kept up to date through effective professional development.

13. College-based training is timetabled in such a way as to cope with trainees starting and finishing at different times of the year. Trainees' progress is not restricted by the normal academic year of the college. Instruction is effective and structured, and is supported by clear lesson plans. In these sessions, instruction is lively and relevant with good integration of theory and practice.

14. Retention and achievement rates in accounting and administration have improved significantly during the past two years. In accounting, only 14 per cent of trainees have left prematurely during the past 12 months, and of those remaining, 71 per cent have achieved at least one NVQ. Some trainees are restricted in terms of progression possibilities, as Tameside College does not offer a modern apprenticeship programme in accounting. Nevertheless, a high percentage of accounting trainees progress towards higher-level qualifications.

15. Employers and workplace supervisors have little understanding of assessment requirements for the qualifications, or of their responsibilities within the work-based training process. However, workplace supervisors are highly committed to their trainees and are complimentary about the off-the-job training. Workplace supervisors are kept fully informed of trainees' progress by means of regular review meetings, although they are not involved in the planning or delivery of the training. Several supervisors express an interest in the NVQ assessor award and in ways in which they could participate more effectively in the assessment process. However, this enthusiasm is not being fully exploited by TQT's staff, and trainees are not benefiting from the excellent opportunities for integrating on- and off-the-job learning. Assessment planning does not enable trainees to understand clearly how naturally occurring evidence generated in the workplace will meet the requirements of their NVQ and assist their progress. There is little evidence of workplace observation, and trainees are not encouraged to use the workplace as an environment for proving and demonstrating competence.

## Hospitality

## Grade 2

16. There are 24 trainees and clients in hospitality, of whom 16 are on work-based training for young people, four are on work-based learning for adults, and four are on New Deal options. Of the New Deal clients, three are on the full-time education and training option and one is on the subsidised employment option, with day-release training at the college. Trainees are working towards a range of NVQ qualifications, including levels 1 and 2 in food preparation and cookery, levels 2 and 3 in craft bakery, and level 2 in food service and reception. All receive off-the-job training at the college. Some 38 per cent of trainees are endorsed as having special training



needs; some initially attend college on a full-time basis to build their confidence before being placed with employers. Other trainees attend college one day a week for practical skills training, knowledge development, assessment, portfolio-building and tutorial support. Fourteen trainees are currently employed by local companies. Most training and assessment is college based, and all tutors and assessors are appropriately qualified. Employers have little involvement with assessments. Peripatetic assessors have recently been introduced to assess trainees in the workplace. The self-assessment report correctly identifies strengths related to resources and well-planned off-the-job training. It does not identify issues related to weak involvement by employers. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent physical resources at the college
- ◆ well-planned, effective off-the-job training
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced college staff
- ◆ encouragement for trainees' progression and additional qualifications
- ◆ good retention and improving NVQ achievement rates

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little co-ordination between college- and employer-based training
- ◆ missed opportunities for workplace assessment

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Trainees are encouraged to take part in European exchanges with colleges in Denmark and France. These exchanges enable trainees to develop new skills and experience new techniques. The exchanges also provide trainees with evidence for their qualification. One trainee requiring additional learning support recently completed an exchange and achieved a full unit towards her NVQ*

17. Hospitality training takes place in well-equipped facilities which reflect current commercial standards. Four different business units within the college provide realistic environments for training: a bakery with a shop, two restaurants with production kitchens, and a production kitchen for take-away meals. One restaurant is open at weekends, and some trainees take up the opportunity of part-time employment to further their experience. The teaching staff are all well qualified and have wide-ranging experience in their industries. They undertake a regular programme of personal development to keep up to date with commercial trends; most have a period of commercial experience during the summer.

18. College training is carefully planned and flexible enough to meet the individual needs of trainees and employers. Trainees are able to acquire additional qualifications in basic hygiene, health and safety, and customer service. Additionally, catering trainees are given an opportunity to acquire an additional industry-standard qualification. All trainees receive a good level of support and encouragement to achieve and progress to higher qualifications. This encouragement was reflected in 1998 with a 33 per cent progression rate to higher levels and a 77 per cent retention rate. Good achievement levels are being maintained and are improving each year. Individual successes are recognised at an annual award event. One restaurant is used for training those trainees with additional learning support needs; they are well supported by a dedicated learning support officer. These trainees are able to attend full-time at college to build their skills and confidence

before being placed with an employer. Specific learning materials have been developed to assist trainees with impaired vision.

