TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 2000

Humberside Engineering Training Association

SUMMARY

Humberside Engineering Training Association provides good off-the-job training in engineering during the first year of the training programme. However, assessment in the workplace is delayed and relies too heavily on witness testimony. Training in manufacturing for process and laboratory operations is satisfactory. There is well-planned on-the-job training but trainees lack an understanding of their programmes and many make slow progress. Equal opportunities arrangements are less than satisfactory with inadequate staff training and inadequate monitoring in the workplace. Individual training plans do not take into account the initial assessment of basic and key skills. Reviews of progress do not focus on trainees' qualification targets. Information systems are underdeveloped and there are no formal arrangements for staff appraisal and staff training. Arrangements for assuring the quality of training are poor.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	4
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	5

KEY STRENGTHS

- good foundation level engineering training
- action to tackle gender stereotyping and social exclusion
- additional qualifications available to trainees
- effective management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- delayed assessment of level 3 NVQ
- weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- failure to use initial assessment when producing an individual training plan
- insufficient use of management information
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQs and key skills
- lack of formal quality assurance arrangements
- weak internal verification of work-based assessments

INTRODUCTION

1. Humberside Engineering Training Association (HETA) began training engineering apprentices in 1968. Since that time, over 4,000 apprentices have been trained. The training organisation moved to its current premises, in a Hull industrial estate on the north bank of the River Humber, during 1978. This site comprises an engineering training centre, classrooms, and administration and management offices. In 1990, HETA expanded, acquiring two training sites on the south bank of the River Humber. Both of these sites are located within the premises of large chemical companies near Grimsby. One site provides similar training to the existing site in Hull, but with fewer engineering resources. The other site has a practical training facility for process operations trainees.

2. HETA is a charitable, employer-led organisation. It provides training primarily for young people employed in companies with interests in chemical, fibre and engineering manufacture. The companies involved extend beyond those who are members of the group training association. A board of directors meets on a two-monthly basis and consists of six representatives of companies which have modern apprentices on HETA's training programmes.

3. Following a series of changes in funding arrangements and a significant decline in the number of funded trainees, the board of directors announced a decision, in July 1999, to enter into voluntary liquidation. Following support from several organisations, including Humberside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the decision was reversed and a rescue plan implemented. The plan included a reduction in full-time staff at HETA from 23 to 10, including the loss of members of the management team. In January 2000, a new general manager was appointed. At the time of the inspection, 56 companies employed 210 trainees north of the river and 18 companies employed 89 trainees south of the river in engineering and manufacturing occupations.

4. HETA's training centre in Hull is situated close to Bransholme, one of the largest council estates in the United Kingdom and an area of social deprivation. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in the urban district of Kingston upon Hull who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 24.4 per cent, significantly lower than the national average of 49.2 per cent. In the area of HETA's training centres on the south bank of the River Humber, north-east Lincolnshire, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 35.8 per cent.

5. In the 1991 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the Kingston upon Hull district was 1.3 per cent and in north-east Lincolnshire the proportion was 0.9 per cent. In August 2000, the unemployment rate in Kingston upon Hull was 7.4 per cent and the rate in north-east Lincolnshire was 6.6 per cent. Both of these figures are higher than the national average of 3.5

per cent. Manufacturing is the employment sector for approximately 25 per cent of employees in the Humberside area, compared with the national figure of 18 per cent. The Humber region has the third largest concentration of chemical and allied industries in the United Kingdom.

6. HETA holds a contract with Humberside TEC for work-based training for young people. The number of trainees in each occupational sector in training with HETA is given in the table below. Owing to the small number of trainees in business administration this occupational area was not inspected.

