



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT DECEMBER 2000

York College Training Services

SUMMARY

York College Training Services offers good training in manufacturing and hair and beauty. Training in the college is well resourced and trainees have access to a wide range of work-based learning opportunities. Training in construction, engineering, business administration and hairdressing is of a satisfactory standard. Off-the-job training is good, but few links are made with training available in the workplace. There is insufficient work-based assessment. There are comprehensive equal opportunities policies which are regularly evaluated, but monitoring arrangements do not extend to the workplace. A high level of support is offered to trainees by the college's staff who work to ensure that trainees' individual learning needs are met. However, progress reviews lack clear targets against which trainees' performance can be measured. Management of training is less than satisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of working environments and a lack of readily available data upon which management decisions can be based. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. There is a wide range of quality improvement activity which engages staff from all parts of the college. The quality assurance systems do not yet cover activity in the workplace.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ varied and challenging opportunities for workplace learning
- ◆ additional training opportunities enhancing the employability of trainees
- ◆ effective and well-resourced off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ supportive and enthusiastic employers
- ◆ high levels of additional support for trainees
- ◆ sound mechanisms for internal and external communication
- ◆ wide range of quality improvement activity

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ lack of awareness by employers of NVQ requirements
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ lack of clear target-setting at reviews
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of working environments
- ◆ lack of readily available data upon which to base management decisions

INTRODUCTION

1. York College Training Services is the largest provider of training in North Yorkshire, funded through North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). It offers training in the following occupational areas: construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, leisure, sport and travel, hospitality, hair and beauty, health, care and public services, and foundation for work. Trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2, 3 or 4. There are 181 modern apprentices, 236 national trainees and 144 are on other youth training programmes, known locally as NVQ Options. Trainees on NVQ Options programmes do not undertake key skills development. A further 4 trainees are working towards qualifications under the New Deal, within the full-time education and training option.

2. A deputy principal of the college is responsible for managing contractual relations with the TEC and business development work with employers. The training and assessment of TEC-funded trainees is managed by one of three assistant principals who has responsibility for work-based learning in the college's curriculum. Off-the-job training usually takes place in the college and is provided by staff from within college departments. Work-placement officers and work-experience assessors are responsible for maintaining links with trainees and their employers in the workplace. They undertake the following: signing of agreements with trainees and their employers, health and safety monitoring, reviews with employers, college tutors and trainees, and the completion of TEC paperwork. Placement officers and work-experience assessors are line-managed by the curriculum managers and work closely with the relevant course tutors.

3. York College Training Services provides training through subcontracting agreements for a total of 246 trainees from 10 other training organisations. Over 90 per cent of these trainees are working towards qualifications within the construction sector. York College Training Services subcontracts the training and assessment of five of its own trainees to other colleges in the region. Three of these trainees have completed initial awards at York, but are now working towards additional or higher-level qualifications with specialist colleges.

4. York has a population of 177,000. It is a historic city with traditional industries in rail, engineering, food manufacturing and construction. In recent years there has been considerable growth in tourism, science, finance and management industries. Over 70 per cent of the city's population are employed in the service sector. In York, 5.3 per cent of the population are employed in high-technology sectors, including biosciences and information/communication technology. This is higher than the regional and national averages, which stand at 4.6 per cent and 5.2 per cent respectively. Unemployment in the York unitary authority in October 2000 stood at 2.1 per cent. This was lower than the national average of 3.4 per cent and the regional average of 4.2 per cent. Just under 25 per

cent of young people aged between 18 and 24 in York are unemployed. This proportion has increased from just under 23 per cent in October 1999, but it is still lower than the regional average of 27.9 per cent.

5. In York, just over 1 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups. This is significantly lower than the regional proportion of 4.4 per cent and the national average of 6.2 per cent, based on 1991 census data. In 1999, 75 per cent of York's school leavers progressed into further education. Eight per cent moved into employment and training, 7 per cent went into employment without training and a further 6 per cent were unemployed. The destinations of the remaining 4 per cent are unknown. In 2000 52.6 per cent of school leavers in the city of York achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades C and above. This is higher than the national average of 49.2 per cent, but lower than the average for North Yorkshire Local Education Authority, which was 59.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. York College Training Services began its self-assessment report early in 2000. Guidelines for the report were distributed to curriculum and team leaders, who also received training about the timetable and framework for self-assessment. Quality audits in March and April 2000 were used to provide staff with support and to check on the progress made. In the summer of 2000, the draft reports submitted by staff from the areas involved in providing TEC-funded training were combined into a composite self-assessment against the criteria in *Raising the Standard*. This report was brought up to date in November 2000, just before the inspection. All actions identified as a result of self-assessment have been incorporated into team action plans which are formally reviewed in March and November as part of the college's quality assurance process. Inspectors agreed with grades given by the college in all but two occupational areas. A higher grade was given for manufacturing and a lower grade for business administration. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment grades for equal opportunities and quality assurance. They awarded a higher grade for trainee support and a lower grade for management of training.

7. A team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 42 days at York College Training Services in December 2000. They inspected the following occupational areas: construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, hospitality, and hair and beauty. The other occupational areas offered by the college were not inspected because they each had fewer than 10 trainees. Inspectors interviewed 103 trainees, 47 supervisors in the workplace and 68 college staff, including both course tutors and the college's managers. They visited 48 workplaces. Inspectors observed off-the-job training sessions, assessments and progress reviews both in the college and in the workplace. Documents relating to trainees' work and the overall provision of training and assessment were reviewed.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	2		1			3
Engineering	1	1	3	1	1	7
Manufacturing		2				2
Business administration		2	1			3
Hospitality			2			2
Hair & beauty			3			3
Total	3	5	10	1	1	20

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

8. York College Training Services has 226 trainees working towards NVQs in brickwork, wood occupations, painting and decorating, stone masonry, plumbing and electrical installation. There are 84 national trainees, 70 modern apprentices and 72 trainees on other government-funded youth training programmes, who are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Following initial assessment and an induction programme, which usually takes place in the college, off-the-job training is provided for most trainees at the college on a day-release basis. Electrical installation trainees also attend college for week-long training programmes linked to their NVQs. Most assessment takes place in the college, although some assessment in the workplace is carried out with plumbing and electrical installation trainees. One full-time and one part-time placement officer visit trainees in the workplace to conduct progress reviews and to provide them with ongoing support. Trainees are employed in a wide range of local firms. The self-assessment report for this area did not give a clear picture of training taking place. Inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses during the inspection and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ varied and challenging on-the-job experience
- ◆ good quality off-the-job training
- ◆ high levels of retention and achievement in most areas

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ lack of awareness by employers of NVQ programmes
- ◆ slow progress made by some trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

One employer implements a carefully structured on-the-job training programme. Here, trainees spend alternate periods of time in the joiner's shop and on site, and are moved around different sites with selected supervisors working in teams on particular types of work. With this employer, trainees' experience is recorded and performance both on and off the job is regularly appraised.

