



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT MAY 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1999

# Cambridge Regional College

## SUMMARY

Cambridge Regional College provides satisfactory training programmes in construction, engineering, business administration and hospitality. Training on health, care and public services programmes is good, with good co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities, but it does not promote them in the workplace. Support for trainees is satisfactory. At the time of the first inspection, the training provision for hairdressing was unsatisfactory, as was the management of training and quality assurance. The links between on- and off-the job training were weak in several areas and hairdressing trainees made little progress towards achieving their qualifications. Managers of college-based provision had little awareness of the requirements of the trainees or the operation of the company services team. Quality assurance procedures did not lead to improvements in training quality. Cambridge Regional College was reinspected 12 months after the original inspection report was published. Changes to the hairdressing provision addressed all the main weaknesses found in the original inspection and the provision is now good. Retention and achievement rates in hairdressing are now very good. Substantial changes to the management structure and financial responsibility for training provision have improved the overall management of training. The changes in management focus, and new procedures have improved the quality assurance arrangements.

**As a result of the reinspection of Cambridge Regional College, the original published report text for hair & beauty, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Business administration	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	4
Health, care & public services	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Hair & beauty	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ well-managed off-the-job training in catering, motor vehicle engineering and construction



- ◆ high standard of trainees' work in catering and construction
- ◆ good pastoral support, including regular staff visits to the workplace
- ◆ a strong commitment in the college to equal opportunities
- ◆ thorough internal verification
- ◆ good workshop facilities in engineering and construction
- ◆ close liaison between on- and off-the-job training provision
- ◆ significant improvements in trainees' achievements in all areas
- ◆ high achievement and retention rates in hairdressing

#### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ slow response in meeting some agreed performance targets
- ◆ poor delivery and assessment of key skills
- ◆ too little individual planning of training
- ◆ no systematic identification or sharing of good practice
- ◆ poorly defined service level agreements with some schools

## INTRODUCTION

1. Cambridge Regional College has two sites. The main site is a newly built campus on the northern edge of the city. The second, smaller site is in the city centre. The college manages its curriculum through 10 schools and has over 3,000 full-time and 13,000 part-time students. The inspection was concerned with the college's trainees on programmes funded through Central and Southern Cambridgeshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). These programmes are offered in construction, engineering, transport technology, business administration, customer service, accounting, information technology, hospitality and catering, care, childcare, and hairdressing. The college's company services unit manages the TEC-funded programmes. The company services manager directs the training programmes, which are delivered within the college schools, and reports directly to the director of quality and innovation. There are currently 116 trainees working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and additional qualifications on modern apprenticeship programmes. This represents an increase of 80 apprentices more than were seen at the time of the first inspection. The number of trainees on other programmes of work-based training for young people has risen by 41 to 128. These trainees are pursuing several different qualifications, including NVQs at levels 2 and 3, City and Guilds specialist qualifications and national certificates. All the trainees are employed by companies in and around Cambridge.

2. Most trainees live in the TEC area of central and southern Cambridgeshire. Of the working population living in this area, 39 per cent work in the city of Cambridge. Seventy-one per cent of local businesses employ fewer than ten staff. Employment is concentrated in public administration, education and health (32 per cent), manufacturing (19 per cent) and distribution, hotels and catering (19 per cent). The area has a buoyant economy, including a large proportion of high-technology and service industries which need highly skilled management and administrative staff. The economic performance of the TEC area has been consistently higher than that of both East Anglia and the United Kingdom as a whole. Although this trend is forecast to continue, it is threatened by growing skills shortages, especially in technological and managerial occupations. Unemployment in Cambridgeshire is low. It fell from 4 per cent in 1997 to 3 per cent in 1998.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. Cambridge Regional College produced a self-assessment report, in November 1997, on all its work; this was used for the subsequent inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). After a training programme, which was arranged by the TEC, the company services team, which is responsible for TEC-funded training, produced a separate self-assessment report on its work. This report drew on information in the college's full self-assessment report and on information from trainees, employers and heads of the curriculum schools which provide off-the-job training. The report did not accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in most areas and proposed a higher grade than that given by inspectors in all aspects except the provision of training in health, care and public services. The post-inspection action plan addressed the main weaknesses identified by inspectors. A second self-assessment report was not produced for the reinspection as the self-assessment of training provision is now incorporated into the main college self-assessment process. A report detailing progress with regard to the action plan clearly identified the improvements made and the intended targets for further improvement. The grades for all three areas reinspected were raised from those awarded in the original inspection.

