

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT APRIL 2000

Derwent Training Association Limited

SUMMARY

Derwent Training Association Limited provides satisfactory training in engineering skills. Good off-the-job training is carried out in the organisation's own training centre. Training in the workplace is structured. Work placements are provided by a wide range of small, medium and large manufacturing and production companies, many of whom are members of the association. Much assessment practice is good. Internal verification is thorough. Trainees' achievement rates for some qualifications are high. Arrangements for trainee support are satisfactory. The organisation has a sound approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity and has had some success in removing barriers to recruitment into engineering. Managers are fully supportive towards trainees. They maintain close links with local industry. All trainees secure employment. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ flexibly arranged training programmes
- ◆ trainees' high achievement rates on some programmes
- ◆ strong links with employers and external agencies
- ◆ rigorous internal verification process

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment of key skills
- ◆ failure to update trainees' individual training plans
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ insufficient use of NVQ assessors in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

1. Derwent Training Association Limited (DTA) was established in June 1988 as a company limited by guarantee under the name of 'North Yorkshire Training Services Limited'. It is run by a board of management and trustees elected from members of the association. The main aim of the association is to provide a comprehensive training service for member and non-member companies. In February 1989, the association commenced full-time training activities. In 1990, it acquired leased premises in Malton, North Yorkshire, and set up its own training workshops offering off-the-job training in a number of engineering skills.

2. DTA's staff comprise a training-centre manager and four other full-time training and administrative staff. There are also three part-time engineering tutors. The association has approval from a number of awarding bodies to carry out assessment for NVQs at levels 2 and 3 for the following engineering disciplines: engineering manufacture foundation; engineering production; engineering maintenance; machining; fitting and assembly; electrical and mechanical maintenance; welding and fabrication; general electrical engineering; electrical systems and servicing; performing manufacturing operations, and also technical services.

3. The organisation has a contract with North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide training for young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age. There are 67 trainees on programmes, of whom 62 are modern apprentices and five are following an NVQ-options programme. Over the last two years, enrolment into engineering has more than doubled. Approximately one quarter of recruits is in the electrical and electronics sector and the remainder is from the structural steel industry. Trainees come mainly from the Ryedale area and Ripon. Employment opportunities in the Ryedale district largely mirror those in York and North Yorkshire as a whole. The manufacturing sector accounts for nearly one quarter of total employment in York and North Yorkshire, the wholesale/retail sector and the community/personal and social services sector have slightly higher employment rates than in the county as a whole.

4. North Yorkshire is the largest county in the United Kingdom with a residential population of approximately 737,632, which represents 14.5 per cent of the total population of Yorkshire and Humberside. Unemployment in North Yorkshire is low at 2.9 per cent. The unemployment rates in Scarborough and Selby of 6.3 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively are above the national average of 4.6 per cent. In 1999, of the 8000 young people of school-leaving age, 72 per cent went into full-time education, 5 per cent joined basic NVQ training programmes, 4.7 per cent became modern apprentices, 6.3 per cent received non-government-sponsored training as employees and, 0.03 per cent entered employment without training.

5. The Ryedale workforce has a high percentage of people with no NVQ-equivalent qualification. The proportion of people without an NVQ or equivalent qualification, first degrees and higher degrees are significantly lower than those in York and North Yorkshire workforce. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 53.5 per cent, compared with the average in North Yorkshire of 56.3 per cent and the national average of 46.3 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the local population is less than 1 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The organisation produced its first self-assessment report in November 1999 following wide consultation with staff and support from the local TEC. Employers from the association were also involved in the self-assessment process. The report was detailed and contained a full description of the structure of the organisation and the occupational area. Judgements were clearly supported by firm evidence. Inspectors agreed with the grades given in the self-assessment report.

7. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 12 days with the provider. Inspectors visited nine employers in Scarborough, Kirby Moorside, York and other smaller towns in the North Yorkshire area. They interviewed 27 trainees, 10 workplace supervisors and had discussions with DTA's staff and association members. They also examined policies and procedures, trainees' files and portfolios, assessment and verification files. One instruction session was observed during the inspection and this was awarded a grade 2.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

8. DTA provides a range of training programmes for 67 trainees. The trainees are expected to complete their NVQ level 2 foundation programme in one year and meet the modern apprenticeship requirements in three years. Trainees are recruited onto the programmes throughout the year, a practice that is welcomed by local employers. Trainees attend the centre for one or more days a week depending on their start date. Individuals starting the programme late are given additional support. Many trainees have to travel by public transport from across the region to attend the centre and this is taken into account when training is timetabled. Companies are notified each day of the absence of trainees who are their employees. In some instances, trainees take responsibility for monitoring and recording their progress. They record their achievement of skills on a sheet that is displayed in the workshop. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report. They identified others and awarded the same grade as that given by DTA.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexibly arranged training programmes
- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ trainees' good achievement rates for some qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor recording of some off-the-job assessments
- ◆ insufficient knowledge of the NVQ process on the part of some staff
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment of key skills

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good practice in supporting trainees. One employer is sponsoring a trainee for an engineering degree course after he has completed his modern apprenticeship. The employer proposes to make degree sponsorship a regular activity.

9. There is good on- and off-the-job training. All trainees undergo induction programmes both at the training centre and with their company. Particular attention is paid to health and safety and good working practices. Staff are occupationally experienced, vocationally qualified and conversant with current industry techniques and practice. Several staff have recent experience of further education. Trainees find them supportive and approachable and they learn skills in an adult environment where they receive help and guidance. The training is interesting, challenging, well structured and directly relevant to their employment. Practical demonstrations are effective. There is a good rapport between trainers and trainees. The practical applications, the pace and the training method meet the learners' needs. The skills trainees acquire during their off-the-job training are cross referenced to the specified competencies for the NVQ at level 2. In this way, trainees cover the requisite theory while strengthening the skills they have to use in their workshop practice. In the training centre, the use of limited resources is carefully managed and all trainees have ready access to machines.

10. There are around eight trainees to every trainer. Trainers are able to meet the needs of individual trainees. Feedback to trainees is given informally on a regular basis and trainees' progress is formally reviewed every month. Trainees have access to information technology hardware and software and there are sufficient computers to meet trainees' requirements. Trainees benefit from a range of teaching materials and well prepared learning packs. For example, an in-house pneumatics learning pack includes notes for trainees and a CD ROM. Companies provide opportunities for trainees to practise skills at NVQ level 3. Some companies have structured on-the-job training plans. Many companies enable trainees to broaden their knowledge and experience by undertaking different jobs on a rotation basis.

11. DTA has developed good working relationships with many local companies which support and contribute to the training programmes. Companies often ask training-centre staff to work with them to solve manufacturing and engineering problems. Training-centre staff visit employers regularly to discuss trainees' performance. They receive regular progress reports. If necessary, employers make direct contact with DTA's staff to discuss any issues relating to training and their trainees. A number of companies arrange additional on-site training sessions. DTA's staff visit companies to provide training and help trainees with portfolio building. Employers provide witness testimony to trainees' acquisition of competencies at NVQ level 3. Employers ensure that trainees benefit from a wide range of experiences and training opportunities in the workplace. Employers attend

and support annual NVQ presentations organised by DTA. Employers often contribute to the programme through contributions in kind. For example, a local employer provides materials and equipment for the NVQ level 2 programme.

12. Trainees have good achievement rates on the modern apprenticeship programme. All trainees obtain their NVQ at level 3. For the past two years, the retention rate on the modern apprenticeship programme, has been 100 per cent. The trainees' achievement rate for level 2 has averaged 75 per cent for the last two years. The retention rate on the NVQ level 2 programme has increased from 72 per cent in 1998 to 80 per cent in 1999. Trainees attain high standards in their practical work. Portfolio work at NVQ level 3 is of a good standard.

13. Some recording of assessment evidence is poor and lacks rigour. Not all trainers and assessors are aware of the relevant NVQ awarding-body requirements. Some staff do not use assessment plans or record assessment decisions properly. There is an over-reliance on witness testimonies by supervisors in work-based assessments. Assessments carried out in the training centre mainly relate to portfolios and practical activities. Some assessors do not indicate whether the trainees have covered the requisite theory work. Some trainees' portfolios contain insufficiently clear evidence of trainees' acquisition of theoretical knowledge at NVQ level 2. Assessment is neither continuous nor progressive. Trainees are not credited with NVQ units as they complete them. Formal NVQ assessment is carried out when trainees have completed all the NVQ units.

