



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2000

Northern Racing College

SUMMARY

Northern Racing College provides training in racehorse care. There is good development of practical skills by trainees but planning and recording of assessments are weak. Records of assessment lack detail of the activities which have been assessed. There is good pastoral support for trainees, but progress reviews are weak. Although equal opportunities is well promoted throughout the organisation, there is little understanding of equal opportunities by employers. Training in the workplace is not clearly managed. Training plans are not used in the workplace. Quality assurance procedures do not always apply to the workplace and there is no system to ensure that all the activities of internal verification happen correctly.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good career progression
- ◆ good marketing to attract under-represented groups into training
- ◆ good pastoral support

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities at NVQ level 3
- ◆ poor progress-review process
- ◆ poor inclusion of employers in trainees' programmes
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification

INTRODUCTION

1. Northern Racing College was established in 1984. It is a registered charity limited by guarantee. The college is near Bawtry in South Yorkshire. Facilities include 35 racehorses, an indoor riding school and training gallops. It is one of two racing schools in the country which offer specialist training for the horse-racing industry. It trains new recruits into the racing industry and existing staff within the industry. The college receives 26 per cent of its funding through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) from a franchise agreement with a local further education college. This provides the funding for trainees' first 10 weeks of off-the-job training, which is held at the college. Not all trainees require this foundation-level training. As this training is funded by the FEFC, it did not form part of this inspection. Twenty-one per cent of the funding comes from grants from the horse-racing industry. The college also receives 22 per cent of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), 1 per cent from the local authority and 11 per cent from its own fund-raising activities. The National Training Provider (NTP) provides 19 per cent of the funding, which is for the on-the-job training only. Training funded from this source is the only aspect which falls within the scope of this inspection.

2. There are 12 full-time members of staff and one part-time member of staff, who are based at the Northern Racing College. There are 17 other people who are contracted on a regular basis to support or provide various aspects of the college's activities, which include marketing, assessment and internal verification. There are 114 trainees. Of these, 21 trainees are on other work-based training programmes for young people, 76 are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are advanced modern apprentices. Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) is the co-ordinating TEC for the purpose of this inspection. The college also has trainees funded by Scottish local enterprise councils (LECs). The college also provides training and assessment towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for people who are unable to access government funding.

3. Since 1993, the stewards of the jockey club have enforced a mandatory youth training scheme for all stable employees entering the industry under the age of 19. Recruits must attend the 10-week course at either of the industry's two colleges. The course at the Northern Racing College is funded by the FEFC, the other college's course is funded by the TEC. This requirement will only be waived in exceptional circumstances, which must be acceptable to the stewards of the jockey club. These circumstances would be that a trainee has sufficient previous experience of working with horses to already be above the foundation level reached on this course. Of the current trainees, there are 20 who have been exempt from attending the course at Northern Racing College. Following this 10-week residential course, trainees are able to progress to NVQs at level 2, which they complete in the workplace. Trainees only attend training in the college again if there are specific skills which are not practised in the workplace in which they work. The jockey club enforces a minimum wage, which is directly related to the



achievement of an NVQ in racehorse care.

4. The horse-racing industry is expanding, and employment prospects in the industry are good. All trainees are guaranteed employment as they complete their NVQs at level 2. Not many progress to NVQs at level 3. The ultimate progression for trainees is to obtain their licence to ride in races. Only a small proportion of trainees achieve this nationally.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The self-assessment report was produced in February 2000. Five members of staff had updated it over the previous five months. Trainees and employers were not consulted. The self-assessment report covered all activities of the Northern Racing College and many of the strengths and weaknesses identified were applicable to training which was out of the scope of this inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded for equal opportunities and trainee support. Lower grades were awarded for the occupational area, management of training and quality assurance.

