



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JULY 2000

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY 2001

LITS

## SUMMARY

LITS provides good engineering training and effective support for modern apprentices. All the apprentices are employed in well-established companies which are well resourced and provide good opportunities for progression within the industry. The training is well planned and managed and apprentices are closely monitored to ensure good progress with their training. Apprentices are protected from discrimination and harassment, on and off the job. At the time of the first inspection, there was no specific promotion of equality of opportunity. Good use is being made of professionally produced equal opportunities materials and trainees have good awareness of equal opportunities issues. The company provides satisfactory quality assurance and any issues relating to the quality of training are quickly addressed.

**As a result of the reinspection of LITS, the original published report text for equal opportunities has been replaced by new text, which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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
Engineering	2

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ♦ excellent work placements
- ♦ women apprentices are well integrated into a traditionally male environment
- ♦ frequent and thorough progress reviews carried out at work
- ♦ good additional learning support
- ♦ long-established partnerships with employers
- ♦ well-managed on-the-job training
- ♦ continuous improvement in the quality of training linked to self-assessment

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ♦ few assessments involving direct observation
- ♦ monitoring activities of equal opportunities poorly recorded
- ♦ no initial assessment of key skills
- ♦ weak management of some off-the-job training
- ♦ quality assurance systems not fully implemented

## INTRODUCTION

1. LITS was founded in 1981 to provide training consultancy services. The original five clients were the maintenance departments of regional health authorities, and LITS organised and monitored their engineering apprenticeship organisation and monitoring service. The company now provides this service to over 100 companies, many of which are large national and international organisations. Around 30 per cent of the company's training activities are now linked to government funded programmes by contract with South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). All the training programmes offered by LITS lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In December 1994, the company achieved approved status as an assessment centre.

2. The company has strategic alliances with the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU) and the Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA), acting as consultants to both organisations with regard to the development and delivery of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeships. The company has established itself as a leading training organisation for the lift industry and has worked with the LEIA on the development of a database covering all the modern apprentices and adult NVQ candidates training in the industry across the United Kingdom.

3. LITS operates throughout the United Kingdom, with the senior training advisor working from the head office in London and nine training advisors operating regionally. The company began offering apprenticeship programmes in 1981 and, with the introduction of the youth training scheme, registered 12 trainees in 1986. At the time of the first inspection, 27 of the client companies were involved with LITS and between them, they had 173 apprentices. There were 163 apprentices at the time of the reinspection. In the lift and escalator industry there are currently 5,185 people working throughout the United Kingdom in field activities. Of these, 119 are modern apprentices with LITS, representing 2.3 per cent of those in the industry.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The company produced its first self-assessment report in May 2000 for the inspection. The company carries out annual self-assessment, but for the inspection produced a report using the Training Standards Council's framework *Raising the Standard*. The views of apprentices, their employers and the company's training advisors were taken into account. The company's senior training advisor was primarily responsible for writing the report. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. The company has provided a development plan to address the weaknesses and, at the time of inspection, several of the planned actions had been implemented. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses in each aspect of the training and awarded a higher grade than that given in the report for the management of training, but lower grades for the other aspects. The self-assessment report produced for the reinspection was reasonably accurate and appropriate progress was being made with the action plan, according to the timescales outlined.

5. The first inspection in July 2000 was carried out by a team of four inspectors. They spent a total of 16 days inspecting the government-funded training at LITS. Inspectors interviewed the company's training advisors, the senior training advisor and workplace supervisors, mentors and personnel managers in employers' premises. They visited 10 employers' sites nationally and interviewed 48 apprentices. They examined assessment records, apprentices' files, NVQ portfolios, and other documents relating to the training and its management, and observed practical work. Inspectors observed four on- and off-the-job training sessions. The table below shows the grades awarded for the training sessions.

6. Reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of four days with LITS during April 2001. They interviewed nine trainees from three different companies. They examined documents relating to trainees, including portfolios and assessment records, and management and quality assurance documents, and interviewed LITS' staff. They visited two further education centres in Kent and one employer's premises, where they interviewed a personnel manager.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		3	1			4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 2

