



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1999

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY 2001

# Plymouth Training for Commerce and Industry

## SUMMARY

Plymouth Training for Commerce and Industry provides satisfactory training in business administration, hospitality and hair and beauty. At the time of the first inspection, training in retailing and customer service was poor, some trainees were making no progress. Training on the care programme was not well co-ordinated or monitored. The company had an equal opportunities philosophy but did not actively promote equal opportunities. Trainee support was not always structured or systematic. Management of training was less than satisfactory, there was no formal contract with the main subcontractor, and quality assurance systems were poor. At reinspection 11 months after the original report was published, some improvements had been made in the occupational areas of retailing and customer service and care. However, training was unsatisfactory with customer service trainees making slow progress and inadequate planning and assessment in the workplace for care trainees. Since the first inspection considerable efforts have been made to increase the promotion and understanding of equal opportunities among staff, trainees and employers, and this aspect is now satisfactory. Trainee support measures are also now satisfactory with particular attention paid to initial assessment and a range of effective support systems. Improvements in management of training have been made through effective service agreements with departments of the college and good internal communications, but there are still insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. Some of the weaknesses in quality assurance have improved but the current arrangements are judged to be unsatisfactory.

**As a result of the reinspection of Plymouth Training for Commerce and Industry, the original published report text for retailing and customer service, in health, care and public services, equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.**

## GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	5
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	3
Health, care & public services	5

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Retailing & customer service	4
Health, care & public services	4

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

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

## KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good support for trainees from assessors
- ◆ good quality off-the-job training at college
- ◆ good opportunities for additional qualifications
- ◆ good awareness raising on equal opportunities for trainees and staff
- ◆ effective internal communication

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak assessment practices
- ◆ failure to integrate key skills in several occupational areas
- ◆ poor progress by some trainees
- ◆ poor levels of achievement on some programmes
- ◆ ineffective strategies to recruit under-represented groups
- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ slow implementation of action plans

## INTRODUCTION

1. Plymouth Training for Commerce and Industry (PTCI) was formed in 1986 and at the time of the first inspection was jointly owned by Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Plymouth College of Further Education (PCFE). In February 2000, the college bought out the Chamber of Commerce's share and assumed sole control of PTCI. In August 2000 PTCI moved its premises and currently shares accommodation in the college with an academic department of PCFE. The company is a member of Plymouth training consortium. PTCI offers a wide range of training services to the public and private sectors. The company runs short courses on a variety of topics to suit individual needs. There are open courses with discounts for chamber members. The company contracts with PROSPER, the training and enterprise council (TEC) for Devon and Cornwall, for work-based training for young people, national traineeships and modern apprenticeships. At the time of the first inspection, PTCI also offered the full-time education and training option to New Deal clients under PROSPER's contract with the Employment Service. On the reinspection, PTCI offered the subsidised employment option to New Deal clients.

2. In January 1999, the unitary authority of Plymouth had one of the highest levels of unemployment in the Southwest, 6 per cent, compared with the regional average of 3.7 per cent. In January 2001, the regional average unemployment rate was 2.5 per cent compared with 3.4 per cent in Plymouth unitary authority and 3.5 per cent nationally. In terms of ethnic background, the population of the Southwest is predominately white. In Plymouth, at the time of the 1991 census, the number of people from minority ethnic groups was 0.9 per cent. In 1998, careers destination records showed that 71.9 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds continued in further education after their general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 44 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In 2000, the equivalent figures were 47.5 per cent in Plymouth and 49.2 per cent nationally.

3. PTCI offers training towards national vocational qualifications (NVQ) at levels 1 to 3 in a wide variety of occupational areas. At the first inspection there were a total of 191 trainees: six in agriculture; two in construction; four in engineering; 11 in business administration; 52 in retailing and customer service; 50 in hospitality; 50 in hair and beauty; and 16 in health, care and public services. Thirty-two of the trainees were modern apprentices, 112 national trainees and 47 were on work-based training for young people. The occupational areas of agriculture, construction and engineering were not inspected, as the number of trainees was not significant. Trainees work in local companies and a large national company.

At the reinspection, the number of trainees and New Deal clients was as shown in the following table:

Trainee numbers at reinspection	Work-based training for young people			New Deal
	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other	Employment option
Agriculture		6	1	
Construction	1	5		2
Engineering	16	14	2	
Business administration		3		2
Retailing & customer service	13	15	3	1
Hospitality	9	18		1
Hair & beauty	7	58		
Health, care & public services		4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The company's second self-assessment report was prepared in time for the first inspection. Staff who had been with the company more than six months helped to prepare the report. Some employers and trainees completed questionnaires, which were used for the report. The board of directors also contributed to the report. Draft reports were circulated and discussed by staff prior to finalising the grades and report in June 1999. The report adhered to the guidelines in *Raising the Standard*. Inspectors found that many of the strengths were no more than normal practice or were not attributable to PTCI. They awarded the same grades for the occupational areas of business administration and hospitality as were given in the report. They awarded lower grades for the occupational areas of retailing and customer service, hair and beauty, and health, care and public services. Inspectors also awarded lower grades than those which were given by the company for equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance.

6. PTCI produced a further self-assessment report in November 2000, three months before the reinspection. PTCI staff, trainees, employers and subcontractors were involved, primarily through completion of questionnaires. Once the first draft of the report was prepared it was circulated to selected staff for comments. The report has introductory paragraphs that describe the range of training provided and identifies the work undertaken by subcontractors. Data are provided on the local environment and economy. The report covered eight occupational areas in addition to the four generic areas. At the start of the reinspection, PTCI produced a report consisting of 'position statements' relating to the work that had been done on all of the strengths and weaknesses identified at the first inspection.

7. On the first inspection, a team of seven inspectors spent a total of 21 days at PTCI during September 1999. The inspection covered the youth training programmes in the occupational areas of business administration, retailing and customer service, hospitality, hair and beauty and health, care and public services. Inspectors visited 29 workplaces, the local college and the company's own training premises. Interviews were conducted with 51 trainees, 25 workplace supervisors/managers and 11 subcontracted assessors/trainers. Twenty-two interviews took place with staff from PTCI. Inspectors observed five assessments and 12 instruction sessions including three induction sessions and nine training sessions. They viewed a wide range of documents that included trainees' files and portfolios, minutes of meetings, staff personnel files, management and quality assurance procedures, achievement and retention data, TEC contracts, and external verification reports from awarding bodies.