9. Good relationships exist between York College Training Services, trainees and employers. Most trainees have already found employment with their firms before enrolling on their programmes at the college. The college's staff help those trainees without employment to secure work. Relationships with firms in the electrical installation sector are particularly good. In this area most employers recruit trainees with assistance from the college, which helps to promote further good, long term working relationships. Employers are supportive and committed to training. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training and value the efforts made on their behalf by their employers and the college. Trainees benefit from experience in the workplace, which is both varied and challenging. Trainees are often given significant responsibilities on site. Most training in the workplace is driven by the immediate needs of the company. This sometimes results in trainees

undertaking tasks which have little relevance to their NVQs. Trainees regularly use their experience at work as evidence towards their NVQ qualifications. Where electrical installation trainees have obtained sufficient evidence in specific areas and can demonstrate to tutors that they can satisfy competence requirements, they are not required to repeat the work in college. This practice does not take place in all areas of construction.

10. Off-the-job training is well planned and effective. Teaching classrooms are spacious, well lit and well equipped, providing a good learning environment. Tutors make good use of teaching aids and materials, and work to detailed lesson plans. Trainees are attentive in theory sessions, respond well to prompts by the tutor and participate in the learning process. With some exceptions, workshops are well equipped and instruction is well planned and effective. Painting and decorating facilities are particularly good. Well-designed, realistic working conditions are created. A wide range of materials and techniques are used, and a simulated 'client/contractor' relationship is developed with staff from another college department, which helps to reinforce the importance of commercial considerations. Trainees have good portfolios and are given regular and comprehensive feedback on work that they submit for marking. Practical work is good and trainees' work often features in prize-giving ceremonies and competitions at both local and national level. Retention and achievement levels are high. Over 90 per cent of trainees in this area remained on the programme in 1999-2000, with an average of 75 per cent of trainees achieving their NVQ targets. Electrical installation results are exceptionally high, with 97 per cent achieving Part I and 89 per cent achieving Part II of their qualification.

11. Only trainees working towards qualifications in electrical installation and plumbing are assessed in the workplace, Other trainees are assessed in the college in a simulated environment. Employers are not involved in the assessment process in any way. Valuable and extensive opportunities to assess competence in the workplace are lost. While most employers confirm having received a training agreement and other documents relating to training from the college, most have not read the material and cannot identify its contents. Most employers are unaware of NVQ requirements and terminology and are either unwilling or unable to contribute to trainees' progress towards their qualifications. Often, employers are unaware of assessment requirements and are unable to distinguish between progress reviews and assessments. Employers are unable to check or evaluate trainees' off-the-job training and progress. Many employers do not fully appreciate their role and responsibilities in the training process. Progress reviews are undertaken in a systematic and methodical way, with occupationally competent placement officers checking and reinforcing trainees' claims of experience in specific activities. However, these reviews lack rigour regarding target-setting and while trainees and employers receive a copy of the review, this information is not shared with tutors at the college.

12. Progress and achievement in plumbing has been severely held back by the inability of the college to provide training and assessment in the use of gas for part of the programme in accordance with external requirements. Trainees who

otherwise would have completed their training in July 2000 were unable to complete their level 2 NVQ and have had to return in the autumn term of 2000-01 for training and assessment with an external company. Similarly, trainees who would have progressed to level 3 NVQs at the beginning of the autumn term have been delayed in starting their programme pending the resolution of this issue.

Engineering

Grade 3

13. One hundred and seventy-four trainees are working towards NVQs in engineering at levels 2 or 3 in motor vehicle, mechanical engineering, fabrication and welding, aeronautical or electrical/electronic engineering. There are 80 modern apprentices, 67 national trainees and 27 other youth trainees who are receiving government funding. Over 150 employers or work-placement providers are used for work-based training in this sector. Trainees who are working towards NVQs at level 2 attend college on a full-time basis for one academic year or on day release over a period of two years. Trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 attend college on a day-release basis. During their time in college trainees attend theory and practical training sessions. The college's staff assess level 2 trainees during the off-the-job training sessions. Most assessment of level 3 trainees is conducted in the workplace, by either work-placement officers or the college's trainers. Some assessment of level 3 NVQ motor vehicle trainees is carried out in the college's workshop. Work-placement officers review trainees' progress towards their NVQs every 10 weeks. The grade awarded by inspectors for this occupational area is the same as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

The table below shows the distribution of trainees within engineering training.

NVQ level	NVQ	Number in Training			Totals
		Youth	NT	MA	
Level 2	Engineering manufacture (foundation)	11	48	24	83
Level 3	Engineering manufacture	1		5	6
Level 3	Engineering production	3	0	11	14
Level 3	Engineering maintenance			11	11
Level 2	Aeronautical engineering			5	5
Level 3	Aeronautical engineering			5	5
Level 3	Motor vehicle refurbishment			2	2
Level 2	Motor vehicle mechanical & electrical systems			7	7
Level 3	Motor vehicle mechanical & electrical systems	9	19	4	32
Level 3/4	Academic related courses	3	0	6	9
	Total	27	67	80	174

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of workplace learning opportunities
- ◆ enhanced opportunities for career progression
- ◆ high retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ little use of work-based evidence for key skills competence

14. The range of training opportunities offered by employers takes in all engineering disciplines and offers training on up-to-date industrial plant or commercial equipment. Employers range from large internationally recognised manufacturing companies to a specialist aeronautical engineering organisation. They also include many commercial vehicle garages and certified vehicle-testing stations. Within every organisation, and in each vocational area, the scope of experience offered varies from basic operations to complex tasks. Employers in larger companies plan training so that trainees gain experience within various sections of a company. Training is not, however, directed to achieving the NVQ. Within smaller organisations training is determined by the tasks being undertaken

GOOD PRACTICE

The timetable for the delivery of aeronautical engineering classes has been re-arranged. This has enabled specialist aeronautical engineers to teach the evening sessions. Trainees therefore gain up-to-date knowledge, from an expert engineer with specific knowledge of the industry.

at that particular time. Trainees are under the supervision of experienced tradespeople, who have vast practical and technical knowledge. Trainees progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience and most are treated as junior employees rather than trainees.