6. The team of three inspectors spent a total of 21 days from October to December 2000 inspecting the Northern Racing College. Inspectors interviewed 56 trainees, 30 employers and workplace supervisors and 13 members of staff. They visited 38 different racing stables situated from North Yorkshire to the south of England. At the request of the organisation, inspectors conducted a telephone interview with the national chief verifier for the awarding body. They observed 20 progress reviews conducted in the workplace. Inspectors examined a range of supporting evidence. This included minutes of staff meetings, trainees' files, trainees' portfolios, the awarding body's documents and internal and external verifiers' reports.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (equine studies)

Grade 4

7. Northern Racing College provides training leading to NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in racehorse care and to NVQs at level 3 in racehorse care and management. There are 114 trainees, of whom 21 are on other work-based training programmes, 76 are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are advanced modern apprentices. All modern apprentices have been on foundation modern apprenticeships or other work-based training programmes and achieved NVQs at level 2 in racehorse care before moving to the NVQ at level 3. All trainees are employed in the work placements found for them by the college. Trainees are working in 70 racing stables across the British Isles, which include flat-racing and national hunt stables. Training is given in the workplace. There is the opportunity to attend the college for one week for off-the-job training. This is usually so that the trainee can learn a specific aspect of training such as plaiting a horse's mane. The racing stable where the trainee works does not carry out this activity. The staff who provide training are experienced in the racing industry. Since 1998, out of 131 trainees starting, 16 foundation modern apprentices have left early with no qualifications and 21 have left early with some qualifications. There are 19 foundation modern apprentices who have completed their individual training programme. Of the modern apprentices, no trainee has left early without any qualifications. Four have left

early after achieving NVQs at level 3 but without completing their individual training plans, but this was in 1997 and 1998. Out of those trainees who started their programmes in 1999, no trainee has left early, and no trainee has completed their individual training or programme framework. The self-assessment report identified many strengths and weaknesses which were more appropriate to generic aspects, and particularly to trainee support. The inspectors found further strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working environments for trainees
- ◆ good career progression

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no effective planning of work-based training
- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities for trainees taking NVQs at level 3

8. Trainees work in racing yards in roles which suit their needs and abilities. The activities they undertake in the racing yards give trainees good opportunities to learn skills in handling thoroughbred horses. The working environment and conditions are conducive to a good learning experience. There are good resources in the racing yards. In many yards, there are covered riding areas, electronic horse walkers, equine swimming pools and a range of thoroughbred horses from yearlings to mature steeplechasers. Trainees are provided with ample opportunity in the workplace to gain experience of practical tasks. Trainees taking NVQs at level 3 are given specific responsibility for organising aspects of yard management, care of the tack room and accompanying horses to the races. Trainees are encouraged to build working relationships with the racehorse owners. Trainees are given the opportunity to develop their skills beyond the requirements of the NVQ by work riding (specialising in riding the horses outside of race times to properly exercise them and maintain their fitness), breaking and schooling young horses, working with horses in the equine swimming pools and dealing with veterinary practitioners if the horses have health or injury problems.

9. There are individual training plans for trainees, but they do not identify individual targets for them. Trainees do acquire skills on a daily basis. However, gaps in their completion of NVQ requirements are not always identified for them to find evidence. There is some simulation allowed in the NVQ award, but in some cases whole units of the award are simulated for trainees. Usually, visiting assessors assess trainees. All assessments for NVQs at level 2 have been recorded only by summarising trainees' achievements on summary sheets. The summary sheets simply require skills to be ticked when completed and do not refer to the activities undertaken, the conditions under which the activities were completed or

POOR PRACTICE

During one riding assessment, an assessor did not know the trainee, and so asked the racehorse trainer to identify the trainee on a gallop. The assessors did not ask for an introduction to the trainee or brief the trainee about the assessment. The assessor observed the trainee from a distance and then left. No formal feedback was provided and no recording documents were used at the time.

any incidents or issues which may have arisen. The awarding body issues an assessment plan but this is completed when the trainee is at the college during the initial 10-week training period. It is not a full record of the assessment plan and lacks details of the different forms of assessment and evidence which might be used to record competence and of when assessment is to take place. Northern Racing College addressed this weakness during the inspection, and trainees now receive more details of their assessment plans.

10. Trainees are frequently unaware of an assessment, which is about to occur. Assessments are carried out quickly and with insufficient effort to draw out the trainees' knowledge and understanding. A lack of planning and of sufficient recording of assessment are common.