8. On the reinspection, a team of four inspectors spent a total 14 days with PTCI in February 2001. The reinspection covered two occupational areas: health, care and public services; retailing and customer service; together with all four generic areas. Inspectors interviewed 24 trainees and three New Deal clients across a range of occupational areas including: health, care and public services; retailing and

customer service; business administration; hospitality; engineering; hair and beauty and agriculture. Inspectors visited 16 work placements and met with 15 workplace managers/supervisors. Twenty-one interviews were conducted with PTCI's staff. Inspectors visited the three subcontractors and interviewed six staff. A total of 32 trainees' files and 26 trainees' portfolios were examined. Other paperwork examined included contracts, service agreements, external and internal verifiers' reports, health and safety monitoring reports, minutes of meetings, initial assessment and induction materials, promotional literature, policies, procedures and audit reports. Inspectors observed one trainee's progress review and awarded a grade 2 for one observed session of induction and initial assessment.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions on the first inspection:

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration			1			1
Retailing & customer service		1	1			2
Hospitality		2	2			4
Hair & beauty	1	2				3
Health, care & public services		1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

### Grade 3

9. There are 11 trainees in business administration. See table below for the number of trainees on each programme. Nine of the trainees are employed, one trainee is in a work placement, and the other is based at PTCI. Off-the-job training is available in the training centre on a weekly basis on either a Wednesday or Thursday. There is one assessor who is based at the centre and carries out training and assessments. A new assessor has been appointed to enable assessments to take place in the workplace. Both assessors are well qualified and either have or are working towards their internal verifier award. The percentage of trainees achieving an NVQ over the last three years has been 41, 66 and 64 per cent. The number of trainees has dropped from 50 starting in 1996-97 to 10 in 1998-99. The inspectors were able to confirm some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They also identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by the inspectors was the same as the one that was proposed in the report.

This table shows the number of trainees in each programme.

	NVQ level 2 information technology	NVQ level 2 administration	NVQ level 3 administration	NVQ level 3 accounting
Modern apprentices			3	
National trainees	1	3		
Other	1	2		1

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ well structured induction into NVQ
- ◆ good integration of key skills
- ◆ good initiatives from trainees in portfolio building

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient objectives for off-the job training sessions
- ◆ insufficient work-based observation and assessment
- ◆ workplace supervisors often unaware of their role

#### POOR PRACTICE

*This is an example of poor planning. The centre assessor was made aware, just before taking a training session, that a trainee who had been on the programme for two months was going to attend for an induction. The induction was thorough and took two hours. The location for induction was the training room where other trainees were trying to work. The induction was interrupted by the telephone on three or four occasions. The other trainees were not receiving attention during this period. If they needed anything they had to interrupt the induction process.*

10. The centre-based assessor introduces trainees well to their NVQ programme. During the induction, trainees are given a range of documents which guide them through the creation of their portfolio. Among these materials are pro-formas which can be used for witness testimonies by the trainees' supervisors. The training room has an excellent supply of additional background resources. All trainees at level 3 can borrow textbooks to help them gain additional knowledge. During induction the trainees are introduced to the idea of cross-referencing evidence between different units and qualifications. Key skills are introduced and an explanation is given as to how training for them will be carried out at the same time as the NVQ. During off-the-job training sessions a number of activities are carried out including training on a one-to-one basis, and using verbal questioning to assess trainees' work and test their understanding. The training centre has appropriate resources to allow trainees to work on any tasks that they do not carry out in their workplace. Trainees are actively supported and encouraged to create their portfolios using evidence that they bring in from their workplaces. Trainees decide how to put together their work and how to index it. Trainees cross-reference their evidence to the key skill standards. Their portfolios are of a high standard and the external verifier has commended them.

11. Targets for completion of the NVQ are set at the beginning of the programme, but there is a lack of short-term targets or goals throughout the process. The average length of time that it takes to achieve an NVQ at level 2 is 13 months. When trainees attend the off-the-job training sessions they are not given any



objectives for that day. The assessor uses a diary to keep notes on which trainees are due to be assessed but there are no formal plans or objectives for most of the trainees. There are currently no work-based observations in most of the trainees' portfolios although an assessor has been recruited to carry out assessments in the workplace. Until recently, all assessments took place during the off-the-job training sessions in the training centre. Trainees collect work-based evidence, including long statements, which outline how they demonstrate competency. Trainees also request statements from supervisors. Two supervisors have recently taken over trainees either from another department or from a supervisor who has left. These supervisors have no clear idea as to what their role is in the NVQ programme.

12. There is no process through which PTCI provides information on the supervisor's role and responsibilities beyond what is outlined in the company agreements. The person directly responsible for the trainee does not always sign these agreements. Some supervisors have lists of units, but are unaware of how the trainee should be collecting evidence or what on-the-job training the trainee should receive. There has been no regular contact between the assessor and the workplace supervisor to discuss which units are being worked on and the type of evidence the trainee needs to provide. All work places are visited every eight to 10 weeks by the programme co-ordinator, who carries out reviews with the trainees and supervisors.

### **Retailing & customer service**

### **Grade 4**

13. PTCI has 31 trainees working towards qualifications in retailing and customer service. Twenty-seven of these trainees work for a large national retailer. There are 15 national trainees, 13 modern apprentices and three trainees on other work-based training for young people. One New Deal client is employed in PTCI's training centre and is working towards a level 2 customer service NVQ. One trainee is working towards a level 1 NVQ in distributive operations at a local retailer in Plymouth. The remaining trainees are all working towards customer service NVQs at level 2 and level 3. The national trainees complete four additional units from the NVQ at level 2 in retail operations and the modern apprentices choose four additional units from the NVQ at level 2 in administration. Most of the trainees are working in stores in Devon and Cornwall. Two self-employed assessors, contracted by PTCI, carry out assessment in the workplace, one assessor taking responsibility for stores in Devon and the other for stores in Cornwall. There is no formal, structured off-the-job training. The employer carries out all on-the-job training. Assessors conduct some coaching and support sessions either in small groups or one-to-one, as required. A contracted self-employed verifier and a member of PTCI's staff carry out the internal verification. All assessors and verifiers are qualified and occupationally experienced. Since 1998, a total of 114 trainees have started the national traineeship. Sixty-four trainees (56 per cent) have completed all sections of the individual training plan. Thirty-two of the national trainees, 28 per cent, left the programme with no qualifications. In 2000, a total of 18 trainees started a modern apprenticeship. There has been no achievement of

level 3 qualifications and five trainees (28 per cent) left the programme at an early stage with no qualifications.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor progress on national traineeships
- ◆ unrealistic deadlines
- ◆ poor induction to programmes
- ◆ lack of planning and integration of key skills training
- ◆ unplanned training and assessment
- ◆ poorly resourced programme