15. The college has training workshops which adequately cover NVQ basic engineering training. Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Most are accredited NVQ assessors. However, out of seven classroom sessions observed, one lesson was found to be poor and another less than satisfactory.

16. Trainees have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications and experiences that will enhance their careers. Trainee aeronautical engineers are employed as civilians in a military environment. They have the opportunity to gain air-licensing qualifications on aircraft servicing. Other trainees are working towards a second national certificate qualification. In addition there are many other examples where trainees undergo additional NVQ unit certification at level 2 in engineering manufacture foundation training.

17. Very few trainees leave their programmes early. The figures indicate that over the period 1997-2000 there was an intake of 187 trainees. Thirteen trainees left early, a remarkably small number considering the total of motor vehicle trainees. It is not unusual for motor vehicle engineering programmes to have low retention rates. During the 1997 to 1999 period, figures for level 2 NVQ engineering foundation training indicate that of 61 trainees who started on the programme 58 achieved their qualification. Thirty-five per cent of trainees are on this programme, which represents an achievement rate of 95 per cent. Achievement data regarding other areas of training were not available.

18. The motor vehicle workshop uses its own fleet of vehicles for training and assessment purposes. The average age of vehicles exceeds ten years. The college supplements this activity by offering a repair and service facility for staff and local residents to enable trainees to gain experience on more modern vehicles. This is done on a commercial basis. Assessment from these activities is mainly done when a trainee cannot acquire a sufficient range of evidence from the workplace, for example in the repair of electric window mechanisms and advanced braking systems. However, college assessors have not been to the workplace for assessment purposes for the past five months and plans to do so will not be discussed until the month after the inspection. In the meantime, trainees supply job cards from their workplace to show the tasks they have carried out. However, this, combined with insufficient visits to the workplace by assessors, leads to an over-reliance on witness testimonies.

19. Considerable effort has been made to cross-reference the requirements for key skills to activities in the academic programme. Minimal evidence is used from work-based training activities. Full-time trainees who are working towards level 2 NVQs in engineering manufacture normally complete key skills before they enter the workplace for their next stage of training at level 3. There are missed opportunities for using evidence that has been collected for trainees' NVQ

portfolios or from that which is generated by activities in a realistic working environment. A new review form for work-based training is being tested. On this form there is a specific reference to the progress made in gathering key skills evidence a work-based perspective. It is too early to measure the impact of the new form.

20. There are some instances where off-the-job training is linked to on-the-job training. This occurs at higher certificate level where assignments focus on the use of commercial equipment. In general, however, employers are not aware of the college's schemes of work for off-the-job training and consequently cannot integrate and supplement practical training in the workplace with current academic and practical work being undertaken at the college.

Manufacturing

Grade 2

21. There are 13 trainees working towards qualifications in the manufacturing sector. Four are modern apprentices and nine are on youth training programmes. Seven trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 or 2 in producing handcrafted furniture and five are working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in laboratory and associated techniques. One trainee is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in laboratory techniques, as well as an advanced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in science. All trainees are employed and attend off-the-job training for one day each week at the college and four days a week in the workplace. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were descriptive accounts of procedures. Inspectors identified strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ well-equipped modern laboratories
- ◆ wide range of work-based learning opportunities
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor assessment practice in furniture
- ◆ no provision of materials for some trainees

22. Training programmes follow set patterns, but good flexibility allows trainees to proceed at their own pace throughout the entire programme and to benefit from additional time and instruction where needed. A good ratio of tutors to trainees

allows for ample one-to-one instruction. There is a good working relationship between trainees and staff, with clear mutual respect. College tutors are well qualified. Teaching is of a high standard with sound instruction, clear explanations and practical demonstrations. Monitoring of trainees' progress is clear, although the monitoring systems can record completion only of full units of NVQs. Trainees demonstrate high levels of skills and knowledge and both they and their employers value the off-the-job training. Attendance is good and the college maintains good records of attendance and timekeeping.

23. The college laboratories are newly built and are light, airy, quiet and well equipped. Work placements offer wide-ranging training opportunities, which extend well beyond the range and standards required to achieve level 3 NVQs. Supervisors in the work placements have appropriate vocational experience and are well qualified and experienced in their trade and professional areas. Retention rates are high, with over 80 per cent of trainees remaining on their programmes. At the time of inspection it was difficult to obtain detailed or accurate data concerning retention and achievement within the different training programmes in this occupational area.

24. Assessments for laboratory occupations take place in the workplace, but none are carried out in the workplace for furniture, although witness statements about trainees' performance are routinely used for portfolio-building. All furniture assessments are simulations. Assessment is not always carried out in consultation with the trainees and trainees are sometimes unaware that they are being assessed. The assessment procedures in laboratory operations are clear, sound, and represent best practice, but those in furniture are less clear, less thorough and are difficult to understand. Most trainees in furniture have a poor understanding of the assessment process. Best practice in assessment is not shared between all the off-the-job training staff.

25. The college's policy is for trainees to provide their own materials for furniture. Some employers provide their trainees with suitable materials, but others provide sub-standard materials, or none at all. Some trainees have to purchase materials themselves in order to carry out their exercises, sometimes resulting in poor-quality materials being used. Some of the tools provided for furniture trainees are blunt, saws in particular, and trainees experience difficulty in cutting and so have lowered expectations of being able to produce good-quality work.

26. Most training plans have no short-term targets and lack information against which to measure progress, although some training staff set short-term targets for individual trainees to achieve during their on-the-job training. Intermediate target-setting with milestones is not undertaken. Whilst there is some liaison between off-the-job trainers and the work placements there is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and some employers are unaware of how their trainees are progressing at college. The work experience is not sufficiently controlled, being largely determined by the employer. The training in the workplace is not formally pre-planned, although some work-placement providers do offer a systematic range of activities for the trainees.

Business administration

Grade 3

27. York College Training Services offers NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 in accounting, levels 1, 2 and 3 in administration, and levels 2 and 3 in information technology. There are 32 trainees working towards qualifications in this occupational area. Fifteen are modern apprentices, 15 national trainees, and two are on other youth training programmes. Of the modern apprentices, 10 are registered for programmes in accounting, and five in administration. There are six national trainees in accounting, eight in administration and one in information technology. The two youth trainees are working towards NVQs in administration. Three staff in the business, management and professional studies curriculum area provide the off-the-job training and assessment for the trainees in accounting. Four staff from the information technology and office skills curriculum area provide the training and assessment for the trainees in administration and information technology. All trainees attend weekly off-the-job training sessions on a day-release basis. A work-experience assessor carries out progress review visits for all trainees every 10 weeks and assists with assessment of administration trainees. Two members of staff act as internal verifiers. Trainees are employed in 30 different organisations in the private and voluntary sectors in manufacturing, leisure, media, professional services, retailing and travel. The college recruits some trainees and then arranges their employment. Other trainees are already in employment and are sent to the college as part of their employers' staff development arrangements.

