



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2000

North London Garage Group Training Association

SUMMARY

North London Garage Group Training Association provides satisfactory training in engineering. Off-the-job training is carefully planned and well structured. Resources for off-the-job training are good. Some employers enable trainees to undertake a wide range of tasks in the workplace. Training and assessment in some workplaces, however, are not planned systematically. Over one third of modern apprentices leave their programme early without gaining any qualifications. Staff receive little training related to equal opportunities. There is insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. There is particularly good help and support for trainees who have not been successful at school. Many of these trainees progress to employment and further education and training. Trainees are not set clear targets during their progress reviews. Management of training is satisfactory. There is, however, insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The quality assurance process does not include the observation of training and the performance of staff. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ extensive range of training opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ success of level 1 trainees in progressing to employment and further training
- ◆ efficient system for matching trainees to job vacancies
- ◆ good management procedures

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsatisfactory retention rate on the modern apprenticeship programme
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient staff training related to equal opportunities
- ◆ failure to set trainees clear targets during progress reviews
- ◆ inadequate service level agreements with subcontractors
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous self-assessment process

INTRODUCTION

1. The North London Garage Group Training Association (NLGGTA) was originally formed in 1970 by a group of owners of local garages in association with an industrial training board. In 1983, involvement with the training board ceased and since then, the association has employed its own staff. The group management committee meets at least once a year and consists of representatives from each of the 50 member companies. The association maintains contact with over 300 employers in the motor vehicle trades across north London. The executive management committee of six members, five of whom are elected from the group's membership, meets three times each year.

2. NLGGTA is based in an industrial trading estate in Brimsdown, Enfield. Its main block comprises a suite of management and administration offices and four classrooms. Training workshops for fork-truck and motor vehicle servicing NVQs at level 1 are housed in a large warehouse 100 metres away from the main office block. Movement between the two buildings involves crossing a busy area used by large vehicles accessing an industrial waste site. Trainees moving between the two buildings are escorted by staff and are asked to wear high-visibility jackets.

3. NLGGTA has contracts with both North London and FOCUS Central London Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) to provide work-based training in motor vehicle trades. Through the contract with North London TEC, NLGGTA provides training for 124 advanced modern apprentices, 38 foundation modern apprentices and 15 trainees on other work-based training for young people. Through its contract with FOCUS TEC, the association provides training for 16 advanced modern apprentices, one foundation modern apprentice and two trainees on other work-based training for young people. NLGGTA also provides basic training and testing for fork-lift operators as part of the New Deal Gateway. At the time of the inspection there were two New Deal clients receiving fork-lift truck training.

4. The North London TEC area includes the boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Barnet. In 1998, there were 214,000 people employed across 17,000 businesses in the North London TEC area. There are 790,000 residents in the three boroughs, representing 11 per cent of the population of London. In the FOCUS TEC area, there is a workforce of 467,000 but relatively few people are employed in motor vehicle repair trades. Unemployment rates in October 2000 for Enfield, Haringey and Barnet were 5.4 per cent, 11.4 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 3.4 per cent. The 1991 census shows that 21.1 per cent of the working age population in the North London TEC area was from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of people in Haringey from minority ethnic groups is exceptionally high, at 40 per cent. In 2000, the percentage of school leavers, in the North London TEC area, achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. NLGGTA completed its first self-assessment report in September 1998 and revised it in February 1999, with assistance from North London TEC. The second self-assessment report was produced in August 2000. Two senior members of staff compiled the report. Most of the NLGGTA staff were consulted during the self-assessment process. Views of employers and trainees were sought through informal discussions and questionnaires. The self-assessment report failed to clearly identify individual weaknesses for each of the four generic aspects. NLGGTA produced a revised statement of the strengths and weaknesses in the occupational and generic areas, at the start of the inspection.