	Hull contract			**Grimsby contract**			**Total**
	Advanced modern apprentice	Foundation modern apprentice	Other training	Advanced modern apprentice	Foundation modern apprentice	Other training	
Engineering	127		60	59		2	246
Manufacturing	21			15	13		51
Business administration	2						2
Totals	150	0	60	74	13	2	299

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. HETA carried out its first self-assessment in 1998. A revised version of the original report was produced in May 1999. It was subject to further modification by the general manager in May 2000. The report describes the recent history of the organisation, and its current business objectives, organisational structure, sources of funding and subcontracting arrangements. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are descriptive rather than evaluative of the quality of training. In preparation for inspection the general manager developed a revised self-assessment report with clearly identified strengths and weaknesses and an action plan for improvement. The general manager consulted members of HETA's staff when compiling the revised report. However, there was little consultation with trainees, employers and subcontractors.

8. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 18 days at HETA in September 2000. Inspectors interviewed 46 trainees and visited 20 workplaces. They met with 17 workplace managers, supervisors and assessors. Seven subcontractors' staff were interviewed. Ten interviews were conducted with HETA's staff. Thirty-four trainees' files and 29 portfolios of evidence for assessment were examined. Other paperwork inspected included contracts, external verifiers' reports, internal verifiers' plans and records, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings and promotional materials. Inspectors observed one progress review of a trainee in the workplace. They also observed and graded five training sessions in engineering, awarding one session a grade 2 and four sessions a grade 3.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering — Grade 3

9. There are 246 engineering trainees, comprising 186 advanced modern apprentices and 60 trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme consists of an initial 26 to 46-week programme of off-the-job training towards an engineering foundation national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 and in key skills. The companies the trainees are employed with determine the length of the initial programme. Trainees attend day-release courses at one of four local colleges of further education to study for educational qualifications in engineering in addition to the NVQ. The practical off-the-job training is undertaken at HETA's training centres by five full-time trainers/assessors. Most trainees attend one of HETA's training centres but they may be required to attend one or more of the others for specific aspects of the training. After the foundation phase, training becomes work based with local employers. Trainees work towards an occupationally specific NVQ at level 3 and continue day-release studies at college. One of HETA's three qualified

assessors visits trainees in the workplace once each month to carry out a review of the trainee's progress. HETA's visiting assessors and qualified work-based assessors undertake the assessment of NVQ and key skills evidence in the workplace. There are two advanced modern apprentices in motor vehicle engineering, who attend college on day release for practical and theoretical training. College staff assess the motor vehicle trainees' workplace evidence.

10. During 1998 and 1999, a total of 20 trainees started other work-based programmes for young people. Twelve of these trainees have gained a level 2 NVQ. Six trainees left the programme without qualifications, five left after gaining some qualifications and nine are still in training. Before 1998, there were a large number of trainees undertaking other programmes for young people. A total of 201 trainees started between 1996 and 1997. Twenty-six of these trainees left training without any qualifications, 166 trainees achieved a level 2 NVQ and 31 trainees are still in training.

11. The company's self-assessment report for engineering identified four strengths and five weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and considered another to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses in the self-assessment report were considered by inspectors to be more relevant to generic aspects. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded was the same as that given in HETA's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- high achievement rate on engineering foundation programme
- good retention rate on apprenticeship programme
- good foundation level training

WEAKNESSES

- delayed assessment of level 3 NVQ
- weak assessment of some key skills
- over-reliance on witness testimony for level 3 NVQ

GOOD PRACTICE
Some first-year apprentices spend a few weeks in their engineering company before starting the full-time foundation training. During the foundation training company representatives monitor the trainee's progress by frequent visits to the training centre.

12. Employers of trainees include internationally recognised companies, major fabrication exporters and prestigious chemical and petrochemical organisations. The range of training opportunities embraces all disciplines of engineering and offers training on commercial industrial plant. Within most employers the range of experience offered varies from basic operations to highly complex tasks. Trainees are under the supervision of experienced tradespeople who have extensive

practical and technical knowledge. Employers plan training to ensure that trainees gain experience in the various sections of the company. Trainees progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience. In some companies, mentors have been appointed to support and monitor the progress of trainees.

13. Between 1996 and 1999, a total of 157 engineering trainees started the engineering foundation level programme. Over this four-year period, 141 have gained a level 2 NVQ foundation award in engineering. At 90 per cent, this is a high success rate. Over the four-year period between 1996 and 1999, a total of 189 trainees started an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Thirty-two trainees entered the programme at the level 3 NVQ stage. One hundred and forty-one of these apprentices are still in training and 13 have achieved all the targets in their individual training plan. This represents a good retention rate, of 81 per cent.