7. LITS has 173 engineering modern apprentices working towards achievement of an NVQ at level 3 and completion of their modern apprenticeship framework. All the apprentices are employed by large national or international companies. Just over 50 of the apprentices are employed as engineering apprentices, but most are employed as lift engineering apprentices. Apprentices follow a technician or craft apprenticeship programme, the main distinction being that technicians require higher levels of qualification to support the theoretical aspects of their programme. In most cases, the apprentices undertake their NVQ level 2, engineering foundation qualification and supporting theory qualifications with a subcontracted training provider arranged by their employers. LITS takes over responsibility for their training when they begin working towards the NVQ at level 3, usually in the second or third year of their four-year apprenticeship. Where companies require LITS to manage the training from the start of the apprenticeship LITS's training staff work with the company to provide the training and assessment for the NVQ at level 2, and monitor the apprentices' progress throughout the programme. On-the-job training takes place within the apprentice's company and during work on-site where appropriate. Each company appoints a mentor for their apprentice and LITS training staff work with the mentor and apprentice. In addition to attendance at a local further education college, where the apprentices are working towards nationally recognised engineering qualifications such as higher national certificates, apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions at one of the LITS training centres. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company in their self-assessment report and found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ excellent placement companies
- ◆ apprentices trained to a high standard
- ◆ good quality of portfolios
- ◆ many trainees achieve additional qualifications
- ◆ good achievement and improving retention rates

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little assessment by direct observation
- ◆ late introduction of key skills training for many trainees
- ◆ unplanned training in some work placements

8. All the LITS apprentices are employed by large well-established companies. Some are engineering companies, some are large companies requiring their own engineering workforce and all of the major lift companies are represented. The

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*LITS, recognising that further education college training does not cover all the relevant theoretical knowledge for engineers, has made a significant investment in the development of its own learning packs to cover the specialist aspects required. The packs comprehensively cover all the additional material required by the lift industry. The material is explained in detail and the packs contain a series of multiple-choice questions so that apprentices can check their understanding at each stage. The apprentices regard the use of the packs as a particularly helpful part of their training.*

companies provide a well-resourced work environment for the apprentices and often the opportunity to work on contracts throughout the country. The apprentices are trained to a high standard. They all work with skilled engineers who pass on their knowledge and support the apprentices throughout their apprenticeship. By the fourth year of their apprenticeship, the apprentices demonstrate a high degree of skill and are able to explain the detail of the work they are undertaking.

9. During their on-the-job training, apprentices compile a portfolio of evidence to support their claim of competence in the workplace across the range of skills required to achieve the NVQ at level 3. The portfolios contain a well-presented range of good evidence. The apprentices work with LITS's training staff to ensure the suitability of the evidence and to cross-reference the evidence to the requirements of the NVQ. In some companies, the on-the-job training is planned throughout the apprenticeship to ensure appropriate opportunities are created for the apprentices to obtain all the skills necessary to achieve the NVQ. This is difficult to achieve where the job role is primarily maintenance and repair, since the company cannot predict when a particular job may arise. In some cases, the allocation of work for the apprentices is carried out by workplace supervisors who are knowledgeable about the requirements of the job and the company, but less aware of the requirements of the NVQ. Here the training is less well planned and relies on apprentices covering whatever work is available at the time. In these cases LITS's staff work with the employers' staff to ensure that apprentices have the opportunity to cover all the requirements of the NVQ.

10. In all cases, assessment of the apprentice's competence is carried out by a qualified assessor examining the portfolio of evidence. When an apprentice carries out a suitable task, the performance is witnessed by a workplace mentor or supervisor who records the acceptability of the standard of work carried out. This witness testimony, together with the appropriate evidence, forms the basis of the assessment material. Few assessments take place at work by an assessor directly observing the work being carried out and, in a few cases, this results in some additional work for the apprentices in preparing the supporting evidence material.

11. All the apprentices undertake a programme of off-the-job training as part of their apprenticeship. Through attendance at LITS's training centres and local further education colleges, apprentices generally achieve higher qualifications than those required by the apprenticeship framework, and many progress to the higher national certificate. In a few cases the apprentices progress to an engineering degree programme. Many of the apprentices achieve units of the NVQ in addition to the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. They also attend company specific courses, often provided by LITS, which further enhance the apprentices' experience and add value to the apprenticeship.

12. LITS's training centres are well equipped and the off-the-job training that the company provides is highly regarded by the apprentices. One training centre, being refurbished at the time of inspection, has a suite of modern computers and associated information technology equipment which the apprentices are able to use. In the training sessions group sizes are small and training staff make good use

of their industrial expertise to encourage and motivate the apprentices. There is a good working relationship between the apprentices and the training staff and the apprentices learn in a relaxed environment, with staff who can relate directly to their experiences at work. Trainers made appropriate use of humour to maintain the apprentices' attention and interest.