14. The first inspection report identified a high level of involvement by employers. On reinspection, this was not evident, with trainees having to complete their NVQ work in their own time. Key skills are now introduced at the beginning of the programme and some trainees are beginning to understand how they can produce evidence which can be assessed against both their NVQ and key skills requirements. However, trainees who started their programmes more than six months ago are being assessed on their key skills at the end of their programme. Since the first inspection, new assessors have been appointed and staff turnover has been reduced. Access to computers for key skills work has been improved. The recent self-assessment report identified three strengths and three weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and two of the weaknesses. One more strength and several weaknesses were identified by inspectors. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ flexible arrangements for assessors' visits to trainees
- ◆ good on-the-job training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ slow progress of trainees
- ◆ lack of understanding of portfolio development by trainees
- ◆ inadequate induction to the NVQ and key skills process
- ◆ insufficient feedback on unit achievement to trainees and employers

15. The one national employer has offered training leading to NVQs to all members of staff and supervisors over the past 18 months, so many of the work-based supervisors have already achieved NVQ qualifications. Potential trainees are required to have been in full-time employment for at least three months before they can be enrolled. This is to ensure that they are suited to their job role and have received the employers' induction and initial training. Trainees are visited

frequently by their assessors, at least once a month, with some trainees being seen as often as once a week. Assessors are very flexible with the pattern of their visits and arrange visits to suit trainees' shift patterns. Visits sometimes take place in the evenings and on Saturdays. Good use is made of observation of workplace performance in the assessment of level 2 trainees. Their job roles provide them with ample opportunity to achieve their qualifications in an efficient timescale. The assessor in Cornwall also acts as the programme co-ordinator, carrying out formal reviews of trainees' progress every eight weeks. In Devon, a full-time member of PTCI's staff carries out the progress reviews. Workplace supervisors are sometimes present during these reviews, but in most instances their only involvement is to add a written comment about the trainee on the review form. All progress reviews are signed by workplace supervisors.

16. The large national employer has a good induction and on-the-job training programme. A completely new training package has recently been launched to encourage all members of staff to achieve their training targets. When the apprenticeship programme starts at a new store, trainees attend a group induction at a local hotel and the PTCI assessor contributes to some of the sessions. These include, introducing the NVQ and health and safety in the workplace. Trainees also attend a variety of training courses, away from their own store. These include the launch of new initiatives, training in customer service and the use of company systems. Trainees value these opportunities to develop the skills required to carry out their jobs more effectively. A customer service workbook has been developed, with the approval of the awarding body, to cover all the required knowledge and understanding for trainees working towards NVQs in customer service at level 2. A similar workbook has also been introduced for trainees working towards the NVQ at level 2 in retail operations. Completion of the workbooks encourages trainees to look at their own jobs in more detail and to seek extra information from their colleagues and supervisors. Both of the assessors use a laptop computer and an information technology key skills workbook in providing one-to-one coaching and support for trainees in the workplace. Some trainees have produced key skills evidence of a high standard through the use of work-based projects designed by their assessor and supervisors.

17. Progress for trainees is slow on both the national traineeship and modern apprenticeship schemes. Level 2 trainees often complete their workbooks at an early stage, but cannot achieve units from their customer service NVQ until their competence is assessed by observation. Some trainees have been on programme for over a year and have not had any units assessed. Several of the current level 3 trainees have progressed from level 2, however no trainee has achieved a unit of the level 3 qualification, despite the fact that several trainees have been on programme for eight months. Trainees are expected to complete their NVQ evidence gathering in their own time and are allowed very little time at work. Trainees find it difficult to complete NVQ work in the evenings or weekends.

18. National trainees do not have any involvement in building their own portfolios. Observations by assessors and the completed workbooks are the main sources of evidence. Trainees have little responsibility for their own qualifications

and opportunities to encourage trainees to produce their own evidence are often missed. When trainees are observed by assessors while working on the shop floor or dealing with customers, they are not sure what they are being assessed against. One trainee was not aware that he was being observed until his assessor showed him the observation record later in the day. Assessors sometimes observe more than one trainee at a time if there are several in one store. Trainees do not understand the national standards and how their evidence is cross-referenced against the units of their qualifications. The amount of feedback given to trainees at the end of an observation is variable and does not always relate to the standards against which they have been assessed. Trainees who progress to the modern apprenticeship scheme are unsure of how to start working towards their qualifications. The amount and level of guidance and support provided by their assessors is too variable. They are provided with a level 3 workbook which does not relate to a retailing environment and they are confused about how it should be used. Some trainees are not being stretched to their full potential and often lose interest because they are not sure how to make progress. They are not familiar with NVQ standards and have not been given clear guidance on the layout of their portfolios. A new assessment-planning form has been introduced in the last month and trainees feel that this is beginning to help them understand how and when assessment will take place.

19. Trainees all receive an induction to their NVQ programme from their assessor on a one-to-one basis in the workplace. Trainees show a good understanding of the appeals procedure but are confused about how and when their NVQ programme will be achieved. They are given a large quantity of photocopied information and are not sure of its relevance. Some trainees commented that they found the paperwork to be 'overwhelming' and most consider it to be confusing. Many trainees could not remember what was covered in the induction and only recalled filling in forms.

20. Trainees in Cornwall do not have a copy of their individual training plan and they do not understand its relevance with regard to their own training and achievement. Most trainees have not achieved the targets for unit completion identified on their training plans. The training plans have been revised to show later dates for unit completion. Employers are not aware of the content of individual training plans. During some progress reviews, trainees have identified their own slow progress but no subsequent action has been taken. Some employers show more interest than others do in the training process, but they have little influence over the progress and achievement of their trainees.

## **Hospitality**

## **Grade 3**

21. There are 50 trainees in hospitality of whom fourteen are work-based training for young people, 18 are national trainees and 18 modern apprentices. Twenty-three trainees are working towards food preparation and cooking qualifications, and 27 are working towards hospitality qualifications in bar service, food and drink service, housekeeping, reception, quick service, front office and supervision.

Three trainees are in work placements. The other trainees are employed and are recruited onto the programme through their employers. Trainees working towards the food preparation and cooking programme attend off-the-job training at college on one day each week. Trainees on level 2 hospitality programmes do not attend regular off-the-job training. From September 1999 an off-the-job training programme was introduced for all hospitality level 3 trainees. Assessment for trainees on a food preparation and cooking programmes is mostly carried out in a classroom environment. Assessment on other programmes is work-based and is carried out by a self-employed assessor. The percentage of trainees leaving with an NVQ over the last three years has been 28, 28 and 57 per cent respectively. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weakness identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good learning and assessment opportunities in the workplace

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor assessment practice
- ◆ the slow progress of some trainees
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills

22. Food preparation and cooking trainees attend well-structured off-the-job training one day each week during college terms. Each day consists of a half-day practical session for skills required in the workplace and a half-day theory session to improve trainees' knowledge and understanding. Trainees are divided into classes, which correspond to the level of the NVQ towards which they are working. The tutors have an effective open-delivery method. Sufficient time is provided for each cookery unit of the qualification to be covered in appropriate detail. The tutors ensure that the full range of the qualifications is taught and not just the minimum requirements. Resource materials in the form of workbooks, guidance notes and information sheets help trainees to learn. The workshops do not fully prepare the trainees for the workplace, as the overall environment is not similar. A half-day off-the-job training course has been developed for the supervisory units of level 3 hospitality qualifications. Trainees are generally in high-quality workplaces, primarily hotels, but also restaurants and public houses. At these premises the trainees have the opportunity to learn from experienced supervisors and receive practical training as well as the opportunity to develop the skills learnt during off-the-job training. The workplaces offer excellent prospects for work-based assessment through naturally occurring opportunities.

