



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT APRIL 2000

University of Hertfordshire

SUMMARY

The University of Hertfordshire offers satisfactory training programmes in care. Assessors work alongside trainees in the workplace and are closely involved in the training programme. Staff are committed to upholding equal opportunities. Trainees receive frequent reviews of their progress and have access to a comprehensive counselling service. Internal and external communications are good. Staff have a wide range of occupational experience. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Systems for monitoring and evaluating programmes are effective.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ close involvement of work-based assessors in trainees' induction and off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent and well-recorded reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ wide range of staff's occupational experience
- ◆ effective monitoring and evaluation of training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor arrangements for initial assessment
- ◆ no planned training for some trainees
- ◆ inadequate use of data
- ◆ insufficiently thorough internal verification process

INTRODUCTION

1. Hertfordshire County Council originally established the University of Hertfordshire as a technical college in 1952. In 1969, it was designated as one of the first three polytechnics in the country and in 1992 was established as the University of Hertfordshire. It is based mainly in Hatfield, Hertfordshire and has approximately 2,000 staff and 19,000 students. It offers a wide range of courses including engineering and business studies and, in recent years, has become increasingly involved in the teaching of nursing and related disciplines such as physiotherapy and radiography. In 1993, it merged with the Hertfordshire College of Health Care Studies and the Barnet College of Health and Midwifery. The University of Hertfordshire Care NVQ Centre was established in 1991 and became part of the university at the point of merger in 1993. The centre was established to offer training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care to nursing auxiliaries as part of education and training to the local National Health Service (NHS) authorities and is a department in one of the eight faculties at the university. Since then, the centre has expanded to offer training leading to NVQs in care to staff both within and outside the NHS across Hertfordshire and bordering counties. Nine full-time and five part-time staff are directly involved in the centre's work. Assessors are employed by the workplaces.

2. The University of Hertfordshire care NVQ centre offers training leading to NVQs in care at levels 2, 3 and 4 to care workers employed in local NHS trusts, private, residential and nursing homes and group homes. The University of Hertfordshire also offer training in key skills and for assessor qualifications. The trainees work with clients from a wide range of sectors including children, adults and older people with acute and chronic health problems or mental illness and learning disabilities. Trainees work in hospital wards, the community and as therapy helpers in occupational therapy, physiotherapy, radiography and speech therapy. The centre currently has 309 trainees, 51 of whom are government-funded trainees.

3. Most of the centre's trainees come from the Hertfordshire area, with small numbers working to the north in Bedfordshire and to the east in Essex. Approximately 4 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. In Bedfordshire the proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups is higher at 9.3 per cent, and it is lower in Essex at 2 per cent. The unemployment rate across the county is low at 1.8 per cent across the county. In Essex it is slightly higher at 3 per cent and in Bedfordshire it is 2.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. In Hertfordshire, almost 80 per cent of those employed work in the service industries. Twenty per cent of the population work in education or health-related occupations. Employers find that vacancies for care assistants and particularly nurses are difficult to fill. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 52.3 per cent in Bedfordshire, and 49.3 per cent in Essex, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 1999, the



proportion of 16 year olds staying on in full-time education in both Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire was 80 per cent, compared with the national average of 69 per cent. In Essex, this proportion was 70 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The centre's programme manager had responsibility for compiling the self-assessment report and attended external training on self-assessment in March 1998, together with the team member responsible for liaising with Hertfordshire TEC. The self-assessment report has been a regular agenda item at team meetings since March 1998. An evaluation procedure was piloted on a small scale. In September 1999, a second self-assessment was carried out using procedures amended in the light of the pilot evaluation. Trainees, employers and all staff were consulted. Inspectors agreed with the grade given for trainee support. The grades they awarded for the occupational area and the other three generic areas were lower than those given in the self-assessment report.

5. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at the University of Hertfordshire during May 2000. Inspectors examined the centre's records and awarding body documents. They interviewed 21 of the 51 trainees, 13 employers, and work-based supervisors. They also held 16 interviews with the centre's staff. Inspectors visited 15 training sites, observed four reviews of trainees' progress and two training sessions. They looked at assessment records, trainees' work and portfolios.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Health, care & public services	1	1				2
Total	1	1	0	0	0	2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

6. There are 51 trainees. Twenty-one are following an advanced modern apprenticeship programme, 27 a foundation-level modern apprenticeship programme, and three are on other training programmes. All trainees are employed and work with a wide range of clients including children, adults and older people with acute and chronic health problems, mental health problems, mental illness and learning disabilities. On-the-job training takes place in the community, in hospitals, nursing and residential homes. Some trainees work in hospital wards and operating theatres and as therapy helpers in occupational therapy, physiotherapy, radiography and speech therapy departments of NHS trusts. The staff consists of one care NVQ programme manager, four NVQ co-ordinators who liaise with employers and three NVQ facilitators. One of the facilitators is responsible for training and

GOOD PRACTICE

An employer arranged for a group of trainees to visit the local undertakers as part of their training for an NVQ unit called 'contribute to the care of a deceased person'. Trainees valued this experience and found that it increased their knowledge and helped them deal with the emotional implications of their work role.

arranging assessment of key skills for all trainees. All staff are experienced in health and care and hold teaching qualifications. They are also qualified as assessors and internal verifiers. Three members of staff are qualified to accredit trainees' prior learning and achievement. Trainees' progress through the NVQ is reviewed by the NVQ co-ordinators or facilitators every four weeks. The self-assessment report identified many strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training for some trainees
- ◆ good resources in most workplaces
- ◆ close involvement of assessors in trainees' induction and off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ many changes of staff for some trainees
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

7. In all the care organisations, there are promotion opportunities for care assistants with NVQs in care. The qualified trainees are given appropriate responsibilities and are well integrated into the team of carers. Off-the-job training for trainees working in hospitals takes place in the hospital education unit. Programmes of training are well structured and carefully recorded. Training activities are imaginatively designed and help trainees to develop the requisite NVQ competencies. The rooms are well equipped for teaching and trainees have access to the hospital's staff library and resource centre which contain a comprehensive range of recent and relevant journals. Trainees employed in nursing homes, residential and community settings are trained in the workplace. Some workplaces provide trainees with more learning materials than others but most have textbooks and videos for trainees' use. The trainees describe their colleagues as good sources of information. All trainees have access to the university's library and learning resources. Trainees use up-to-date equipment in the workplace and are able to collect evidence of their acquisition of the full range of competencies for their NVQ, including those required for optional units such as those in midwifery.

8. The centre provides each trainee with open-learning materials and a workbook relating to each unit. These consist of questions for the trainees to answer and details of activities for them to carry out. These workbooks are a useful guide for trainees and help them to collect evidence and find ways of demonstrating their knowledge. Training in key skills is offered in workshops or on a one-to-one basis with the key skills facilitator. Key skills assessment is an integral part of the assessment of trainees' performance in the workplace. Some trainees have acquired communication, application of number and information technology key skills through their previous studies. Their previous attainment in key skills is identified and recognised by the prior learning advisor.

9. Assessors and trainees work closely together throughout the programme. The centre is responsible for training assessors and verifiers. A two-day induction to assessment for unqualified assessors usually takes place two weeks before the trainees start the programme. Assessors from the workplace accompany trainees when they attend one of the training centres for their induction. The induction programme covers the structure of the NVQ, assessment methods, and ways of gathering evidence. Methods of gathering evidence for two NVQ units are identified. Assessors and trainees receive help from the NVQ co-ordinator in drawing up a plan for assessment in the workplace. Duty rotas in the workplace are arranged so that trainees and assessors work together. Some trainees choose to undertake night duties occasionally with their assessor in order that they can take advantage of all opportunities for assessment. Assessors give up their own time to complete trainees' assessments. Many assessors accompany trainees to other departments in the hospital to collect information for their NVQ.

10. The assessor is responsible for training the trainee to carry out tasks in the workplace. When trainees feel ready to demonstrate their competencies, they ask the assessor to assess them. Assessment is carefully planned and most trainees know when they are to be observed carrying out activities in the workplace. Some assessors base their assessment of trainees' competence on continuous observation of their daily practice. Trainees prefer this to specific observations of their performance.