4. During the first inspection, a team of seven inspectors spent a total of 21 days at Cambridge Regional College in May 1998. Inspectors met staff from the college, representatives of the TEC and the regional government office, employers and trainees. They visited the college's two sites and 31 workplaces. They observed 17 training sessions. They also examined assessment records, training plans, trainees' files and portfolios and numerous documents relating to training and its management.

5. Reinspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors for a total of nine days in June 1999. They interviewed eight hairdressing trainees and four trainees from other occupational areas. They examined documents relating to the training and its quality assurance and management, trainees files and portfolios and assessment records. Inspectors interviewed college managers and staff, employers and workplace supervisors. They met representatives of the TEC and government office. Assessments, reviews and five training sessions were observed by inspectors and 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
Hair & beauty		5				5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

### Grade 3

6. Cambridge Regional College has 14 trainees in construction, all of whom are employed and are training as plumbers. Twelve are working towards NVQ level 2; two are on modern apprenticeships leading to NVQ level 3. Trainees attend college one day each week for training in the theoretical aspects of plumbing. These studies are intended to support their practical learning at work during the rest of the week. A programme co-ordinator from the college visits trainees at work every three months to review their progress. The college's self-assessment report identified few strengths or weaknesses in construction training. Inspectors agreed with the proposed grade.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ teachers at the college are well qualified; their practical experience is good
- ◆ trainees' work is of a high standard and demonstrates occupational competence
- ◆ training workshop facilities are good

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ key skills are not integrated with the vocational training or assessed
- ◆ co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is poor
- ◆ the lack of materials hampers trainees' progress towards achieving NVQs
- ◆ some workplaces do not offer enough opportunity for trainees to develop their competencies

7. The college-based training is well organised. It is conducted in modern workshops and taught by staff who use their experience and expertise well to maintain trainees' interest. Staff relate the theoretical aspects of training to current practice, but key skills are not integrated with other aspects of trainees' work or properly assessed. Practical assignments are well designed and are structured in a way which enables trainees to develop their skills. The monitoring of trainees' progress, in carrying out their assignments, is not rigorous enough. Some trainees fall too far behind before staff take any action to help them.

8. College programme co-ordinators do not have enough influence over the design of trainees' work experience to ensure that it enables them to achieve their NVQs. Programmes of training at work are determined entirely by employers. They do not take account of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship programme. In most cases, no attempt is made to ensure that the theory taught at college is timely or otherwise appropriate to trainees' experience at work. College staff who conduct reviews in the workplace are often not qualified in the relevant occupation, tending to concentrate too much on administrative matters. For some trainees, their work

does not provide the necessary range or type of experience. For example, one trainee's daily work was with a general plumber, covering a wide range of jobs and skills; another, who installed water-softeners, performed an insufficient range of tasks to lead to an NVQ. The college provides a standard course for all, rather than individual learning programmes, so that it is difficult to make up for the differences in work experience. Few construction trainees achieve their NVQ within the normal duration of the training programme.

## **Engineering**

## **Grade 3**

9. Cambridge Regional College provides training in electrical, electronic, mechanical, production and motor vehicle engineering. There are 42 trainees, of whom 18 are modern apprentices and 24 are in other work-based training for young people. The modern apprentices are working towards an NVQ level 3. The other trainees are pursuing City and Guilds qualifications, national certificates or NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All the trainees are employed. They attend college one day each week for the theoretical aspects of their NVQs or for an engineering course. Trainees are visited regularly in the workplace by a training adviser from the college. The purpose of these visits is to review trainees' progress and agree on targets for further achievement. The college's self-assessment report did not identify some of the weaknesses in engineering training which were found by inspectors. The inspection grade is lower than that proposed by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ workshop sessions are conducted well
- ◆ trainees' prior learning is accredited towards qualifications
- ◆ trainees are working effectively without direct supervision
- ◆ accurate tracking and records for motor vehicle trainees' attendance and achievements
- ◆ there are good workshop facilities
- ◆ lecturers are knowledgeable about NVQs