23. Trainees on hospitality programmes are assessed in the workplace. Trainees on food preparation and cooking qualifications do not have the opportunity for work-based assessment. Assessment is in a classroom environment and the kitchen does

not simulate a realistic working environment. The trainees complete the assessment documents and the assessors sign on completion. There are no supporting comments made by the assessor nor are the assessment decisions recorded. Sometimes trainees record workplace activities for use as supporting evidence but these are rarely confirmed by witnesses.

24. When an assessor has visited a workplace and made observations, the subsequent record usually lacks appropriate detail. There have also been instances where assessors have overlooked gaps in trainees' work caused by insufficient evidence and assessed incomplete units as complete. Internal verification only occurs at or near the completion of a portfolio; there is no on-going sampling. The lack of work-based assessment has recently been resolved by the appointment of an assessor for the food preparation and cooking programme. It is too early to judge whether this solution is leading to improvements in the assessment process.

25. There has been a significant lack of achievement and slow progress by trainees. In 1997-98, 28 per cent of trainees left with an NVQ and the average length of time taken to achieve a level 2 qualification was 17 months. Some trainees left after 26 months without achieving an NVQ. There was an improvement in 1998-99 when 57 per cent of trainees achieved an NVQ in an average length of time of 13 months. However there are still trainees leaving the programmes after 11 or 19 months without achieving a qualification. One reason for slow progress is an inflexible, college-based assessment process. If trainees missed an assessment opportunity for a particular unit, they would have to wait up to a year for the opportunity to recur. This issue is being addressed, and from September 1999 assessment opportunities will occur regularly and trainees will have the opportunity to attend on an alternative to the specified day to achieve the assessment.

26. Many opportunities for key skills assessment alongside the NVQ are missed. For example, the college-based assessors do not assess key skills alongside the NVQ, even though there are clear opportunities for such assessments to be made. A separate key skills assessor has been appointed with the tasks of improving the understanding of key skills requirements as well as the training itself. A new diagnostic test has been introduced to identify trainees who require further support with key skills. Trainees are given additional learning materials which are used through exercises that are not directly linked to their occupations. It is too early to judge whether these recent changes will improve trainees' achievement or assist in the key skills training.

### **Hair & beauty**

### **Grade 3**

27. There are 50 trainees in hairdressing of whom seven are on work-based training for young people, 35 are national trainees and eight are modern apprentices. There are 12 trainees working towards hairdressing NVQs at level 3 and 38 are working towards hairdressing NVQs at level 2. Eighty-two per cent of all trainees are employed. On-the-job training is carried out within a range of

commercial salons. Off-the-job training takes place at a local college of further education where trainees attend one day each week. The college assessor carries out assessment during off-the-job training and also in the workplace. A range of additional qualifications is made available through the college. Key skills units are integrated into the national traineeship and modern apprenticeship programmes. Achievement rates have increased over the past three years. The number of trainees leaving with an NVQ during 1996-97 was 52 per cent and in 1998-99 it was 65 per cent. The self-assessment report highlighted a number of strengths and weaknesses that inspectors identified as no more than normal practice. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified during the inspection and the grade awarded was lower than the one given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good training provision
- ◆ high achievement rate
- ◆ strong assessment process

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ no initial assessment of basic or key skills
- ◆ no awareness among trainees of the appeals process

28. Off-the-job training takes place at the local college. Trainees attend practical and theory sessions, where they find the arrangements helpful. Training is well planned and well structured to meet the needs of individuals. Trainees are encouraged to progress at a pace which suits them individually. Access to additional practical sessions is arranged if further assessment opportunities are required for individual trainees. Training is planned and taught by well-qualified staff whose collective skill levels and experience strengthen the programme. A spacious, well-equipped realistic working environment enables trainees across all programmes to experience working in a busy salon. A varied client-base ensures all aspects of the NVQ programme can be offered. Trainees are scheduled to work on the reception area to practice their skills and gain experience of booking appointments, retailing products and demonstrating customer care. Key skills are fully integrated into the programme. All trainees demonstrate good knowledge of their application. Trainees' portfolios are well structured and include key skills evidence cross-referenced to the hairdressing NVQ.

29. On-the-job training is given by experienced staff during employers' model nights or specific training sessions. Trainees can also take part in product training days planned by representatives of commercial hair companies. These opportunities are used to practice skills learnt in the off-the-job learning environment, and, in some instances, to collect supplementary evidence in the

form of witness testimonies. Close working relationships between the PTCI programme co-ordinator, college placement officer, work-placement representative and trainees result in good attendance at off-the-job training sessions. Achievement levels are good. Sixty-five per cent of trainees left with an NVQ in 1998-99, in the first part of 1999-2000 the achievement rate has risen to 78 per cent. Assessment is well planned and implemented. Trainees are fully involved in the process. Time is given to allow discussions and feedback to take place about the assessment. Trainees are encouraged to ask questions and to make sure that they are clear about recorded decisions. The process of assessment is a positive experience and helps trainees to progress. Assessment records help trainees to know what future actions are required. These are then discussed during off-the-job training sessions.

30. There are missed opportunities for work-based assessment. One assessor employed by the subcontractor operates across the provision for nearly all trainees. There is currently one work-based assessor on an employers' site who has recently started to assess trainees' work. The limited access to work-based assessment affects the progress of some trainees. Accreditation of prior learning and achievement is not used, although a fast track programme for some trainees has recently been introduced. There is currently no initial assessment of basic or key skills within the hairdressing provision. Trainees with literacy problems have had no additional support identified. In one example, such a trainee had been on programme for over a year and received no additional support. The lack of key skills assessment leads to appropriate training not being identified for individuals.

31. Some trainees' reviews are carried out by the PTCI programme co-ordinator. A large number are carried out by the subcontractor. Short-term targets are verbally discussed, but not recorded. Trainees do not concentrate on their individual objectives and have no record of expected short-term goals. Trainees do not understand the roles of the various people involved in their training programme. The responsibilities of PTCI staff and subcontracted staff are not clearly defined. Internal verification procedures meet awarding body requirements and are carried out by the subcontractor. Trainees lack awareness of the internal verification process and its purpose. They are unaware of the assessment appeals procedure and do not question assessment decisions.