14. Some staff do not have a clear understanding of the NVQ process and assessment requirements, particularly in relation to the foundation programme. They are unclear about the essential difference between training and assessment activities. Training does not focus sufficiently on the requisite NVQ competencies. Some assessors are not fully aware of their assessor roles and responsibilities. Formal reviews of trainees' progress are carried out in line with contractual requirements but trainees are not set targets and achievement milestones.

15. The provider has made a great deal of progress in making key skills an integral part of the training programme and this has been recognised by the awarding bodies. In the first year of the programme, however, opportunities for the assessment of key skills are often missed. Of the key skills, only information technology is taught from the outset of the programme. Trainees are not taught the other key skills until the end of their first year. Trainees miss opportunities to gather evidence of their competence in key skills through their vocational activities. Trainees at the centre are unclear about key skills and their place in the modern apprenticeship programme. Key skills are covered in the second year of the programme. NVQ level 3 trainees in the workplace are more aware of key skills and collect and record evidence of their acquisition of them from the start of their programme.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

16. The organisation has an equal opportunities policy that has been updated in line with current legislation and it meets the contractual requirements of the local TEC. The policy is reviewed on an annual basis and is also revised when new legislation is introduced. The provider currently has no disabled trainees or trainees from minority ethnic groups but in recent years has recruited individuals from these two groups to its adult training programme. The catchment area for this provider covers a large rural part of North Yorkshire where the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is less than 1 per cent. The provider's offices and training centre is accessible to people with mobility problems and facilities exist to accommodate female trainees in the provider's training workshop. There is currently one female trainee working towards a qualification in engineering. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report and the grade given by the provider.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective promotion of equality of opportunity
- ◆ systematic implementation and review of equal opportunities policy

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ most trainees' lack of awareness of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ little systematic analysis of equal opportunities data
- ◆ lack of training for staff on equal opportunities

17. Staff from the company regularly attend careers conventions and promote engineering as a career. In particular, they draw attention to the use of computers in engineering and point out the opportunities for women in engineering. Employers receive a copy of the provider's latest edition of its equal opportunities policy and their attention is drawn to the legislation. Employers are asked to sign and return a tear-off slip confirming their receipt and understanding of the policy. The provider uses questionnaires to obtain feedback from trainees, employers and staff on many issues concerning training and these include questions on equality of opportunity. The questionnaire for staff requires very comprehensive responses to a wide range of questions on equal opportunities matters.

18. Equality of opportunity is comprehensively covered by company policies relating to recruitment and training of staff, delivery of services, recruitment and treatment of trainees, consultation with employers and working with other organisations including subcontractors. There are detailed guidelines on company discipline and clear grievance and complaints procedures. Leaflets relating to aspects of new equal opportunities legislation are sent to all employers within a short period of time

following publication. DTA's staff monitor employers' promotion of equal opportunities when they visit workplaces. Employers who do not have a policy on equal opportunities are offered assistance to devise one, or they are invited to adopt the provider's own policy on equal opportunities.

19. Many trainees were unable to recall much of the information on equal opportunities they were given during induction and were unclear how they might be affected by various aspects of the legislation. Trainees were unclear what they should do if they encountered bullying, harassment or discrimination. They were able to identify whom they should approach if they had a problem in the workplace or training centre, however, and reported that the individual in question was very approachable.

20. The provider has a good track record for training people from a wide range of backgrounds. Although information on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disabilities is collected during the recruitment process, this is not analysed to assist planning and decision making.

21. The organisation has a positive approach to promoting equal opportunities. There is, however, a lack of formal staff training relating to equal opportunities matters. An analysis of responses to a questionnaire showed that staff did not have an in-depth knowledge or awareness of the various issues. There are plans for a member of the TEC to provide staff with requisite training in the near future.