11. There are only a small number of work-based assessors, and they do not receive regular training to keep them up to date. The activities which occur naturally within the workplace are not used for assessment, particularly for the 17 trainees at NVQ level 3. There are many missed opportunities for assessment. The evidence in trainees' portfolios for NVQs at level 3 is not satisfactory. Some trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 have attended the college for a week and all their assessment for the NVQ has been completed during that week. Trainees' work in their portfolios is not assessed and therefore no feedback is given. No comparison is made between the work trainees do in the workplace and the NVQ standards. Trainees are not encouraged to use a range of sources of evidence for assessment. The wide range of activities carried out by trainees in the workplace is not used for evidence. Witness testimony is not always well presented or explained. There are few work-based assessors and there are long gaps between visits from visiting assessors and so trainees are assessed at a slow rate. This has been recognised by managers and there are staff changes planned to rectify the situation.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

12. Northern Racing College has an equal opportunities policy and grievance procedure. The equal opportunities policy is distributed to trainees and staff. The policy was distributed to employers during the inspection, but before it was just shown to them. The agreement employers have to sign before taking on trainees includes employers' acceptance of the policy. Trainees receive information about equal opportunities during their induction at the college. The policy was reviewed during the inspection. Data are collected. Eleven trainees require additional learning support. One trainee is registered as having a disability and a further 10 also have disabilities. The inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and they awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ successful promotion of training to under-represented groups
- ◆ prompt action to address grievances

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of equality of opportunity by employers

13. The college operates an effective marketing and recruitment system over a wide geographical area. There are 98 days of recruitment and publicity events in the current year. The careers events and open days attended include race days, local road shows, and major national equine events. A horse-racing celebrity has been engaged in a promotional recruitment exercise. This celebrity has been particularly successful in gaining access to schools for promotional events. The college promotes careers in equine industries through targeted presentations to schools and under-represented groups. Examples of targeted presentations and recruitment drives include promotions in former coalfield regions which are now regeneration areas and promotions to the probation service. The college has recruited trainees from overseas. Additional funding has been acquired for trainees from financially under-privileged groups. Taster days are organised throughout the year, which give potential trainees an insight into the college and the racing industry. Although work with horses has traditionally been more popular with women, 43 per cent of trainees at the college are men. Fifty per cent of trainees had no previous experience with horses when they first started with the college. Although marketing has been successful in some areas, the college has no trainees from minority ethnic groups. The only barrier imposed by the industry is a weight restriction, as only people below a certain weight can ride a racehorse. Trainees also need to be physically fit and able to cope with the job. Although promotional material distributed by the college mentions that the college is an equal opportunities employer, it does not mention equal opportunities for trainees.

14. All trainees know what action to take if a problem occurs. Problems occurring in work placements are referred to the head person in the racing stable in the first instance and to the college or monitoring officer in the second. All trainees know whom to contact at the college. When problems occur, prompt action is taken resulting in trainees moving to another yard or returning to the college until another suitable employer is found. All complaints are logged centrally by the college.

15. Data are collected on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disability, but are not always analysed. There is no record over the past two years of a review of equal opportunities at senior board or management level. The college has relied upon analysis of the industry provided by the jockey club to monitor its own performance. An equal opportunities officer has been appointed recently. The equal opportunities officer had training on equal opportunities provided by the local TEC during the inspection. This information has yet to be disseminated throughout the college. Equality of opportunity is not fully promoted to work-

placement providers. Beyond traditional concerns such as sex discrimination, employers and workplace supervisors have little awareness of equal opportunities. The college does not check that there is an equal opportunities policy in trainees' workplaces or monitor properly that all trainees are protected from discriminatory behaviour. Equal opportunities forms a specific item for discussion during progress reviews. This is to check on the trainees' welfare and to increase trainees' awareness of equal opportunities issues. The monitoring officer sees the head person in the racing yard or the workplace supervisor after seeing the trainee, to confirm the details.

Trainee support

Grade 3

16. Trainees are recruited nationally through national advertising, marketing at horse shows and through the careers service. Trainees do not need to have had riding experience before beginning their training. All trainees, apart from the few with sufficient previous experience, receive a 10-week induction programme at the college before moving to employment. The college finds employers for those trainees who have not secured this for themselves. In most cases, trainees move to employers after having achieved an NVQ at level 1 and the key skills required to begin the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. A full-time member of staff then monitors them in the workplace. This member of staff is responsible for 114 trainees in 70 stable yards across the country, the internal verification for all key skills and most of the equestrian trainees' NVQs, and also carries out assessment. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and one weakness. Inspectors did not agree with the strengths identified, but did find others. They did agree with the one identified weakness and found other weaknesses. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

