

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION
REPORT SEPTEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
JANUARY 2002

Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's **learn**direct provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited provides satisfactory training in engineering and manufacturing. Learners in engineering receive good training during the first phase of their learning programmes but assessment towards level 3 national vocational qualifications (NVQs) does not start until near the end of their training. At the original inspection, the company had introduced initiatives to encourage women into engineering and to recruit learners from schools with low rates of achievement. However, it was not monitoring equal opportunities sufficiently in the workplace. Monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace has improved since the original inspection but it remains inadequate. Learners now have a thorough understanding of equal opportunities. Learners have the opportunity to achieve a range of qualifications in addition to their NVQs and apprenticeships. At the time of the original inspection, the company did not use its assessments of new learners to shape their individual learning plans. This weakness has now been rectified. There is clear strategic management of the company. At the time of the original inspection, workplace supervisors lacked an understanding of learners' NVQs and managers were unable to obtain up-to-date information about learners' achievements. Workplace supervisors now have a good understanding of learners' NVQs and the company has established computerised systems that provide up-to-date information. However, managers do not use information from the computerised systems when they set targets and make decisions. Since the original inspection, the company has made little progress in allocating responsibilities for management. At the original inspection, the company lacked procedures for assuring quality and internal verification was weak. The company has now produced written procedures to assure quality but these lack detail. Internal verification remains weak.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	3

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

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good training in first phase of learning programmes in engineering
- ◆ action to recruit women and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities among learners
- ◆ additional qualifications available to learners
- ◆ clear strategic management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed assessment of level 3 NVQs in engineering
- ◆ ineffective management structure
- ◆ insufficient use of data to guide decisions
- ◆ inadequate arrangements for quality assurance
- ◆ weak internal verification

INTRODUCTION

1. Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited (HETA) is a company and a registered charity. It started to offer training in engineering in 1968. Currently, it provides training for member and other companies in the occupational areas of engineering, manufacturing and business administration. Neither inspection covered business administration because there are few learners in that area. The company operates from three sites. The first site, in an industrial estate in Kingston upon Hull, contains the company's administrative offices, a training centre and classrooms for engineering. The other two sites are within the premises of large chemical companies near Grimsby in northeast Lancashire. One of these sites provides training in engineering. The other provides practical training for learners in manufacturing.

2. HETA's board of directors meets monthly and comprises six representatives of learners' employers. In July 1999, cuts in funding led the board to announce a decision to enter into liquidation. After Humberside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and other local organisations intervened, the board reversed its decision and agreed on a plan to rescue the company. The plan led to a cut in the number of full-time staff and the appointment of a new general manager in January 2000. At the time of the original inspection, HETA had nine full-time staff. By the time of the reinspection, it had appointed a further seven full-time staff and four part-time staff. At the time of the original inspection, HETA had 299 learners working for 74 employers. It now has 252 learners working for 75 employers. Of these, 211 are advanced modern apprentices, 20 are foundation modern apprentices and 21 are on other learning programmes leading to NVQs. At the time of the original inspection, HETA contracted with Humberside TEC. It now contracts with Humberside Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, was 24.4 per cent in Kingston upon Hull. In northeast Lincolnshire, the proportion was 35.8 per cent. The national average in 2000 was 49.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportions were 27.5 per cent in Kingston upon Hull and 36.5 per cent in northeast Lincolnshire, compared with a national average of 50 per cent. The 1991 census found that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups was 1.3 per cent in Kingston upon Hull and 0.9 per cent in northeast Lincolnshire. In August 2000, the rate of unemployment was 7.4 per cent in Kingston upon Hull and 6.6 per cent in northeast Lincolnshire, compared with a national average of 3.5 per cent. In September 2001, the rate of unemployment had fallen to 6.7 per cent in Kingston upon Hull and 5.4 per cent in northeast Lincolnshire and the national average had fallen to 2.9 per cent. Approximately 25 per cent of Humberside's workforce is employed in manufacturing.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. HETA carried out its first self-assessment in 1998 and revised its self-assessment report in May 1999. The general manager revised the report again in May 2000 and produced a fresh self-assessment report for the original inspection in September 2000. This report identified strengths and weaknesses and included an action plan. Senior staff were consulted but there was little consultation with learners, employers and subcontractors. After the original inspection, HETA prepared an action plan, which it updated in September 2001 in preparation for the reinspection. HETA did not produce a self-assessment report for the reinspection but plans to produce one in March 2002.