## **Health, care & public services**

## **Grade 4**

32. At the time of the reinspection, there were three national trainees on a care programme and one national trainee on an early years care programme, all working towards level 2 NVQs. They are employed in residential homes for older people or adults with learning difficulties, or in childcare establishments, including a school. Since the first inspection, PTCI has moved the contract for off-the-job training and assessment from the college to a subcontracted arrangement with a different adult education provider. A service level agreement was signed in October 2000 but was not effective until early January 2001. The new subcontractor offers monthly evening theory sessions; one session had taken place before the reinspection. The



subcontractor also has responsibility to ensure assessment is carried out in the workplace and for internal verification of the awards. Trainees are registered with the awarding body through the subcontracted provider. There is a team of three staff at the subcontractor, all of whom are occupationally experienced and qualified. Reviews of trainees' progress continue to be carried out by PTCI's staff.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ unclear roles and responsibilities for work-based assessors
- ◆ poor rate of achievement for some trainees
- ◆ no planned work-based learning for the NVQ
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of workplace assessment or of the learning environment
- ◆ failure to integrate key skills units with the programme

32. Following the first inspection, an action plan was developed and several weaknesses have been addressed. Work-based assessors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Some achievement rates have improved. In July 2000, an employer raised concerns over the lack of progress of two recently recruited trainees. These trainees were subsequently transferred to another training provider and the decision was made not to recruit further trainees at PTCI until a new subcontractor was found to provide the programme. PTCI's recent self-assessment report and action plan reflected on how the previous action plan had been implemented but did not identify any strengths and weaknesses in this occupational area or any further action to be taken. Inspectors found two strengths and three weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ flexible arrangements for trainees' progress

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no achievement by modern apprentices
- ◆ delayed integration of key skills with the NVQ
- ◆ inadequate planning of work-based training
- ◆ insufficient use of assessment by direct observation in the workplace

33. Following the first inspection, it was increasingly evident that the NVQ and the key skills programmes provided through the college department did not meet the requirements of some of the trainees. These trainees did not attend college regularly and were not making satisfactory progress. The change to a subcontractor

was delayed, and at the time of the reinspection there was little evidence available to assess the new training. However, PTCI's programme co-ordinator has established effective working relationships with staff in the workplace and staff at the new subcontractor. Workplace supervisors and the remaining trainees are enthusiastic about the arrangements being implemented by the new subcontractor.

34. Some trainees valued the training sessions at the college, others prefer the training offered by the new subcontractor because the groups are smaller and there is more opportunity for one-to-one support. All trainees are now completing key skills with PTCI. Workshops at PTCI are arranged one morning a week. These workshops are arranged as one-to-one sessions to cater for the individual needs of trainees. The assessor/trainer responsible for application of number visits the workplace to look at how key skills can be integrated with other work activities. Trainees now feel they are making progress with their care NVQ and key skills. Trainees appreciate the increased flexibility that has been introduced into the new arrangements for training.

35. At the first inspection, failure to integrate key skills units with the NVQ training programme was identified as a weakness. Some trainees are now working on their key skills, having completed their care NVQ. None of the present trainees have integrated their key skills with their NVQ training as they have progressed. However, where possible, evidence for two key skills units is being cross-referenced from the care portfolio with the help of the programme co-ordinator. Attempts are being made to link key skills competence in application of number and information technology to workplace activity. The delay in focused development and assessment of key skills has held up the completion of the framework for some national trainees.

36. Since 1997, five trainees have started a modern apprenticeship. All five trainees left the programme with no qualifications. The NVQ at level 3 is currently not available through PTCI. Since 1998, a total of 11 trainees have started national traineeships. Three of these trainees have completed all sections of their training plans, three trainees left the programme with no qualifications and one trainee left after achieving the level 2 NVQ. The other four trainees are still in training. During 1997-98 a total of 14 trainees started other work-based training programmes. Three of these trainees completed their training plans, but the other 11 all left the programme with no qualifications, prior to the first inspection. Out of the nine trainees who started other work-based training programmes during 1998-99, eight have completed their individual training plans since the first inspection.

37. The weaknesses identified in the first inspection concerning workplace assessment have been partly rectified. Work-based assessors are clear about their roles, but are only used for witness testimonies at present. Workplace supervisors have not been used as assessors in the workplace, even if they have the relevant qualifications. The regularity of assessment in the workplace has varied, some trainees receiving monthly visits, others having only occasional visits. This inconsistency has partly arisen from communication difficulties between the

assessor, workplace supervisor and trainee. There is a heavy reliance on witness testimonies and trainees' reports on their workplace activity for portfolios. There are few reports from assessors as a result of direct observation of trainees' performance in the workplace. At the time of reinspection, there is inadequate planned training, in accord with the requirements of the NVQ, taking place in most work placements. PTCI's programme co-ordinator is not occupationally qualified or experienced in care. It is planned that the assessors from the new subcontractor will assess trainees in the workplace at least monthly and will systematically monitor workplace training plans.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

38. Following the change in ownership in February 2000, PTCI has used the equal opportunities policy and procedures of Plymouth College of Further Education. The policy and the colleges' disability statement are reviewed annually. The policy meets the requirements of the TEC and the awarding bodies. The chief executive of PTCI has responsibility for implementing the policy and procedures. As part of standard college procedure, one of the programme co-ordinators is nominated as the equal opportunities 'champion' for PTCI. This nominee has recently been invited to join the college's equal opportunities working party at its monthly meetings. Equal opportunities are a standing agenda item at general meetings for PTCI's staff. The marketing of training opportunities at PTCI is subcontracted to an outside agency.

At the first inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ restricted access to facilities for some trainees
- ◆ no recruiting against gender stereotypes
- ◆ no equal opportunities strategy

39. By the time of the reinspection, PTCI had developed and implemented an equal opportunities strategy over a range of issues. A change in the location of PTCI's accommodation and increased availability of college resources has resulted in improved access to training facilities. The self-assessment report of November 2000, identified three strengths and no weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths, identified two weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### ***STRENGTHS***

- ◆ good awareness raising with trainees and staff
- ◆ active monitoring in the workplace

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ ineffective strategies to recruit under-represented groups
- ◆ insufficient analysis of data

40. Since the last inspection PTCI has implemented an action plan to increase the staff's awareness on a range of equal opportunities issues. They have undertaken training and have been provided with guidance materials. The staff at PTCI now have a good understanding of equal opportunities and they are active in implementing the colleges' policy and procedures during their work with work-based trainees and employers.

