



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 2000

Dunstable College Training Agency

SUMMARY

Dunstable College Training Agency offers training in nine occupational areas. Agriculture programmes offer good workplace learning opportunities, but the animal care programme is poorly managed. Construction trainees benefit from having highly supportive employers, but they have little assessment in the workplace. Training programmes in engineering, hospitality, and retailing and customer service are good, with good assessment both on and off the job. Work placements are good in business administration, but achievement rates are low and there is little workplace assessment. Health, care and public services offers good off-the-job training, but the achievement rates are also low and trainees' assessment is delayed. Foundation for work programmes are also less than satisfactory. Target-setting and achievement are poor. Support for trainees is satisfactory but not always recorded properly. Equal opportunities, management of training and quality assurance are less than satisfactory. There is poor monitoring of trainees' experiences in the workplace, insufficient data used as evidence for management decisions and insufficiently rigorous self-assessment.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4
Construction	4
Engineering	2
Business administration	4
Retailing & customer service	2
Hospitality	2
Health, care & public services	4
Foundation for work	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	3
Management of training	5
Quality assurance	5

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training in engineering, hospitality, and retailing and customer service
- ◆ effective and frequent support from liaison officers
- ◆ good development of training at community sites
- ◆ good off-the-job training in care and engineering

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent review process
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by some staff and trainees
- ◆ insufficient data used when considering management decisions
- ◆ poor management of subcontractors
- ◆ little quality assurance of trainees' experience in the workplace
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous self-assessment

INTRODUCTION

1. Training Agency (DCTA), the department of the college providing work-based training, has been running programmes funded by the training and enterprise councils (TECs) since August 1990. Dunstable College opened as a general further education college in 1961 and is based close to the centre of the town of Dunstable in South Bedfordshire. The college recruits students for its full- and part-time education and training courses mainly from Luton and the surrounding areas. In 1999-2000, the college had 6,600 students studying for a wide range of full- and part-time courses from foundation level to higher national diplomas. The college's main source of funding is the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). There are 105 teaching staff and 118 support staff employed at the college. There are 16 staff working specifically for DCTA, and college tutors also work with trainees alongside full-time students. The college operates in a competitive environment. There are two further education colleges and one sixth-form college in Dunstable and Luton. Dunstable is approximately 30 miles north of London, in a county bordering the East Midlands, some of the Home Counties and East Anglia. There is a solid infrastructure of main roads through the county, which has the two main centres in the towns of Bedford in the north, and Luton in the south. There is also an international airport in South Bedfordshire, and good rail links.

2. DCTA has contracts with Bedfordshire and Luton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE) and has recently gained a contract from Hertfordshire TEC. During its 10 years in operation, it has worked with some 5,500 trainees and 800 different companies. Currently, the college has 345 trainees. There are 13 trainees in agriculture, 29 in construction, 45 in engineering, 112 in business administration, 29 in retailing and customer service, one in leisure, sport and travel, 36 in hospitality, 34 in health, care and public services and 46 on foundation for work programmes. Of these, 48 trainees are adults. DCTA currently offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships, as well as other work-based training programmes and the lifeskills stage of the New Deal Gateway. The work-based learning for adults programme includes training in basic employability. Trainees also work towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3. Leisure, sport and travel was not inspected separately owing to its low number of trainees.

3. Bedfordshire's economy is driven by the manufacturing sector, which constitutes almost a quarter of all employment in the county. This is almost double the proportion employed in manufacturing for the rest of the Southeast. The county has a population of approximately 543,000. Particular areas of the county have high unemployment, poor housing and low levels of educational attainment. People from minority ethnic groups account for 9.9 per cent of the county's population compared with an average of 6.2 per cent over England and 3.2 per cent across eastern England. Around 2.1 per cent of people of working age in Bedfordshire are unemployed compared with a national average of 3.4 per cent and an average of 2.2 per cent in eastern England. In 2000, the percentage of school leavers in



Bedfordshire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 49 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. Statistics from the CCTE show that 81 per cent of 16 year olds stay on in full-time education compared with an average in England of 69 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. DCTA produced its third self-assessment report in August 2000. A self-assessment report was also produced for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), which was reinspecting the college at the same time as the Training Standards Council's (TSC) inspection. The self-assessment report for DCTA was produced by its manager supported by the head of the college's support unit. No trainees or employers were consulted during the self-assessment process. Staff and most subcontractors contributed to the report. However, the three subcontractors which began working with the college in March 2000 produced their own separate reports. Some of the strengths in the DCTA's report were descriptive rather than evaluative.

5. A team of 11 inspectors spent a total of 43 days at DCTA in December 2000. They interviewed 124 trainees (40 per cent), 17 employers and 25 workplace supervisors. Fifty-seven interviews were carried out with staff from the college. They visited 47 sites where trainees were in training and observed and graded 22 training sessions. In addition, inspectors examined 78 portfolios. Inspectors reviewed trainees' files, management information, curriculum and assessment material, internal and external verifier's records and policies and procedures.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture	1	1				2
Construction		1				1
Engineering		1	2			3
Business administration	1	2	3			6
Hospitality		1				1
Health, care & public services	2	5				7
Foundation for work		1	1			2
Total	4	12	6	0	0	22

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 4

6. DCTA provides training for three specific occupations within the agricultural sector. These are amenity horticulture (sports turf), animal care and equine studies. Of the 13 trainees, there are three advanced modern apprentices, seven foundation

modern apprentices and three trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. There are four trainees on amenity horticulture (sports turf), of whom three are taking NVQs at level 3 and one of whom is taking an NVQ at level 2. These trainees are employed on three local golf courses, where they receive on-the-job training. Off-the-job training is provided on a day-release basis by a local agricultural college which is subcontracted to provide both training and assessment. There are seven trainees on animal care programmes including one taking an NVQ at level 1 and six taking NVQs at level 2. All are employed at local kennels, pet centres and safari parks, where they receive on-the-job training. Off-the-job training is provided at Dunstable College on a day-release basis. Equine training is subcontracted to the training section of a local council. There are two equine trainees including one taking an NVQ at level 2 and one taking an NVQ at level 1. Equine trainees have work placements at the subcontractor's own stables for on-the-job training and attend a local agricultural college for off-the-job training on a day-release course. The self-assessment report is insufficiently self-critical. Inspectors could not find all the identified strengths or weaknesses. The self-assessment report was brief, contained factual inaccuracies and failed to identify several significant weaknesses identified by inspectors. The grade awarded by inspectors is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good workplace learning opportunities
- ◆ good portfolios of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor integration of key skills
- ◆ no accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ poorly managed animal care programme
- ◆ no planned on-the-job training
- ◆ poor understanding of training programmes by trainees
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment

7. Trainees are employed or placed with employers who have excellent physical resources, which allow them to gain strong practical skills and industrial experience. Resources include equipment and machinery representative of the latest industrial technology. Trainees often benefit from the variety of opportunities, afforded them by their particular workplaces, which enhance their wider social and personal development skills, such as when they deal with visitors and customers. Trainees' portfolios are well structured and the evidence contained is effectively recorded and referenced to the NVQ standards. Evidence is drawn from a wide range of sources including witness testimony, photographic and pictorial sources, written accounts, assignments, observations and practical assessments.

8. Most trainees are undertaking key skills training and assessment. They have some awareness of the key skills they are undertaking but do not fully understand the rationale for key skills. Trainees receive key skills training which is additional to, and not contextualised within, the occupational training. Many trainees have separate folders for key skills evidence but this is not drawn from or referenced to the occupational evidence. Only a small amount of key skills evidence is linked to occupational areas. Trainees have separate sessions at college for key skills training and this is usually given by a non-occupational tutor. Accreditation of prior learning is not used for trainees entering NVQ training programmes. Some trainees have begun NVQ programmes having achieved other vocational qualifications but have not been able to make use of this previous experience to accelerate them through the NVQ. This has led to repeated work for some trainees.

9. The animal care programme at Dunstable College is poorly planned and managed. There are no schedules or schemes of work for teaching theoretical knowledge or for the tutorial sessions held at the college for trainees. There is no structured learning programme and trainees are not aware of their progress through the NVQ. Some trainees who have been on their programmes for over a year are still waiting for units to be formally assessed and signed off by the assessor. Trainees are assessed in the workplace, but there is no planned schedule for assessment and no recording of individual units or elements completed by trainees. There is no internal verification in animal care, so trainees cannot complete their awards and gain their NVQs. Equine and horticulture trainees who receive off-the-job training at a local agricultural college have a very different experience. This training is well planned, structured and effective in developing trainees' occupational knowledge.

10. In all the programmes there is no planned on-the-job training by the workplace supervisors. This unnecessarily delays trainees' development and restricts their opportunities to fulfil the practical competencies required to complete the NVQ. There is also no link made between the workplace and the off-the-job training. Trainees are not fully aware of the content of their training programmes or of the NVQ requirements and do not understand their training programmes. This lack of understanding means that trainees are not always aware of opportunities to assimilate evidence, and speed up their own progress on their programmes.