6. Four inspectors spent a total of 16 days with NLGGTA during October, 2000. They interviewed 49 trainees, two New Deal clients and four staff employed by contractors. They also conducted 19 interviews with NLGGTA's staff. Inspectors made 16 visits to workplaces and met with 14 workplace managers and supervisors. They looked at the files of 31 trainees, 22 portfolios, contracts, external verifiers' reports, policies on health and safety and on equal opportunities, written procedures for, and evidence gained through, quality assurance, minutes of meetings, and promotional materials. Inspectors observed four reviews of trainees' progress. They observed five training sessions and gave a grade 3 to four and a grade 4 to one.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

7. There are 196 motor vehicle trainees on NLGGTA's programmes. Of these, 140 are advanced modern apprentices and 39 are foundation modern apprentices. The remaining 17 trainees are on other work-based training programmes for young people. Most of the trainees are working towards NVQs in light or heavy vehicle repair servicing and body repair at levels 2 and 3. Trainees are employed or are on placement with employers ranging from large franchised dealerships to small, privately owned garages. Fifty-six per cent of trainees attend off-the-job training at the NLGGTA's training centre. Most of the remaining trainees receive off-the-job training provided by one of two subcontracted colleges of further education. Six trainees attend a college in the Midlands for specialist work on heavy vehicle maintenance. Twelve unemployed trainees are on a 16-week programme leading to an NVQ in vehicle service replacement at level 1. The unemployed trainees attend NLGGTA's training centre for three days each week for theory sessions, portfolio-building and practical training in the centre's vehicle workshop. The remaining two days are spent with an employer on work experience. Trainees working

towards qualifications in vehicle body repair, vehicle refinishing and service replacement have the opportunity to achieve additional qualifications in welding and vehicle valeting. NLGGTA has six training officers and one assessor who assess trainees in the workplace and at the training centre. Inspectors considered some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive range of training opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ effective key skills assignment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no clear assessment schedule
- ◆ narrow range of evidence in some trainees' portfolios
- ◆ low retention rate on advanced modern apprenticeship programme

8. Most work placements have excellent facilities and good equipment and trainees benefit from a wide variety of learning opportunities. Trainees are allocated to a skilled member of staff who teaches them new skills. Some employers have developed a programme which allows trainees to rotate jobs on a regular basis and work with different members of staff to widen their experience. In larger work placements, trainees are given the opportunity to attend manufacturers' specialist training courses. If trainees are unable to develop all the requisite NVQ competencies in their particular workplace, NLGGTA's training officers arrange for them to transfer to another workplace where they are able to undertake a wider range of tasks.

9. Off-the-job training resources at NLGGTA's training centre include desktop electronic diagnosis equipment for anti-lock braking, fuel injection and electronic ignition systems. Faults can be programmed into the equipment for trainees to identify. Training classrooms are equipped with television and video facilities. These run the interactive video system which covers all areas of the knowledge requirements for the NVQ in light vehicle engineering at levels 1, 2 and 3. Lecturers make good use of the video system training sessions. Trainees are able to use the programme themselves to extend their learning. NLGGTA also has a purpose-built information technology classroom where other software may be used. Trainees have access to a health and safety reference programme to help them complete their assignment on auditing work-based safety practices, which also helps to develop trainees' key skills in communication and information technology. The two local subcontracted colleges of further education provide good off-the-job training resources for vehicle body repair and vehicle refinishing

trainees. The trainees use paint mixing systems and chassis alignment equipment of industry standard. Trainees have access to spray bake ovens and individual spraying booths. Trainees gather evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competencies in a realistic working environment. A range of welding equipment is available, giving trainees the opportunity to achieve additional welding qualifications at level 2. One college had a good range of modern vehicles. During the training sessions observed by inspectors, however, these vehicles were not used and the trainees were working on much older vehicles.

10. The ratio of qualified staff to trainees is high. NLGGTA staff who manage and assess the engineering training are well qualified and have had many years of working in the industry. Subcontracted colleges also have suitably qualified and well-experienced staff. Most of NLGGTA's trainers have achieved a teaching certificate or attended a course on instructional techniques. Some of NLGGTA's training officers have achieved the key skills practitioners' award as part of their staff training programme.