41. Trainees receive an effective session on equal opportunities during their induction programme. The initial level of trainees' understanding is measured by the use of a quiz at the start of the induction session. Trainees' awareness of the various forms of harassment is raised through the use of well-produced learning materials. Emphasis is placed on team working and on how individuals should be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Following the induction session, trainees have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Trainees are made aware of the college's mediation service. This confidential service provides support, through specified members of staff, in situations of bullying and harassment. Trainees receive an information pack to help reinforce the learning that took place in the induction session.

42. PTCI's staff are active in monitoring equal opportunities for trainees in the workplace. The employer's equal opportunities policy is examined during the initial stage of making a service level agreement with a new employer. If the employer does not have a recorded policy they are provided with a 'draft' policy to use as a guide. Employers are provided with guidance notes on the relevant legislation and a leaflet identifying good practice in equal opportunities. Employers are invited to the college for breakfast meetings on training topics, including equal opportunities. Employers were able to demonstrate ready access to copies of their equal opportunities policy and guidance notes.

43. The review of trainees' progress in the workplace includes discussion on equal opportunities. Trainees' awareness is reinforced during these discussions with their programme co-ordinators. Trainees are given the opportunity to express any concern they may have and are fully aware of how to make a complaint. In some cases, the discussion on equal opportunities at the workplace involves the workplace supervisor, who often values the guidance given by the programme co-ordinators. In some engineering work placements, effective action had been taken to remove the display of inappropriate pictures of women. However, in some other work placements, the display of such pictures is still considered as acceptable by supervisors.

44. Trainees with some form of disability are provided with an information pack on the range of support services available at the college. The pack includes clear

identification of access and specialist facilities on all college sites. Persons using wheel chairs do not have access to the training room at PTCI but there is access to a small interview room on the ground floor. If required, PTCI's staff are able to arrange for group induction or training sessions to be carried out in college premises which do provide access and facilities for trainees with mobility difficulties. A New Deal client, with some mobility difficulties, expressed satisfaction with the range of facilities and support provided during the college's training sessions. A member of PTCI's staff has established links with a local employment consultancy which specialises in matching potential employers to job-seekers who have some form of physical disability.

45. A section in the college's mission statement makes reference to expansion of activity to areas of inner city deprivation. PTCI's staff have developed links with staff from a city-centre community-services group on a project aimed at getting socially disadvantaged young people into employment.

46. At the time of the reinspection, there were no trainees from minority ethnic groups. In each of the last two years, the total number of trainees starting training was 191 and 152. During each year, one trainee from a minority ethnic group started training on a customer service qualification. Both of these trainees left their programme early with no qualifications. PTCI's staff have attempted to increase representation on work-based training programmes in hospitality by making links with a specific minority ethnic group. This initiative has not yet been successful.

47. There is a stereotypical gender imbalance within several occupation areas. During the past two years, a total of 110 trainees entered programmes in care, business administration and hairdressing. Of these, only eight were men, 7.2 per cent. The proportion of men increased from 6.5 per cent in 1999 to 8.2 per cent in 2000. A total of 56 trainees entered training in agriculture, construction and engineering over the past two years. Men represented 98 per cent of these entrants. The marketing materials and literature do not adequately promote or encourage individuals from under-represented groups to take up work-based training opportunities.

48. Equal opportunities data are collected, but PTCI does not adequately analyse the data to influence plans and developments. Data on applicants and recruitment practices are not analysed or reviewed to help target under-represented groups.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

49. Trainees are recruited to PTCI through local job centres or through referral from the trainees' employer. Potential trainees take an 'initial assessment' programme by attending the PTCI training centre for one day a week over three weeks. In the fourth week the trainees undertake an interview with PTCI's staff. Several induction topics are covered in the initial assessment programme, others are addressed when the trainee starts the NVQ programme and a separate induction takes place in the workplace. Programme co-ordinators visit the

workplace to conduct reviews of trainees' progress on a 12-week cycle. However, more frequent reviews are not uncommon. Copies of the completed review forms are given to the trainees and their employers.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no short-term targets within reviews for some trainees
- ◆ inaccurate individual training plans in some areas
- ◆ unsystematic approach to accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ ineffective initial assessment
- ◆ failure to provide additional support for some trainees

50. Following the first inspection, PTCI developed a detailed action plan to rectify the weaknesses identified in trainee support. Trainees now identified as being able to benefit from additional learning support are scheduled to receive appropriate support. On reinspection, individual training plans were found to be accurate and the revisions to the trainee's progress-review process have improved short-term target-setting for trainees. The initial assessment programme has been developed and successfully rectifies the other two weaknesses identified at the first inspection. The recent self-assessment report identified two strengths and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weakness and found others. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive initial assessment for most trainees
- ◆ wide range of effective support systems
- ◆ appropriately varied additional qualifications

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient involvement of some workplace supervisors in the trainees' review process
- ◆ limited access to support resources for non-local trainees

51. Since the first inspection, PTCI has developed a comprehensive induction/initial assessment programme. Potential trainees on the programme were very clear about the purpose of the sessions and described having taken tests which helped to assess their academic level and their ability to meet the key skills requirements. They also understood that they were being assessed to find out about their learning styles and teamwork skills. Trainees had received feedback on the results of all initial assessments and were aware that interviews were planned to discuss their individual needs. In addition to initial assessment, the three-day programme provides potential trainees with a good understanding of the qualification they are to undertake. Trainees receive information and guidance on

the range of support services available and an effective induction into equal opportunities, complaints and appeals procedures and health and safety. They are invited to evaluate the training sessions at the end of each day. Feedback from trainees displayed a high level of satisfaction with the content, style and follow-up support. One group of potential trainees had expressed concerns about one activity and were given the opportunity to contribute to changes in the programmed activity.

52. Trainees identified as needing additional support are referred to the careers education and guidance services or the learning support unit at the college. PTCI's programme co-ordinators meet with the college's learning support co-ordinator monthly to discuss and review the learning needs of individual trainees. Trainees have the same access to the college's services and resources as all full-time students. These services include counselling, welfare, travel and accommodation services, the learning development service, the flexible learning centre and the mediation service. Funding for trainees who meet the appropriate criteria can be accessed through a national youth charity. Trainees feel very well supported by their programme co-ordinators and are often encouraged and supported to extend themselves by completing key skills at a higher level than required by apprenticeship frameworks. One trainee's assessor visits twice weekly and has been helped with one-to-one coaching and support to maintain employment. Additional support has been given to develop key skills which are outside the trainee's qualification. Other trainees report that PTCI's staff listen, are understanding and will offer one-to-one support where necessary.