Trainee support

Grade 3

22. Trainees are recruited from a wide area of North Yorkshire and applicants are referred from local careers offices in Scarborough, York and Malton. Some applicants contact DTA direct as a result of recommendations from friends and families while others may be referred by employers. One employer situated in Ripon advertises locally for modern apprentices and interviews, selects and appoints the successful applicants. This arrangement has been in operation for the last few years. Following completion of an application form, all applicants are interviewed and undertake an aptitude test to determine a starting point for their training. Trainees who are successful have their details sent to prospective employers who then invite them for interview. Trainees usually receive a two-day induction on the provider's premises. This includes an introduction to health and safety, the NVQ, the presentation of videos on engineering and welding, and sessions on writing a curriculum vitae and equal opportunities. Trainees who join the training programme at a later stage receive induction individually. Trainees are given an introduction to their workplace by their employer during the first few days of their training. Trainees recruited by the employer in Ripon receive an introduction to the company on their first day of employment and induction from the provider two to three weeks later. Trainees based with the Ripon employer are visited by a trainer/assessor twice a week for the purpose of NVQ training and assessment. Reviews of

trainees' progress are carried out at quarterly intervals. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report. They found both strengths and weaknesses the company had not identified and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-established recruitment process
- ◆ good arrangements for initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ effective arrangements for trainee support
- ◆ trainees' good awareness of their progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainees' poor recollection of induction content
- ◆ no updating of trainees' individual training plans
- ◆ lack of rigour in trainees' progress reviews

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of good support to meet trainees' needs. The provider makes arrangements for staff to transport trainees from rural areas and, exceptionally, trainees who have difficulty in getting to job interviews or the training centre. The provider meets the cost.

23. The recruitment process for DTA programmes is well structured and well established. Employers are fully aware of the procedures and many are involved in marketing training. When potential trainees approach DTA, they are required to complete an application form giving details of their previous experiences and educational qualifications. Although trainees are required to have certain qualifications, exceptions are made in some cases. When the application form has been received, the provider writes to the applicant outlining the arrangements for him or her to take a recognised aptitude assessment. Every effort is made to minimise excessive travel and arrangements are made for the assessment to take place as near as possible to the person's home.

24. All potential trainees undergo initial assessment, and take mechanical aptitude, arithmetic and general intelligence tests under appropriate examination conditions. The results of the assessment are notified in writing to the applicant as soon as possible. Successful applicants are then referred to prospective employers. Those who are unsuccessful are advised to return to their local careers office for further guidance and help. While finding suitable employers for successful applicants, the company keeps in touch with the future trainees by telephone or in writing, in order to ensure their interest and enthusiasm are sustained. The combination of interview and initial assessment is effective in enabling staff to determine the most appropriate engineering discipline for the trainees and the level of support they will need. Trainees are well motivated, keen, punctual and regular in their attendance, even though some have to travel more than 20 miles to work. Their achievement rates are good.

25. The initial interview and aptitude assessment also serves the purpose of identifying trainees' additional learning support needs. The provider offers good levels of individual support. DTA's staff spend time with trainees with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Through close links with external agencies, the provider is able to arrange specialist help or, when necessary, referral to another provider. Currently, DTA in conjunction with the awarding bodies is exploring the feasibility of using alternative acceptable methods, such as the use of video film and audio tape, for recording assessments. In many cases, employers help trainees with learning difficulties and provide them with a mentor, where required. All aspects of support are recorded on a sheet that is kept in the trainees' files. DTA's staff make follow-up visits and telephone calls to trainees receiving support to monitor their progress and find out if they need further help.

26. Trainees are fully aware of the extent of their progress towards achievement of the foundation training programme. The majority of trainees attend the provider's training centre each week on day release for off-the-job training. The size of the groups is such that every trainee is able to consult the tutor individually when he or she wishes to discuss a problem or obtain help with a particularly difficult exercise. Trainees have three training days and one portfolio-building day each month. All trainees have the opportunity to reflect on their work, both in the work placement and in the training centre. They are able to consult their trainers on the extent to which the portfolio evidence they gather meets the NVQ specifications and can be cross-referenced to the NVQ units. Details of trainees' completion of NVQ units are entered on a sheet at the front of the portfolio. Tutors check this sheet regularly to make sure the entries on it are correct. Those trainees, based with one particular employer, who do not attend the training centre, are visited every week in their workplace by DTA's staff and receive training, advice and guidance on a one-to-one basis.