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ training plans do not adequately specify content, assessment methods or timescales
- ◆ trainers, workplace supervisors and assessors do not work as a team
- ◆ the rate of trainees' progress is related to a course, not to the individual
- ◆ some motor vehicle workshop groups are too large for effective training

10. Much of the off-the-job engineering training provided by the college takes place in its modern, well-designed and efficiently maintained workshops. Sessions are well

run, although, in one motor vehicle class, the large number of trainees made learning difficult. Lecturers made clear links between practical activities in the workshop and the theory which had been covered before. There is an individual training plan for each trainee, but these focus on the course, rather than on the particular needs of each individual. Assessment methods and timescales are not specified.

11. Most employers regard their arrangements with the college as traditional day-release programmes. They are positive about training advisers' review visits, even though most of these advisers do not have engineering expertise. Reviews concentrate on trainees' progress at college, rather than on the whole training programme. Advisers' lack of engineering backgrounds means that they have little influence over training at work. Targets for trainees' progress are not set, neither are training plans updated as the normal outcome of each review. In some cases, trainees waste time acquiring and gaining credit for skills through simulated work, when these same skills are needed as part of their everyday jobs. The links between on- and off-the-job training are inadequate. Lecturers are often unaware of what happens in the trainees' workplaces, and they plan college work in isolation. Communication between the college and employers is poor. Some employers have been unable to obtain information about their trainees' attendance at college or about the progress which they are making.

12. The motor vehicle section has recently developed its own computerised tracking system to provide accurate records of trainees' attendance and NVQ achievements in each unit of the programme. This section also uses occupational experts to visit workplaces and to conduct trainees' progress reviews. The development of NVQ portfolios, reviews of trainees' progress and training plans for motor vehicle trainees have all improved over the last year as a result of these initiatives.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

13. At the time of inspection, the college had a total of three trainees on modern apprenticeship programmes: one in accounting and two in customer services. There were a further four trainees aiming to achieve an NVQ level 2, three of them in accounting and one in business administration. All the trainees are employed. Those in accounting attend the college for one day each week for the theoretical aspects of their training. For trainees in customer services and business administration, all the training is delivered in the workplace. In its self-assessment report, the college underestimated the significance of some weaknesses and proposed a higher grade than that awarded by inspectors.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good assessment of prior learning among customer services trainees
- ◆ flexibility in arrangements for entry to business administration and customer



services programmes

- ◆ well-designed workplace assessment in customer services

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ few opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ accountancy training is focused on the course, not the trainee
- ◆ poor achievement rates in business administration

14. Trainees may join the business administration and customer services programmes at any point in the year. They undergo a thorough assessment of their prior learning which includes review and evaluation of work previously carried out in training or at work. Trainees in business administration and customer services are visited regularly at work by college staff who review their progress and carry out assessments of their growing competence. Assessors' visits are well planned to minimise disruption to trainees' work, particularly in customer services. Trainees also submit work, for assessment, to the college by post. Once assessed, it is promptly returned with detailed written feedback from lecturers. Although training is entirely work based, trainees have access to college facilities such as the learning resources centre.

15. For trainees in accounting, there is insufficient co-ordination between the work which they do at college and that at work. When they are at college, they join a current day-release course. The rate of trainees' progress is determined by the course and not by their differing abilities. Tutors are sometimes unaware that these are on a work-based training programme, and they take no account of individual training plans. Work completed in the workplace is not assessed and it does not contribute to trainees' qualifications. In all three areas, little use is made of assessment opportunities at work, and progress towards achievement of NVQs is slower than it need be. Many trainees fail to achieve the full award. For the past two years, the achievement rate for business administration trainees has been low, at 33 per cent.