53. Additional qualifications, including complementary NVQs, are offered and completed by trainees in all occupational areas. Other qualifications undertaken include: health and safety; first aid; food hygiene; make up and manicure; floristry; wines and spirits; national licensee certificate and computer literacy and information technology. Trainees are encouraged to take the qualifications most relevant to their training programme. Trainees work for these qualifications at the same time as their NVQs, and, in some cases, the work provides supplementary evidence for their portfolios.

54. Some workplace supervisors are not adequately involved in the review of trainees' progress. The format of the forms used for the reviews has been subject to recent changes and a section has been added to include feedback from employers. Before this change, only a signature was required from the employer. Workplace supervisors are not always present at the reviews, or they may attend at only the beginning or the end of the process. Supervisors are not adequately involved in developing a workplace action plan. On some occasions, the employer's feedback on a trainee's performance has been conducted over the telephone. Comments by the employer are sometimes not very constructive, referring only to the trainee's personality rather than their progress towards achievement of qualifications.

55. There are several trainees, primarily those employed at retail stores in Cornwall and some parts of Devon, who do not attend the college for any part of

their training and do not have easy access to the range of college support services. These trainees are issued with a students' union membership card but no alternative arrangements for satisfactory access to similar support services have been established.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

56. The college's commitment to work-based learning and assessment is communicated in its mission statement. PTCI manages the training programmes funded by the TEC and the Employment Service. The full-time chief executive, who is responsible for the overall management of the company and the development of the strategic plan, reports directly to the commercial manager of the college's business and communications centre, one of the college's seven academic departments. PTCI employs eight other full-time and two part-time staff. Three of the full-time staff provide administrative support. Most of the off-the-job training is provided by various departments of the college.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ unclear organisational structure
- ◆ some trainees unaware of PTCI's role and responsibilities
- ◆ no formal contract with the main subcontractor
- ◆ no management of links between on- and off-the-job training

57. An effective action-planning process has been implemented to rectify several of the weaknesses identified at the first inspection. Staff have been issued with an organisation chart and all have current job descriptions. Trainees and employers are now aware of the roles and responsibilities of PTCI's staff. All college departments and subcontractors have service level agreements with PTCI. The recent self-assessment report identified one strength and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with the identified strength and found two others. They did not agree with the significance of the weakness identified by PTCI and found three other, more significant, weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective new organisational structure
- ◆ good internal communications
- ◆ wide range of training offered to staff



### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak implementation of staff appraisal process
- ◆ insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in key skills processes
- ◆ inadequate co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

58. The well-managed organisational change has had a positive effect on trainees. Since the college took over the ownership of PTCI last February, there have been several changes in structure. The changes have ensured that PTCI's staff were integrated with the rest of the college from the outset by providing a thorough induction to familiarise them with the college's policies and procedures, support services available for trainees and staff, and health and safety issues. Staff were briefed fully on the new organisational structure. A folder containing updated job descriptions and personal profiles of PTCI's staff has been circulated among the team to enable them to become quickly familiar with each other's roles and responsibilities and specialist skills. Trainees and employers have also benefited from this as staff are able to brief them on the new structure, and everyone is now clear about PTCI's staff roles and responsibilities.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*PTCI has developed written records of the resources available at each of the work placements. The data record includes the range of NVQ units which can be covered, the involvement of workplace staff in assessment and the information and guidance provided to workplace staff.*

59. In the two months before the reinspection, a member of the senior management team of the college became actively involved in the day-to-day management of PTCI. The focus of attention has been to establish 'position statements' in terms of the improvement action plans and to identify priorities for future action. The staff of PTCI have welcomed the additional support and guidance provided.

60. The wide range of communication channels used by PTCI has resulted in effective working relationships and teamwork among staff. The management style encourages the sharing of information and resolution of issues on an informal basis. A variety of meetings is held to share information and discuss trainees' progress. These include staff meetings, meetings between programme co-ordinators and college training staff, assessor meetings, meetings of programme co-ordinators with learning support staff to discuss additional support needs of trainees and meetings with external subcontractors. Agendas for PTCI's staff meetings include regular items on equal opportunities, health and safety, discussion of targets and training issues. The college issues a weekly staff bulletin, which always starts in a positive way by publishing letters of thanks from learners to staff. Items include staff training opportunities, forthcoming events, arrangements for visits from external verifiers, job vacancies, learners' achievements and awareness raising of the college's procedures. Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns in an issues log which is kept in a central location. Issues raised are dealt with promptly and the date of action is recorded.

61. The opportunities for training are extensive and open to full- or part-time staff of PTCI. The college has a regular programme of training activities on topics identified as priorities through analysis of feedback from self-assessment reports

on training needs, development needs arising from graded observations of staff activities, departmental plans, requirements of external bodies and new legislation. The programme of in-house training includes regular sessions on induction for all new staff, assessor and verifier training, equal opportunities and training in appraisal and supervisory management. Training opportunities offered less frequently include sessions on interview techniques, key skills, computing, health and safety and on being a tutor. Staff can apply to go on external courses to obtain professional or training qualifications or for updating by such organisations as awarding bodies. PTCI runs several training events for its staff specific to work-based training. In 2000-01, four of PTCI's staff have attended a course on risk assessment to help them in their role of monitoring health and safety in the workplace. Five staff are training for key skills qualifications, two are working towards qualifications in providing advice and guidance and six staff have attended courses on quality assurance. All staff training is evaluated and the results are used to inform plans for future staff development. PTCI has invited staff from subcontractors to training events but there has been only limited participation.

62. The college appraisal system is well structured but it has not been implemented satisfactorily within PTCI. Nine staff have been appraised during the past year. Records of the appraisal process are weak and bland, general targets only have been set. The use of performance indicators and targets to measure the contribution made by individual members of staff is inadequate. Staff are aware of the TEC targets, but there is little link made with the college's overall targets for recruitment, achievement and retention.

63. Workplace supervisors have insufficient involvement in the planned development and assessment of key skills. They lack understanding of how key skills underpin the NVQ, despite the recent attempts to engage them through employers' forums and the provision of employers' guides. This lack of involvement has been detrimental to trainees. Opportunities have been missed to use the naturally-occurring situations in the workplace to gather evidence and for the direct observation of interpersonal skills, computing and problem-solving skills. There is too much use of simulated evidence and not enough integration of key skills with NVQs, particularly in care and customer service.