19. Employers receive feedback on their employees' activities at college at regular progress review meetings with the training support officer. However, employers have limited involvement in the planning of the training and assessment, even though some are qualified assessors and are interested in being included in assessments. College tutors have very recently started visiting work placements to carry out assessments. This is still in the pilot phase, and opportunities for trainees to progress as a result of structured, integrated workplace assessment and observation are missed.

### **Hair & beauty (hairdressing)**

### **Grade 2**

20. There are 33 hairdressing trainees on youth programmes and four clients on the full-time education and training option of New Deal. All 33 youth trainees are employed in local salons; 27 are working towards NVQ level 2 and six towards NVQ level 3. Level 2 trainees attend the college's school of hair and beauty at one of the Hyde centres one day a week for off-the-job training; level 3 trainees attend college two evenings each week. The college training programme consists of theoretical input, practical training, tutorial support, manufacturers' and other additional courses, guest stylists and assessments. Trainees' remaining time is spent in their employers' salons gaining work experience and on-the-job training. Training and assessment are delivered by a qualified team of tutors/assessors, supported by a training support officer. Trainees have access to dedicated additional learning support. All trainees are visited in their workplace by the training support officer on a 12-weekly cycle. There is also a college-based assessor who visits salons to carry out assessment in the workplace. At the time of inspection, there were no modern apprentices or national trainees, although the college has recently contracted to deliver these programmes. Over the past two years, there has been a steady increase in numbers of trainees, and improving retention and achievement rates. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths indicated in the self-assessment report; however, some strengths were found to be no more than normal practice and additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good encouragement for trainees to progress
- ◆ good resources and training equipment
- ◆ good standards of assessment maintained by verification procedures
- ◆ effective, good-quality tuition
- ◆ good achievement and retention rates

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little work-based assessment
- ◆ some weak co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training

21. Hairdressing programmes are well planned and delivered at the college's school of hair and beauty, which incorporates spacious salons and attracts external clients. Programmes are designed with a mix of interesting theory, practical and demonstration sessions which are relevant to the needs of hairdressing employers. The centre is well resourced and equipped, but is in need of repair and refurbishment. Hairdressing is soon to be relocated to new, specialist accommodation at the college's main Ashton-under-Lyne centre. Trainees can join the programme at any time during the year. They receive a comprehensive induction to the training programme. Personal hairdressing tools, equipment and protective clothing are provided free of charge to all trainees. Progression from NVQ level 2 to level 3 is encouraged, and many trainees take advantage of this. Attendance, retention and achievement rates have steadily improved in recent years, with a current retention rate of 70 per cent for both level 2 and level 3 NVQs. NVQ level 3 achievement rates are consistently higher than for level 2; achievement rates over the period 1996-98 were 72 per cent at level 3, compared with 56 per cent at level 2.

22. Trainees have a clear understanding of the qualification requirements in terms of both content and assessment arrangements. Staff work closely as a team, and good working relationships exist between staff and trainees. Trainees receive an effective level of pastoral, qualification and learning support. There is an additional learning support unit with a strong hairdressing focus, staffed by members of the team. Key skills are included in all programmes, but are not separately accredited. To ensure that all trainees have access to assessment through observation and extra help where needed, practical sessions are staffed by two assessors. This facilitates the assessment process and provides support and guidance for portfolio-building.

23. Tutors continuously evaluate the quality of training sessions and the progress of each group of trainees. Trainees' progress towards their qualifications is rigorously monitored and recorded. The progress of each trainee is reviewed every four weeks; trainees also have a tutorial and workplace review every 12 weeks. The workplace review encourages employers to participate. The training support officer visits trainees both in college and in the salons to discuss their progress with them, and also liaises with both college tutor/assessors and employers. Clear and realistic achievement targets are agreed and set at each review, and trainees are aware of these targets.