11. Trainees are nominated by their manager or employer to undertake training towards an NVQ. Nomination forms are circulated throughout the NHS trusts and private nursing and residential care homes three times each year. All trainees who wish to work towards an NVQ are accepted by the centre. Trainees work for at least three months in the care setting before starting their training and have a good insight into the demands of the occupational area. Trainees' key skills, numeracy and literacy skills are not formally assessed. Those trainees needing help with literacy and numeracy are given this by their assessor or NVQ trainer as the need arises.

12. Throughout the organisations, there have been changes of staff, training or assessing trainees. Some trainees have had three different assessors over a short period of time. They have experienced breaks in the continuity of their on-the-job training and assessment. Some trainees have made slow progress towards achieving their NVQ.

13. Trainees' retention and achievement rates are poor. In the period 1997-98, 50 per cent of trainees who started their training left the programme early and 46 per cent achieved their NVQ. In 1998-99, 60 per cent of trainees left the programme early, and only 23 per cent obtained an NVQ. Only 50 per cent of the trainees who started during 1999-2000 remain on the programme. One trainee has completed the modern apprenticeship framework and five trainees are nearing completion of it.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

14. The University of Hertfordshire has an equal opportunities policy, which is included in the student and staff handbook and is introduced to trainees during induction. In addition, there is a separate policy for the centre, which is included in the trainees' handbook. Training related to equal opportunities forms an integral part of the NVQ programme. In the written agreement between employers and the university, employers must give a commitment to ensuring that their working practices are non-discriminatory. The centre for NVQ training has parking for people with disabilities and is accessible for those in wheelchairs. All trainees are already employed. The university collects data on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities. Sixteen per cent of trainees starting the programme in 1999-2000 were men, 12 per cent were from minority ethnic groups and there were no trainees with disabilities. People from minority ethnic groups account for 4 per cent of the population in Hertfordshire. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but awarded a lower grade than that given in by the university.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ staff commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ extensive programme for staff training in equal opportunities issues
- ◆ trainees' good understanding of complaints procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient coverage of equal opportunities issues during induction
- ◆ no criteria to ensure fair selection of trainees
- ◆ no use of equal opportunities data in action planning

15. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and includes sections on staff development, complaints and grievances, services and facilities and community links. The university has an equal opportunities officer and an officer for disabled students. There are notices in the NVQ centre about action to be taken by trainees should they encounter harassment or bullying. Staff know trainees well as individuals. They give trainees their voicemail, office and fax telephone numbers and e-mail address and encourage the trainees to contact them if they encounter any discriminatory behaviour.

16. The University of Hertfordshire publishes a staff development newsletter containing details of free in-house training on equal opportunities. Staff have attended a number of these training sessions in the last year, as well as training on equal opportunities organised by other organisations. The university's equal opportunities officer was invited to a staff team meeting to discuss implementation

of the equal opportunities policy. Trainees are given a copy of the university's complaints and appeals procedure at induction. They are clear about how, and to whom, they can make a complaint.

17. During the trainees' one-day induction programme, reference is made to the equal opportunities policy but no action is taken to check the trainees' understanding of it. The handbook accompanying the induction day is uninteresting in format, contains no graphics and is not couched in clear and simple English. The university's publicity materials make appropriate reference to the training programmes and their content promotes equality of opportunity.

18. Trainees are selected by employers to join the centre's programmes. The university's procedures manual does not include criteria for the fair selection of trainees. Equal opportunities data on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities are collected but not used to plan ways of recruiting persons from groups under-represented on training programmes. Data on the retention and achievement rates of trainees from these groups are not analysed. There is no specific action plan for the promotion of equal opportunities.

Trainee support

Grade 3

19. Trainees are recruited to programmes after being nominated by their employers, and have usually worked in care for at least three months before starting on the programme. The centre's key skills co-ordinator carries out checks on health and safety at the trainees' workplace. Trainees receive an informal interview at their workplace. During this, identification of their prior achievements, and of their need for additional learning support, is carried out. Trainees attend a one-day induction during which the NVQ in care is explained to them. All trainees are allocated an NVQ co-ordinator to advise and support them through their programme. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses from those stated by the centre in the self-assessment report, but awarded the same grade as that given by the university.