27. Trainees receive a two-day induction to training from the provider, and an introduction to the workplace from the employer when they start work. The content of the induction programme is set out in a pack. Video films are used to inform trainees about health and safety, NVQ structure and content, introduction to engineering and welding, and the production of a curriculum vitae. Other topics are covered by leaflets and handouts with explanations. Trainees were able to recall the various videos used and their messages but could recall little about topics covered in other ways. For example, they could remember little about equality of opportunity, its legislation and how it applied to them as individuals. Trainees are not asked to evaluate their induction sessions and no systematic checks are made on their understanding of topics covered.

28. Various documents are used to record trainees' completion of NVQ units. However, individual training plans are not updated to take account of trainees' progress towards achieving their goals. Trainees' results in initial assessments are not taken into account when drawing up individual training plans. Similarly, trainees'

prior learning is not taken into account in the plans and it is not accredited. Trainees' files contain copies of their individual training plans but it is only updated following a change in the trainees' personal details or when the trainee decides to work towards a different qualification. The trainees do not receive an amended copy of their plan.

29. Trainees' progress reviews are carried out in accordance with the terms of the contract with the local TEC. The reviews, however, are insufficiently thorough. They do not focus enough on trainees' progress in completing NVQ units or on trainees' personal development. During the reviews, trainees are not set demanding targets. On the foundation training programme, all progress reviews are carried out at the provider's training centre. Employers do not participate in progress reviews at the centre. They receive a copy of the record of progress reviews through the post. In some instances, the employers' views on trainees' progress are canvassed by a telephone. In other instances, the employer is visited a day or so after the review and is asked to supply comments on trainees' progress and general well-being.

Management of training

Grade 3

30. DTA has charity status as a trade association. It is run by a board of management and trustees and provides training under contract from the North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council. The training-centre manager is responsible for day-to-day management of training and is assisted by four full-time training and administrative staff and three part-time engineering tutors. Foundation training and vocational education programmes are offered at DTA's premises in Malton. DTA has recently succeeded in a bid for funding from the single regeneration budget and European social fund monies for new purpose-built premises in the area. The local TEC and members of the association have matched funding for additional tools and equipment to be installed in the new premises. The training-centre manager has additional roles as an assessor and internal verifier and also visits companies employing trainees regularly. The organisation has developed a range of policies and procedures that relate to recruitment and selection of staff and trainees, training, staff development, and health and safety. All staff have job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff meetings are held. The board of the association meets regularly to discuss the training provision and company matters. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open and effective management style
- ◆ strong links with employers and external agencies
- ◆ close working of DTA's staff with employers in planning on-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped staff-appraisal process
- ◆ little use of NVQ assessors in the workplace

31. The small team of staff at DTA meets regularly. Minutes of meetings are copied to all staff, including part-time tutors. These meetings include discussions about contract issues such as trainees' achievement and recruitment, and also the training provision. At these meetings, staff discuss reports from awarding bodies and monitor progress towards achieving targets. Requisite action is identified and its implementation is reviewed at the next meeting. Part-time staff are encouraged to attend meetings and when they cannot do so they organise their own meetings to share information. The organisation provides funding to enable part-time staff to meet. In addition, there are daily informal meetings of staff. The management style is open and supportive of staff. Staff report that the manager is always available to provide help and guidance whenever needed. The board meets regularly. Many of the directors attend its meetings. They become involved in discussion of issues relating to the training provision and constructively contribute to ways of improving resources and training opportunities.

32. DTA has strong links with a number of external agencies, both in the immediate area and in local towns, which have promoted recruitment of trainees. Links with the career services have enabled potential trainees to be offered tasters in engineering prior to joining DTA. Open days on employers' premises have been particularly well attended by potential trainees and their parents who discuss training and employment opportunities. DTA has taken positive steps to forge productive relationships with employers. A few large companies have provided their employees with training and have enabled them to gain NVQs. They report that their employees' retention rate has improved. DTA also have good relations with the local TEC and has secured TEC funding for a move to new purpose-built accommodation in the Malton area. In addition, employers who are members of the association have agreed to provide funding, the machinery required, and a workforce to facilitate the move.