24. Assessments take place mainly in the college. They are rigorous and fair, with regular quality checks through the internal verification process. Although workplace assessments are currently limited, a strategy for increasing the level of workplace assessment has been introduced. The training support officer assesses generic skills (such as reception duties) in the workplace, and one of the tutors has recently been allocated some time to assess trainees in the workplace. These arrangements have not been taken up by trainees nearing completion of their NVQ, but first-year

trainees are now beginning to benefit from them, and greater use is being made of trainees' work-based experiences for assessment purposes. Witness testimonies from employers are used regularly, and one salon has a work-based assessor to assess trainees in the workplace.

25. There is good liaison with employers, and an employers' forum group has been established. This forum is now considering ways of improving co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment. Training for assessor qualifications and health and safety has been offered to employers, but so far there has been little interest. The employers' forum meetings are poorly attended, but copies of minutes are distributed to all the salon employers. The forum aims to improve employers' understanding of the training programme and assessment requirements by addressing the weak co-ordination between college-based training and assessment and work-based learning.

26. Trainees' achievements are celebrated through a 'student of the month' award, which recognises good punctuality, attendance and customer care, and an annual NVQ presentation evening. Trainees' motivation is further enhanced by entering regional and national hairdressing competitions. Trainees are encouraged to attend manufacturers' courses in perming and colouring, and gain additional qualifications for key skills, men's hairdressing, basic first aid, and health and safety. The college's beauty therapy provision also enables trainees to access related programmes such as nail art, make-up and manicure, body massage, aromatherapy and waxing.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 1**

27. Tameside College's equal opportunities policy is updated on a regular basis. The policy is approved by the college governors, and reviewed by the equal opportunities management group and the equal opportunities advisory group, which has a direct advisory responsibility for equality issues. Recruitment data on ethnicity, gender and disability are regularly collected and analysed. Action plans are produced for strategic and operational planning purposes. Some 4 per cent of Tameside's population and 7 per cent of the college's students are from minority ethnic groups. The self-assessment report clearly sets out the evidence for both accepted normal practice and organisational strengths. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ Strong promotion of equality of opportunity

- ◆ equal opportunities action plans at all levels
- ◆ well-established and effective complaints procedure
- ◆ good use made of analysis of data to effect change

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak monitoring of employer equal opportunity responsibilities

28. The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated through demanding targets and a review process which promotes a culture of continuous improvement. All staff are aware of the equal opportunities policy. Through a combination of effective communication and the work of the equal opportunities management and advisory groups, equal opportunities issues maintain a high profile throughout the college. This process is given further impetus by the active involvement and intervention of the college's chief executive in both groups. When issues or developments are identified, actions are agreed and monitored on a regular basis through progress reports and targets at school and occupational-area level. The annual review of equal opportunities also informs the college's strategic plan.

29. Statistics on trainees and staff are gathered on a regular basis. Gender, disability and ethnicity are all analysed for trends, and opportunities are followed up to attract under-represented groups. Multilanguage information boards and literature are used throughout the college. Data analysis is used to inform future planning and to adjust existing action plans and reviews. The college's complaints procedure is publicised in college charters and displayed throughout the college. Trainees are protected against all forms of discrimination, and specific procedures are in place to protect them from personal harassment. Training support officers use the college's equal opportunities policy statement to brief employers as part of the initial visit when setting up a new work placement.

30. A sub-contractors profile form is used to gain information on all employer practices regarding equality issues. TQT satisfy their TEC contractual requirements when vetting employers. Where employers do not have their own equal opportunity arrangements, TQT training support officers supply a copy of and explain the content of the college equal opportunities policy relating to training. Where employers have their own arrangements, these arrangements are checked by the training support officers to ensure they cover the same range of responsibilities outlined in the college policy. Training support officers and tutors are constantly aware of equal opportunity issues. Should a work placement no longer appear suitable for a trainee, prompt action, involving all parties, is taken to amicably resolve the issue. If necessary, TQT may find a more appropriate placement for the trainee. TQT indirectly, through detailed trainee questionnaires, trainee reviews at work and the initial sub-contractors profile form, monitor each placement regarding equal opportunity matters. Nevertheless, TQT do not directly monitor to ensure employers understand their responsibilities regarding equality of opportunity and some of the monitoring work done by the TQT support officers is not well recorded.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 1**