28. In 1997-98 25 per cent of accountancy trainees completed their awards. This proportion rose to 83 per cent in 1998-99, but then fell to 33 per cent in 1999-2000. In 1997-98, 88 per cent of administration trainees completed their awards. In 1998-99 this proportion rose to 100 per cent. There was no achievement in 1999-2000 but all the trainees recruited in that academic year are still in training. The self-assessment report failed to identify some of the weaknesses concerned with the lack of involvement by employers in the programmes. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and well-resourced off-the-job training
- ◆ relevant additional qualifications gained by administration trainees
- ◆ supportive and enthusiastic employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in NVQ and modern apprenticeship
- ◆ missing opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ incomplete integration of key skills

29. Off-the-job training in accounting and administration is good. In some cases training is given to groups of trainees working towards the same qualification, in others to mixed groups of trainees and college students. Lecturers prepare detailed schemes of work and lesson plans, which are supported by good teaching materials and tasks for trainees to carry out. The use of a variety of effective techniques to present material and keep the interest and concentration of their trainees. Trainees work diligently at their own pace on the tasks which they are set and are supported by one-to-one coaching to identify and rectify any problems. Trainees appreciate the good quality of the off-the-job training and the support they receive from the curriculum staff and the work experience assessor.

30. The college's teaching and learning resources are good. The curriculum staff who give off-the-job training are well qualified and have good teaching and occupational experience. Trainees use industry-standard hardware and software, and classrooms are well furnished. The college has set up a business bureau, which provides business services to staff, students and external customers. This bureau is used by some trainees to give them realistic experience for those parts of the NVQ which are not covered by their workplace. Trainees have access to a good learning-resource centre, which provides a well-stocked library, educational technology facilities and an extensive information technology suite with connections to the Internet.

31. Most administration trainees work towards additional qualifications. Examples include qualifications in audio typing, integrated business technology, and word processing. The schemes of work and lesson plans for the NVQ off-the-job training have been designed to minimise the additional work required by the trainee to meet the requirements of these other awards.

32. The motivation and enthusiasm of the administration trainees is further reinforced by the quality of the off-the-job learning opportunities and the supportive workplace supervisors provided by the sponsoring employers. The trainees' employment is highly relevant to their training programme, and they have access to good work-based resources. These employment conditions provide all trainees with extensive sources of naturally occurring evidence. This is used well by administration trainees but not by accounting trainees. All trainees show high levels of occupational competence and they are very keen to take on additional responsibilities in the workplace when opportunities present themselves. Workplace supervisors encourage this increased responsibility. They are particularly influential in developing the trainees' confidence and interpersonal skills.

33. Despite the employers' enthusiasm and support for trainees, they have a low awareness of their responsibilities within the modern apprenticeship frameworks and little knowledge of the content and requirements of the NVQ. Within recent weeks the college has provided employers with a guide which provides a good background to the modern apprenticeship and NVQ and the employers' role. Previously, the college provided little information and did not systematically reinforce these issues at the trainees' progress review meetings. Employers are not

involved in the training undertaken by trainees for their NVQ. The college does not provide employers with a copy of the trainee's off-the-job training plan or scheme of work. Employers are not asked to provide the college with a copy of their trainees' on-the-job training plans. The employers and the college do not systematically map workplace activities against the trainees' overall training requirements. Employers do not systematically structure on-the-job training. On- and off-the-job training is not well planned or co-ordinated.

34. There is insufficient assessment by observation in the workplace. There are no work-based assessors. The college's staff assess administration trainees in the workplace once every eight weeks. They are unable to respond to situations that can provide assessment opportunities at any other time. There is no work-based assessment for accounting trainees, although accounting staff have plans to introduce some work-based assessment in the near future. There is no assessment-planning process which involves employers and takes account of good off- and on-the-job learning opportunities.

35. Although college staff in administration and accounting are planning to teach key skills alongside the NVQs these structures are not yet fully established. Trainees have little knowledge of key skills and do not understand the role of key skills in their training programme. Employers have little awareness of key skills. Most trainees and their employers regard key skills as an imposition and irrelevant to their workplace. The relationships between key skills and NVQ units are not clear to trainees and they are not collecting evidence to satisfy both the NVQ and key skills requirements. None of the curriculum staff have or are working towards the key skills practitioners' award. Very few modern apprentices or national trainees have completed their awards.

Hospitality

Grade 3

36. There are 40 trainees working towards qualifications in this area. Twelve are modern apprentices, 14 are national trainees and 14 are on other youth training programmes. Twelve national trainees are aiming for level 2 NVQs in food preparation and cooking and two trainees are on level 2 NVQ food and drink service programmes. All the trainees on other youth programmes are aiming for food preparation and cooking qualifications at levels 1, 2 or 3. During their programme, the modern apprentices and national trainees are expected to achieve basic food hygiene and basic health and safety qualifications in line with their framework requirements. These qualifications are available to the other trainees and are taught by the college on a regular basis. All trainees also achieve a certificate in customer care. College staff provide trainees with an induction at the beginning of their programme, which for most trainees is at the start of the college's academic year. Trainees who start after this date are given a shortened version of the full induction. There is regular updating of induction information during the programme. Trainees receive separate induction from their employers when they start work.

37. Most trainees work in hotels of various sizes, which are either run by national chains or are independently owned. Other trainees are in restaurants, bistros, public houses and nursing-home catering operations. Trainees attend college one day each week for off-the-job training. Training is also delivered in the workplace by the trainee's supervisor. All assessment occurs in the college's restaurant and kitchen, which is recognised by the awarding body as a realistic working environment. The college's staff, who undertake assessment and verification work, are occupationally qualified and hold the relevant assessor and verifier awards.