### **Hospitality**

### **Grade 3**

16. There were 18 trainees on TEC-funded training in hospitality, twelve of them working to achieve NVQ level 2; six on modern apprenticeships leading to NVQ level 3. All trainees are employed, attending college for one day each week. They work in a wide range of concerns in and around Cambridge, including public houses, hotels, colleges and schools. Off-the-job training includes both theoretical and practical aspects of their work. All trainees attend a one-day induction at the start of their training and they are allotted a training adviser who visits them at work every 12 weeks. The college's self-assessment report did not identify some of the weaknesses found by inspectors, including the steady decline in trainees'

achievements. The proposed grade was higher than that awarded by inspectors.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training in food preparation and cooking
- ◆ there was a high standard of work produced by trainees
- ◆ highly qualified and experienced staff

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no key skill development and assessment
- ◆ lack of effective training plans for each individual
- ◆ ineffective reviews of progress
- ◆ failure to improve NVQ achievement rates over the last three years

17. Off-the-job training is good, with training thoroughly planned. Trainees are given details of the training programme and the assessment opportunities at the start of each training session. Lessons are well structured and well taught. Tutors have good rapport with their trainees and they make good use of their experience to maintain trainees' interest and enrich their learning. Trainees recognise the value of this opportunity to develop their skills away from the pressures of work. Employers speak highly of the college, commenting on the high standard of work which is produced by trainees.

18. Training in the workplace is not planned. It does not form part of an overall training programme which also includes study at college. Individual training plans are not formulated for each trainee. There is no assessment which entails direct observation of trainees demonstrating their competence at work. Trainees record their daily activities on diary sheets which are assessed, by a college tutor, as part of their portfolio of evidence. People who are not specialists in hospitality and catering carry out workplace reviews. These reviews focus on collection of assessment evidence and pastoral care, rather than discussion of training needs or setting learning objectives. Key skills training is a mandatory part of the modern apprenticeship programme, but it has not been adequately developed. Trainees have little understanding of key skills or how they will be assessed. Trainees' achievement rates have fallen over the last three years, with 60 per cent of them achieving NVQs in 1997-98.

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

**Grade 2**

19. Cambridge Regional College has 21 trainees in hairdressing, of whom 17 are national trainees, three are on other programmes of work-based training for young

people and one is a New Deal client. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 in hairdressing. The majority of trainees are employed and there are good employment prospects for those about to finish training. Most of the training and assessment takes place in the college, which trainees attend for one day a week. This off-the-job provision is being made available throughout the year. The college has adequate resources. Trainees have access to computers, including a recently opened hairdressing resource-based learning centre.

Inspectors at the first inspection identified the following main weaknesses:

- ◆ trainees' progress is seriously restricted by the lack of hairdressing clients
- ◆ most trainees make slow progress and fail to achieve the full award
- ◆ individual training plans take no account of previous occupational experience
- ◆ lack of flexibility in off-the-job training prevents trainees from progressing at their own pace

20. Since the first inspection, staff have implemented many of the changes which the college identified in the post-inspection action plan. The hairdressing training has greatly improved as a result.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good quality monitoring visits
- ◆ comprehensive recording system
- ◆ good workplace training opportunities
- ◆ well-structured off-the-job theory training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient models for first year trainees

21. Trainees' achievement of the NVQ level 2 in hairdressing has improved three-fold in the past year, from 23 per cent in 1997-98 to 80 per cent in 1998-99. This is now a high achievement rate for the qualification. Retention for national trainees is now excellent at 94 per cent. Good quality monitoring visits to the workplace take place every 12 weeks by the company services training co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is a qualified hairdresser and has a good understanding of the assessment process. The reviews are well informed by the inclusion of salon managers, trainers and assessors. A termly progress report, which details unit achievement, attendance and general progress, is retained by the employer, trainee, college lecturer and the company services unit. If the report is more than a few weeks old the training co-ordinator updates the information prior to visiting the workplace. The co-ordinator meets on a weekly basis with the main hairdressing lecturer who takes the trainees for theory and practical training. The information arising from the meeting is recorded and this includes past and future workplace training and target-setting. The

target-setting is assessment focused and makes links between on- and off-the-job training. Employers are well informed about the progress of their trainees and report that communication with college staff has improved over the last year. Employers take part in quality reviews of hairdressing training including observation of training sessions. On-the-job training is good, with regular practical training sessions. Most trainees are able to work on one or two models on a regular weekly basis. Employers are supportive of their trainees and encourage them to build up their own group of regular clients. Trainees attend training events run by manufacturers and are also sent on specialist cutting courses to develop their confidence.