11. Trainees are assessed in the workplace by qualified assessors. The trainees are assessed carrying out their everyday tasks. Assessment, however, is not planned systematically and trainees are not always aware that they are being assessed. Assessors' feedback to trainees is not recorded well. Trainees are not always given enough information on how they can improve their performance. The evidence in some trainees' portfolios is narrow in its scope. There is a disproportionate amount of testimony from witnesses of trainees' performance. Insufficient use is made of media such as audio and video tapes and photographs.

12. Staff at NLGGTA have identified ways in which the modern apprentices can identify evidence of their acquisition of key skills and requisite knowledge of theory, through their occupational tasks. Assessors from NLGGTA gather evidence of trainees' acquisition of key skills in the workplace. The subcontractors' assessors, however, do not gather evidence of trainees' key skills from trainees' performance in everyday activities. The trainees who attend one of the two local colleges on day release demonstrate their key skills under simulated work-based conditions. Off-the-job training is well structured and planned. During their induction, trainees are provided with a weekly programme of training activities.

13. There were 281 trainees who started an advanced modern apprenticeship between 1997 and 1999. Of these, 109, or 39 per cent, left the programme without achieving further qualifications. Of the 56 apprentices who started three years ago, in 1997, 27 have fulfilled all the objectives in their training plans and seven apprentices are still on the programme. In 1998, 48 trainees joined the advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Twenty trainees have gained an NVQ at level 2 and key skills certification and are now working towards NVQs at level 3.

14. There were 153 trainees who started a foundation modern apprenticeship between 1998 and 1999. Of these, 41 trainees have left the programme without achieving further qualifications. In 1998, 114 trainees joined the foundation

modern apprenticeship programme. Fifty-one trainees have completed the foundation modern apprenticeship. Since 1998, 20 trainees have started other youth training programmes. Ten trainees have subsequently become advanced modern apprentices, six have left with no qualifications and the remainder are still in training.

15. Between 1997 and 1999, 105 trainees joined the 16-week programme for unemployed young people, leading to an NVQ at level 1. Sixty-eight trainees have achieved all the targets in their individual training plans.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

16. The equal opportunities policy is reviewed on an annual basis. The policy satisfies the requirements of the contracts with North London TEC and FOCUS TEC. A nominated member of staff at NLGGTA is responsible for monitoring the promotion of equal opportunities in the organisation and has been in post since 1993. The centre manager establishes working practices for upholding equality of opportunity. Equal opportunities is a standing agenda item on the monthly staff meetings. The 1991 census for north London identified that 21 per cent of the working age population in the area was from minority ethnic groups. Inspectors did not agree with the one strength stated in the self-assessment report. They agreed with the weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report but found others. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ prompt action on complaints
- ◆ systematic monitoring of data on applicants

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no specific initiatives to promote training to under-represented groups
- ◆ lack of understanding of equal opportunities issues by trainees
- ◆ insufficient staff training related to equal opportunities
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace

17. As part of the entry process for trainees, NLGGTA has obtained equal opportunities data for several years. These data are analysed at monthly staff meetings. Data cover those who applied, those who attended interviews and those given a place on a training programme. NLGGTA has been collecting data on the gender, ethnicity and disabilities of new trainees for several years. Analysis of

these data, however, has not led to any specific initiative to promote training to groups under-represented on training programmes.

18. At the time of the inspection, of the 196 trainees, 8.7 per cent, or 17 trainees, were from minority ethnic groups. Over the past the company has had an average of 12.3 per cent of trainees from minority ethnic groups. This proportion compares with the proportion of 21 per cent of people from minority ethnic groups in the local population, identified through the last census. There are currently no women trainees on the engineering programmes. The building housing the training workshops does not have women's lavatories. The training facilities at the Brimsdown centre are not accessible for people using wheelchairs.