31. In all, 18 per cent of TQT's trainees require additional learning support. Learning and pastoral support is the responsibility of the head of each occupational area. A dedicated member of staff provides additional learning support in each occupational area. Support sessions are planned as a regular feature of training and learning; additional sessions are available on demand. Selection, initial assessment and induction arrangements are rigorous and fully established, and are administered to all trainees. Trainees are tested for occupational skills and basic skills. Advice on employment and qualification progression is available, as is a central counselling service. The self-assessment report does not specifically identify strengths and weaknesses for this aspect, and much of the evidence cited is no more than normal practice. Few weaknesses were identified, however, and inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ wide variety of effective additional learning support available
- ◆ thorough initial assessment
- ◆ comprehensive personal counselling service
- ◆ broad range of employment and qualification progression support

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some incomplete induction records

32. All prospective trainees are interviewed to identify prior achievements and personal aspirations. Applicants are given accurate information and impartial advice about training and employment opportunities prior to recruitment. Applicants may also attend short, introductory courses at the college to show them what life will be like as a trainee. Following recruitment, each trainee is assessed for basic skills. The results from initial assessment are used to direct trainees towards the most appropriate training programme and to identify any additional learning support needs. Trainees are each placed on the programme which best meets their capabilities and career choice. A wide variety of resources and skills are available to support diverse training needs. Staff ensure that trainees are aware of the facilities available to support their training.

33. Additional learning support is provided within each occupational area to ensure that support is integrated within the vocational training. Supplementary support is provided by central workshops in basic and key skills. These workshops are open to trainees during the day, in the evening and at weekends. A broad range of information technology resources is available to support trainees with learning difficulties and disabilities. The level of support provided allows many trainees, particularly those with severe learning difficulties, to achieve qualifications which would not otherwise be possible.



### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*Arrangements to support trainees to keep them on their programmes are particularly good. Full-time one-to-one tuition has been organised for one trainee with severe learning difficulties, enabling this trainee to achieve an NVQ at level 1 and progress onto the next level. Other features of support include signers appointed to work with deaf trainees, and rescheduling of programmes to allow those on maternity leave to continue to progress towards their qualification.*

34. The counselling service is widely publicised to trainees. Highly trained counsellors are available by appointment and on request. Specific emphasis is placed on eliminating any barriers to trainees' use of the service. By encouraging trainees to share their problems with a counsellor as soon as possible, college staff are then able to minimise, and in some cases eliminate, any adverse impact on the learning programme. Each trainee's progression into employment or to additional qualifications is actively supported throughout the college. A central college service provides information on employment opportunities and careers advice. It also arranges mock interviews, provides job-search facilities and assists with curriculum vitae preparation to help trainees to find employment.

35. Some trainees' college-based induction records are incomplete, and some trainees' recollection of the workplace induction process and its content is poor. Trainees are given the task of ensuring that workplace induction takes place, but the consistency, content and quality of this process is not adequately monitored by the college, and workplace induction is not included in the college's extensive audit arrangements.

## **Management of training**

## **Grade 2**

36. Tameside College operates from four sites: one in Ashton-under-Lyne and three in Hyde. The college is the managing agency for Tameside Quality Training. TQT is managed by two directors and through individual heads of school. There is a dedicated administrative co-ordinator who reports to the director of marketing and development. Four full-time trainee-support officers report to heads of school and are responsible for admissions, monitoring progress and achievement, and carrying out workplace assessment. The college appointed two dedicated work-placement officers in January 1999 to increase work-based training and assessment opportunities. There is a clear management structure, which is understood by all staff. The college has policies and procedures in place to cover all key aspects of its work. All staff have appropriate job descriptions in line with agreed priorities, and staff undertake an annual staff appraisal which is linked to organisational and personal aims and staff development priorities. The college has been awarded and successfully re-accredited with the Investors in People Standard. The self-assessment report provides a clear overview of the college's management arrangements. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's evidence found through self-assessment and with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### **STRENGTHS**

- ◆ robust management-information system
- ◆ well-established staff development and appraisal system
- ◆ organisational, team and individual targets set and monitored
- ◆ effective internal communications
- ◆ staff roles and responsibilities clearly understood

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some employers not fully aware of their responsibilities within work-based training
- ◆ weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*Tameside College has developed a comprehensive Intranet site containing information, news and guidance. Staff are able to access the service from computer terminals throughout the college.*

37. Tameside College is well managed. The senior management team provides strong and focused leadership which fully supports the college's mission statement. The TQT management team is effective, practises an open management style, and values the contribution of all staff. There is a good division of roles and responsibilities, and all staff clearly understand what is required of them and how their individual functions integrate with other departments and individuals. All staff undertake a comprehensive induction on joining the college. Reviews of staff's performance take place regularly and are used as a basis for the staff development programme. All staff are encouraged to participate in both internal and external training, and the college has allocated 10 days for training to each member of staff in its annual budget. Staff training meets the personal needs of staff and the strategic and operational aims of the college, and also enables staff to support trainees with diverse training needs.