13. Although recruitment to, and completion of, the apprenticeship is affected by the economic state of the industry, LITS has increased the numbers of apprentices staying on the training programme. From the current intake of 73 apprentices, eight have left the programme early and the remainder are progressing towards achievement of the framework. Of the 50 trainees who started in 1996-97, 13 left early without achieving the NVQ at level 3, three left having achieved their NVQ at level 3 and 21 completed the full modern apprenticeship. Thirteen of this group are still on programme and have nearly completed the full modern apprenticeship framework. The apprentices are not formally assessed on their key skills until the latter stages of their apprenticeship. For the apprentices in their final year, evidence of key skills acquisition gathered throughout their apprenticeship is gathered, cross-referenced to portfolio evidence and assessed. Opportunities to identify this evidence early in the programme have been missed.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

14. LITS has a written equal opportunities policy and this is included in its quality assurance manual. The apprentices' induction pack covers equal opportunities and an equal opportunities statement is included in apprentices' portfolios. All the organisations which employ LITS's apprentices have their own equal opportunities policies and associated procedures. Frequent and regular meetings between the companies' training advisors and the apprentices provide an opportunity related to equal opportunities for issues to be raised and addressed. LITS plays little part in the recruitment of most of the apprentices, since many are on the apprenticeship in their organisations for a year before LITS becomes involved with their programmes. Some 3 per cent of apprentices are female.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ little promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ low awareness by some trainees of equal opportunities and associated procedures
- ◆ few checks on employers' adherence to policy
- ◆ equal opportunities poorly covered in some induction
- ◆ no written grievance or complaints procedures

15. Since the original inspection in July 2000, the senior training advisor has carried out a review of all equal opportunities policies and procedures to identify any deficiencies. This review has covered special needs, employers'

responsibilities, harassment and discrimination, complaints and appeals procedures. By the time of the reinspection, draft procedures were ready for implementation in a few weeks time when new contracts were to be issued to companies. Staff have attended training programmes on equal opportunities and dyslexia. All trainees have received one-to-one training on racial discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying from their training advisors. Equality of opportunity is covered in the induction for trainees that takes place in companies and in the further education colleges used for foundation training in the first year of advanced modern apprenticeships. Some weaknesses identified during the first inspection have been rectified. Plans to rectify others are well advanced. Trainees now have a good understanding of equal opportunities. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness by trainees of equal opportunities and associated procedures
- ◆ good use of professionally produced equal opportunities materials
- ◆ good support for women apprentices in male-dominated environment
- ◆ quick and effective response to incidents of harassment

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of established guidelines and procedures
- ◆ poorly recorded monitoring activities of equal opportunities

16. Since the last inspection, LITS has obtained some good promotional materials produced by a major engineering union on issues such as racial discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. All trainees have received one-to-one training related to these issues with their training advisors. Trainees were extremely positive about these sessions. They could recall their content easily and were able to talk well about their understanding of equal opportunities and these issues in particular. Many trainees also receive equal opportunities training from their companies. Some thought-provoking posters about discrimination are prominently displayed in the training rooms. The induction trainees receive from their companies and further education colleges is thorough and comprehensive and they are given good reference materials. Training advisors hold copies of college handbooks that detail equal opportunities policies and procedures.

17. Trainees have regular monthly meetings with their training advisors. Discussion of equal opportunities issues takes place at these but is not recorded. All trainees know how to make a complaint, whether at work or in training. They see their training advisor as an independent and approachable person who will deal with problems on their behalf where necessary. Trainees who had been on the scheme at the time of the first inspection reported an increased emphasis on equal opportunities since September. Trainees' problems, and in particular those relating to training, are dealt with quickly to the trainees' satisfaction. Employers carry out the recruitment process for many of the apprentices and LITS usually has little



involvement in this. LITS makes every effort to tailor courses to suit individual trainees' needs and circumstances. LITS's staff are fully involved in some employers' recruitment processes and aim to ensure these are fair and equitable. They also provide initial assessment materials. LITS uses an effective NVQ assessment appeals procedure developed by the national training organisation. All trainees have a copy of this, in the form of a flowchart, in their portfolios. It includes an equal opportunities statement. The apprentices understand the process and use it when necessary.

18. When employers recruit women as apprentices, LITS's staff work effectively with the organisations and apprentices to ensure they receive appropriate support in a workforce that is traditionally male dominated. When any incident of harassment is identified LITS's staff have reacted quickly and effectively to deal with it. Trainees spoke of incidents which have been well handled, but these have not been recorded on trainees' files. The female apprentices are well supported by their training officers and sensible solutions are quickly found to address some of the initial alienation they experience when joining a hitherto all-male team.