19. Advertisements about training opportunities at NLGGTA state that the organisation is an equal opportunities employer. Two training officers are female and two lecturers are from minority ethnic groups. With the exception of photographs of one female trainee from a minority ethnic group on a display board, promotion materials do not show pictures of female trainees or persons from minority ethnic groups. Promotional materials are not available in any language other than English. NLGGTA has no established links with local community organisations for the purpose of promoting training to groups under-represented on training programmes.

20. Trainees have little understanding of equal opportunities issues. There is little coverage of such issues in the trainees' induction programme. Trainees are not given reference materials to aid their understanding of discrimination and harassment. Equal opportunities issues are not discussed during the trainees' progress reviews. Trainees are aware of the complaints procedure. NLGGTA's staff have taken effective action on complaints from trainees. The training centre does not have any displays of publications to help trainees or staff achieve a better understanding of equal opportunities issues.

21. Over the past three years, there has been little staff training related to equal opportunities. Few of the training officers, who visit trainees in the workplace, have been given guidance on how they should monitor the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. In many of the trainees' workplaces, there are pictures on the wall which may be offensive. NLGGTA's staff have not asked employers to have these removed. NLGGTA has service level agreements with the employers and these require them to ensure the upholding of equal opportunities for the trainees. NLGGTA's staff do not examine employers' equal opportunities policies or monitor employers' practices for upholding equality of opportunity. They have not monitored employers' methods for selecting trainees to ensure that they promote equal opportunities.

Trainee support

Grade 3

22. NLGGTA recruits most of its trainees through the careers service. It has links

and maintains regular contact with 11 offices in the north and northwest London areas. NLGGTA gives all applicants an occupational and basic skills test together with an interview. NLGGTA expects applicants to have at least a grade D in their GCSEs, although this is not a rigid requirement. Successful applicants attend a half-day induction to their NVQ programme. Trainees attend off-the-job training as part of their programme and this takes place at the Brimsdown centre or a local college. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out by NLGGTA's training staff. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with the identified strengths and found some other weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ efficient system for matching trainees to employers' vacancies
- ◆ thorough and systematic initial assessment and interview process
- ◆ good help and support for trainees on the level 1 programme
- ◆ good progression for level 1 trainees to employment or further training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no follow-up to brief induction programme
- ◆ little updating of individual training plans
- ◆ failure to set trainees targets during progress reviews

23. NLGGTA has regular contact with a wide range of careers offices in the north and northwest boroughs of London. These areas include, for example, Edgware, Walthamstow, Camden, Wembley, Finchley, Enfield and Barnet. Advertisements are also placed in the local press for recruitment purposes. Some trainees are referred to NLGGTA by the Employment Service. NLGGTA encourages local garages to send details of job vacancies to the training centre. NLGGTA's staff then arrange for trainees to have work placements at garages where there are job vacancies. NLGGTA is currently able to draw on a wide range of placements with 97 employers. At the time of inspection, 37 of these employers had job vacancies.

24. All applicants are invited to take part in an initial assessment of their mechanical aptitude and basic skills. Following assessment, applicants have an interview with a member of staff to discuss the assessment results and decide which training programme is most suitable for them. Those applicants whose assessment results indicate they are capable of achieving an NVQ at level 2 or 3 are offered foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships. Applicants whose assessment results are not as good are offered a place on the 16-week NVQ programme at level 1. Level 1 trainees spend three days a week at the centre for both theory and practical training and 2 days in a work placement. Applicants whose assessment results indicate that they need help with their literacy and numeracy skills are referred to the careers office for additional assessment and,

where appropriate, basic skills training. Applicants whose assessment results indicate that their attainment is no higher than level 1, receive a special training endorsement.

25. NLGGTA's staff recognise and take into account the extent to which trainees have acquired key skills through work for previous qualifications. However, trainees do not have clear targets set for them, relating to key skills, in their individual training plans.

26. Applicants who are successful are able to discuss their specific work preferences at interview. They are able to choose from a variety of work placements. These can involve them in a range of tasks, including working with cars or trucks as a mechanic, repairing car bodywork, and working in the parts department of a garage. If possible, a suitable work placement is identified for successful candidates at their interview. Arrangements are then made, as soon as possible and sometimes on the same day, for them to be interviewed by the employer offering the placement. NLGGTA's staff try to find a work placement as near as possible to the trainee's home. Trainees on the level 1 programme receive financial assistance with their travel costs.