22. Trainees speak enthusiastically about their off-the-job training and have an excellent relationship with the tutor. Attendance is high. Improvements have been made to both the theory and practical training. These include good quality handouts for theory, reception training and improved practical sessions. Models are efficiently used to maximise training opportunities. For example, one trainee is assessed for haircutting and another subsequently for a colouring service, on the same model. A resource-based learning centre has recently been opened in the hairdressing area of the college. It contains handouts for trainees who miss sessions, open learning materials, CD ROMs and videos. Trainees are also able to use computers to support their gathering of evidence for key skills. Trainees can take written test papers to support their practical progress. The new recording system is well-used, informative and kept updated. It covers attendance, assessment, portfolios, retention, types of evidence and oral questioning. These records feed information for tutorials and inform action plans. Portfolios are regularly checked and clear written feedback detailing strengths and weaknesses is given to trainees.

23. The college has had a long-standing difficulty in attracting enough clients for its students and trainees in hairdressing. Widespread advertising and practical training sessions for second year trainees scheduled in the early evenings has improved the situation during the past year. Clients are directed towards the second year trainees, all of whom are making good progress with assessment and expect to complete this term. The scarcity of clients restricts first-year trainees' progress. First-year trainees have on average completed three or four units of the NVQ level 2, which is an improvement from the first inspection when trainees had achieved only one unit. Assessment for first year trainees takes place mainly using full-time college students as models. Trainees who worked in salons on Saturdays before leaving school complete skills tests to gauge their aptitude, but do not progress significantly faster than those new to hairdressing. Some salons have qualified assessors and most are now committed to a training scheme offering free assessor training. The trainees' opportunities for achievement have been increased by the college salons remaining open in the evenings and every Wednesday, throughout the summer. The college is offering the hairdressing NVQ at level 3 in 1999-2000, so that current trainees will have progression opportunities.

## Health, care & public services

## Grade 2

24. At the time of inspection, there were 15 trainees. Four of them are modern

apprentices employed in care. Eleven are employed in childcare and are working towards an NVQ level 2. Off-the-job training is delivered at the college which trainees attend for one day each week. Work placements all involve care for children or for elderly people. College tutors carry out most of the assessment of trainees' competence, while workplace assessors contribute only a small amount. The college's self-assessment report did not identify the main strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. However, the grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that proposed in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ off-the-job training is closely linked to workplace practice
- ◆ trainees' views on the effectiveness of training are sought and acted on
- ◆ high attendance and retention rates, both on and off the job

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate opportunity for assessment

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*At one nursery, trainees' work is planned to contribute directly to NVQ awards. Trainees are fully involved in a staff development programme, part of which encourages visits to other nurseries to see a wide range of childcare practices. The nursery's owner is a qualified NVQ assessor.*

25. Training is well planned and well delivered. In a particularly effective session, trainees' interest was maintained through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching techniques. Intelligent use was made of trainees' work experience to illustrate the theory being covered. Trainers and assessors set realistic targets for trainees. Although these are not always achieved by the date predicted, trainees are encouraged to persist and most eventually achieve their awards. Trainees' progress is closely monitored, and there is an effective internal verification system.

26. The extent to which trainers communicate effectively with employers varies. In some cases, there are productive working relationships which benefit trainees. In other cases, relationships are less secure, with employers not sufficiently aware of the requirements of the relevant NVQ.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

27. The college takes its commitment to equal opportunities very seriously. Its achievements in this area are partly reflected by the wide range of students which it recruits. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy is issued to all staff, who are also aware of the related procedures. There is good access for wheelchair users throughout the college, including those areas where access is often difficult, such as construction workshops. The college has been less active in promoting equality of opportunity in the workplace. The various occupational areas place differing levels of emphasis on raising trainees' awareness of equality of opportunity. The college's self-assessment report did not identify any weaknesses in this aspect of its work.

Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ there is a strong equal opportunities culture in the college
- ◆ a comprehensive policy is widely distributed
- ◆ there is good access for wheelchair users
- ◆ both policy and procedures are reviewed regularly
- ◆ positive action is taken to address issues

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ there is no consistent monitoring of trainees' gender or ethnicity
- ◆ no co-ordinated approach to promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Having recruited a woman into the traditionally male-dominated motor vehicle engineering programme, the college reviewed her employer's facilities. The college supported the employer in building a lavatory and changing-area for women.*

28. The college 'equalising committee', which has student representation, meets every two months to review equal opportunities issues and to discuss the views submitted to it by the college's numerous special interest groups. Where equality of opportunity issues have been identified, action has been taken to deal with them. An equal opportunities statement is included in the students' charter and the part-time students' handbook which all trainees receive. On care programmes, equality of opportunity is carefully considered and consideration of the issues forms a significant part of trainees' work. However, in one engineering workplace review which was observed by inspectors, the treatment of the subject was cursory.