19. Procedures for, and guidelines on, the promotion of equal opportunities have been drafted but have not yet been implemented. LITS intends that these procedures and guidelines will be in operation by the time new contracts are issued to companies in April 2001. The new contracts for employers are comprehensive. They place a responsibility upon employers to uphold equal opportunities and employers are aware of this. The monitoring of equal opportunities is poorly recorded. LITS carries out initial checks to ensure that any new employer has a suitable equal opportunities policy and that it complies with the current legislation. Training advisors have a detailed knowledge of the equal opportunities policies and procedures of the companies where trainees work. They were also able to give details of how problems had been dealt with and the content of training events. They did not, however, keep copies of employers' policies on, and procedures for, promoting equal opportunities.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

20. All LITS's apprentices are employed and most start their training with LITS when they begin working towards their NVQ at level 3. Before starting an apprenticeship, the potential apprentices are interviewed by an LITS training advisor and by the employer. Applicants to be an LITS apprentice on the technician route require four GCSEs at grade C or above, and those seeking the craft apprenticeship require three GCSE passes at grade C or above. In most cases, the employers carry out the initial assessment of the apprentices' basic skills and suitability for the apprenticeship. In addition to an induction at their employer's workplace and their further education college, all apprentices are given an induction to their programme by LITS's training staff. Training advisors visit all the apprentices regularly at work to monitor progress and carry out assessments of their competence. In addition, some apprentices attend the LITS training centres for progress reviews and additional training and support. Inspectors agreed with

the strengths and weaknesses the company identified in their self-assessment report and found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent and rigorous reviews
- ◆ extensive use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ opportunities for team building and personal development
- ◆ excellent progression routes
- ◆ good additional learning support to meet identified needs

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ key skills not assessed on entry
- ◆ trainee support not fully recorded
- ◆ inconsistent quality of induction

21. All apprentices are visited frequently at work and all aspects of their progress are reviewed by training advisors at least every eight weeks. If an apprentice is making slow progress, or if any issues with training have arisen, more frequent reviews are arranged. Many apprentices are visited every month. Weekly visits are arranged for those who need additional learning support, or they are taken into an LITS training centre for specific support to meet their identified needs. In addition to the routine reviews an extensive review of all aspects of progress is conducted every quarter. This review involves the apprentice, the training advisor, the workplace supervisor and, in some cases, the employer's personnel manager. Short-term achievement targets are set for the apprentices at each review. The apprentice is given a copy of the notes made at each meeting and progress against the targets is monitored and shared with the workplace supervisor.

22. Extensive use is made of accreditation of prior learning. Six of the LITS training advisors are qualified to accredit prior learning. Most of the apprentices starting with LITS already have an NVQ at level 2 in engineering, or a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in engineering, or individual modules of the award or a part-completed nationally recognised engineering qualification. Credit for these qualifications is recorded in the apprentices' individual training plan and record sheet. LITS tests the prior learning using unit-specific questionnaires they have developed. Apprentices who join the programme with an engineering NVQ at level 2 comprising the eight-unit foundation award, complete the additional three units required by the modern apprenticeship framework at a local further education college.

23. Apprentices have many opportunities for personal development, the acquisition of team building skills and additional qualifications to those required by the modern apprenticeship framework. Many apprentices attend a one-week

outdoor activities course during which they develop their leadership and team building skills. Each apprentice keeps a daily log of activities and training advisors include part of the programme induction in the week's activities. On the final day of the course, senior managers from the employing organisations attend and make presentations to the apprentices. Apprentices are able to choose to take an additional qualification at level 3, or individual units to enhance their programme. For example, apprentices working in the lift industry are encouraged to gain an electrical installation NVQ level 3 in addition to their engineering maintenance qualification.

24. Opportunities for progression are excellent. The employers generally regard the modern apprenticeship as the minimum qualification required, and encourage all the apprentices to progress to the best of their ability. Some of the lift industry's apprentices go on to achieve an NVQ at level 4 and become field test engineers. One former apprentice is training as a work-based assessor and one of the women apprentices has begun a first degree in manufacturing management.

25. The training advisors provide a high level of support to meet identified needs, although much of the support given is unrecorded. Pastoral support, when needed, is generally provided by specialist staff at the employers, after referral from the training advisors. Additional learning support needs are identified by the training advisors and the necessary support is provided to ensure the apprentices' progress. In one example, four of the apprentices based around the London area were making slow progress towards achieving their NVQ. After negotiating with their employers, LITS arranged for the apprentices to attend the training centre for one day every two weeks to undertake remedial training. This enabled them to catch up with their work and make suitable progress towards achievement of their NVQs.