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of how trainees' successes are celebrated. An annual awards ceremony for care and assessor awards is held. Trainees can invite their friends and family to join them as they are presented with their certificates.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective working relationships between staff, trainees and employers
- ◆ frequent and well-recorded reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ comprehensive advisory/counselling service

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic monitoring or recording of trainees' support needs
- ◆ poor initial assessment process

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of how an employer enabled trainees to take justifiable pride in their achievements. An employer had provided each trainee in the care home with a presentation folder for their certificates of achievement. These certificates could then be displayed to clients and relatives should the trainee so wish.

20. Staff have frequent discussions with employers in order to make sure that the training programme continues to meet their requirements as well as those of trainees. Some staff were previously employed in the NHS trusts or care homes contracting with the University of Hertfordshire, and have a good understanding of the requirements of the employers and the job roles of the trainees. Trainees are well supported, both in their off-the-job training and in the workplace. Any problems reported by trainees regarding the training process are quickly and effectively addressed and recorded. Pastoral care is good. Staff follow up any personal or domestic issues affecting trainees' learning through weekly or fortnightly visits and telephone calls to trainees. Trainees receive comprehensive reviews of their progress every month. During the reviews, trainees engage in action planning to improve their work and receive careers guidance. They are set specific targets and their progress towards reaching them is followed up in subsequent reviews. Trainees have access to the full range of the university's resources and facilities, including libraries, a computer resources centre, an equal opportunities officer, a disabled students' officer and counselling, financial and legal services.

21. Trainees have different co-ordinators for their key skills work and NVQ training. These co-ordinators keep separate records. These do not indicate trainees' needs for additional learning support across all aspects of their work, what support has been provided and whether it has proved effective. There is no assessment of trainees' basic skills. No staff have received specialist training to administer basic skill tests or identify and help trainees with particular learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The centre has recently established a more systematic procedure for recording trainees' prior achievements and support needs, but it is too early to know whether this is proving effective.

Management of training**Grade 3**

22. The University of Hertfordshire training centre has a team of nine full-time and five part-time staff who are managed by the programme manager. The team comprises co-ordinators, facilitators and administrators. There are written procedures for staff selection, recruitment and appraisal. Co-ordinators and facilitators carry out reviews of trainees' progress, meet employers, carry out training sessions and occasional assessments. Assessors are all based in the workplace and employed by the organisation which also employs the trainee. In some organisations, both co-ordinators and internal verifiers carry out internal verification in the workplace. Two co-ordinators are based in offices in the NHS Trust hospitals where trainees are based. The university achieved the Investors in People award in June 1999. The centre works with an independent training consortium which represents independent care homes, seeks to promote training and serves as a central contracting service between the centre and the care homes. Inspectors agreed with the strengths in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses. A lower grade was awarded than that given by the university.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good internal and external communications
- ◆ thorough staff induction
- ◆ good staff development programme
- ◆ wide range of staff's occupational experience

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate analysis of data
- ◆ no planned training for some trainees

23. Internal and external communications in the university are good. The NVQ co-ordinators hold monthly meetings. Minutes specify action to be taken and progress in implementing this is followed up at future meetings. These meetings are key to the running of the centre. Other similarly well-run meetings are held for internal verifiers, the independent training consortium staff, employers and at senior management level. NVQ co-ordinators meet employers and assessors every month to exchange information and review progress. Staff make regular use of the university's e-mail service and intranet for information. All employers are well informed of recent developments through direct contact with the university or through the independent training consortium. The two co-ordinators based in the three NHS trusts maintain regular daily contact with trust staff.

24. Staff at the university receive a thorough induction. They are introduced to the university and receive a staff handbook. They are given a general induction to the university and a staff handbook. They then receive an induction to their job and to the department they are working in. This departmental induction lasts for approximately two weeks and includes work shadowing of all the staff in the department and visits to other sites. All staff have clear job descriptions. The university's appraisal system is good. Staff receive an annual appraisal and their work is reviewed by their line manager every six months. At their appraisal interview, staff discuss their performance and development with their line manager. They agree an action plan for the following year and training to help them realise their own aims and those of the organisation. An action plan for the following year is developed and staff development needs are identified linked to both organisational and personal needs. Each member of staff has a budget allocated for staff development, and this is used flexibly to ensure any particular needs can be met. Recent staff development activities have included research projects into NVQs in care and the industry's perspectives on the benefits to employers of employees with NVQs in care.