11. In the case of subcontracted training in equine studies and amenity horticulture, the assessments are mainly conducted at the local college as the trainees have no work-based assessors. There have been some assessments for the amenity horticulture trainees when the college's assessors have visited them in the workplace, but these visits are infrequent. Many trainees are ready to be assessed by observation but have to wait for opportunities at college for this. This severely restricts the use of genuine work-based evidence and curtails trainees' progress. The distinct lack of planning and recording of observations in animal care does not facilitate the efficient use of work-based assessment.

Construction

Grade 4

12. DCTA provides training and assessment in electrical installation. It also subcontracts training and assessment for plumbing, carpentry and electrical installation to another training provider. There are 29 trainees in this occupational area, of whom 19 are advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3, six are foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2, and four are on other work-based training programmes for young people also working towards NVQs at level 2. All 19 advanced modern apprentices are taking electrical installation, as are two foundation modern apprentices and one trainee on another work-based training programme. The advanced modern apprentices and other trainee are all employed by eight small to medium-sized local companies and trained and assessed directly by DCTA. The two foundation modern apprentices taking electrical installation and the other seven trainees are all based with the subcontractor, which also provides work placements for the trainees. None of these trainees are employed. Apart from the foundation modern apprentices, one trainee on another work-based training programme is taking electrical installation trainees. Two trainees on the work-based training programmes for young people and one foundation modern apprentice are taking plumbing programmes. Three foundation modern apprentices are taking carpentry with the subcontractor. All trainees attend day-release off-the-job training at colleges in the area. The 20 electrical installation trainees with DCTA attend off-the-job training at Dunstable College. The college first offered this training in April of this year. Before then, the training was subcontracted to another college in the area, but the achievement rates were poor. Owing to this, DCTA decided to bring the training and assessment within Dunstable College for these trainees. DCTA has two members of staff, one liaison officer and one work-based assessor, dedicated to the construction programmes. Both visit trainees in the workplace to conduct trainees' reviews, and the work-based assessor assesses trainees using verbal questioning and examination of trainees' portfolio evidence. The subcontractor also carries out trainees' reviews for its trainees while training and assessment is further contracted out to another college in the area. There has been little achievement by trainees so far. Of the 43 trainees who have started training between 1997 and 2000, 11 have left early, giving an average retention rate of 74 per cent. The self-assessment report contained five strengths and one weakness. Two strengths were found by inspectors to be more relevant to another area, two were found to be no more than normal practice and one was found in part by inspectors. Inspectors found some of the stated weaknesses but found other major weaknesses as well. They awarded a grade lower than that stated in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective short-term target-setting for most trainees
- ◆ involved and supportive employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some trainees
- ◆ no assessment by observation of work-based evidence
- ◆ inadequate resources for practical training
- ◆ poor assessment practice for subcontracted trainees

13. Short-term target-setting is effective in ensuring that most electrical installation trainees collect work-based evidence for assessment. These targets enable trainees to focus easily on specific aspects of their experience at work. This is done by DCTA's well-qualified and experienced work-based assessors, who set trainees these realistic targets when they visit them in their workplaces. The targets are clearly noted on forms and are readily understood by the trainees. They keep copies of the forms in their portfolios for easy reference while at work. These targets are reviewed at each assessment visit, which occur on a frequent basis. The targets are also discussed at each formal review every eight weeks. Trainees are appreciative of the discipline this process gives them in carrying out their collection of evidence in order for them to progress towards the completion of their qualifications.

GOOD PRACTICE

DCTA's work-based assessor uses a digital camera to record trainees carrying out activities in the workplace. The trainees then use these images to support evidence in their portfolios. This has inspired trainees to record their own evidence in creative ways. One trainee always carries a camera in his toolbox to collect naturally occurring evidence and another trainee is using a video camera to make recordings of himself at work.

14. Employers are supportive of trainees in gaining the required knowledge and training for them to become skilled and competent employees. They are involved in their training by trying to ensure their trainees undertake the widest possible range of activities in order for them to gain valuable experience. Most employers monitor the type of work undertaken by each trainee. This is done formally by completion of a simple pro forma or is monitored informally when trainees with smaller employers work closely with their workplace supervisors. If the employer feels that the trainee has spent too much time on certain aspects of work, then alternative work experience is made available. All employers are actively and usefully involved in the trainees' review process. This gives the trainees' reviewer a well-rounded view of the trainees' progress at work. Employers who are working directly with DCTA have a basic understanding of the NVQ process and are willing to learn more to aid their trainees' progression. One employer, who has seven trainees, readily agreed to attend an awareness-raising session about NVQs. This was organised specifically for the employer by DCTA employers to increase their knowledge. Other employers have had one-to-one sessions with the DCTA's staff to gain further knowledge about their trainees' progress.

15. Some trainees' progress towards completing their NVQs at level 2 has been slow. This applies to five trainees in electrical installation. Four of these trainees are now having their training and assessment carried out by DCTA. DCTA withdrew some trainees, with these four among them, from another college in the area at the end of 1999. Two of these trainees had been in training for nine months and the other two for three months at that point. They were withdrawn from the other college owing to its poor practice of not using any work-based evidence for assessment. DCTA's work-based assessor is trying to progress these trainees more

quickly, but the validity of the trainees' past work cannot be totally relied on. These trainees need to collect more evidence for assessment and are not as advanced as they should be at this stage of their training.

16. There is no assessment by observation in the workplace for DCTA's trainees. There is ample opportunity for this, as the trainees are involved in a wide range of work. Some trainees are slow in completing NVQ units and their evidence relies heavily on witness statements from workplace supervisors. They have little opportunity to use diverse forms of evidence. DCTA's work-based assessor spends time with trainees in the workplace discussing and examining work they are carrying out, but does not observe them working. For trainees who are subcontracted to another training provider, no assessment by observation can occur as they are not visited in the workplace by their assessors.

17. For the trainees who rely on DCTA directly for their training and assessment, resources for practical training towards the NVQs are inadequate. There is no dedicated area for practical training and insufficient equipment and materials available. A skills audit has been carried out on the type of activity the trainees will encounter at work. This has been done to assess if there will be any gaps in the trainees' experience. Although gaps have been identified, there is as yet no strategy to ensure that these gaps can be filled. In one instance, it was noted that trainees would not gain much experience in bending steel conduits in which electrical wires are carried. Conduit-bending machines have been obtained, but the training is given in inappropriate accommodation. This training is in a classroom used for theoretical work and there is no attempt to try to replicate the working environment.

18. Assessment practices used for subcontracted trainees are poor. Trainees attend off-the-job practical and theoretical training for plumbing, carpentry and electrical installation at another college in the area. Practical training is carried out on a modular basis so that trainees can cover the range of work needed for the NVQ. Trainees cannot relate this training to the NVQ and have little or no knowledge of the NVQ they are taking or of its units. Trainees in carpentry and electrical installation are not collecting any work-based evidence which could be used for assessment purposes. The plumbing trainees are collecting some work-based evidence, but this is done only if the trainee feels that it is appropriate. No targets are set for trainees for collection of this evidence. There is no assessment by observation in the workplace for trainees with the subcontractor. Most assessment is carried out on the practical work the trainees undertake in the college's workshops, and there is a small amount of witness testimony evidence collected by the plumbing trainees.

Engineering

Grade 2

19. There are 41 advanced modern apprentices, two foundation modern apprentices and two trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. All the trainees work towards achieving NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in

engineering. In addition, trainees work towards other qualifications ranging from craft to degree levels. Nearly all trainees take foundation training at the level for modern apprentices in the college's workshops on a day-release or block-release basis over two years. On completion of their NVQs at level 2, most trainees work towards an NVQ at level 3 in the workplace. Key skills are achieved during this period of on- and off-the-job training. Retention rates are over 80 per cent and the modern apprentices are beginning to achieve their apprenticeships. Most modern apprentices are taking mechanical engineering and are employed in a wide range of small and large companies, many associated with the car or aerospace industries. Occupational staff from the college provide off-the-job training and assessment while DCTA's staff provide the assessment and support for work-based training. The college's occupational staff who provide the training and assessment are fully qualified in mechanical engineering and as assessors and internal verifiers. The self-assessment report highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses also found by the inspectors, who awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ well-planned and effective assessment in the workplace
- ◆ effective working relationships between employers and college's staff
- ◆ good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of involvement in assessment by employers
- ◆ ineffective use made of individual training plans

20. Prospective engineering trainees are carefully recruited, tested and matched with suitable employers. This recruitment and matching process is effective and it provides the employers with appropriate staff. The selection process is followed by off-the-job training at Dunstable College. The training is well planned to cover all aspects of the trainees' chosen NVQs. The training materials are good. They are based on a series of tasks to ensure that the trainees learn all the necessary skills to achieve the NVQ. Although most of the equipment in the workshops is out of date, it can still be used to teach the basic skills required in engineering. New control engineering resources and appropriate computer software has recently been purchased which reflects modern industrial practices. The workshops are well maintained and operated to high health and safety standards. Key skills are being incorporated into the off-the-job training. The trainees are collecting and recording key skills evidence as they build their portfolios for their NVQs at level 2. The staff in the workshops are experienced trainers with good industrial experience. The assessment system used in the workshops is thorough. Each unit is individually assessed and the results recorded. Assessment is supported by an efficient internal

verification system. The off-the-job training package effectively provides the trainees with an excellent grounding in engineering skills on which they can build when they are in the workplace.