Following a frightening incident with a horse, one trainee was very upset and was given no support by the racehorse trainer in the workplace. She resigned immediately, which left her homeless. The college's monitoring officer promptly offered her a place back at the college and addressed her accommodation problems. The trainee is now regaining her confidence through training at the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective placement of trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak identification of learning requirements for NVQ at level 3
- ◆ weak induction to NVQ at level 3
- ◆ poor progress-review process

17. On completion of the 10-week course at the college, trainees are offered employment in a stable yard suited to their needs and capabilities. Training staff at the stable yard use great care and their accumulated knowledge to place the trainees in a workplace which will ensure that they progress in a suitable working environment. Trainees are guaranteed employment. Vacancies are received directly from racehorse trainers by the college. There are more vacancies than

there are trainees. Trainees tend to stay with their employer at the end of their training, and the jockey club monitors the movement of those who transfer their employment within the industry. Swift and prompt action to remedy any problems in the workplace is taken. Trainees are confident that they can contact the college should problems arise. In the workplace, the trainees are visited every three months by monitoring officers and very good pastoral support is offered. The visiting member of staff knows all the trainees by name, knows their background and is concerned for their welfare. They have other specialist knowledge of all trainees such as whether or not trainees have ridden in races, or if they are awaiting a licence to ride in races. Some trainees are offered the chance to take part in trips abroad and special race days.

18. Trainees at all levels are issued with a textbook which helps them with the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Once the trainees have completed the NVQ at level 2, they are then asked to choose whether or not they wish to progress onto the advanced modern apprenticeship. There are 17 trainees currently following NVQs at level 3 as advanced modern apprentices. If they do decide to become advanced modern apprentices, they complete the paperwork for this in the workplace. It is difficult to find a quiet place to talk with some trainees in their workplaces. No further assessment is given or undertaken to ensure that these trainees are capable of dealing with the higher and more exacting demands of the NVQ at level 3. There is no systematic induction to the framework. Trainees are given three handouts about the framework for inclusion in a portfolio. There is little guidance on the content of the portfolio. There is little discussion or written guidance to support trainees onto the apprenticeship route.

19. Although trainees' pastoral needs are taken care of, the review process to progress trainees in their qualifications is poor. Reviews take place with other members of staff present in the stabling yard while horses are being fed, clipped or tacked up. Sometimes reviews involve five trainees at once in the yard with some having to leave to do short tasks and returning later to complete the review. Some reviews take place outside the yard using a vehicle to rest paperwork on, and some are held in unsuitable conditions in often very busy tack rooms. Many progress-review records are not filled in completely, and very few involve the employer or contain their comments. Workplace supervisors sign the progress-review forms when the reviews are completed. There is no action-planning for the next assessment, and no records are made of the trainees' current progress or achievement. Often the trainees do not know that they are to be reviewed because the racehorse trainer or stable-yard staff have not passed on this information to them.

Management of training

Grade 4

20. There are eight full-time members of staff employed by the college, five of whom are involved with the off-the-job training at the college. Three are directly involved with managing the training in the workplace. They are the director, who

is also the chief executive, the training manager and the monitoring officer. All these members of staff are based at the college. The monitoring officer has responsibility for internal verification and assessment, and co-ordinates the visiting assessors whom the college subcontracts. The monitoring officer reports to the training manager, who also has responsibility for off-the-job trainers. The training manager reports to the chief executive. Trainees and students have increased from 150 in 1997, to 200 in 1998 and 1999. In 2000, there were 208 trainees and students. The college was reaccredited for the Investors in People Standard in December 1999. There is a corporate and financial plan. The self-assessment report identified strengths which were mainly to do with the training at the college. No weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths, identified further weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective contacts with the racing industry

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete strategy to manage training in the workplace
- ◆ poor inclusion of employers in trainees' programmes

21. Northern Racing College has established strong links with other organisations which are involved with racing. A link with a welfare trust for the industry has enabled trainees who have been identified as having additional learning needs to have one-to-one support in the workplace from a member of the welfare trust to help them complete their NVQ at level 1. The link with another regulatory body has raised the standards of health and safety expected within racing yards. All yards now clearly display the industry's health and safety policy and trainees have a good knowledge of the contents. College staff check for this policy's implementation when they review health and safety practices in the workplace. As part of a three-week potential jockey course, a link with an Irish training centre for the racing industry in Kildare enabled five trainees to ride out for different racehorse trainers and visit racing establishments in Ireland. For some of the trainees, this was their first time out of England. Employers have appreciated this initiative and the college hopes to repeat the course. The chief executive is a member of a training advisory group of the racing industry, which links with the other racing school in the country to determine the standard of training and initiate improvements to the training of staff. The training manager is also a member of a group which reviews the awarding body's practice and procedures. The college also makes use of the jockey club's database of people working in the profession and follows its analysis of movement within the profession.