64. In some programmes, the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak. Employers are not provided with adequate information on the topics to be covered during the sessions of off-the-job training at the college. In some occupational areas, trainees have to repeat training for skills that they have already acquired in the workplace, or they learn new skills at college which they are unable to put into effect in their workplace. Trainees are assessed during off-the-job sessions on skills that they are able to display in the workplace. Opportunities for assessment in the workplace are not always planned. Employers are sometimes not involved in the planning of reviews and assessments. The recent appointment of additional assessors across all occupational areas to carry out work-based assessment is aimed at improving the co-ordination of training through frequent contact with the workplace supervisors.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 4

65. Responsibility for quality assurance in PTCI lies at senior level with the operations manager and chief executive. PTCI has adopted some of the quality assurance systems and procedures of the college. There are additional procedures to ensure that the company meets the requirements of the awarding bodies and the TEC contract. The college's quality assurance system covers all aspects of training which takes place within the college.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor internal verification procedures
- ◆ no quality assurance targets
- ◆ non-compliance by staff with some well-established quality assurance procedures
- ◆ no monitoring or evaluation of subcontractors' training
- ◆ no definition of service levels for subcontractors

66. Following the first inspection, senior managers prepared an action plan which was shared with all staff. There have been monthly action plan review meetings involving staff and some subcontractors where progress has been discussed and outcomes evaluated. There has been a series of monitoring sessions where PTCI's staff, subcontractors, trainees and employers have been questioned and progress evaluated. Questionnaires forwarded to a number of employers and trainees throughout the year have met with a disappointingly low level of response. The internal verification procedures have been rewritten and staff have received training and additional guidance. Meetings of internal verifiers across the occupational areas have assisted in establishing satisfactory practice. Service level agreements are issued for every college department providing training, as well as subcontractors and self-employed assessors. There is still insufficient monitoring of some subcontractors and inadequate monitoring of on-the-job training. The self-assessment report identified two strengths and two weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with one of the strengths and considered the other to be no more than normal practice. They found two other strengths, agreed with the two identified weaknesses and found others. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective sharing of good practice
- ◆ effective internal audit process
- ◆ good monitoring of off-the-job training at the college

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of some subcontractors
- ◆ slow implementation of action plans
- ◆ insufficient use of data to guide a continuous improvement strategy
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of on-the-job training

67. Good practice is shared in a variety of ways to improve training. PTCI has set up a number of meetings with similar providers in the area to share information. This has resulted in an improved initial assessment programme. Improvements have been made as a result of training exercises carried out with assessors to standardise assessment practices. At meetings with some subcontractors, good practice is also shared. One improvement made as a result is the colour coding of types of evidence for NVQ portfolios. Assessors of construction are using the approach to key skills developed within the hairdressing sector to make more effective use of the workplace to generate evidence. Lead internal verifiers from each occupational area meet regularly. They have devised standardised monitoring systems for trainees which can be used in all occupational areas.

68. The internal audit system has been successful as a means of improving practice and developing staff performance. Every month, 10 trainees' files are reviewed by PTCI's data manager and the programme co-ordinators to check that correct procedures are being followed. Programme co-ordinators audit each other's completed individual training plans and the progress review forms for trainees. The audits highlight good and poor practice and have resulted in improvements to the progress review process for trainees. For example, the review forms have been redesigned to include a section for employers' comments and a box is now included to record units achieved since the last review.

69. The monitoring of the off-the-job training at the college is good. There is a management file for each college programme which contains details of the various processes of training, from recruitment to exit. Each training team carries out a self-assessment of the training it provides which is fed into the college's self-assessment system. PTCI's co-ordinators are involved in this process. The college has arrangements for the annual observation of the teaching of all lecturing staff. One of a team of observers comprised of specialist staff sits in on training sessions and gives confidential feedback to every lecturer. Support is given to the member of staff to help improve performance if this is required. Performance data are analysed and a report sent to the college's academic board.

70. The monitoring of some subcontractors is inadequate. There has been over-reliance on the subcontractors' own quality assurance arrangements and on reports from external verifiers as quality indicators. The lack of monitoring of some subcontractors has resulted in poor internal verification practices not being identified and subsequent remedial action not being taken. One subcontractor does

not provide PTCI with timely reports on trainees' progress, nor on their attendance at off-the-job training sessions. One trainee, with this subcontractor, has taken over three years to achieve a level 2 NVQ. There has been inadequate monitoring of the customer service training. Customer service trainees are spread over a wide geographical area and are assessed by self-employed subcontractors whose assessment practices vary. None of the 13 customer service advanced modern apprentices has yet achieved a unit of their NVQ, despite being on the programme for eight months. One trainee has consistently asked for further support but this has not been actioned.

71. PTCI has made improvements as a result of action planning to address weaknesses identified at the first inspection. However, at the time of the reinspection many of the actions are still in progress or not yet fully established and their effectiveness is not clearly evident. Many of the trainees have been on programme for over a year and have been adversely affected by the earlier weaknesses. The recent appointment of assessors to carry out work-based assessment in construction, catering and administration is only just beginning to result in acceptable levels of work-based assessment. The introduction of breakfast seminars with employers to raise their awareness of NVQs and their role in the training process only started in January 2001. The employers' guides on NVQs and key skills have improved employers' understanding, but many employers are still not fully engaged in the training process. Staff training to improve standardisation of assessment did not take place until November 2000. Delayed action to move the unsatisfactory care training to another subcontractor resulted in slow achievement of the NVQ and late training for key skills. Unsatisfactory arrangements for vetting employers for health and safety have only been identified and addressed in the past three months. New procedures and staff training are now in place to ensure trainees are adequately protected at work.

72. There is insufficient use of data to guide the continuous improvement strategy. Data are available on retention and achievement, both from the college's management-information system and PTCI's own database. The data are currently used mainly to fulfill TEC requirements and not to drive forward long-term change. There is inadequate analysis of data for the identification of trends so that a strategy can be developed to deal with under performance. PTCI uses a set of structured questionnaires to obtain feedback from trainees. The results of these surveys are put onto a spreadsheet and the numbers of responses analysed. Issues arising from this analysis are dealt with on an individual basis. Data are not analysed sufficiently to identify and compare trends across occupational areas and to inform an overall improvement strategy.

73. On-the-job training is not adequately monitored or evaluated. There are no procedures to ensure that planned training takes place at work. Employers are not required to provide a structured training programme. Although programme co-ordinators visit the employer's premises for the purpose of carrying out reviews with the trainee they do not monitor workplace training plans. There are no arrangements for the observation of on-the-job training or evaluation of its effectiveness.

74. The self-assessment report concluded that a satisfactory grade should be awarded for all areas of the training. The report indicated that no significant improvement had been made since the first inspection in the three occupational areas of business administration, hospitality and hair and beauty. No strengths or weaknesses were identified in the occupational area of health, care and public services. No weaknesses were identified in engineering and equal opportunities. Whereas the self-assessment process obtains views from a range of interested parties, the evaluations made in the report are not all soundly based. The grades awarded on reinspection agreed with three of the six grades given in the self-assessment report. All of the areas reinspected showed improvements and were awarded one grade higher than on the first inspection.