14. Employers value the skills acquired by the trainees on the engineering foundation programme. The engineering workshop facilities are more than adequate to carry out training to level 2 NVQ requirements. The classroom facilities are good with adequate visual aid equipment. Trainers are well qualified with a wide range of relevant engineering experience. They have gained extensive experience in training young people and several staff hold teaching or trainers' qualifications. Several trainers are former employees of companies which now employ trainees. Others have links with staff within these companies. Both situations lead to close liaison with employers.

15. Standardised training packages containing well-structured and planned assignments are used in the training centre workshops on the engineering foundation programme. Each of the off-the-job training components has operational procedures which are detailed and comprehensive. There are well-established procedures for the use and storage of personal and protective equipment.

16. Apprentices start the level 3 NVQ on their second year of training. During this year, trainees are assessed using a series of questions based on their knowledge of their specialist areas of competence. HETA's assessors do not formally assess level 3 practical performance evidence until the end of year three. However, many trainees have portfolio and logbook evidence showing that they have performed practical tasks by themselves to the satisfaction of their supervisors well before the formal assessment of practical performance starts. This delay in assessment of practical competencies results in the internal verification of assessment decisions being delayed until near the end of the trainees' programme. Able trainees are not achieving as soon as they are able to. For those trainees who leave the programme early, delayed assessment of practical competencies means they have no record of achievements to take elsewhere should they return to training.

17. In recent years, key skills have been developed and assessed within the training centres during the engineering foundation programme. Much of the evidence is produced by simulation exercises undertaken off the job. Evidence produced by trainees for some key skills assessment lacks substance. Little use is

being made of naturally occurring evidence from the workplace for the assessment of key skills and workplace supervisors have an inadequate understanding of key skills requirements and associated competencies.

18. In most companies, 90 per cent of level 3 NVQ evidence is based on the testimony of the trainee's supervisor. The supervisor simply signs a trainee's logbook entry stating that the trainee is competent at the relevant task. Following observation of trainees carrying out tasks, evidence of completion is not substantiated by detailed written judgements made by the supervisor.

Manufacturing — Grade 3

19. HETA has 51 trainees on the manufacturing programme, of whom eight are advanced modern apprentices following a level 3 NVQ in laboratory operations. The remaining 43 trainees comprise 28 advanced modern apprentices, 13 foundation modern apprentices and two trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. They are undertaking NVQs in process operations. HETA took over responsibility for the management of the work-based training contract for laboratory and process operations trainees in April 1999. Before that time, the TEC contracted directly with the employers. HETA subcontracts most of the training to nine large to medium industrial companies. Each has from one to over 20 trainees employed or on placement. The companies have technical and industrial experts acting as trainees' supervisors and assessors.

20. All laboratory operations trainees start on an NVQ at level 3. These trainees attend HETA's training centre in Hull for three weeks' basic training at an early stage of their programme. This basic training is the only direct involvement of HETA's staff with the laboratory operations trainees. From this point, training is subcontracted. Trainees are trained and assessed and have their progress reviewed by their sponsoring company's staff. One industrial company, an accredited centre with the awarding body, offers the qualification. Trainees also attend a local further education college on a day-release basis to study for a GCSE 'A' level qualification in a science or mathematics, or a national certificate in a science. Having achieved one of these qualifications, trainees are then encouraged to take a higher national certificate in chemistry at a local university.

21. All process operations trainees spend nine months at a HETA training site in either Hull or Grimsby and initially follow a level 2 NVQ foundation programme in engineering manufacturing together with work on key skills. HETA's staff carry out off-the-job training and assessment. During this period of off-the-job training, staff from the sponsoring company visit trainees weekly or fortnightly to monitor progress. HETA's training workshops used for process operations are equipped to enable trainees to experience single vessel plant operations to multiplant operations. The training centres give trainees exposure to realistic plant operation situations and opportunities for assessment.