21. All assessment for the NVQs at level 3 is carried out in the workplace by DCTA's staff. The assessment process is fully explained to the trainee as they start gathering evidence for their portfolios. The concept of unit assessment is explained and the assessor and trainee discuss the various evidence options. They then look at each unit and identify the types of evidence they have available for each unit. The trainee is also given an assessment check sheet appropriate to each unit as a guide to what is expected from them. The assessor is very thorough, and questions trainees about their work after observing them, also looking at any documentary evidence. The assessor records details of all parts of the assessment and the trainees sign the records to indicate their agreement with the conclusion reached. All assessments for each trainee are recorded so that their progress towards completion of units and the NVQ can be easily checked. The assessor has a detailed knowledge of each trainee's work and progress, and there are good working relationships between the assessor and trainees. Assessment in the workplace is effective, comprehensive, well planned and fully recorded.

22. The working relationship between DCTA's staff and employers is also very good. They have worked together over a number of years but have worked more effectively in the last year. DCTA's staff visit employers regularly. This has resulted in a high degree of trust developing between the two parties. The companies now use the expertise of DCTA's staff to help drive forward the progress on their business plans surrounding recruitment. They are involved in helping companies recruit trainees, and DCTA's ability to find appropriate applicants is greatly appreciated by the companies. The companies are very supportive of what the college does and they provide help and equipment to improve the college's training facilities. The teamwork between the companies and DCTA's staff helps in identifying trainees who may be thinking of leaving early and working on ways to encourage them to stay. Of the 69 trainees starting, 14 have left the programme without completing their training, but 10 of these leavers have achieved an NVQ. Only four of the 69 trainees starting in the past three years have left the programme without any qualifications, which is less than 6 per cent. The advanced modern apprentices in their final year are now beginning to achieve their qualifications. So far, eight have achieved their qualifications and the rest remain in training.

23. The assessment process for NVQs at level 3 is good but there is little involvement by employers except for supplying witness statements. DCTA's staff have not encouraged employers to train their staff as work-based assessors. Employers' staff take an active part in the training of the young people and they are keen for them to succeed, but they rely heavily on DCTA's staff for knowledge about the NVQs.

24. At present, the individual training plans are not used as active working documents. They are completed for each trainee at the start of the programme and

copies are circulated to the trainees and their employers. Nothing else is added to the individual training plans. There are a few individual training plans with amendment sheets detailing course changes, but some of these hold incorrect information. If individual training plans are altered, these amendments are not circulated to everyone with a copy of the original. Individual training plans are rarely used when trainees and DCTA's staff discuss trainees' progress or make plans for trainees' work.

Business administration

Grade 4

25. DCTA has 64 trainees in business administration which it monitors directly, and since April 2000 it has also been responsible for trainees with three subcontractors. At two of these there are 48 trainees. Trainees' numbers were not available for the third subcontractor so they were discounted from the overall number of trainees with DCTA. DCTA's trainees are recruited throughout the year from the careers office, in response to advertisements or directly from employers. DCTA's trainees are given an initial interview and assessment of basic skills in the DCTA's office based at Dunstable College. The appropriate level of programme is then identified for trainees. Those not already employed are offered interviews with suitable work placements through DCTA's network of employers. Once they have found a work placement, the relevant qualification aim is identified. Administration, information technology and accounting qualifications are available. Trainees have an induction with DCTA and in the workplace in groups or individually, depending on when they join the programme. Of the 64 trainees directly with DCTA, there are 30 foundation modern apprentices, including 23 on administration programmes, two on information technology and five taking accounting NVQs. There are 12 advanced modern apprentices, including eight on administration programmes, two on information technology and two taking accounting NVQs. There are 15 trainees on other work-based programmes for young people, including 12 taking administration NVQs and three on accounting programmes. There are also seven trainees on other work-based training for adults taking information technology and secretarial qualifications in the college. Most trainees attend Dunstable College for off-the-job training half a day each week to cover the background knowledge and skills for the NVQ and key skills. Training is given in pleasant, well-equipped rooms located in the college's main building. Key skills are introduced from the start and trainees attend specific development workshops about key skills during their programmes. Trainees are assessed mostly during off-the-job training at the college by DCTA's assessors. Trainees are formally visited at work by DCTA's liaison officer about every 12 weeks to review their progress. There is much informal support between these visits. Training and assessment for accounting trainees is subcontracted to a nearby college. At the three other subcontractors, trainees' training and assessment is mostly conducted in the workplace. Internal verification of DCTA's trainees in administration and information technology is mainly carried out by looking at a sample of their portfolios. Subcontractors internally verify their trainees' work. There is a mixture of trainees who are employed or in work placements at DCTA and with the subcontractors. Inspectors agreed with one strength given in the self-assessment

report and found one other, as well finding four weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good variety of work placements
- ◆ good support from employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low achievement rates by foundation modern apprentices
- ◆ over-dependence on works packs in administration
- ◆ little assessment in the workplace
- ◆ no initial assessment by one training provider

26. DCTA places trainees with a wide range of organisations including two local authorities, a national car manufacturer, a national charity, a local primary school, engineering companies of varying sizes, a national quality assurance company and an estate agency. The larger concerns have a planned rotation of work placements in different sections to provide a breadth of experience. There is a variety of on-the-job training covering specific work needs such as computer software development skills, product awareness, awareness of new legislation and telephone techniques. Training also covers development in personal skills and other areas such as time management, health and safety, personal effectiveness and, in one case, supervisory management training. Other individual development opportunities are also offered to trainees, such as a trip to the docks to observe import processes for one trainee working in that role. The work placements deliberately create learning opportunities for trainees.

27. Employers work in close partnership with DCTA's liaison officers regarding trainees' training and development for their jobs and NVQs, and support trainees with personal issues such as health and family matters. In the larger organisations, trainees' progress is closely followed by the work placements' training officers. In smaller concerns, managers take an active interest in the trainees' development. In one, a senior manager acts as mentor to the trainees, in addition to the role taken by the immediate workplace supervisor. There is considerable informal on-the-job coaching provided as and when appropriate for the trainees. Both liaison officers and employers work together to motivate trainees when necessary to help them resolve any matters which might otherwise lead to trainees falling behind or dropping out of their programmes.

28. On the foundation modern apprenticeships in 1998-99 the achievement of NVQs was 44 per cent of those starting and 47 per cent of those starting the programme completed it. Three trainees are still in training. In 1999-2000, the achievement rate rose to 51 per cent and retention improved to 60 per cent, with eight still in training. These rates are low. On the advanced modern apprenticeship

programmes, numbers of trainees are much smaller. No useful retention and achievement trends can be identified yet. Of the 11 beginning their frameworks in 1998-99, three have completed their individual training plans, two are still in training, but six have left early. In 1999-2000, 11 began the framework. Of these, eight are still in training, one has left early and two have achieved their individual training plans. On the other training programmes for young people over the past three years, retention and achievement have both averaged 70 per cent, with nine still in training. This is satisfactory. In the three years up to March 2000, DCTA also ran a large college-based adult training programme for the NVQ in using information technology. There were between 130 to 150 trainees each year with an average rate of achievement of 80 per cent. DCTA was unable to continue this programme when the NVQ was revised in January 2000, as new assessment guidelines now require all evidence to be from a real work source over a nine-month period. Currently there are six adults based at the college, four following a secretarial programme and two on computer training, none of which are NVQs.

29. The NVQ programme for DCTA's administration trainees is structured around the awarding body's work packs, particularly at levels 2 and 3. Sheets for recording evidence have been pre-printed by the trainers, showing the evidence to be gathered, such as the specific personal statements to be written and tasks to be undertaken to satisfy the NVQ criteria. The NVQ criteria are referenced against the list of evidence to be collected. This approach leads to the trainees producing the same evidence rather than supplying their own individual workplace evidence, which is often overlooked. As the referencing has already been done, the trainees are not required to think through how evidence fits their NVQ, so some have little understanding of the different units within the NVQ. Some trainees are also overwhelmed by the quantity of work in the packs which leads to unnecessarily large portfolios. For the NVQ at level 3, some administration trainees have difficulty in generating appropriate and sufficient evidence in the workplace. The NVQ at level 3 requires them to demonstrate how they have contributed to the development of others, but their job roles do not always give them the opportunity to interact with other staff in this way.

30. There is very little assessment of most of DCTA's trainees in the workplace through observation. This rich source of naturally occurring evidence is not being used. There is also very little, if any, use of verbal questioning, to confirm the breadth of trainees' understanding. Instead, trainees bring evidence into college for their assessors to judge. As the assessor never sees trainees in the workplace, assessors are not able to advise trainees on appropriate evidence which might be readily available with trainees' working environments. Of the trainees who had been assessed by observation, this observation has not been recorded inadequately. DCTA's assessor goes to one of the national employers where there are 22 trainees to give training on site once a week. Even here, there is little use of workplace observation. Where witness statements from workplace supervisors have been used, these are often inadequate. Sometimes they are undated, contain very little detail, often are identical and have little or no comment about the individual trainees. Portfolios also contain policies and leaflets which on their own are not proper evidence. Assessors do not question trainees sufficiently to establish their

understanding or use of these pieces of evidence. At some subcontractors, assessment is all carried out at work. Observation is used satisfactorily and verbal questioning following observations is carefully recorded.