27. Trainees taking part in the level 1 programme make good progress. Trainees on this programme come from a variety of backgrounds and many have not done well at school. Trainees said that although they were disappointed that their performance in their initial assessment was not good enough to enable them to work towards an NVQ at level 2, they realised that the level 1 programme was more appropriate for them. Trainees on the level 1 programme receive good help and support. They have monthly reviews of their progress and frequent and regular contact with staff at the training centre, who do all they can to help the trainees overcome any barriers which impede their progress. In the past three years, 65 per cent of trainees on the programme have achieved their NVQ at level 1 and most have progressed to level 2 programmes.

28. All trainees take part in an induction programme at the Brimsdown centre and at their work placement. Trainees receive an induction pack, which includes a health and safety guide, a TEC charter for participants and a trainees' handbook. The trainees' handbook includes the content of the induction programme, which usually lasts one day, and includes a brief description of the company, safety policies, standard documents and details of their training programme. Trainees had good recall of what they were told about health and safety during induction. Issues relating to equal opportunities are not covered in sufficient depth during induction. Many trainees do not understand the modern apprenticeship framework and some are unable to give the correct title of the NVQ towards which they are working. The induction programme at the training centre sometimes lasts for only half a day and there is little follow-up to induction topics to aid trainees' understanding of them.

29. Following induction, individual training plans are compiled for all trainees. Many of these are detailed and comprehensive and specify, for example, all the

NVQ units the trainees have to complete and details of training in the workplace. Some, however, omit important details, such as the name of the college where the off-the-job training takes place. The individual training plans are not always referred to during trainees' progress reviews, or updated afterwards.

30. Trainees receive regular reviews of their progress both on and off the job. Level 1 trainees have progress reviews every month, and trainees on programmes funded by North London TEC and FOCUS TEC have reviews every eight weeks and every three months respectively. NLGGTA's staff visit trainees in the workplace to carry out progress reviews more frequently, when necessary. NLGGTA staff seek comments from employers and workplace supervisors on trainees' progress before carrying out the reviews. Employers and workplace supervisors, however, do not take part in the progress reviews and are not given any record of them. The reviews are mainly of a pastoral nature and trainees are not set demanding targets related to the achievement of the NVQ and the acquisition of key skills. During their progress reviews, trainees do not engage in action planning to improve their performance. Action planning for achieving the NVQ takes place, however, during a separate assessment session off the job. Both trainees and workplace supervisors are unclear about the difference between the roles of the staff who carry out the progress reviews and the roles of the assessors.

Management of training

Grade 3

31. The chief executive and centre manager head the senior management team. There is a team of six full-time training officers and assessors. Four full-time and one part-time staff are responsible for training at NLGGTA's training centre. Support staff include a part-time technician in the workshop, a recruitment officer, two administrators and the company secretary in the offices. NLGGTA has a detailed procedures and work instruction manual. NLGGTA subcontracts training to three colleges, of which two are local and one is a specialist college in the Midlands. NLGGTA has 110 trainees attending its training centre, 45 trainees and 35 trainees respectively attend each of the two local colleges and six trainees attend the specialist college. The numbers of trainees joining the motor vehicle programmes in each of the past three years were 135 in 1997-98, 139 in 1998-99 and 158 in 1999-2000. The NLGGTA holds the Investors in People Standard and was successfully reassessed for this in 1999. Staff meet regularly. Staff receive an annual appraisal, and the comments they make during this are fed back to management. Employers are informed of new developments through a regular newsletter. They are invited to offer feedback by any means including e-mail and through liaison with the training officers who visit trainees in their workplace. In its second and most recent self-assessment report, NLGGTA did not identify weaknesses in the management of training. They issued a revised statement of strengths and weaknesses at the start of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths but considered other strengths and the weaknesses to be more relevant to other areas. Inspectors found additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and comprehensive set of operational procedures
- ◆ effective management of staff
- ◆ good links with employers at management level