22. After the foundation programme, process operations trainees enter employment or a work placement to undertake work-based training towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in process operations or process engineering maintenance. Qualified company employees carry out assessments and verification in the workplace. Reviews of trainees' progress occur in the workplace, either with HETA's staff or company employees. Process operations trainees attend a local college of further education on a day-release basis and follow a course of study leading to a national certificate qualification.

23. The company's self-assessment report identified three strengths and two weaknesses in the area of manufacturing training. Inspectors considered these strengths and weaknesses were not relevant to manufacturing, being more closely related to engineering and generic aspects of the training. Inspectors found two other strengths and three other weaknesses. The grade awarded by the inspectors is lower than that given in HETA's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- highly effective on-the-job training plans
- rigorous assessment in the workplace for laboratory operations trainees
- good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- delayed progression to level 3 NVQ for process operations trainees
- lack of understanding of their programme by many trainees
- no awareness of key skills by laboratory operations trainees

24. All laboratory operations trainees and many process operations trainees have well-structured and recorded on-the-job training plans. The plans specify the time the trainee will spend in different working environments. Activity in different locations and on different tasks is linked to key learning objectives and relevant NVQ units or elements. The plan also includes the name of the assessor. These plans ensure that trainees can progress towards achieving their NVQ in a logical and easily understood manner. Where training plans are absent, as in the case of process operations trainees at one subcontractor, trainees were moved without consideration of training needs and not given the opportunity to be assessed on tasks carried out.

25. Laboratory operations trainees are assessed on an ongoing basis by experienced and qualified staff of the employer. In every work placement in which trainees are placed for a six-month period, senior members of staff are allocated as mentors and there are qualified work-based assessors. Assessment by observation of trainees' performance of tasks is planned with the trainee and the appropriate workplace supervisor. All assessments are appropriately recorded. Trainees are given verbal feedback and a copy of the written record, together with action plan

targets to achieve in preparation for future assessment. Targets are discussed with the supervisor, and the next six-month work placement provider uses the action plan to ensure that the trainees' learning is enhanced. Laboratory operations trainees are well aware of their progress and achievement.

26. Since HETA took responsibility for the TEC contract in April 1999, the retention rate for laboratory operations trainees has been 100 per cent but no trainee has yet achieved all the targets in their individual training plan. Four trainees who started in 1997 were close to completion of the level 3 NVQ at the time of the inspection. Since April 1999, the retention rate for process operations trainees based in Hull has been 100 per cent. The retention rate for trainees based in companies in the Grimsby area has also been high, at 83 per cent. Five trainees, who started in 1996, have gained the level 2 NVQ.

POOR PRACTICE
For some process operations trainees, a lack of assessment opportunities occurs due to either there being no assessor in their workplace or the assessor being busy elsewhere in the company.

27. Many process operation trainees were not sure when or if they would start level 3 training. Several trainees had completed their level 2 NVQ over a year ago. Employers indicate that due to safety reasons trainees could not start their level 3 NVQ until they had satisfied the company of their competence to be control room operators. Other trainees had received their level 3 standards but their assessors were unsure of procedures to be followed and when they would start assessing.

28. Many trainees were found to have a poor understanding of their training programme. They are unsure of their trainee status and the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Most do not understand the relevance of key skills.

29. The modern apprenticeship framework for chemical manufacturing and processing does not require separate certification of key skills. The national training organisation indicates that all the key skills are integrated within the NVQ units. However, laboratory operations modern apprentices were pursuing their NVQ without any knowledge of key skills and assessment arrangements. Assessors and internal verifiers were also unaware of the requirements for key skills within the modern apprenticeship framework.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities — Grade 4

30. HETA has an equal opportunities policy statement which is given to every trainee. There is also a more detailed equal opportunities policies and procedures manual kept by the company. It was prepared over two years ago and has not been regularly updated. The policy meets the requirements of the TEC. HETA's induction programme for trainees includes equal opportunities.