31. At one subcontractor, there is no initial assessment of basic skills. This means that individual learning needs may not be identified immediately, if at all, and trainees may be placed on inappropriate training programmes. No informed judgement can be made to provide trainees with individual additional learning support.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 2

32. There are 29 trainees in this occupational area. Nine clients are currently attending a three-week fork-truck training work-based learning for adults programme. The first week covers induction and basic information technology skills. The second week involves undertaking fork-truck training leading to a certificate. The third week is spent on job-search activities. Eighteen trainees are working towards an advanced modern apprenticeship in customer service and two trainees are working towards a foundation modern apprenticeship in customer service. The training for most trainees is subcontracted to two training providers. One training provider has 11 trainees, 10 of whom are advanced modern apprentices. The other training provider has the other eight advanced modern apprentices. There is currently one trainee trained directly by DCTA. Both subcontracting arrangements began in April 2000. Both subcontractors undertake all assessments and reviews. Subcontractors ensure that assessments occur in the workplace at least once a month. Reviews are undertaken within the required timescale as set by the CCTE. Both subcontractors internally verify their own work. DCTA's liaison officers undertake assessments and reviews for customer service trainees recruited directly by DCTA. All trainees on this programme are employed. Trainees are placed in medium-sized companies and 11 trainees are working within the hospitality industry. All assessors and internal verifiers are occupationally competent and hold appropriate qualifications. Numbers in this occupational area have been very small but there has been a significant increase in numbers of trainees for the current year owing to the new subcontracting arrangements.

33. Self-assessment reports were written by DCTA and both training providers. However, the three self-assessment reports are presented as separate documents and do not follow the same format. There is no identification of common strengths or weaknesses. The strengths identified by DCTA were found by inspectors to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors found additional strengths not identified by DCTA. Inspectors agreed with DCTA's weakness of low achievement in retail and found additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by DCTA.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ appropriate selection and matching of job roles and NVQs
- ◆ good understanding of NVQ process by trainees
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ wide range of assessment techniques used by subcontractor

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little involvement in assessment process by employers
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

34. Both subcontractors recruit their own trainees. Recruitment is either by employers with employees needing training making contact with DCTA or through trainees making contact themselves. If trainees make contact with DCTA themselves, they are then enrolled on a programme when they have been found suitable employment. Both subcontractors undertake a detailed vocational skills analysis of the job role of each trainee. This analysis confirms whether the job will enable trainees to generate sufficient evidence to complete an NVQ. If gaps are identified, then appropriate arrangements are made to enable the trainee to generate the required evidence. This careful screening ensures that trainees are in appropriate job roles which enable them to collect sufficient evidence against all the components of their framework. All advanced modern apprentices are either in supervisory or managerial positions and have the authority to initiate improvements within customer service. Employers can identify improvements made in workplace practices as a direct result of trainees working towards customer service NVQs at level 3. One employer was able to confirm that the trainee has introduced improvements in the use of recording paperwork. Another employer was able to confirm that the trainees instigated a change to the types of messages left on voicemail. This change resulted in improved communication with customers. Trainees' development through working towards their NVQs is greatly valued by employers and they can identify the benefits arising from the NVQs for both the trainees and organisations.

35. Trainees have a good understanding of the NVQ process. The induction process provides trainees with a good introduction to NVQs, the standards, and the roles and responsibilities of the trainee, assessor and others involved in training, including internal and external verifiers. All trainees are issued with a set of the NVQ standards during their induction. Both subcontractors clearly inform the trainees of the NVQ assessment process. Trainees have a good understanding of the appeal process. Assessments are well planned. Trainees are set short-term targets which enable them to prepare for subsequent assessments. The planning of assessments, and all assessments undertaken, are well recorded and copies of the plans and records are made available to trainees. Trainees also have a good understanding of agreed long-term achievement targets as recorded in their individual training plans. Portfolios are of a good standard and trainees

demonstrate a good knowledge of their portfolios. Trainees are clear about the progress they have made towards achievement. Trainees match the evidence they have collected to each appropriate NVQ element. When they have demonstrated their competence in an element, this is signed off as completed by both the assessor and trainee. For the college's trainee, there was a delay in the start of assessments owing to there being no customer service assessor available. Consequently, the effectiveness of the college's planning and recording of assessment cannot be judged.

36. Since the beginning of the three-week fork-training programme in February 2000, 51 out of 53 trainees beginning have achieved their certificates. Additional qualifications are also made available, including manual handling and basic information technology skills. Of the 53 trainees, 70 per cent have also gained certificates in information technology. Job outcomes are known for all leavers up to the end of August. Of the 37 who have left, 11 have obtained employment. Nine of these 11 job outcomes were related to the distribution industry. Of the four advanced modern apprentices recruited by DCTA, two have completed their individual training plans and one is still working towards this. DCTA has recruited one foundation modern apprentice who has successfully completed the individual training plan. The trainees with subcontractors have not been in training long enough for rates of achievement and retention to become apparent.

37. Both subcontractors have arrangements to ensure that trainees receive appropriate training to support the development of their knowledge and understanding. Trainees' additional training requirements are first identified through the vocational skills analysis undertaken during induction. Subsequent training needs are identified through discussions to plan assessments and through the review process. Training needs, and agreed actions to address them, are recorded on assessment plans. One subcontractor gives trainees a short training programme called 'complaints are a compliment' to explain the need for trainees to accept such involvement in all aspects of their training. The same training provider also has available a range of information technology training programmes and trainees are taught these on a one-to-one basis using laptop computers. Employers have a range of training programmes to support trainees' development as well. One employer uses an external trainer to give a range of customer service courses. Successful completion of each course results in the award of a certificate. Other employers provide training on products and telephone techniques. One trainee has undertaken first aid training.

38. Observation of trainees is the most common assessment technique used by both subcontractors. Observation is supported by product evidence, personal statements from trainees, photographs and case studies. One subcontractor uses innovative assessment techniques. This begins with the assessor holding a professional discussion with the trainee. The interview is recorded through the use of an audio recorder. Video is also used to record discussions. The assessor references the recording of the interview, giving exact identifiers for where on the tape the trainees' answers to written questions can be heard.

39. Most employers are aware of the NVQ and of the framework that the trainee is working towards. However, employers are not actively involved in the assessment process. Employers rarely provide witness testimonies. Neither of the subcontractors involves employers in the assessment planning. Employers are not given copies of agreed assessment plans or completed assessments. Employers do not have specific knowledge of trainees' progress beyond that which they learn during the review process. Employers' understanding of key skills is varied. Trainees have a better understanding of key skills requirements, and the college and both subcontractors integrate the teaching of key skills within the occupational training programme. However, there is no initial assessment of key skills during the induction or at any stage of the NVQ programme. Although the retention rates for both subcontractors have been satisfactory since the beginning of the subcontracting arrangements in April, the achievement rates have been low.

Hospitality

Grade 2

40. Hospitality training provided by DCTA is subcontracted to one training provider with the exception of one trainee. This subcontractor has an area manager who is supported by two full-time training organisers. There are 36 trainees, 18 of whom are foundation modern apprentices and 18 of whom are advanced modern apprentices. All trainees are employed. Programmes being undertaken by trainees included housekeeping, quick service, food preparation and cooking, food and drink service, craft baking, bar service, reception, on-licensed premises and restaurant supervision. All trainees have been recruited from the hospitality industry or referred by employers to the subcontractor. Establishments where trainees are employed are varied and are assessed by the subcontractor to ensure that there are good opportunities for successful completion of the trainees' training programmes. All training and assessment is carried out in the workplace by the subcontractor's staff. The self-assessment report produced by DCTA placed great reliance on that produced by the subcontractor. The strengths contained in the report were assessed as being no more than normal practice by inspectors, who identified other strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high levels of involvement by employers
- ◆ clear and effective target-setting
- ◆ well-planned assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ incomplete planning of training

41. Training organisers from the subcontractor have good occupational knowledge

and experience and effective working relationships with workplace supervisors and trainees. Employers are thoroughly involved in the training programmes and encourage their employees to take part in training. Trainees are fully employed within the industry in a variety of establishments suited to the successful completion of their training programmes. Many are employed before they start their training. An initial assessment is completed by the trainees as well as a key skills assessment to identify learning styles and current levels of key skills abilities. This initial assessment does not fully assess the trainee for any learning support needs and is not reviewed by DCTA. Learning support needs are identified by training organisers during training and they also take responsibility for addressing such needs. Before they start training, trainees have policies and procedures explained to them and they receive a guide to NVQs. Employers also receive a full explanation of the training and sign an employers' agreement provided by the subcontractor which explains their responsibilities in the training process. An individual training programme is decided in consultation with the trainee, training organiser and the employer which takes into consideration both the trainees' job roles and the employers' expectations of them. Optional and additional units within programmes are fully discussed by the trainer, trainee and employer and the selection of these reflects both employment opportunities and the career aspirations of the trainee. Some trainees also have access to in-house training programmes, which further develop their occupational competence and knowledge. This means that trainees have individual programmes which meet their needs and which have optional units best suited to both their needs and their workplaces.