26. LITS pays considerable attention to the health and safety of the apprentices in a potentially dangerous industry. The company employs a full-time, qualified health and safety advisor. The advisor has been trained as a construction industry safety advisor and is an accredited safety auditor. There is good support for apprentices who find the work environment unsuitable. One lift apprentice who had an epileptic seizure while at college. His condition had not previously been identified by LITS or his employer. The LITS training advisors worked with the employer's occupational health specialist to place the apprentice on a new training programme in the design office, away from the dangers of site work. Another apprentice, who developed a fear of heights, was relocated in a job where he was not required to operate at heights.

27. Initial assessment of the apprentices is carried out by the employers with the help of LITS, which provides initial assessment of basic skills. Assessment of numeracy, literacy and engineering aptitude are carried out but there is no assessment of the apprentices' key skills when they enter the programme. Once on the programme the apprentices have an induction into the workplace, their college programme and their apprenticeship training programme. There is a full programme of induction and apprentices keep a checklist in their portfolio as a record of completion of the induction topics. The time spent on induction and the

emphasis placed on different parts of the programme varies and some apprentices have little recall of some aspects of the programme.

## Management of training

## Grade 2

28. LITS is managed by the senior training advisor based at the company's head office. Nine self-employed training advisors across the country are responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the training programme, including the organisation of on- and off-the-job training and the assessment and monitoring of apprentices. The training advisors make frequent visits to the apprentices' workplaces and maintain links between LITS and the employers. Little of the internal management communication is recorded, but communication between all the training advisors and the senior training advisor is frequent and timely. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses to those identified by the company and gave a higher grade than that awarded in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ very experienced and well-respected staff
- ◆ close partnership between company and employers
- ◆ well structured on-the-job training in most companies
- ◆ close and accurate monitoring of apprentices' progress

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little analysis of management data
- ◆ weak management of some off-the-job training

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*When one employer ceased training, managers at LITS were able to secure new employment for the apprentices concerned. Through their close co-operation with the employers, LITS managers ensured that transfer allowed the apprentices to continue their training with virtually no disruption to their planned programme.*

29. The LITS managers and staff are well qualified, all with some higher education qualification, and have significant experience, often in very senior roles, of relevant industries. Good use is made of this experience when designing and implementing the training programmes for apprentices. Many of the training staff are held in high regard by the organisations employing the apprentices and LITS is able to make effective use of the long-standing working relationship the company has with its employers. LITS has built up a good reputation with employers and works closely with them to develop training programmes which meet the industry's needs. The employers have a significant input to the structure of the programmes and work in partnership with LITS to ensure apprentices achieve their intended goals.

30. In most organisations on-the-job training is well structured, clearly planned and well managed. Apprentices and mentors have a good understanding of what is required to achieve the NVQ and the apprentices' work is planned to ensure that they will have suitable opportunities to acquire and demonstrate all the skills they

need for their employment and for the achievement of their qualifications. The apprentices know when they will be working on service, call-out, repair or technician work and which skills they will need to demonstrate at each stage. On-the-job training for a small number of apprentices has been adversely affected by the loss of key personnel in the employer's companies and previously planned training has become less well planned and co-ordinated. LITS training staff are working with the workplace supervisors to address this issue.

31. Off-the-job training given by LITS is well managed and planned to meet the learning needs of the apprentices and their employers. Management by LITS of the off-the-job training given by the various further education colleges is less effective. Where sufficient apprentices are attending a particular college LITS uses its influence effectively to ensure that the training provided is good. Managers and staff work closely with the colleges in planning the training and monitoring apprentices' progress. In some colleges, where perhaps only one apprentice attends as a member of a day release class, LITS has less control over the programme or its quality. In one case, there was some misunderstanding about the precise roles of the employer and the training advisor regarding a problem experienced by apprentices at a college and a solution of the problem was delayed.

32. The company has clear policies and procedures for most aspects of the training programmes and their management. Policies and procedures are shared with all staff and are routinely reviewed. Document control is sufficiently robust to ensure that staff use the current version.

33. Communications between LITS's staff across the country are frequent and generally by telephone. Although this communication is informal staff are kept up-to-date with company activities and issues relating to the apprentices. The staff all meet once every year and any required actions or changes to procedures are recorded. There are written job descriptions and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and their responsibilities in the company.