31. The company's self-assessment report for equal opportunities identified two strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and

considered the other to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with one of the weaknesses, and found two others. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the company's self-assessment report. There are six women trainees out of the total of 299 trainees. One woman trainee is in the business administration sector, four are in laboratory operations and one is training in electrical engineering. There are no trainees with disabilities or trainees from minority ethnic groups.

STRENGTHS

- effective action to tackle gender stereotyping and social exclusion

WEAKNESSES

- weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- poor understanding of equal opportunities by trainees
- lack of focus on equal opportunities

32. Over the past two years, HETA has monitored recruitment. Of the trainees recruited in 1999 and 2000, 41 per cent and 35 per cent respectively were from local secondary schools where many pupils underachieve in GCSE examinations. HETA has recently initiated a programme to give local school pupils in year 10 and year 11 an opportunity to gain experience of engineering and manufacturing, to promote interest in the profession and to encourage applications from well-motivated young people. HETA also markets work-based training to all schools in the area, with one objective being to encourage women to take up engineering and manufacturing as a career. HETA also collaborates with local schools through a regional science and technology organisation, which co-ordinates projects between educational establishments, industry, and the engineering national training organisation.

33. HETA contracts with employers without establishing fully their commitment to equal opportunities. It does not routinely monitor employers' premises and sites to ensure trainees are free from discrimination and harassment. HETA's staff do not routinely discuss equal opportunities issues when they meet trainees in the workplace. HETA's staff are unsure of the requirements of equal opportunities. They have not had recent training in equal opportunities. In some instances trainees' supervisors were unaware of their company's equal opportunities policies and procedures. However, in one company, all staff had to sign an agreement not to display sexually offensive materials.

34. The equal opportunities input provided by HETA's staff during the trainees' induction programme is inadequate. Trainees are made aware of the company's equal opportunities policy and of how, as trainees, they could be subjected to bullying or harassment in the workplace. They are not adequately informed about the relevance of equal opportunities in the workplace, or their rights and

responsibilities. All trainees knew whom to complain to if they feel they are being treated unfairly.

35. HETA's equal opportunities policy fails to identify the main legislation relating to equality of opportunity. The company does not have equal opportunities as a standing agenda item at staff meetings. There is no monitoring to ensure that training centres promote equality of opportunity. A recently appointed member of staff has been given responsibility for developing equal opportunities awareness and good practices, but little has so far been achieved.

Trainee support — Grade 4

36. HETA provides selection and recruitment services for local engineering companies. It advertises training opportunities in local newspapers and promotes work-based training at careers events at local schools. Applicants for training are invited to attend an initial selection session. This consists of candidates taking a series of written tests. At the Hull training centre, candidates who pass the tests are selected for training by interview. Data on selected candidates are then circulated by HETA to employers who have vacancies. At the Grimsby training centres, candidates selected by the test results are invited to an open evening attended by engineering employers. Prospective employers invite selected candidates for interview. A few large companies undertake their own selection of trainees before registering the trainees with HETA. New trainees are given a three-day induction programme at their allocated training centre. Trainees at the Grimsby training centres have additional induction sessions given by the two host chemical companies.

37. The company's self-assessment report identified three strengths and two weaknesses for trainee support. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths but considered others to be normal practice. Inspectors found other weaknesses than those shown in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- additional qualifications available to trainees
- good mentoring in some companies

WEAKNESSES

- no initial assessment of key skills
- no use of initial assessment as a basis for an individual training plan
- uninformative individual training plans
- inadequate progress-review process for trainees in the workplace

38. During the engineering foundation training programme trainees have the opportunity to achieve a range of additional qualifications. During induction, they can obtain a basic health and safety certificate. The electrical specialists have the opportunity to work towards a wiring regulation qualification. All apprentices have the choice of taking level 2 NVQ units in addition to the requirements of the level 3 NVQ and the modern apprenticeship framework. Trainees obtain certificates on the use of abrasive wheels and all trainees are given the opportunity to gain a qualification in basic pneumatics. Some trainees receive support from their employers to progress onto engineering programmes at higher national certificate and degree level.