42. Training organisers and employers provide high levels of support to trainees, and training organisers will visit trainees in the workplace at convenient times. This includes visits during both early mornings and late evenings, as well as at weekends. The subcontractor evaluates trainees' satisfaction with their training systematically. The area manager investigates any difficulties identified through this evaluation process. Meetings are held at regular intervals with trainees as part of their reviews. These reviews are held at four-weekly intervals and are often more frequent at the start of training programmes when trainees need increased support. In most cases, employers are involved in these reviews and have a clear understanding of the training trainees need between each review. Those employers which are unable to take part in reviews have a separate meeting with training organisers to discuss this. Tasks for trainees to complete between reviews are clearly stated, effective and re-assessed at the next review. These actions for trainees to complete take into consideration the previous experience they have gained in employment and their individual training plans are updated accordingly.

43. Assessments are well planned by training organisers in consultation with trainees. An assessment plan is produced which details what assessment is need when, and how the assessment will be carried out. Trainees understand this process. Assessments are carried out at times best suited to the trainees and their employers. After the assessment, trainees receive a comprehensive report from the training organiser on their competence to perform the necessary tasks. This is recorded in their portfolios and entered on the next review sheet. Results of assessments are usually conveyed to employers during the review process and not

immediately after they are successfully completed. The subcontractor has a well-developed system for recording progress and a planned internal verification process which includes the observation of assessments. Achievement is not routinely monitored by DCTA. The subcontractor informs DCTA of successful outcomes.

44. Trainees have a good knowledge of the NVQ process and of the manner in which to collect evidence and record it within portfolios. They are required to complete an evidence grid which relates the work they have undertaken to appropriate NVQ units. They answer questions to show their level of theoretical knowledge before they are assessed. Some trainees record their evidence by using a tape recorder. Many trainees have been employed for some considerable time before starting training and many have relevant experience from other employment. Several trainees are in positions of responsibility and have supervisory roles within their organisations. They display good levels of occupational competence. Opportunities are missed to assess trainees when they are completing the theoretical aspects of training, especially when theory is taught as part of their normal working procedures.

45. All training is carried out entirely in the workplace by the subcontractor's training organisers and by workplace supervisors. DCTA's staff undertake occasional visits to the workplace with training organisers to observe training and assessment, but they do not monitor the quality of training. Although trainees and workplace supervisors clearly understand short-term training targets set at reviews, there is no overall planning of training discussed between all the parties at the beginning of the training process. Training meets the short-term targets set between reviews and does not fulfil a previously identified structure.

46. Subcontracting arrangements have been in existence since April 2000. Thirteen foundation modern apprentices were in training in April and a further 18 have since been recruited. Of these, 13 have since left the programme without completing their frameworks and the rest are still in training. There were 12 advanced modern apprentices in training in April and a further 12 have since joined. From this group, six trainees have left the programme without completing their frameworks and the rest are still in training. These rates of retention are similar to those found by other training providers for hospitality.

Health, care & public services

Grade 4

47. DCTA has 34 trainees in this occupational area working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care and early years care and education. There are four early years trainees, who are all foundation modern apprentices. In care, there are nine advanced modern apprentices, 13 foundation modern apprentices and eight trainees on other work-based learning programmes for young people. All trainees are employed. There are two men among these trainees. There are three trainees from minority ethnic groups. Many of the trainees are already working in care before their employers approach the DCTA to provide training. Others are referred to DCTA through the Employment Service. DCTA also presents its training

opportunities at local schools. Employment opportunities for care are in residential care and nursing homes, and in day-care centres for older people and for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems. In early years care, trainees are employed in private day nurseries. DCTA usually holds induction to training at the three main start dates of September, January and May. Induction to NVQs is brief. Induction is given in the workplace for those starting at other times. Induction includes a routine screening of basic skills. Trainees are given a handbook containing health and safety and equal opportunities procedures. Most trainees also have an induction from their employers. Trainees attend the training centre once a week for the first eight weeks of their off-the-job training, then attend monthly for additional sessions relating to particular NVQ units. In the later part of trainees' programmes, they attend specific sessions on NVQ units, workshops or one-to-one tutorials. There are weekly key skills sessions at DCTA's training centre. Visiting assessors or tutor/assessors carry out all assessment in the workplace. DCTA began to offer early years training again in May 2000. Of seven trainees who began in 1997-98, no trainees have achieved their qualifications, and of seven who began in 1998-99, two trainees have completed their individual training plans and two have gained NVQs at level 2. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses to those given in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given by DCTA.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective one-to-one tutorials
- ◆ good off-the-job training sessions
- ◆ good resources for off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor understanding of NVQs by employers
- ◆ incomplete development of training materials for key skills
- ◆ unsupportive structure of off-the-job training
- ◆ delays in assessments
- ◆ poor achievement rates

GOOD PRACTICE

One employer arranged for a trainee to attend a specialist course on working with people with profound and complex difficulties. Following the course, the trainee was asked to share the information with the other staff.

48. The liaison officer from DCTA visits the employer and provides written information about the NVQ programme. Some employers are able to provide good opportunities for on-the-job training. However, some employers do not fully understand NVQ training or become involved with it. This leaves some trainees poorly supported in the workplace. Most trainees work with, and are supervised by, senior or experienced staff in the workplace. Not all of these are occupationally qualified. The overall co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak, with many employers unaware of their trainees' progress towards their qualifications. A recently established employers' forum is seen as a way of

improving employers' understanding of the NVQ process. Employers arrange shift patterns to allow trainees to attend the training centre, but almost all trainees attend when they are off duty. DCTA encourages employers to arrange shifts so that these trainees do not attend the training centre and work on the same day. However, this rarely happens for many trainees. For example, attendance at the additional key skills sessions has presented difficulties for some early years care employers, which has resulted in reduced training or assessment opportunities for some trainees. Some employers and some trainees are confused about the requirement for key skills and training for this. DCTA has written some key skills training materials which are vocationally specific, but these are not yet ready for trainees to use. The organisation of off-the-job training is designed to be flexible. However, the move from weekly to monthly training sessions followed by a period of optional drop-in sessions does not suit all trainees. Some trainees and employers find it confusing, and the less confident trainees feel insufficiently supported. Some trainees start to make slower progress.

49. Trainees' progress is monitored through three-monthly reviews carried out between the liaison officer and the trainee. In some cases, employers or workplace supervisors are also present. Reviews are carried out more frequently if trainees need additional support. They are recorded and targets are set. In care, targets are often short term and specific to training goals. In early years care, they are less specific. Trainees, employers, the liaison officers and the tutors keep copies of the targets. Effective one-to-one tutorials are available for trainees who visit the training centre. Trainees value these. Off-the-job training is of very good quality. It is thoroughly planned, uses a variety of methods to involve trainees and draws effectively upon trainees' working practices. Good use is made of case studies, and the requirements for sensitivity and confidentiality are carefully observed for these. There are good resources for training and trainees are encouraged to research materials from a variety of sources, including the Internet. However, the merging of training for different NVQ levels has led to some large groups and which make the less confident trainees less able to request additional support during these sessions.

50. DCTA no longer uses work-based assessors. Instead, DCTA's assessors visit trainees in the workplace and carry out lengthy observations and assessments. The intervals between assessments are too long for some trainees. Some trainees waited several months for their first assessments. Some do not fully understand the appeals process regarding assessment decisions. This makes it difficult for trainees to achieve units gradually, and some trainees are faced with managing the assessment of large sections of their portfolios towards the end of their training. The gap between assessments means that they take a long time to understand the NVQ process. Assessment methods are negotiated with trainees, who tend to prefer verbal questioning and direct observation. Some employers provide a good range of in-house training which supports trainees' NVQ achievement. Achievement rates are poor. In 1997-98, no trainees achieved their individual training plans or any NVQs. In 1998-99, two of seven foundation modern apprentices achieved their individual training plans including NVQs at level 2.

51. Trainees are able to organise their own portfolios, but have some difficulties with matching their evidence against the units of the NVQs. There is no tracking system to enable all parties to be able to follow trainees' progress towards NVQ units. There are very few internal verifiers.

Foundation for work

Grade 4

52. DCTA currently has 46 trainees on the foundation for work programme. It operates from two training centres it has set up in Hitchin and Luton, which it calls community sites, and from its training centre at the college. It offers training to both adults and young people who will benefit from more support, advice or training before entering the labour market or mainstream training programmes. DCTA offers basic employability training to adults who wish to progress into occupationally specific training. Young people join a prevocational training programme before joining mainstream programmes at either DCTA or with other suitable training providers. The basic employability programme runs for up to 26 weeks and includes learning basic information technology skills alongside personal and employability skills. Job-search skills are taught on every programme. Support in basic literacy and numeracy skills is available as is training in English for speakers of other languages for those trainees who are identified as needing this type of training. The programme for young people runs for 13 weeks and aims to improve the trainees' skills in getting jobs and their personal development skills. When appropriate, the trainees have work experience for up to 28 days.