38. At the time of the inspection it was difficult to obtain detailed or accurate data concerning retention and achievement within the different training programmes in hospitality. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, although some were no more than normal practice. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ responsive and flexible training programme
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good occupational skills development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of planning of on-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ slow progress towards achievement of key skills

39. The college has developed a programme which is sensitive to the needs and capabilities of the trainees. Care is taken to place trainees on the right level of programme. Good use is made of the optional units within a target qualification to reflect the experience gained in the workplace. Off-the-job training is structured flexibly. Trainees alter the date if they cannot attend college on their usual day. The groups are made up of a combination of level 1, 2 and 3 trainees and the mix of abilities within the group is well managed by tutors. Level 3 trainees are encouraged to assist and supervise level 1 and 2 trainees. This mix also brings a greater maturity to the off-the-job training sessions. Trainees are able to share experiences and learn from each other. There are good opportunities for one-to-one coaching during the off-the-job training days. There is a good ratio of tutors to trainees. Additional qualifications are made available to trainees. Some trainees complete first aid courses, some attend intermediate level food hygiene qualifications and others progress to level 4 NVQs as an addition to their modern apprentice framework, once they have achieved level 3.

40. Trainees are well matched to their placements. They are placed to ensure that their career aspirations and individual needs are met. While most of the trainees are already employed when they join the programme, there are occasions when a change of placement becomes necessary. This may occur because of a change in the trainee's personal circumstances or because their current place of work is no longer able to offer them the experience they need to aid their continued development. The college has good links with a wide variety of employers throughout the local area. One of the ways it uses these links is to ensure that trainees are in the most appropriate work environment. Some trainees join the programme from school and good assistance is given to these young people regarding suitable placements. All trainees are employed and the college emphasises this with employers when they are arranging placements. There is a part-time placement officer who liaises with work placement providers and teaching staff each day as well as carrying out the progress reviews in the workplace. The placements offer varied menus and in most cases there is a good range of equipment, all of which assists the trainees' development. Supervisors are experienced industry professionals and take an active interest in the development of the trainees.

41. Trainees develop good practical skills during off-the-job training sessions, which are then reinforced in appropriate work placements. The off-the-job training is given in the college's restaurant kitchen. The college continues to update the equipment in this kitchen. Work-based trainees are given the opportunity to participate in the full range of activities undertaken by the college, which include attending York Food Festival when the college provides catering in the form of a street café, as well as carrying out catering demonstrations. Some trainees have also won catering awards in England and mainland Europe. There is a positive approach to the development of the trainees by college staff and their workplace supervisors and the level of support available from both parties is acknowledged and valued by the trainees.

42. Training in the workplace is not planned in sufficient detail. Some of the trainees are working for companies which have produced detailed training manuals and procedures, but this is not the case for all trainees. Many trainees do not have written plans showing the training they will undertake in the workplace. In these cases training is coincidental with working demands. A scheme of work shows the areas to be covered on each of the off-the-job training days and a rota outlines which section of the kitchen trainees will attend on a given day. Employers do not have a copy of this and generally rely on the trainees to tell them what has been covered at college. This makes it difficult for employers to do any preparatory work with trainees. There is little integration of on- and off-the-job training. The individual training plans in the trainees' files are poor. They only show a target date for the completion of a full qualification. There are no targets set for achievement of the individual units at the outset of the programme. New individual training plans are drawn up at the start of each academic year. However, they do not always show achievements from the previous period. Many trainees are unclear exactly how their programme will develop.

POOR PRACTICE

During the off-the-job training session a number of trainees were seen eating the food they had produced while still in the food production area. In order to test if an item of food was fully cooked another trainee used fingers to sample the food. Teaching staff were slow to respond to this behaviour, which is clearly in contravention of good food hygiene practice.

43. Most assessment takes place in the college during the off-the-job sessions. Assessment planning is carried out with the trainees when they first arrive at college for an off-the-job session. Trainees are allocated tasks and then link this to potential evidence for their NVQ units. Observation is undertaken by college staff, who give feedback at the end of the session. The feedback is recorded on the assessment-planning document. The college's staff occasionally undertake observation at a trainee's workplace, but many opportunities for relevant workplace assessment are missed. Insufficient use is made of workplace supervisors who hold relevant assessor awards. Little emphasis has been placed on developing more workplace supervisors as assessors. The use of witness testimony is underdeveloped. Trainees complete evidence diary sheets but these are little more than a record of what has been completed in the workplace and are of limited value in the assessment process. This approach to assessment can delay trainee progress.

44. Many trainees have yet to show any significant progress towards key skills achievement. Key skills requirements are discussed during induction and an introduction to key skills is included in the early part of the training programme. However, many trainees consider this to be an additional aspect of their programme and further work is needed to integrate key skills with occupational achievement. The college has produced generic material for some of the key skills units and the catering staff are developing additional support for trainees, but this work is not yet complete and is not having an impact on achievement in this area.

Hair & beauty**Grade 2**

45. York College Training Services has 57 young people working towards NVQs in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. There are 54 national trainees, two modern apprentices and one youth trainee. All trainees are in permanent employment and spend four days each week working in commercial salons and one day in the college's training salon, where they receive a structured programme of training. Most assessment takes place within the college's training salon, but some assessment is available in the workplace through an appointment system. During 1999-2000, 70 per cent of all level 2 candidates who completed their training programme achieved their qualification. The only level 3 trainee also completed her programme and achieved her award. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-resourced training salon
- ◆ well-integrated key skills
- ◆ relevant additional courses available to trainees
- ◆ clear system for monitoring trainees' progress in the college's salon

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient opportunities for work-based assessment

46. The hairdressing salon in the college is run on a commercial basis, and is well equipped. It provides a realistic training environment where trainees are able to develop their skills for commercial practice. There is a good range of current commercial hairdressing products, and up-to-date equipment for trainees to use. The college invites manufacturers of hairdressing products to demonstrate to trainees any new ranges that are being launched. The demonstrations are run by the professional technicians, who advise trainees on the effects that can be achieved and new techniques to complement the product and achieve fashionable results. Trainees are given the opportunity to use the products on models. Practical training sessions are well structured and planned. All trainees are entered for local hairdressing competitions. Those who are successful are entered for regional and national competitions. Key skills are integrated well into the hairdressing NVQ. They are assessed as part of the planned NVQ assessments. Key skills are promoted to the trainees as an important and relevant part of their training programme. The trainees are able to see the relevance and importance of key skills through their occupational focus. Trainees work toward five key skills in line with framework requirements.

47. The college offers additional courses to all trainees. These include basic barbering, cosmetic makeup certificate, waxing certificate, manicure certificate, introduction to aromatherapy, and Indian head massage. A barbering specialist teaches the barbering course. This course give trainees the opportunity to apply a more unconventional cutting style, which helps train the eye to check weight and balance and improves dexterity. The skills that trainees learn in the additional courses complement the technical skills developed on their hairdressing programme. Trainees develop a range of skills, which increase their employment opportunities in a very competitive industry.