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of understanding of NVQs and key skills by workplace supervisors
- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training by subcontractors

32. NLGGTA has a comprehensive set of clear operational procedures and work instructions. Each individual procedure and instruction is explained by a flow chart. This clearly sets out the stages of the procedure, the action to be carried out and who has responsibility for its implementation. The operations manual is placed in the main office for reference purposes. New staff joining the organisation are introduced to the operational procedures and working instructions progressively, as they become more familiar with the organisation's work. Amendments to the procedures and instructions are in accordance with ISO 9002 quality assurance procedures. All staff contribute to the updating of the operations manual through the auditing procedures as well as during staff and team meetings.

33. The senior management team produces annual business plans, which set goals and targets for the next five years. Progress in implementing the plans is reviewed quarterly during senior management team meetings. NLGGTA is committed to staff development and training. An audit of the skills of all staff has been carried out. From this, the objectives for staff development are identified and related to the business goals and targets set out in the business plan. All staff receive an annual appraisal. During this, training is identified which staff need to help the organisation implement its business plan successfully. Staff are also invited to offer feedback to their managers during their appraisal. Two training officers have had their job roles and responsibilities changed to ensure that training and assessment at the training centre are subject to effective quality assurance. One training officer is now responsible for co-ordinating the in-house assessment and internal verification processes in relation to NVQs and key skills. The other training officer is responsible for trainee support provided in-house, and for overseeing the development of trainees' portfolios.

34. There is an induction process for new members of staff. One new member of staff described this as detailed and valuable. Senior management, administrators and training staff are all involved in the induction process. During the induction period, a training plan is drawn up for the new member of staff. New members of staff are initially shadowed by an experienced member of staff who acts as a mentor.

35. NLGGTA has a membership of over 50 employers and commitment from over 130 motor vehicle companies to help and support trainees in the workplace. NLGGTA is a founder member of the national collective of training groups, which is now incorporated into a larger national training collective. Business links with motor vehicle employers in the north London area have been developed over 30 years. Each employer receives a quarterly newsletter, and is invited to offer feedback. NLGGTA is now offering information through its website. The feedback employers provide shows that they are very pleased with the training NLGGTA provides in the north London area. Some employers, who do not have their own induction programme for trainees, receive help and advice from NLGGTA's staff on how to provide one. NLGGTA provides these employers with sample induction programmes.

POOR PRACTICE

A training officer had identified that an employer was not complying with health and safety legislation within the garage's workshops during normal visits to trainees. The training officer carried out a risk assessment for the garage workshop facilities, and drew up an action plan for the employer. NLGGTA, however, took no action to check that the action plan was implemented.

36. Some employers move the trainees round their workshop to ensure they have a wide range of experience and are able to develop a variety of skills. Trainees have the opportunity to attend external courses on motor manufacturers' products or on specialist body repair. NLGGTA does not, however, ensure that workplace supervisors are fully aware of their responsibility to help and support trainees. Training to help trainees achieve their NVQ and develop key skills is not planned systematically. Some workplace supervisors had little understanding of the NVQ in motor vehicle engineering or of the specifications for key skills. In most instances, training is incidental rather than structured.

37. NLGGTA subcontracts the training and assessment for 44 per cent of its trainees to colleges. The colleges have failed to ensure the off-the-job training is always relevant to trainees' work in the workplace. The staff from local colleges do not assess trainees through direct observation of their work in the workplace. The two local colleges, however, have made arrangements to carry out work-based assessments in the current academic year. The structure of the academic year and college terms can have an adverse effect on the rate of trainees' progress. For example, modern apprentices working towards an NVQ at level 3 had failed to complete the coaching unit by the end of the last academic year. NLGGTA's staff had raised this issue with the college but it remained unresolved by the time of the inspection, four months later.