25. Staff working with trainees have a wide range of occupational expertise covering, for instance, general nursing, midwifery, mental health, learning difficulties and disabilities, challenging behaviour, radiography, and care of older people. Many staff have specialist occupational qualifications including master-level degrees.

26. The organisation has a wealth of management information, some of which is kept on computerised systems, and much is part of staff's personal records kept by co-ordinators. This information is, at times, difficult to extract, and is not always used effectively in planning. Although individual members of staff are aware of the progress of individual trainees for whom they are responsible, there is no overall and systematic monitoring of trainees' progress. The university has no procedures for enquiring into the causes of trainees' low retention and achievement rates.

27. Some trainees receive off-the-job training which is planned and monitored. Others receive all their training on the job and this training is not planned or recorded. Trainees usually approach colleagues at work to ask for information to fill gaps in their knowledge or to be shown how to do a particular task. There is no record of this training and the centre does not monitor it. Some on-the-job trainers are unaware of the content of the off-the-job training programme.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

28. Overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with the pro vice chancellor for academic quality. Each of the eight faculties has an associate dean with responsibility for academic quality, assisted by heads of department. The programme manager is responsible for quality assurance in the NVQ centre. The NVQ staff follow a detailed quality assurance procedure which describes how NVQ assessment is monitored. A number of committees monitor quality. A course or scheme committee meets annually within each department to review an annual report on quality. Progress in following up action points is then reviewed by the committees centrally. NVQ co-ordinators and work-based internal verifiers carry out internal verification at the organisational level. One co-ordinator takes the role of lead verifier in each organisation. The centre meets TEC and awarding body requirements. Inspectors agreed with some strengths identified by the centre and identified further strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures
- ◆ thorough self-assessment process
- ◆ effective monitoring and evaluation of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no analysis or systematic use of feedback from employers in planning improvements
- ◆ insufficiently thorough internal verification process

29. University of Hertfordshire has comprehensive policies and procedures for the quality assurance of its activities, many of which focus on academic quality. Further quality assurance policies and procedures have been developed for the NVQ centre, detailing the key training processes particular to the centre. These have been developed over time, are regularly revised and amended. These relate to most of the activities carried out by the centre and detail the responsibilities of staff. All staff have a copy of the procedures and make regular reference to them as necessary. The procedures include details of internal audit. Staff also have access to the university's procedures through a networked information technology system.

30. The centre carried out its second self-assessment process prior to inspection. The process was led by the centre's programme manager. The self-assessment report was comprehensive. Evidence in it was gathered through interviews with trainees and employers, the responses of staff to questionnaires and consultation with all relevant staff, including senior managers in the university. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report and with many of the grades given by the university. The report had an accompanying plan. This has been updated regularly and many improvements have been made.

31. The centre takes part in the university's annual monitoring and evaluation process. Each year, the centre produces an annual report of its performance, which includes data on trainees' retention and achievements, findings from external verifiers' reports, summaries of trainees' responses to questionnaires, and a review of the implementation of the previous action plan. A committee including all team members, key employers and senior staff then considers this report. The annual reporting and evaluation process involves staff within the same faculty reporting on the performance of each other's programmes. Action points, and progress in following them up, are considered at team and senior management meetings. This process forms part of the self-assessment cycle and aims to ensure the continuous improvement of provision.

32. NVQ co-ordinators meet employers every four weeks to discuss trainees' progress and review the training and assessment process. Employers produce feedback informally, but this is not used systematically in the planning of improvements. The internal verification of trainees' portfolios is thorough and takes place regularly. Internal verification is planned and well recorded. Although internal verifiers observe assessment carried out by staff who are working towards their assessor qualifications, they do not routinely observe qualified assessors carrying out assessment, questioning trainees and providing them with feedback. Assessors have not met for some time to discuss ways of ensuring consistency in their evaluative practices.