29. Monitoring of trainees' ethnicity and gender is sporadic, with no recruitment targets. The company services team has monitored the gender of trainees in recent years. No action has been proposed to respond to an increase in male trainees in hospitality and catering, from 49 per cent of the total in 1996-97 to 100 per cent in 1997-98. Equality of opportunity is strongly promoted in the college, and, where issues arise in the workplace, the college moves quickly to address them. There is an initial check by the training adviser to ensure that companies comply with the relevant legislation. Thereafter, promotion of equal opportunities at work is left to individual members of staff.

### Trainee support

### Grade 3

30. The college's self-assessment report failed to identify some of the weaknesses found by inspectors in this area. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the provider.

*STRENGTHS*

- ◆ regular review meetings in the workplace
- ◆ rapid access to help from tutors and training advisers
- ◆ trainees' additional support needs are identified and met through off-the-job training
- ◆ good pastoral care both on and off the job

*WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no assessment of key skills on entry for some areas of work
- ◆ little use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ additional support not always available in the workplace when required

31. The college supports its trainees well during off-the-job training. Although the college does recruit some trainees directly, many are sent by their employers. Every trainee is interviewed before the start of the programme. The college has a thorough induction programme, but there is no systematic initial assessment of key skills. In most occupational areas, trainees' prior experience and achievements are not accredited towards more advanced awards. At college and in the workplace, trainees have ready access to tutors and training advisers, regarding the support given to them as good. Employers comment favourably on the speed with which trainees' problems are addressed by their supervisors, who visit regularly and are always available by telephone.

32. The role of training advisory staff is to both support trainees and review their progress. Most trainees regard their relationship with their training adviser as one in which they can seek help with any aspect of their life and work. When trainees' studies are hampered by personal or domestic circumstances, training advisers are usually able to deal quickly and effectively with the problems. Trainees often ask their work colleagues for advice with their training. When needs for additional learning support are identified, managers arrange appropriate help, either through the college or at work. However, trainees often have to notify their training adviser of their own learning problems. Not all are willing to highlight their weaknesses, and some who need help with reading and writing do not get it.

**Management of training****Grade 3**

33. Since the first inspection, Cambridge Regional College has redefined the role and responsibilities of the company services manager, providing a focus for the management of government funded training within the college. Clear links have been established between the manager and staff of the company services unit and those responsible for providing training. Management of the training provision is satisfactory, although many of the changes instituted after the inspection have yet to



be fully implemented, and their effectiveness measured. The college is the holder of the Investors in People award.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ college managers do not take responsibility for on-the-job training
- ◆ ineffective lines of communication between the company services team and teaching departments
- ◆ training staff have insufficient information about trainees to make sound judgements about them
- ◆ employers are not involved in, or adequately informed about, training
- ◆ managers do not ensure that staff implement all college procedures

34. Management of training has improved as planned actions have been implemented. The college did not produce a new self-assessment report or regrade provision, but staff produced a separate report detailing progress in implementing the post-inspection action plan.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clear understanding of managers' responsibility for on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ effective communication between company services and teaching departments
- ◆ increased employer involvement with training
- ◆ piloted models of training are used to inform policy development

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ management response to issues lacks co-ordination
- ◆ unstructured on-the-job training in some placements
- ◆ slow response in meeting some agreed performance targets
- ◆ poorly defined service level agreements between company services and schools

35. The newly appointed director of teaching and learning and the director of quality and innovation work closely with the quality and audit manager and the company services manager to bring the activities of the company services team more fully into the mainstream provision. The college's policies and procedures, relating to the quality of provision and support, are for the benefit of both college students and the company services' trainees.