Quality assurance**Grade 4**

38. NLGGTA has met the requirements of ISO 9002 since May 1994. The training manager has responsibility for quality assurance within the organisation and is assisted by three designated staff auditors. The quality assurance system is part of the operational procedures and is covered in the work instructions manual. Each procedure and instruction is subject to quality assurance. The operational procedures and work instructions are reviewed yearly. Trainees and employers' views are obtained through questionnaires, informal feedback and at trainees' progress reviews. NLGGTA's quality assurance system meets the requirements of several awarding bodies and is subject to periodic monitoring by staff from the

TEC. The self-assessment report identified several strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. The report identified one weakness which was not directly relevant to quality assurance. Inspectors agreed with one identified strength and found one more strength and several weaknesses. They awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ close monitoring of trainees' attendance and effective action to improve it
- ◆ effective action on feedback from trainees and employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of staff performance
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ lack of rigour in self-assessment
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance of training and assessment

39. The quality assurance system identifies non-compliance with established procedures. Trainees' attendance has been monitored closely. NLGGTA's staff have met with staff from the local colleges to establish ways of improving procedures for reporting on trainees. Following the continued poor attendance of trainees at one college, NLGGTA decided to set up its own training facility. Trainees were transferred from this college to NLGGTA's training centre. In the training centre's first year, the trainees' attendance rate was 86 per cent, compared with 66 per cent at the college. NLGGTA has continued to improve its training centre. Staff have entered into discussion with the local colleges to improve their training resources. One college has recently moved into two refurbished industrial units. One unit is equipped for practical training in light vehicle mechanics and vehicle body repair and refinishing. The other unit is equipped for motor vehicle theory and computer work and has a specialist classroom with automotive electronic diagnostic resources. The other local college has updated its training vehicles to ensure they meet the needs of trainees working towards their NVQ.

40. Since 1994, NLGGTA has sought the views of trainees and employers through questionnaires. On average, 34 per cent of trainees respond to the questionnaires. Action is taken on significant issues the trainees raise. Working procedures and instructions are reviewed and changes to them are discussed at staff meetings. For example, concern was expressed over the infrequency of visits to trainees by training officers. The ratio of trainees to training officers was reviewed and the system for recording training officers' visits has been improved. Feedback from employers shows that they are generally satisfied with the training and services provided by NLGGTA.

41. Some observation of training sessions in the classroom has taken place. There

has, however, been no observation of the performance of staff carrying out training in the workshops. The quality assurance process does not systematically cover the training and assessment processes. There are no procedures for staff to identify and share good practice.

42. NLGGTA has inadequate service level agreements with the two local colleges. The service level agreements include no specific targets the colleges must reach, such as those relating to trainees' achievements. The local colleges have given NLGGTA course details and timetables. In addition, they have shared external verifiers' reports with NLGGTA's staff. NLGGTA, however, does not require details of the qualifications of staff teaching trainees, reports on the observed performance of motor vehicle engineering teachers or reports on course reviews undertaken at the colleges. NLGGTA does not have a service level agreement or any direct contact with the Midlands college, where six trainees from one employer attend off-the-job block-release training sessions three times each year.

43. The self-assessment process is not yet a fully established part of the quality assurance system. After consultation with staff, senior managers produced the self-assessment report. They took feedback from trainees and employers into account when writing the self-assessment report. The second and most recent self-assessment report was accompanied by an action plan for rectifying weaknesses and progress has been made in implementing this. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report. They found, however, significant weaknesses which the organisation had not identified. Inspectors identified 18 weaknesses, compared with nine weaknesses in the self-assessment report. The grades inspectors awarded to two generic areas were lower than those given in the self-assessment report.

44. The internal verification processes of NLGGTA and the two local colleges are satisfactory. The two local colleges, however, have not carried out any assessment of trainees in their workplace. They carry out assessment in the college's workshops, which provide a realistic working environment. This practice of carrying out much, if not all, assessment in a simulated rather than real working environment is not in accordance with the guidelines of the national training organisation for the motor industry. Both colleges have plans to assess trainees in their workplaces but these had not been implemented by the time of the inspection.