39. Several larger companies have assigned workplace mentors to trainees. The mentors provide good pastoral support for trainees and are readily available. Although mentors may not be fully aware of the requirements of the trainees' qualifications, they do understand the need for a managed training programme in the workplace. Some are actively involved in monitoring the work undertaken by trainees. Several have intervened in a positive way when trainees have been placed on work activities which do not help them progress towards achieving their qualifications.

40. Trainees starting a modern apprenticeship programme are not given the opportunity at entry to have their key skills assessed. All follow the same key skills programme. Trainees who have prior achievements, which could be accredited, are not benefiting from an accelerated key skills programme. Trainees in need of additional learning support to manage key skills effectively are not identified at the start of training.

41. The initial assessment consists of three separate tests. Candidates are assessed on their performance in mathematics, deductive reasoning and mechanical aptitude. Most of the testing is done before the candidates receive their GCSE results. The results of the test are used for selection purposes only. Test results are not used to shape a trainee's individual training plan.

42. The individual training plans for trainees do not identify the separate units trainees are working towards within level 2 or level 3 NVQs. There is no record of target qualification achievement dates or achievement dates for individual NVQ units. The plans do not specify the optional units taken by the trainee or the range of additional qualifications followed. There are no records in plans showing any need for additional support or the accreditation of prior achievement. Trainees do not have a copy of their individual training plan.

43. During the visits to trainees in the workplace, HETA's training co-ordinators combine assessment and reviews of trainees' progress. Progress reviews are recorded. In most cases the trainee's workplace supervisor is not directly involved in the meeting between the trainee and the training co-ordinator. It is common practice for the workplace supervisor to be asked to read and sign the progress-

review form after the review has taken place, and neither the trainee nor the supervisor receives a copy of the progress-review form. The progress-review forms used for Hull-based trainees differ from those used for Grimsby-based trainees. Trainees' progress reviews identify what has been achieved since the last visit by the training co-ordinator. They do not focus on an action plan giving details of evidence of performance required to achieve further NVQ units. The progress-review process is not part of a planned strategy of training and assessment in the workplace. It is reactive and historical.

Management of training — Grade 4

44. After facing severe financial problems, HETA was re-organised in 1999. The number of full-time staff was reduced from 23 to nine and a new full-time general manager was appointed in December 1999. A new business plan has been established and agreed by the board of directors. The principal objective of the plan is to continue and to develop apprenticeship training and work placements for trainees. Other objectives include more adult training and to lead the development of an alliance between employers and educational institutions in providing an engineering training resource centre for those still in mainstream education. From September 1999 until June 2000, the board of directors met once each month. The directors were, and still are, accessible at short notice if required. A 'directors update' newsletter is circulated to staff between board meetings. HETA's full-time staff consist of the general manager, two centre co-ordinators, five instructors and an administrator. There are seven additional staff on part-time or short-term contracts.

45. HETA's self-assessment report identified two strengths and two weaknesses for management of training. Inspectors agreed with one strength and one weakness but considered them to be more appropriate to quality assurance. Inspectors agreed the second weakness did relate to the management of training, but did not agree with the other strength in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- effective management
- good recruitment procedures for staff

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of management information
- no staff appraisal and development programme
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQs and key skills

46. A new general manager at HETA, supported by a board of directors with a new chairman, has concentrated on restructuring. The priorities have been to maintain the business and not lose customers while re-organising the staffing structure and moving the company into financial stability. A significant reduction in staff numbers, introducing strict financial controls and effective management accounting, has achieved the objectives. Having established financial stability, HETA revised its self-assessment report just before inspection. The revised report, action plans and business plan showed that the efforts of the management team are now being directed towards addressing identified weaknesses, particularly in the management of training and quality assurance.

47. The management structure at HETA is open and inclusive, but it is new and untested. Internal communications are good. All staff share the organisation's aims and values and there are good working relationships between staff and trainees. The production of new management procedures is in the early stages of development. Due to the need to recruit new staff, procedures and guidance notes for recruitment have been written and implemented. The procedures are comprehensive and ensure fairness, transparency and equality of job opportunity. The organisation has a detailed business plan, which is shared with all staff.