48. There is a clear system for monitoring trainees' practical activities within the college's training sessions. The system gives an overview of tasks carried out during their time in the college's salon. It clearly identifies all tasks completed each week, including duty on reception. Tasks are logged and dated against a trainee's name. Tutors can see at a glance which trainee is doing more than one task or is falling behind. This system enables tutors to ensure that models are allocated fairly and trainees requiring a particular activity for assessment are allowed to work on an appropriate model.

49. Most assessment takes place within the college's training salon. Assessors also visit the work placement during specified times. However, there are very few work-based assessors. Many trainees cannot be assessed when opportunities arise naturally in the workplace, because the opportunities do not coincide with a visit by the college's assessor. Trainees have to wait until they attend college in the hope that an appropriate model will be available, or arrange for the college's

assessor to visit at an arranged time and date in the hope of finding an appropriate client in the workplace. Trainees are unable to progress at their own pace in the workplace. Trainees who are capable of moving quickly through the qualification are being held back. This is particularly evident when trainees do not attend college on a regular weekly basis. Employers are not informed about the detailed structure of the training programme provided by the college on a weekly basis. Few links are made between training carried out in the workplace by the employers and the structured training sessions in the college's training salon.

50. All level 2 trainees were required to complete a level 1 qualification, which took approximately six months, prior to embarking on the level 2 award. The college has now dropped this requirement, but it has significantly delayed the progress of many of the college's current national trainees. In some cases, trainees' evidence has not been reviewed and signed off by the assessors as units have been completed. The college is aware of these issues and over the past six months has taken steps to address them.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

51. York College has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which covers those trainees recruited through York College Training Services. Responsibility for regularly reviewing and monitoring this policy lies with the college's equal opportunities committee. There is a charter, which indicates what trainees can expect from the college and what the college will expect from trainees across a range of areas including equal opportunities. Commitments made in the charter are systematically monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. Notes from the group which monitors the charter are reported to the governors' quality assurance committee. The college operates an open recruitment policy and in all college documents it is made clear that no forms of discrimination are tolerated. Inspectors agreed with the grade awarded for equal opportunities by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policies
- ◆ regular monitoring and evaluation of policies and procedures
- ◆ influencing of change by equal opportunities action plans

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities with employers
- ◆ insufficient awareness of equality of opportunity among trainees

GOOD PRACTICE

An engineering company has removed all offensive calendars from the workplace. They have also contacted the manufacturer and requested that no more be sent to them.

52. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, reinforced by a series of procedures to ensure that the policy is consistently applied across all areas of the college. All are clearly linked to the college's strategic plans, its mission statement and charter. The charter is detailed in the trainees' guide to the college and a diary, which are given to all trainees at the beginning of their training programmes. The charter explains what trainees can expect from the college, in a range of key areas including equality of opportunity. The charter also stresses trainees' responsibility in terms of behaviour and commitment to learning. There is a formal complaints procedure, which indicates stage by stage what a trainee should do if things go wrong, and they feel they need to make a formal complaint. All complaints are recorded with a guarantee of action within three working days. Actions have been promptly taken to address any complaints made to date. The college has an inclusive learning policy, which extends across all programme areas. The policy aims to ensure that training opportunities are available to meet the learning needs of all trainees.

53. The equal opportunities policies are monitored and evaluated by an equal opportunities committee, which is chaired by a deputy principal, with representatives from the human resources department, students and trainees' body, teaching staff, business support staff and college managers. The committee produces an annual implementation plan for the equal opportunities policy. A representative from the committee is also a key member of the college's training and development committee, with responsibility for ensuring that all equal opportunities issues related to training and development for staff and trainees are identified and dealt with. The committee undergoes a self-assessment process. The process identifies key strengths and weaknesses concerning equal opportunities within the college and any changes which need to be made to improve equality of opportunity. Findings are recorded on an action plan. Progress made and issues arising from the plan are reported to the college governors. The action plan influences changes, from fairly small issues such as adjusting paving stones and improving access for wheelchair users, to major changes such as alterations to recruitment procedures and staff training. In response to needs identified in the action plan, a video has recently been purchased which shows different scenarios of bullying and harassment. This video has been used throughout the college, to raise trainees' awareness of equal opportunities. The video also forms part of the induction. The video is accompanied by a questionnaire, which helps to check trainees understanding of the issues raised. A need for staff training in equal opportunities has also been identified through the action plan. Training has recently started, focusing on trainees' rights and responsibilities.

54. There is no formal monitoring of equal opportunities with employers in the workplace. College staff have not recognised that they have a responsibility to check employers' policies, or to assist them in developing policies where none currently exist. They do not see it as their responsibility to ensure that employers are made aware of their moral and legal duty in relation to the equality of opportunity afforded to trainees. The college does not inform employers of any changes to legislation which may have an impact on their trainees. There is no monitoring in the workplace to ensure that employers keep policies up to date.

Where concerns are raised with the college by trainees, however, action is taken swiftly.

55. Trainees have a very limited understanding of equality of opportunity. They also lack knowledge and understanding of their legal rights within the workplace. They are unaware of the legislation protecting young people at work. Trainees who are experiencing discrimination within the workplace do not realise that they can register a complaint about matters not directly connected with training. Trainees are aware of the college's grievance and disciplinary procedures, but many are unsure of the NVQ appeals procedure.

Trainee support

Grade 2

56. All work-based trainees are given full access to a comprehensive range of support services. These include learning support, careers guidance, personal counselling and specialist advice. All trainees complete a basic skills test to assess their need for any additional support. The student services and learning support teams jointly manage additional support for trainees. An initial health and safety inspection is carried out on all employers' premises. This initial vetting is supplemented by frequent monitoring visits. All trainees receive an induction to the college and their relevant vocational area. Reviews of trainees' progress in the workplace are frequently carried out. Work-placement-monitoring staff, the trainee and workplace supervisors are part of the process. Inspectors identified additional significant strengths to those outlined in the self-assessment report and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned advice and guidance for trainees
- ◆ good links with a wide variety of outside agencies
- ◆ high level of additional learning support

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of clear target-setting at reviews
- ◆ some poorly completed individual training plans

57. The student support team works closely with a large number of local schools to provide impartial advice and guidance for prospective trainees. Presentations are given to parents and students, with work-based training offered as an option alongside full-time college courses. The college runs taster days and NVQ options evenings and produces NVQ options leaflets, which are issued to schools and careers services. Positive case studies of trainees following work-based training programmes are also published in the local press. There is a wide range of

publications that give advice and information on the support services provided by the college. This guidance is also included in student diaries and handbooks. These handbooks are available in large print and Braille, to assist trainees who are visually impaired. The student support team also acts as an advocate for any trainee who may wish to change programme. The team will provide information and arrange changes to funding to assist the trainee with this process.