38. The college has effective internal communications. There is a structured system for meetings, which ensures effective transmission of information and sharing of good practice throughout the college. Staff have a clear understanding of the college's values and strategic plan, and support the college's objectives. Realistic and achievable targets are set at organisational, team and individual levels; these targets are regularly monitored and reviewed. The college's computerised management-information system provides detailed information on a full range of performance indicators, including enrolment, work placements, retention and achievement. The college has provided staff training designed to improve their understanding and use of this information. However, some staff are not yet using this information fully.

39. College-based training is well planned, structured and extremely effective. However, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, learning and assessment opportunities is weak. The college is currently developing various initiatives to integrate on- and off-the-job training and assessment more effectively. Various elements of the programmes require subcontracts with employers. Contracts are in place between employers and the college, but they do not adequately establish or specify employers' obligations to the training or assessment arrangements. Communication with employers is regular and keeps them informed of trainees' progress. Such contact does not, however, lead to increased levels of involvement by employers or a clearer understanding of the requirements of the training programme. Most employers and workplace supervisors are not well informed about, or involved in, work-based or college training.



## Quality assurance

## Grade 1

40. Tameside College's quality assurance arrangements are well documented. Procedures covering all key aspects of training, assessment and support are in place and are reviewed at least once a year. When specific quality assurance arrangements are required for work-based training programmes, the quality assurance procedures are appropriately adapted. All external quality requirements are routinely met, and action plans for improvement and to address instances of non-conformity are a regular feature of the internal audit and self-assessment routine. Feedback from trainees, staff and employers is sought and analysed. The self-assessment report accurately identifies a number of key strengths and weaknesses, in particular the quality of off-the-job tuition, the well-established quality procedures, the difficulties encountered in applying quality standards for work-based training, and monitoring the quality of on-the-job training. Inspectors verified the grade given by the college in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ quality assurance procedures leading to continuous improvement
- ◆ comprehensive monitoring of off-the-job training for effectiveness
- ◆ effective, clearly recorded and controlled quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ careful monitoring of achievement and retention data to improve performance
- ◆ self-assessment and internal audit are central to the quality assurance routine

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of awareness by some employers of the college's quality assurance arrangements

41. Quality assurance arrangements within the college are comprehensive, and have a positive influence on the standard of all training and learning. The recording methods are controlled and reviewed annually so that they are always relevant. Through an integrated process of course review, progress and performance monitoring, action-planning and self-assessment, the college and TQT are ensuring continuous improvement and regularly identifying and responding to issues and weaknesses. Internal verification is robust and has started to influence the quality of the learning experience within the workplace. College-based training is routinely monitored for quality and effectiveness, using evidence from both class and workshop observations, analysis of questionnaires asking for feedback on training from trainees, and annual staff review and appraisals. Action plans are drawn up to address all issues. These plans are reviewed and, where necessary, resources are made available to effect improvements.

42. Data analysis is not restricted to statistics. It includes the use of evidence from monitoring, review and evaluation, and the results of internal audit of procedures and systems. Effective use is made of data analysis to improve performance of key indicators such as achievement and retention rates. Since TQT was taken over by



the college in 1996, there has been a steady improvement. Internal audit has been sensitively aligned to the process of self-assessment which has become established as a quality assurance method. This combined routine gives TQT information of any breakdown in procedures, while establishing strengths and weaknesses according to guidelines from the Training Standards Council. Quality assurance procedures within the college are extensive and cover all aspects of its work. Nevertheless, employers' awareness of some of these arrangements is low. Strong efforts are being made in some schools of the college to build employers' awareness through the work-based review and assessment process. Awarding-body assessment criteria, planned work-based training and employers' awareness of the quality assurance standards as they apply to off-the-job training are still at a developmental stage.