53. Trainees are referred to the programme for young people from the careers service and from the employment service for the adult programme. DCTA's liaison officers work with external agencies to provide ongoing support to the trainees and attend joint interviews to assist the trainees to make the right choice of training in line with their individual needs. At their initial interviews trainees are assessed on their basic literacy and numeracy skills, and given a health assessment to identify their suitability for employment. Their previous experience and qualifications are taken into consideration at their interview to allow their individual training programme to be matched to their individual needs. All clients receive an induction to their training programme both at the community sites and at the college. They complete their individual training plan with the liaison officer or their tutors, and identify progression routes and targets they wish to achieve while in training.

54. Trainees follow a variety of qualifications including wordpower and numberpower at entry level and level 1, ESOL, basic information technology, horticulture, carpentry and joinery NVQs at level 1. Some trainees work towards key skills in communication and application of number. Trainees are able to practise their interview skills, complete curricula vitae, and complete application forms for suitable jobs which they have found advertised in the local newspapers or on the Internet. Further guidance and support is given to trainees who are unsure of their career direction. Trainees can get further information through the college's careers information services and its learning resource centre. Specialist tutors are available to give further advice and guidance on specialist occupational training

and jobs. Liaison officers are involved in preparing trainees for getting a job. Staff involved in the programmes are well qualified and help the trainees become more confident and identify how they wish to continue their education, either at the college or with a different training provider. Staff have specialist qualifications in basic skills and ESOL, and are qualified assessors in their specialist occupational area.

55. The inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good development of training at community sites
- ◆ good individualised learning programmes for some adult trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little differentiation in learning materials
- ◆ poor target-setting on some programmes
- ◆ unclear lines of communication between staff
- ◆ poor rates of achievement

56. DCTA has developed training from two community sites in Hitchin and Luton. The sites have been chosen to provide easier access to training for local people. This helps trainees who do not have the confidence to travel far to access training. The community site at Hitchin has a classroom which is equipped with sufficient computers to provide trainees following information technology programmes with the opportunity to practise and improve their skills. Good learning packs have been designed to allow the trainees to plan their programmes according to their individual learning needs. Training is given in small groups and trainers have the opportunity to work with individuals needing additional support. The Hitchin community site is used by trainees on the adult programme. However, DCTA intends to offer training for young people from this community site by working with the careers service to select suitable trainees who would benefit from starting their training programmes close to their homes. When the trainees gain more confidence, the trainers encourage them to attend the college for part of their training programmes and use all the facilities. Interviews with prospective trainees are held at the community site by the liaison officers or the trainers. Trainers help the trainees to identify jobs in their community and arrange work experience locally when the trainee is ready for work, therefore increasing their opportunities of getting a job within their communities. Transport is arranged for the trainees when they travel to college.

57. The community site in Luton is in a community youth development building, so many local young people are already familiar with its training facilities. The

community site provides a well-equipped classroom with computers and textbooks, and trainers have developed good learning support materials to help trainees meet their individual learning needs. An innovative partnership with a church organisation has allowed trainees who want to develop their practical skills in woodwork and upholstery to work towards nationally recognised qualifications. The partnership has recently gained a national award as being a sustainable community development. The trainees attending the programme have increased their confidence and gained self-esteem, as well as gaining practical skills in a sheltered working environment which will improve their opportunities of getting a job. Work produced by the trainees is of a high standard and they have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications in key skills.

58. Adults attending a basic skills programme at the college follow well-planned individual training programmes. They receive a thorough initial assessment which identifies their individual training needs. Their basic skills needs are identified and great care is taken by the trainer to set realistic and achievable learning targets to improve their skills. The trainer negotiates specific targets with individuals for each session they attend and trainees are encouraged to assess their success in achieving their targets and to negotiate the next stage of their programme. All their work is supported with a wide range of good learning materials, some of which are designed by the tutor so they are relevant to the individuals' needs and interests. Group work is encouraged so that the individual trainees can develop their communication and social skills. Job-search skills are designed to raise trainees' awareness of the local job market and develop literacy and language skills. Role play is used successfully to develop trainees interviewing skills as well as improve their personal presentation. Trainees are effectively supported by the staff and receive realistic guidance on finding work. Trainees are continually stretched and challenged by the trainer, and issues of inappropriate behaviour are addressed with sensitivity and professionalism.

59. On some training programmes, little is done to identify the preferred learning style of individual trainees. In some sessions, all trainees are working on the same topic with no consideration of trainees' individual needs and requirements. Learning materials are not adapted to meet the needs of individuals who have additional learning needs. Some preferred learning styles have been identified among trainees on the programme for young people. However, this information is not used effectively. Activities are not sufficiently varied. One trainer has adapted learning materials to cater for a trainee with a visual impairment, but the same is not done for other trainee's training sessions.

60. There is poor target-setting for trainees on some programmes. Although trainees undertake thorough initial assessment they are not set individual action plans which reflect their learning needs. Trainees' individual training plans have the same targets, for example to achieve a qualification, to improve literacy and numeracy skills, and to carry out job-search activities. There is no evidence as to how trainees will achieve this and a realistic timescale is not given in which trainees should achieve these targets. Trainees do not negotiate short-term targets with their trainers to allow them to work towards a specific goal over a period of

time. Some trainees are not sufficiently stretched or challenged by their training and are not clear of their aims and or what they are working towards. Some trainees are working at levels above or below their abilities. Their progress is not measured in a systematic way as reviews are not sufficiently frequent for them to see their achievements accumulating. As reviews are infrequent, they are not set intermediate targets. When targets are set for adult trainees, they are frequently too broad and over-ambitious. For example, a trainee's target might be to achieve a qualification, but this achievement is not broken down into small, progressive steps.

61. There are no set procedures by which training staff communicate trainees' progress to one another. Liaison officers who conduct trainees' reviews are not given any paperwork relating to trainees' progress in each training session they attend or about any difficulties they are experiencing. Although the trainers receive a copy of the trainees' individual training plans they do not discuss how to achieve the targets. Some trainers rely on the trainees to tell them what they had been doing in previous training sessions and do not plan training in advance. Some training sessions are repetitive. Trainers are not always told about new trainees starting programmes and what is on their individual training plans. Some staff grade trainees on a range of skills, but there are no set criteria against which to measure these skills. Trainees do not understand the assessment process. Staff meetings are held and good practice is discussed but not carried forward into training practice. For example, some good paperwork used by staff on one programme has been shared with other staff, but it is still not used in any other programmes.

62. There is poor achievement on both the adult and youth programme. Since 1997-98, there have been 250 trainees on the adult programme. Only 9 per cent have got a job, 7 per cent have progressed to further training, 6 per cent have achieved their individual training plans, 44 per cent remain in training, and 34 per cent left the programme early. Over the same period of time on the youth programme, there have been 367 trainees, and 4 per cent have got a job, 7 per cent have progressed to further training, 15 per cent have achieved their individual training plans, 48 per cent remain in training, and 26 per cent have left the programme early. There has been no significant improvement in achievement over the years on either the adult or youth programmes. Overall, 6 per cent have gone into jobs and 11 per cent have achieved their individual training plans. There are inaccuracies in the data given to inspectors about achievement and retention on these programmes.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 4

63. DCTA has adopted the college's equal opportunity policy, associated paperwork and related procedures for its staff, trainees and subcontractors. There are separate and detailed statements regarding disability and harassment. These fulfil the CCTE and TEC's contractual requirements and the minimum legal

obligations. All trainees receive a copy of the policy and undertake equal opportunities training as part of their induction. Equal opportunities are also covered in staff's induction and staff receive training for equal opportunities awareness and related issues from the local TEC if the need is identified by DCTA's manager. There is a college-wide equal opportunities group responsible for the review and implementation of the policy, which has a representative from the DCTA. The self-assessment report failed to identify significant weaknesses found by inspectors and only one of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report was found by inspectors. Inspectors did find an additional strength not identified in the self-assessment report, but awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good promotion of training opportunities to under-represented groups
- ◆ effective use of data to target recruitment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by some staff and trainees
- ◆ no policy for the management of subcontracted trainees' complaints

GOOD PRACTICE

The refectory at Dunstable College makes special arrangements for those observing the religious festival of Ramadan. The catering staff take advance food orders, which are then served after dusk, when those observing Ramadan are allowed to eat.

64. DCTA promotes training opportunities to under-represented groups by a variety of methods. Recruitment literature has been produced in minority languages appropriate to the area including Bengali, Urdu and Hindi. Foundation and advanced modern apprentice frameworks have also been translated for use with these ethnic groups. DCTA's staff visit local community centres and sites in areas with higher proportions of ethnic groups to promote opportunities for work-based training in a variety of occupations. Advertisements are placed in local community publications and some staff have been involved with advertising campaigns on local radio and with TEC publications to encourage greater awareness of work-based training.

65. Data regarding recruitment, retention and achievement are collated, for example, on gender, ethnicity and disability. These are systematically analysed. Data are monitored and compared with results of audits by the CCTE and TEC. This is in order to target promotional activities towards under-represented groups. Results are published in internal reports, and are presented at team meetings. Staff have days away from the office for the purpose of reviewing the training programmes and setting action points for future recruitment. Local population statistics are used for purposes of comparison.

66. Monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is poor. Many employers are not familiar with the college's equal opportunities policy. DCTA does not ask to keep copies of employers' policies and does not confirm that they do actually

have such policies and related procedures. Trainees' reviews do not satisfactorily monitor equal opportunities across the different occupational areas. A new review form has recently been produced which will record answers to questions about equal opportunities issues from trainees, but this is not yet used by staff across all occupational areas. Many staff at DCTA are not fully aware or conversant with equal opportunities, and the true meaning of equal opportunities has been misinterpreted, even though this has been done with misguided good intentions. For example, a trainee with disabilities could not access a particular area of the college. A member of staff offered to send some training materials to the trainee by post to make up for this poor access, but in this way excluded the trainee from taking part in group training activities. Images which some people find offensive are to be found in many work placements, yet DCTA's liaison officers do not mention this as being inappropriate when they visit trainees and employers. These images are also found within some of the college's staff offices and other areas at the college. Some staff have had training to raise their awareness of equal opportunities but still fail to realise the significance of equality of opportunity or implement equal opportunities procedures fully.

67. The three subcontractors deal internally with complaints which arise from trainees. Trainees and subcontractors do not understand that DCTA has a role to play in this complaints procedure. The subcontractors' own policies show that the next line of responsibility after them is the TEC or CCTE. There has been one instance of a complaint being passed through to the TEC from a subcontractor, and then forwarded to DCTA. There is no procedure to ensure that when subcontractors receive complaints, these are passed on to or discussed with DCTA.

Trainee support

Grade 3

68. DCTA has a dedicated manager supported by four liaison officers, a youth training co-ordinator, two work-based assessors and administrative staff. One advanced and two foundation modern apprentices undertaking qualifications in business administration are also employed by DCTA. DCTA recruits trainees from the Employment Service, careers services, schools, and by referrals from employers, as well as through individual enquiries. The college does not make any distinction between worked-based trainees and students on either further or higher education programmes. All the college's resources and facilities are made available to them at all times. Trainees are interviewed by liaison officers before they begin training. This is part of the initial assessment process and is used to identify the potential trainees' previous experience and career aspirations to ensure the most appropriate choice of training. Trainees complete a diagnostic assessment which identifies how they are able to manage occupational training learning and their level of key skills. Those trainees who lack either the confidence or the skills to gain employment immediately are moved to the foundation for work programme to improve their literacy and numeracy, and to conduct job-search exercises and activities. Some trainees are placed with other training providers if the training they require is unavailable to them at the college. These trainees are also made aware

that they can access support at the college. However, some trainees recruited by subcontractors are not made fully aware that they can use the college's facilities or of any connection with DCTA. Trainees can join training programmes at any time of the year and are placed in suitable employment. For those required to attend the college for off-the-job training, access to programmes is restricted to four occasions during the year. This delayed access to off-the-job training does not prevent them from starting their work placements or having an induction to training. The self-assessment report identified six strengths and failed to recognise any weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with two strengths and identified other strengths and two weaknesses. They awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ additional financial support available for trainees
- ◆ good use made of links with external bodies
- ◆ effective and frequent support from liaison officers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent review process
- ◆ no routine recording and monitoring of support

69. Liaison officers arrange interviews at work placements for trainees with potential employers. When the trainee gains employment, a start date for training is arranged and their induction is begun at the same time. A revised induction programme for trainees has recently been introduced for both the workplace and the college. Induction introduces trainees to NVQs and work in a comprehensive manner. They have an induction record to which they add details as their understanding of their work increases. Recording this information also provides evidence towards key skills. Trainees' first reviews are held within the first nine weeks of training and are used to verify the trainees' understanding of the induction process. The induction process has not been established long enough to assess its effectiveness over time.

70. All trainees are issued with a summary of the college's charter, which describes the college's obligations to them and lists literature relevant to part-time students at the college. Trainees are considered to be part-time students. The charter gives names of the support services available to them during training. If trainees are aware of any additional learning support they will need, they are requested to add this to the enrolment form they complete. Alternatively, tutors can refer trainees to support services if they identify additional learning needs. The tutor providing learning support works with trainees on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. These support sessions are arranged at times to suit the trainee. During 1999-2000, 289 students and trainees received additional learning support. Currently, three trainees are doing so.

71. Support provided by the college is good and well organised. A wide variety of support mechanisms and materials are available to trainees in addition to those related to learning. These include tape recorders, cameras and, in the case of one trainee with a hearing impairment, a signer. The college can also obtain support from external organisations with which they have good and well-established links. These include bodies which support those with visual impairments or those with dyslexia, and the Employment Service and careers services. An access fund is also available for those assessed as being in need of financial help. A member of staff from DCTA is based in the local careers service's office for one morning every two weeks. The careers service arranges appointments for this member of staff to see prospective trainees and offer guidance on training opportunities. If DCTA is unable to provide an appropriate training programme, it investigates other training options for the applicant and passes the information on through the careers service. Learning support assistants are also present during teaching sessions to provide support to trainees. The level of support provided by subcontractors is not currently monitored by DCTA to ensure that this is comparable to support provided by DCTA.

72. There is effective and frequent support for employers and trainees from DCTA's liaison officers. They have reviews in the workplace with trainees at regular intervals and maintain effective communication with employers. This contact is arranged at times to suit both trainees and employers. Liaison officers have good knowledge and understanding of work-based training programmes and make use of links with other organisations. This enables them to provide good advice to trainees on matters other than those related to training.

73. Reviews by both liaison officers and assessors from DCTA and are more frequent than the contractual requirement. However, the quality and effectiveness of the reviews varies across the occupational areas. In care, effective reviews set some good short-term achievable targets, but this is not the same in early years care. In foundation for work, reviews are poor with no recording of short-term targets, and trainees on the eight-week programme for adults of basic employment receive only one review at the end of their training. Reviews for construction trainees are effective. As DCTA does not monitor the support provided by its subcontractors, it does not ensure that trainees with subcontractors have effective progress reviews.

74. Trainees receive a high level of support from liaison officers, tutors and workplace supervisors, but there is no formal and systematic recording of it. As this support is not recorded, there is no information for staff to refer to when a trainee requires it. The only records of support are those kept by Dunstable College's student support services department.

Management of training

Grade 5

75. DCTA was formed in 1990 to offer government-funded training. DCTA is an integral part of the college and, following a restructuring in August 1999, it has been located within the department of Art, Design and Technology. An operational plan has been drawn up for DCTA, effective from August 2000. This plan is part of a wider corporate plan for Dunstable College. There are 16 staff at DCTA, including a manager who reports directly to the head of Art, Design and Technology. Appropriate procedures are implemented for the recruitment and appointment of staff. Newly appointed staff are able to shadow colleagues before taking up the full job role. Staff's roles are clear and understood. Responsibilities include liaison with subcontractors and work placements, assessment and training, and contract administration. DCTA subcontracts 82 per cent of training and assessment to either departments within Dunstable College or to other local colleges and private training providers. Inspectors found additional weaknesses to those given in the self-assessment report, and awarded a lower grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff appraisal system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor management of subcontractors
- ◆ insufficient use of data to make management decisions
- ◆ weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor tracking of trainees' progress

76. Staff appraisal is well established and understood. All staff are appraised by their line managers on an annual basis, and personal and professional targets are agreed. A review of these targets is carried out after six months and, if required, the targets are revised to reflect changed circumstances. The process of appraisal contributes to the overall plan for staff development within the college. Staff's records confirm that they attend a range of staff development activities appropriate to work-based training. This includes equal opportunities training organised by the local TEC, attendance at national conferences designed to promote awareness of trends in government-funded training, and training in specific areas of information technology and key skills.

77. The management of subcontractors is poor, and there is a lack of clarity within DCTA as to its role in managing contractual requirements involving subcontractors. Changes arising from the ending of a former consortium which included a number of its current subcontractors have had some adverse effects on DCTA. DCTA has not established a structure for managing contracts with subcontractors. There have been lapses in contract compliance. For example, the

contract stipulates that the subcontractor must first come to an agreement with DCTA before making any changes to training, and that these changes must be confirmed in writing. One subcontractor has made changes without doing this. DCTA does not share its policies and procedures with subcontractors, and there is no clear recognition and acceptance that the responsibility for the management of subcontracted training and assessment remains with DCTA.

78. There are nine subcontracting agreements covering 247 trainees out of 303 currently with DCTA. A number of service level agreements with subcontractors have been signed in the last month. DCTA does have discussions with subcontractors, and information relating to trainees' attendance, for example, is shared. However, not all subcontractors pass on details of the training they provide, so DCTA has no knowledge of the training it is managing. DCTA and the subcontractors do not meet to share good practice, or meet to discuss improvements outlined in the action plan and plot progress against the action plan.

79. Dunstable College has undertaken considerable expenditure over the past two years to upgrade its management information systems. Reports are being produced from these systems for DCTA, but data are not used to identify trends or areas for improvement in training and achievement. No comparisons are made between the performance of the subcontractors offering training in the same occupational areas or the same frameworks. The lack of appropriate data means that managers are unable to make a reliable assessment of DCTA's annual performance, or to establish a reliable database against which to measure future performance. The position on availability and use of data is further compromised by the lack of information on the recently installed management information system about trainees based at subcontractors. Subcontractors maintain their own management information systems.