33. DTA's staff frequently visit employers to monitor the progress of trainees and to assist with the development of the on-the-job training activities. Some employers give DTA's staff free rein to draw up on-the-job training programmes involving trainees in work across different departments in order that they may develop a wide range of skills. Developments in the local economy have created a need for employers to diversify into new areas of engineering production and manufacturing. DTA has been active in identifying new areas for training. Examples include the provision of a welding and fabrication programme and the development of pneumatics and CAD/CAM courses as options in the engineering provision.

34. DTA encourages all staff to engage in staff development activities. These include training towards trainer/assessor qualifications, awarding body refresher

programmes, courses on key skills, courses on computer-assisted design, computer-assisted machines, and many others. However, these activities are offered when the need arises. The staff appraisal process is underdeveloped. The process was implemented during October 1999 and although many of the staff have undergone appraisal, some have not. DTA has not fully evaluated the effectiveness of its staff-appraisal process. It has not used it as a means of identifying the training needs of staff. It does not have a staff-development plan to rectify the lack of staff training in areas such as NVQ assessment and equal opportunities.

35. The organisation has good contracts with employers in the area, who provide a wide range of good employment opportunities for trainees in the engineering sector. A small number of these have employees who are working towards or have achieved NVQ-assessor qualifications. Several of these employees are working closely with trainees and assist with on-the-job training. DTA does not, however, arrange for these employees to carry out assessment in the workplace for NVQ level 3. All assessment and internal verification are carried out by DTA's staff when they are visiting trainees in the workplace.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

36. DTA meets the quality assurance requirements of the TEC with which it contracts. The organisation also meets the requirements of awarding bodies. The training-centre manager has responsibility for quality assurance and is assisted, in this respect, by the administrative manager. The quality assurance system aims to ensure rigorous self-assessment and continuous improvement. All on- and off-the-job assessment and internal verification is the responsibility of the provider. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report. They found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous internal verification process
- ◆ well-established self-assessment process
- ◆ clear self-assessment report

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ evaluation process not yet complete
- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice
- ◆ insufficiently standardised quality assurance documentation

37. DTA has a thorough and rigorous internal verification system. Internal verification activities are well planned and carefully recorded. They meet the requirements of awarding bodies. Staff who are not yet qualified assessors have their assessment decisions countersigned by an internal verifier. Internal verification activities include sampling of portfolios of evidence and observations of assessors. Feedback on their performance is provided to the assessors and appropriate action for improving it is recorded.

38. Over the past few years, the organisation has developed an effective system of self-assessment and has incorporated it into its business-planning cycle. They also use the self-assessment process to identify areas requiring improvement. All staff are now involved in self-assessment. The process has been promoted to employers but some show a clearer understanding of it than others. DTA has a self-critical and constructive approach to its provision while taking account of the limitations of its role as a trade association. Quality assurance through rigorous self-assessment had led to more flexibly arranged foundation training at the centre in Malton to attract more trainees. It has also led to the systematic identification of ways of developing key skills through all aspects of modern apprentices' training, that has earned commendation from the awarding body. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and detailed and inspectors agreed with most of its judgements.

39. DTA uses a range of TEC-approved questionnaires to obtain the opinions of trainees on the training offered. Trainees answer three questionnaires at different stages of their programme. These cover all aspects of their programme, including initial assessment and the quality of their training, and they also gather information about the trainees' destinations and intentions after completing training. The trainees' responses to the questionnaires have helped the company to identify significant weaknesses such as the lack of targets for trainees and insufficient involvement of trainees in drawing up their training plans. In addition to gathering the views of employers informally, the company also asks employers to respond to a questionnaire. Although the company records the number of responses to each question, it does not analyse them to identify areas of weakness and action needed to make improvements.

40. Communications between managers and staff are good. Some staff share good practice but others do not. For example, staff in some areas have good systems for maintaining records on trainees, but these have not been adopted by staff in other areas. Although staff meet regularly, there is no forum where staff can exchange ideas and share good practice. Some staff have a better understanding of the NVQ assessment process than others.

41. The company has a range of comprehensive and appropriate quality assurance procedures. Many of the quality assurance documents, however, do not indicate when they were last reviewed and confirmed as being up to date. There is no systematic process for ensuring that all parties concerned with training are using the

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correct documentation for quality assurance. There is some confusing variation in the paperwork staff use when carrying out quality assurance.