34. The apprentices' progress is closely monitored throughout their apprenticeship. Accurate records are kept and apprentices, training advisors and employers know what progress has been made and what is required for completion of the programme. LITS's training advisors report on the apprentices' progress monthly and copies are sent to employers and to LITS's head office. Targets for recruitment and achievement are set and success in reaching the targets is monitored. However, little other data are systematically collected and LITS do not analyse the available data in terms of trends or patterns. There is no analysis of data relating to apprentices who leave the programme before completion.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

35. The senior training advisor has overall responsibility for the company's quality assurance process. LITS has a clearly worded commitment to ensuring that quality assurance arrangements cover all aspects of the training operations and a policy

statement is included in the company's quality manual. The company uses the ISO 9000 quality standard framework as a model for its quality assurance system but has not sought accreditation to the ISO 9000 standard. Quality assurance procedures are internally audited and reviewed annually. External consultants are used to develop the quality assurance system and provide regular support. The company is an approved assessment and resource centre with the engineering awarding body. The company carries out annual self-assessment following completion of its internal auditing procedures. The senior training advisor was responsible for producing the company's first self-assessment report, which was completed for the inspection and copied to all the training advisors. The report identified several strengths and only one weakness specific to quality assurance. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ quality assurance addressed through trainee and employer focus groups
- ◆ self-assessment linked to continuous improvement
- ◆ identified quality issues rapidly addressed

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of systematic evaluation of feedback from trainees and employers
- ◆ weaknesses in internal verification
- ◆ quality systems not fully implemented

36. The company's quality assurance activities include the auditing of employers and an annual training evaluation process. Targets are set for recruitment and the achievement of the modern apprenticeship. Managers and staff operate on a national basis to conduct reviews, assessments and internal verification. Communication regarding quality issues is fed back to the senior training advisor in London as they arise. All staff meet annually to review quality assurance and plan future training.

37. Groups comprising employers and apprentices are meeting to identify and deal with quality issues linked to training and development. The groups work closely with LITS's training advisors. Improvements to the quality of the documents used and to the assessment procedures and monitoring of training have been made. Some of the groups' projects are at an early stage of development and have not yet been implemented across all the training teams. Apprentices at one organisation identified deficiencies in their induction programme which they brought to the attention of their managers and LITS's training advisors. As a result, changes have been made to the induction programme and new apprentices have benefited.

38. Managers at LITS regard self-assessment as a primary tool in the identification of issues affecting the company's business and the apprentices' success. Following self-assessment, action plans are developed to address the issues found. Some of



the actions have been successfully implemented and some are part of a longer-term development of the company's systems and procedures. There are many examples of improvements resulting from this process, including the development of assignments to help apprentices identify appropriate evidence of the acquisition of key skills. From the self-assessment process, the company has developed a consistent approach to how apprentices should build up their portfolios of NVQ evidence and records the tasks they perform, using documents developed by employers and awarding bodies. The new system helps apprentices to more easily identify suitable evidence for their NVQs.

39. An evaluation of some of the training provided by the subcontractors is included in the annual review process. All subcontracted training is monitored informally, but more rigorous scrutiny of the services provided by some, and the subsequent action plan implementation, has led to improved training for LITS's apprentices. One apprentice was having difficulty in completing her portfolio of evidence for the NVQ owing to the pressure of work. The LITS training advisor recognised the problem and negotiated with the employer for more time and materials to be made available to the apprentice. The work is now up-to-date.

40. Although the response to feedback from employers and apprentices is prompt and effective there is no recorded collection of the apprentices' views during their training nor are the views of their employers systematically sought. Consequently, no analysis of trends or patterns in training is available to help make improvements.

41. Internal verification is carried out throughout the programme. All portfolios are examined by the internal verifier but there is no planned schedule of visits to interview apprentices during their programmes. Few apprentices are aware of the role or identity of the internal verifier. There is little observation of assessors carrying out assessment. The provision of feedback to assessors is not consistent and some feedback records are not completed. Opportunities to improve quality, which are identified during the verification process, are not always followed up.

42. There are clear agreements signed with subcontractors, but there are no procedures to ensure that minimum standards are met with regard to the quality of training and assessment. There is no system to ensure that quality assurance documents used by the subcontractors are available to LITS. Although the quality manual is regularly audited and reviewed, some aspects of the audit lack rigour. It is not clear which personnel hold copies of the current manual. Many of the weaknesses in the quality assurance system are now being addressed by the company, some changes are recent and time is required to assess their effectiveness.