80. On- and off-the-job training is not effectively co-ordinated by DCTA. There are few structured or planned work-based training programmes. DCTA does not adequately manage training in the workplace, to ensure that it includes the structure of the relevant NVQ. Training in the workplace is left to employers and work-placement providers to plan, and there is a reliance on learning and assessment happening during off-the-job training sessions. Many workplace supervisors are unaware of the requirements of NVQs, and have not been issued with a copy of the NVQ standards. Some provide training within the framework of their own company's training programme, with no reference to the NVQ. Many trainees do not receive off-the-job training, and the requirement that competence be founded on systematically acquired knowledge and understanding is not being met. DCTA does not receive information about off-the-job training given by subcontractors, and there is no programme for observing such training.

81. The tracking of trainees' progress is poor. Trainees' progress in the workplace is not monitored centrally. Given the large number of trainees with subcontractors, including departments of Dunstable College, poor awareness of trainees' progress gives DCTA's staff no prior warning of any problems affecting trainees' progress, which can ultimately affect their retention and achievement.

Quality assurance

Grade 5

82. DCTA use the quality assurance systems, procedures and policies of the college with additional procedures for TEC-funded trainees. The additional procedures for DCTA include those for the completion of files and paperwork, initial visits to employers and subcontractors, induction, initial assessment, reviews, complaints and assessors' responsibilities. These are recorded in the procedures file and also appear on the college's intranet. They show when each procedure was issued and revised, and its current issue number. DCTA's manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance of TEC-funded programmes. DCTA has an internal audit system which monitors staff's adherence to the policies and procedures connected with paperwork for the TEC. Where staff members are not conforming with procedures, an action plan is issued to address this. The college also has a cross-college group relating to self-assessment, internal verification and quality control. There is representation from DCTA on this group. Quality assurance issues, like self-assessment and updates to the quality assurance manual, are featured in the college's monthly newsletter which is circulated to all staff. There is a lesson observation system for college staff, which ensures that all members of staff are observed on an annual basis. This incorporates some of the sessions which DCTA's trainees attend. There has been a course review involving DCTA's trainees in 2000, and four of the liaison officers participated. Trainees and employers participate in an annual written feedback questionnaire. This questionnaire asks them to rate various aspects of the training programme. There is an additional questionnaire for new trainees and another for those who leave programmes. DCTA is currently on its third cycle of self-assessment. DCTA's manager wrote the most recent report. This report then fed into Dunstable College's self-assessment report. Self-assessment identified five strengths, none of which were found by inspectors. The report also cited two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed that there was a weakness in the internal verification process and found the other weakness to be more serious than stated in the self-assessment report, as there is little quality assurance in the workplace. An additional strength and four additional weaknesses were identified, and inspectors awarded a lower grade.

POOR PRACTICE

The health and safety checklists are not always completed by trained liaison officers for DCTA. On two occasions, employers were asked to complete the form themselves then return it to the liaison officer. There is a lack of rigour in the checking of health and safety in the workplace.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective use of feedback from staff and trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient target-setting
- ◆ little quality assurance in the workplace
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ unsystematic internal verification
- ◆ poor analysis and evaluation of questionnaires
- ◆ insufficiently rigorous self-assessment

83. There has been some development of initiatives as a result of team meetings. DCTA's manager has a monthly action plan for current activities which have been agreed on in meetings, trainees' reviews and staff's discussions. The electrical installation trainees were removed from off-the-job training with a local college and transferred to an alternative college. This followed discussions about this subcontractor's performance at staff meetings. Issues raised by the trainees and liaison officers were discussed with the subcontractor, including the poor standard of practical assessments and teaching rooms. However, the decision was taken to move the trainees. As a result of trainees' feedback, the induction programme was revised. This has now been introduced for current trainees and the initial verbal feedback is favourable. The foundation for work trainees having training in basic employability now receive a file containing instructions for all the course work they will have to do at the beginning of the programme, as the trainees reported that they would find this easier. DCTA's manager and the subcontractors share good practice. This has resulted in the development of some of the recruitment questions and induction material. The audit system has been improved in response to the high number of errors found on paperwork for the TEC. A care employers' forum has recently been held so these employers can discuss training, but it is too early to see if this will have a beneficial effect on the quality of training.

84. While the TEC and CCTE provide targets for the recruitment of trainees, their achievements and retention on programmes, DCTA has not written its own targets for achievement or retention. There is no systematic monitoring of achievement or retention by DCTA. While some staff are set personal targets for trainees' recruitment and achievement of intermediate targets, there is very little target-setting for most staff. There are few strategies to address retention issues among TEC-funded trainees.

85. Liaison officers monitor health and safety in the workplace on an annual basis. Some workplaces have not been monitored regularly. There are no strategies to identify where these monitoring visits have elapsed. Most employers' files contain out-of-date employers' liability insurance policies. There is no systematic quality assurance of any of the activities trainees undertake at work. Employers facilitate interviews, induction, on-the-job training and support while trainees are at work. This is occasionally discussed as part of the review process. A checklist completed during reviews confirms that trainees receive an induction and on-the-job training, but does not focus on the content or quality of these. Liaison officers do not record this discussion about the checklist. This means that DCTA only reacts to individual cases of insufficient quality rather than having a regularly updated picture of training. The trainees' experience varies considerably by employer and occupational area.

86. DCTA has 10 subcontractors, three of which further subcontract to other training providers. The subcontractors receive inadequate monitoring from DCTA. DCTA's manager has observed some assessments and training sessions given by subcontractors. There is no systematic planning of this quality assurance to ensure that all subcontractors are monitored at some point during the year. The recording

of observations does not meet the systems described within the quality assurance manual. DCTA's liaison officers ask subcontractors for copies of their internal and external verifiers' reports. However, the collection of these does not result in the identification or discussion of long-term improvements. The subcontractors which further subcontract training to other companies complete their own quality assurance procedures, but do not share the results with DCTA. DCTA's liaison officers have completed some reviews of trainees at one of the secondary subcontractors. However, the purpose of this recent exercise is unclear and nothing has been done with the information gleaned. There are no action plans devised with subcontractors to develop programmes or improve achievement or retention. There is some random auditing of paperwork in trainees' files, but the system for this varies across different programmes and liaison officers. This does not focus on the content of what is recorded during reviews but on the completion of paperwork and the timescales of reviews.

87. Dunstable College has its own internal verification policy and group which monitors standardisation across the college. However, within each subcontractor and programme area there are inconsistencies within the internal verification. Some areas, like hospitality and retailing and customer service, have internal verification which is planned to occur across the year and which contains different methods including observation of assessors and portfolio verification. There are two-monthly meetings during which internal verification and assessment practice are discussed. In other areas, like agriculture, construction and health, care and public services, there has been no internal verification and none is scheduled. Some of the subcontractors are colleges, and internal verification for these colleges is based around the academic year. There is very little internal verification between July and December. In agriculture, there is no internal verifier for the animal care programme, despite the external verifier identifying this as something to be addressed urgently. In foundation for work, internal verification has identified problems with assessors and portfolio evidence, but there is no development plan to tackle these issues.

88. There has been little analysis of questionnaires requesting feedback from trainees within the six months before inspection. Staff are mostly aware of the comments given in the current set of evaluations. Many of the current trainees have expressed concerns about their programmes, and about liaison officers, induction and tutors at college. The evaluation of trainees' views in May 2000 showed that several areas had received a worse evaluation than when they were evaluated in the survey in November 1999. These areas included induction, access to help, tutors, training, timescales for training and the overall programme. Few strategies were introduced between these surveys to address these areas. All trainees surveyed said that they were not sure what they would do when they completed their programmes. Trainees who leave programmes early have been asked to complete a TEC-designed questionnaire. This does not evaluate the service received by trainees from DCTA or areas which trainees are dissatisfied with. The trainees who have completed this questionnaire have not been given advice about its completion. They have answered sections for foundation and advanced modern apprentices and other work-based training programmes, regardless of their qualification aim. These

questionnaires are therefore impossible to analyse. Many trainees who have completed the questionnaire given to them when they first start the programme have recently identified gaps in their induction programme and dissatisfaction with their liaison officers and tutors at college. There are two different versions of the questionnaire for trainees taking short courses, both with different questions. These have identified many aspects of the training which trainees find poor. Little has been done to address any of these comments. DCTA's questionnaires are not anonymous, and as many trainees have not completed their programmes when they are asked to complete the questionnaires, this may inhibit them from giving honest feedback about their training experience. The trainees with secondary subcontractors have not been included within the scope of the questionnaires, so no feedback has been collected from these trainees or their employers.

89. The self-assessment process was insufficiently self-critical and failed to identify significant weaknesses. Self-assessment did not recognise the significance of subcontractors and employers' involvement in the training process. The grades were over-optimistic and not based on the strengths and weaknesses given for each area. For example, equal opportunities was cited as being satisfactory, but was supported with three strengths and no weaknesses. Many of the strengths were found to be no more than normal practice by inspectors. Judgements made in the self-assessment report are not based on data for achievement or retention. There has been no involvement of subcontractors, employers or trainees in the self-assessment process, apart from one subcontractor's self-assessment report which was used to develop some of the strengths and weaknesses within the hospitality section of the report.