GOOD PRACTICE

Education care officers work discreetly with vocational staff to provide learning support. They take part in practical and theoretical sessions, working with a group of trainees, without identifying individuals who require additional support. This allows trainees to receive assistance without embarrassment or stigma.

58. The college has established strong links with a wide variety of external support agencies. These include social services, the probation service, housing advisory service, and drug and alcohol awareness groups. Where staff within the college are unable to offer support to trainees, they use a comprehensive network of referral agencies. Support offered is often of a highly practical nature.

59. Where needs are identified, there is a high standard of additional support for trainees. This support has led to improvements in retention and achievement across all curriculum areas. Strategies to offer support are devised in response to individual needs. For example, a trainee who lacks the confidence to enter the workplace is able to attend the college for most of the week and spend a short time with an employer. The learning support team and employer work closely together to help the trainee to build confidence, return to full-time work and complete the target qualification. Another trainee, who was disaffected at school and felt unable to attend college, is able to receive supported, full-time training in the workplace. The learning support team is gradually introducing the trainee to off-the-job training to help break down his fear of the college environment. Support for trainees is tactfully delivered in a highly constructive manner. Learning support staff work in partnership with the vocational teams to identify suitable learning strategies to meet the individual needs of trainees. In addition, many vocational staff are qualified basic skills trainers, which allows them to continue to provide support throughout a trainee's programme.

60. There are clear, comprehensive guidelines for trainees' induction. Vocational staff are trained in suitable techniques for giving induction and are provided with checklists that describe the recommended content of induction. The induction is reinforced after a four-week interval to aid trainees' understanding. Trainees' progress reviews in the workplace take place every 10 weeks. In most areas they do not effectively set short-term targets for achievement. Future objectives are not expressed in terms of achievement of an element or unit of an NVQ and do not reflect activities which occur naturally in the trainees' on-the-job training programmes. In some areas, such as hospitality, there is very little action-planning at all. The personal effectiveness of trainees is not systematically assessed. Trainees and their workplace supervisors are asked to assess areas such as attendance, attitude to work and initiative against a numerical scale. There are no clear grading criteria for this assessment and most trainees are unable to explain the self-assessment decisions they have made. An exception is hairdressing, where reviews accurately record work activities and set goals for attainment.

61. Initial assessment consists of both a basic skills and key skills diagnostic test. The college has a procedure for vocational aptitude testing, but as most trainees

joining the college are already employees this is not systematically applied. The individual training plans are not used as working documents. All contain similar, generic targets and are not regularly brought up to date. Achievements are often not added and amendments to the training programme are not always recorded.

Management of training

Grade 4

62. Overall management of the contract for work-based training rests within the college's business development unit. Currently, one of the college's deputy principals is responsible for monitoring the contractual and financial compliance with the contract. The assistant principal with responsibility for work-based learning from the curriculum directorate team oversees the operation of the contract within each curriculum area. Targets for the achievement of the contract are set between the assistant principal and curriculum managers. These targets are reviewed on a monthly basis. Programmes are managed by curriculum managers through their teams of tutors and work-experience assessors. The industry liaison manager, training programmes' co-ordinator and the assistant principal meet on a monthly basis with the TEC's programmes manager to review overall performance against the contract.

63. A major restructuring exercise is being undertaken to improve the college's management of work-based training from January 2001. Recent staff recruitment and changes in line management aim to provide a more focused and effective control of training. Job descriptions have been amended to reflect these changes. The college operates an appraisal system to identify staff training and development needs. The college has a computerised database for collating management information. The college was successfully accredited as an Investor in People in 2000. The college's self-assessment report outlined most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, the impact of these weaknesses on the trainees has been underestimated. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses during the inspection and gave a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ sound mechanisms for internal and external communication
- ◆ well-structured staff development programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of working environments
- ◆ lack of readily available data upon which to base management decisions

POOR PRACTICE

During the inspection at a local garage a trainee was seen to insert his fingers into a broken control panel to initiate the vehicle lift hoist. This had become standard practice in the garage originating from when the control panel was broken. The electrical danger of the practice was brought immediately to the attention of garage staff.

64. The college holds a range of meetings to ensure that staff are well informed about strategic and operational developments across the organisation. Issues directly relating to contract performance and aspects of training and assessment are discussed. Meetings are well planned and have structured agendas. Minutes of meetings are recorded and circulated, with required actions clearly identified. Communications between employers, work-placement officers and the college's tutors are sound. Employers are supportive of work-based training and provide good training opportunities. Several workplace supervisors have previously undertaken apprenticeship training with the college and have long-standing relationships with staff. Issues which might affect a trainee's programme are discussed promptly. The college distributes a quarterly newsletter to all employers. This aims to keep employers abreast of developments within training. The newsletters also contain information on support available for small businesses. For example, publications relating to codes of practice within employment law and equal opportunities are detailed. The college has good links with the TEC, responding to requests to provide training opportunities when other training providers have closed. There are strong strategic links with local learning partnerships.

POOR PRACTICE

A trainee on work placement with a furniture manufacturer was unaware of the dangers of using compressed air to clean wood dust from clothing. The implications of this practice are extremely dangerous and possibly life threatening. In addition, the trainee was working with contaminating wood-based materials such as medium density fibreboard (MDF) and hardwood. The trainee was not wearing overalls, which would prevent the carriage of this material from the workplace. The use of other items of personal protective equipment, such as safety shoes, was not enforced.

65. The college carries out formal staff appraisals annually. During the appraisals, staff's training and development needs are identified. Records of staff training and development are held centrally by the college's training and development advisor. Curriculum managers also hold copies. Before training and development takes place, the line-manager has to ensure that it meets an individual's needs as well as being linked to the organisational and departmental requirements. An evaluation of the training is conducted to determine whether it met with personal, team and corporate objectives. A further evaluation is carried out three months later to assess the long-term effect of the training.