36. College managers and staff, involved with the delivery of training for the company services team, are aware of their responsibilities for both on- and off-the-job training. Following the appointment of the director of teaching and learning, managers devolved the budget for TEC-funded provision to the schools responsible for providing training. When issues relating to the training are identified, programme



area managers move quickly to address them. However, the identification of issues and the resulting actions taken are not fully co-ordinated by the college management team. The levels of service the programme areas are required to provide for the company services team are not clearly defined. College managers have identified the need to specify the requirements and have started to introduce formal service level agreements. In some cases, where programme area managers have agreed performance targets with the company services team, they have been slow to achieve them. New, more demanding targets have been agreed on even though the existing targets were not met.

37. Regular meetings between the company services team and managers and staff in the schools provide an effective communication channel and have raised the awareness of college staff to the requirements of the company services unit. Employers are involved in determining the training plans for each of their trainees. They also attend various quality forums which provide them with information on the processes of planning training and the assurance of its quality. In a few workplaces, on-the-job training lacks structure, and trainees progress towards achievement of the NVQ is sporadic. College staff have increased the amount of assessment that takes place at work, either through college staff or by training work-based assessors. Managers have made good use of pilot schemes in a particular occupational area to identify good practice and then disseminate it.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

38. Since the college was first inspected there has been considerable emphasis and urgency placed on improving the quality of work-based training. The college's post-inspection plan identified the action needed to monitor and improve the training across all government-funded programmes. The plan included clear strategies to reinforce the college's strengths and remedy its weaknesses. The action plan has been audited, and progress towards continuous improvement identified. The actions taken by the college have started to have an impact and improve the quality of training programmes, although some developments are at an early stage and it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of all the measures.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ poor practice in training has not been identified in the self-assessment report
- ◆ conclusions drawn from quality assurance procedures not acted upon
- ◆ quality assurance procedures do not improve performance
- ◆ trainees' views are not used to inform the development of training schemes

39. The college has well-documented quality assurance policies and procedures. A quality systems and audit manager is responsible for developing and implementing the quality assurance system and for monitoring its effectiveness. The college's self-assessment report for 1998-99 has yet to be produced and, therefore, there were no

proposed grades for the areas to be reinspected.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ development of quality reviews
- ◆ regular auditing of quality assurance procedures
- ◆ significant improvement across all areas in trainees' retention and achievements

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of coherence in monitoring of training and resulting action
- ◆ no systematic identification or sharing of good practice
- ◆ lack of clarity of integration of TEC-funded training in the new self-assessment process

40. Under the management of the company services unit there are now regular youth training quality review meetings specifically focused on the development and monitoring of TEC-funded training programmes. Employers, the TEC contract manager, trainee representatives and representatives from across the college, who are involved in providing training and assessment, attend regularly. Issues discussed include trainees and employers' feedback, induction procedures, retention and achievement. These meetings ensure that all those involved have the opportunity to discuss and report on developments and progress. However, although action points and responsibilities are identified, there has not been an update on progress made with issues raised at previous meetings during the year. Sometimes issues are 'lost' in the plethora of group meetings and there is no regular co-ordination or monitoring of actions taken outside the company services team. Although there have been moves to share good practice across programme areas, there has been no planned approach and meetings are sporadic. There has been no systematic identification or agreement of what represents good practice. No timescales have been set for the introduction of a systematic approach to identifying good practice, and there are no mechanisms to monitor implementation across occupational areas or progress made towards objectives.

41. The college carries out audits across all areas of training and the self-assessment action plan, to identify progress towards specified goals. Audits are detailed and list the original action point, the evidence seen and include detailed comments which inform management of current status. A quality checklist ensures that audits focus on specific areas directly related to work-based training. Since the last inspection, there has been a dramatic improvement in trainees' achievements across all occupational areas. In 1996-97, overall achievement was 46 per cent, in 1997-98, achievement dropped to 35 per cent, whereas in 1998-99 achievement was 74 per cent. There have been particularly significant improvements in hairdressing with achievement increasing to 80 per cent in 1998-99. The college's strategic plan identifies raising achievement levels and improving retention as key objectives. The company service unit has set, and has exceeded, its 1998-99 targets. The college monitors and reviews retention and achievement throughout the year by sampling



early leavers and by comparing year-on-year retention levels.

42. The college is moving to a whole college approach to self-assessment, encompassing all its training provision and based on the development of a curriculum model. Each school is responsible for producing its own part of the college's overall plan. For government-funded trainees, there is currently no clear plan to show how the information from schools is gathered to enable a detailed self-assessment to be conducted by the company services unit.