22. Despite there being a high turnover of staff in the racing industry and a shortage of stable staff, employers are not involved with the training programme of

trainees. Although the college gives notice to employers of when it is going to visit trainees in the workplace, this information is not always successfully passed down to the head person or trainee. Trainees are often at the races or not available to give sufficient time when the monitoring officer calls. When the monitoring officer does visit, employers do not allow enough time for the progress review or assessment to take place. There is little awareness by employers and workplace supervisors of the requirements of the NVQ. They do not know what the framework for foundation modern apprentices or advanced modern apprentices entails. There is a very recent initiative of appointing mentors for trainees in the workplace. There has been a mixed reaction by employers, but on the whole they have welcomed the initiative. The initiative is so new that it cannot be properly evaluated.

23. The college has an overall corporate and financial plan which covers all its activities. The strategy has mainly concentrated on the activities which happen at the college. The college is broadening its strategy to develop the management of training and assessment in the workplace. There are no action plans for work-based assessors and visiting assessors who have not yet achieved assessor's awards to complete the assessor's training. There is no strategy to develop and train the mentors in the workplace. The role and importance of employers in allowing trainees to train and to be available for progress reviews is not reinforced when visits are made to the workplace.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

24. The college appointed a member of staff who has responsibility for quality assurance within the college 11 months before the inspection. There are quality assurance procedures for the activities which take place at college. The self-assessment report identified one strength and three weaknesses, which were found to be more appropriate to the occupational area. Inspectors identified a further strength and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective action-planning towards continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification
- ◆ weak quality assurance procedures for the workplace
- ◆ weak monitoring of paperwork

25. Through the process of self-assessment, the college has established action-planning and this is helping to manage improvements at the college. The action plan is a working document. It is reviewed at management team meetings every

POOR PRACTICE

One assessor was internally verified after an assessment, and was given no feedback following this. The assessor had observed the riding skills of a trainee. The internal verifier later observed the same trainee, and gave feedback to the trainee. This was a reassessment of the trainee rather than an analysis of the assessment process in order to set standards of assessment.

two months. It clearly states the intention of each action and gives target dates for completion. The actions identified are cross-referenced to the self-assessment report. However, the plan does not identify any indicators of success for actions, nor are the implementation of actions and their level of success reviewed. The self-assessment report was written by the chief executive and all staff contribute to self-assessment.

26. Internal verification does take place. There are five internal verifiers who are based at the college. There are a further three internal verifiers who are called upon to internally verify trainees in the workplace when required. There is poor co-ordination of all the internal verifiers. Some of the internal verifiers are not clear of their roles. There has been lack of rigour in using the awarding body's paperwork for assessment planning and for actual assessment. Trainees do not always sign assessment records. There have been long gaps between assessments for some trainees. There is no overall plan for sampling assessors' work. There are few meetings to raise standards of assessment and verification. Although there is some observation of assessors, there is a lack of co-ordination to ensure that new assessors are observed more frequently to support their learning of the job. The only assessment decisions to be recorded are those when trainees are successful in proving their competence. No unfavourable decisions have been recorded. The external verifier did not examine the assessment and internal verification processes and practice during the most recent visit.

27. The quality assurance procedures for work-based training are in the early days of development. There are no procedures to follow to monitor training in the workplace. Feedback from trainees and employers is not sought at the completion of training. There are no procedures to identify how training should be conducted in the workplace or ensure it is given. There have been some gaps in the overall monitoring and auditing of trainees' files. Paperwork lacks dates and signatures, and there are no checks to ensure that procedures for completing paperwork are followed. Some trainees reach the end of their qualifications and have to wait with no more training to do while the paperwork is brought up to date. The database of trainees' numbers has been inconsistent. There were five different lists of trainees presented during the inspection.