66. On- and off-the-job training are seen as separate aspects and opportunities to link the two are missed. Employers have recently been issued with a handbook that explains their role in the training process. Little has been done to check that they understand it. Employers are not aware of the NVQ requirements. Most are unaware of what is covered when the trainee attends off-the-job training. On-the-job training is not sufficiently planned to enable the trainee to apply in the workplace the knowledge and skills they have developed through off-the-job training. Opportunities are missed to reinforce the learning experience and carry out timely assessment. The lack of co-ordination and effective planning of on- and off-the-job training is apparent in all occupational areas.

67. The college's health and safety officer carries out all initial health and safety visits. Subsequent health and safety checks are carried out by placement officers and work-based assessors during regular routine visits. Health and safety monitoring visits to the workplace are frequent and exceed the requirements of the TEC code of practice. However, the quality and effectiveness of these reviews is inconsistent. Most of the placement officers carrying out the review are occupationally qualified but do not hold a qualification in the monitoring of health and safety in work placements and are unsure of current requirements. The

questionnaire used to review workplace safety does not adequately record trainees' awareness and understanding of health and safety matters, nor does it prompt the reviewer to discuss health and safety issues in any detail. The initial workplace-vetting document is not used during the monitoring visit to assist the reviewer in identifying any changes to the environment or workplace activities that could be potentially dangerous to the trainee. During the inspection, inspectors observed instances of poor health and safety practices in the workplace and college workshops in the areas of engineering, manufacturing and construction.

68. The college has recently upgraded the computerised systems it uses for gathering management information relating to government-funded training. This system has been installed as part of contractual requirements from the TEC. The college's staff are unable to collate reliable information describing trainees' performance when using this system. They are not able to analyse data concerning trainees' recruitment, progress, achievement or destinations. In most occupational areas college staff are unable to isolate information regarding the performance of TEC-funded trainees from data describing the performance of other college students. At the time of the inspection there was no central system to monitor trainees' progress through their NVQs or programme framework.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

69. York College has a written quality assurance system which covers the activity of York College Training Services. The quality assurance manual contains reference to the college's policy for quality, the guidelines for self-assessment and monitoring of teaching practices. The college's management structure includes an executive committee for dealing with policy development and systems development. There are a number of additional sub-committees concerned with curriculum and service quality. Defined responsibilities for each of the quality assurance review groups are contained within the quality assurance manual. There is a dedicated quality standards manager post within the staffing structure. Staff have defined responsibilities for quality assurance within their job descriptions.

70. York College meets the external quality assurance requirements of its awarding bodies and the local TEC. There are a number of trained internal verifiers within the full- and part-time staff who contribute to the college's internal quality assurance system for NVQs. Each curriculum area manages its own internal verification process. This process includes sampling of portfolios and observation of assessment in the workplace. The college's self-assessment report was not sufficiently self-critical. Many strengths identified in the report were no more than normal practice. Action plans have been developed to tackle issues raised in the self-assessment. They address strategic and specific curriculum development and improvement needs. In several areas progress had been made against these plans by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college for this area in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of quality improvement activity
- ◆ systematic gathering and use of trainees' feedback
- ◆ comprehensive action-planning resulting from self-assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ incomplete application of quality assurance system to work-based activities
- ◆ insufficient use of data to initiate improvement

71. There is a clear focus upon continuous improvement that goes across all areas in the college. Within the college's quality management structure there are a number of review groups. Senior and curriculum managers carry out strategic management reviews. These groups work to formal agendas and review the improvement of staff and employers' handbooks and key skills development. They provide a forum for the review of external verifiers' reports and give senior staff the chance to monitor progress made against targets set in college policy documents. Occupational working groups meet each month and focus upon developments within each sector. There are further meetings to review quality assurance, where specific weaknesses or strengths identified during the monthly meetings are discussed at length. All full- and part-time work-based assessors attend these meetings. Representatives from each occupational area subsequently meet to share the observations and ideas generated. Ideas where college-wide improvement may result are then discussed. Action plans are generated at each level of review and are frequently monitored.

72. Internal verification of assessment practice is satisfactorily managed and is carried out by occupationally competent and qualified staff. Sampling plans are available and are used to manage the programme of internal verification. Perceived weaknesses are targeted for additional internal verification, for example within the plumbing training. Assessors receive feedback and support after internal verification has been completed. There is monitoring of teaching practice within the college. A range of practical and theory training sessions are included in the planned observations, which are carried out by staff who have been formally trained in the required techniques. There is little evidence yet of improved standards in training as a result of the observation process. Inspectors observed a considerable variation in the standard of training and assessment during the inspection.

73. There are established mechanisms for gathering feedback from trainees. Information gathered from trainees is carefully analysed and used to influence developments within the college. Trainees are issued with questionnaires. The 'first impression' questionnaires ask for feedback on initial recruitment, induction and college resources. The 'on programme' questionnaires gather feedback on lesson structure, programming and teaching activities. The support given by work-based assessors is also reviewed. 'End of programme' questionnaires consider

overall learning experience, including tutorial support, college facilities and access to learning resources.

74. Comprehensive action plans have been developed following self-assessment. All training staff have contributed to the review of training within their occupational area. Guidelines on the methods for effective self-assessment are issued to all staff. Targets and defined responsibilities are recorded on the action plans. In some instances, actions and targets have been achieved ahead of schedule. For example, slow achievement for trainees on level 2 NVQ programmes in construction was identified. Training and assessment within the college in the use of gas were found to be inadequate. The college subcontracted the training to an outside training provider and improvements were made ahead of the planned dates.

75. Quality assurance procedures are issued to all staff. These procedures relate to both policy objectives and also to the training processes, covering areas such as induction, recruitment, assessment practice and internal verification. Copies of the procedures are contained within staff handbooks, but staff understanding of these procedures has not been checked. There are variations in how the guidelines are applied. For example, during inspection there were significant variations in the quality of review and feedback given to trainees both following assessment and as part of their periodic review of progress. The quality assurance system does not fully extend to work-based training activities. Work-based assessors do not understand the documented systems and in several instances were not aware of the existence of guidelines they were to follow.

76. There is insufficient use of data to initiate improvement. There are particular difficulties in obtaining and interpreting achievement and retention data within occupational areas. Performance statistics which are specific to TEC-funded trainees are not reviewed or used to identify areas in need of improvement. Employers' feedback is sought on an annual basis. However, little analysis of the information received has occurred. This has limited the opportunities for identifying key weaknesses and developing action plans, linked to meeting employers' needs. It also contrasts with the analysis and use made of feedback from trainees. Quality assurance teams do not routinely use statistical data to identify key areas of concern when planning initiatives for improvement. When external auditors make observations the tendency is for the college to take corrective, rather than preventative, action.