48. Monitoring of trainees' performance has been focused on the overall achievement by trainees for contractual and financial purposes. In June 2000, work started on developing a system to monitor trainees' progress for the purpose of monitoring by management. Before the inspection, the information on the progress of trainees in the workplace was held separately by the assessors at the Hull and Grimsby training centres. The performance of assessors and adequacy of work placements have not been routinely monitored by examination of data on trainees' progress. Managers do not have direct access to current and accurate data on trainees' progression and achievement across the complete range of training programmes. Some employers have established routines for monitoring the progress of their trainees, but they are run separately from those used by HETA. There is no information on trainees who leave before completing their qualifications.

49. There is no formal staff appraisal programme at HETA. Staff do not have an individual development programme. Opportunities to notify staff about training courses or education programmes to encourage staff development are missed. The training centres lack career development materials. Staff are not actively encouraged to participate in training development groups.

50. Some workplace supervisors have an inadequate understanding of the requirements of the NVQs towards which the trainees are working. Workplace training is not always systematically planned to accord with the requirements of the NVQ. Too often modifications to trainees' work practices to ensure skills can be developed and demonstrated are made after the trainee's progress-review process rather than before. Some supervisors do not fully understand the

significance of witness testimony. There is no register kept by HETA of authorised witnesses who sign to indicate that trainees have been observed and have achieved competence. Opportunities for the development and assessment of key skills in the workplace are missed due to the lack of involvement of supervisors and mentors. Employers do not receive an introduction to key skills in the workplace or have an appreciation of the value of key skills development.

Quality assurance — Grade 5

51. HETA has little formal quality assurance paperwork, apart from that devised by the organisation before restructuring. Revised procedures are being implemented across the training organisation. HETA produces weekly and monthly performance statistics to monitor the current situation and uses questionnaires, particularly in the engineering foundation programme, to obtain feedback from trainees. HETA is subject to quality audits by the TEC and it meets the quality assurance arrangements of the five awarding bodies. HETA's self-assessment report identified three strengths. The inspection team did not find any strengths in the quality assurance of training. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses in the self-assessment report and found others during inspection. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in HETA's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- no significant strengths identified

WEAKNESSES

- lack of formal arrangements for quality assurance
- insufficient use of data to shape action plans
- no systematic use of feedback from trainees in the workplace and employers
- inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- weak internal verification of work-based assessments

52. Although staff at HETA display an individual commitment to continuous improvements in training, there is no established quality assurance system against which they can work. Procedures which exist are not co-ordinated or audited.

53. HETA does not collect and analyse data in a systematic way. There is no information routinely available on retention and achievement rates. No established system exists to review and evaluate training from the viewpoint of trainees, employers, subcontractors or HETA's staff. HETA lacks the means to write effective action plans aimed at continuous improvement.

54. HETA does not have any service level agreements with subcontractors. The performance of subcontractors is not measured against agreed targets. There are no action plans to improve subcontractors' performance. There is no forum for jointly reviewing arrangements. HETA does not access the results of the quality assurance of training undertaken by subcontractors. Currently, subcontractors determine the level of service HETA receives. HETA has failed to monitor the standards of training, assessment and internal verification carried out by its subcontractors.

55. There are no clear, written procedures for the internal verification of assessment, although there is a flow chart for the process. Verification of the assessment process for engineering NVQs at level 3 is dominated by examination of portfolio evidence towards the end of the programme. Verification is not a planned, continuous process involving sampling of all forms of assessment. The external verifier's reports refer to improvements required in signing and dating documents, particularly witness statements. There are informal meetings of HETA's internal verifiers and assessors but no minutes or actions for improvement are recorded.

56. The grading decisions in the self-assessment report were inaccurate in all areas and failed to identify some significant weaknesses. The report produced shortly before the inspection contained some strengths and weaknesses and an action plan consistent with the findings of the inspection team. Grading decisions were not explained or were inconsistent with identified strengths and weaknesses. The new management team is supportive of the self-assessment process but is not experienced in its use as a tool for continuous improvement.