5. For the original inspection, a team of five inspectors spent a total of 18 days at HETA in September 2000. Inspectors interviewed 46 learners, 10 of HETA's staff, seven staff from subcontractors, and a total of 17 workplace supervisors, workplace managers and work-based assessors. They visited 20 workplaces and examined 34 learners' files and 29 portfolios of evidence. They also examined contracts, external verifiers' reports, internal verifiers' plans and records, quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, promotional material, and HETA's health and safety and equal opportunities policies. Inspectors observed one progress review in the workplace and five lessons in engineering. They awarded one lesson a grade 2 and the other four a grade 3.

6. For the reinspection, a team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at HETA in January 2002. They visited nine workplaces and interviewed 19 learners, nine workplace managers and supervisors, staff from both the subcontractors, and six of HETA's staff. They examined 15 learners' files and four portfolios of evidence. They also examined contracts, policies and procedures, internal and external verifiers' reports, minutes of meetings, records of staff training and the action plan produced after the original inspection.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

7. There are 246 engineering trainees, comprising 186 advanced modern apprentices and 60 trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme consists of an initial 26 to 46-week programme of off-the-job training towards an engineering foundation national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 and in key skills. The companies the trainees are employed with determine the length of the initial programme. Trainees attend day-release courses at one of four local colleges of further education to study for educational qualifications in engineering in addition to the NVQ. The practical off-the-job training is undertaken at HETA's training centres by five full-time trainers/assessors. Most trainees attend one of HETA's training centres but they may be required to attend one or more of the others for specific aspects of the training. After the foundation phase, training becomes work based with local employers. Trainees work towards an occupationally specific NVQ at level 3 and continue day-release studies at college. One of HETA's three qualified assessors visits trainees in the workplace once each month to carry out a review of the trainee's progress. HETA's visiting assessors and qualified work-based assessors undertake the assessment of NVQ and key skills evidence in the workplace. There are two advanced modern apprentices in motor vehicle engineering, who attend college on day release for practical and theoretical training. College staff assess the motor vehicle trainees' workplace evidence.

8. During 1998 and 1999, a total of 20 trainees started other work-based programmes for young people. Twelve of these trainees have gained a level 2 NVQ. Six trainees left the programme without qualifications, five left after gaining some qualifications and nine are still in training. Before 1998, there were a large number of trainees undertaking other programmes for young people. A total of 201 trainees started between 1996 and 1997. Twenty-six of these trainees left training without any qualifications, 166 trainees achieved a level 2 NVQ and 31 trainees are still in training.

9. The company's self-assessment report for engineering identified four strengths and five weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and considered another to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses in the self-assessment report were considered by inspectors to be more relevant to generic aspects. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded was the same as that given in HETA's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ high achievement rate on engineering foundation programme

- ◆ good retention rate on apprenticeship programme
- ◆ good foundation level training

WEAKNESSES

GOOD PRACTICE

Some first-year apprentices spend a few weeks in their engineering company before starting the full-time foundation training. During the foundation training company representatives monitor the learner's progress by frequent visits to the training centre.

- ◆ delayed assessment of level 3 NVQ
- ◆ weak assessment of some key skills
- ◆ over-reliance on witness testimony for level 3 NVQ

10. Employers of trainees include internationally recognised companies, major fabrication exporters and prestigious chemical and petrochemical organisations. The range of training opportunities embraces all disciplines of engineering and offers training on commercial industrial plant. Within most employers the range of experience offered varies from basic operations to highly complex tasks. Trainees are under the supervision of experienced tradespeople who have extensive practical and technical knowledge. Employers plan training to ensure that trainees gain experience in the various sections of the company. Trainees progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience. In some companies, mentors have been appointed to support and monitor the progress of trainees.

11. Between 1996 and 1999, a total of 157 engineering trainees started the engineering foundation level programme. Over this four-year period, 141 have gained a level 2 NVQ foundation award in engineering. At 90 per cent, this is a high success rate. Over the four-year period between 1996 and 1999, a total of 189 trainees started an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. Thirty-two trainees entered the programme at the level 3 NVQ stage. One hundred and forty-one of these apprentices are still in training and 13 have achieved all the targets in their individual training plan. This represents a good retention rate, of 81 per cent.

12. Employers value the skills acquired by the trainees on the engineering foundation programme. The engineering workshop facilities are more than adequate to carry out training to level 2 NVQ requirements. The classroom facilities are good with adequate visual aid equipment. Trainers are well qualified with a wide range of relevant engineering experience. They have gained extensive experience in training young people and several staff hold teaching or trainers' qualifications. Several trainers are former employees of companies which now employ trainees. Others have links with staff within these companies. Both situations lead to close liaison with employers.

13. Standardised training packages containing well-structured and planned assignments are used in the training centre workshops on the engineering foundation programme. Each of the off-the-job training components has operational procedures which are detailed and comprehensive. There are well-established procedures for the use and storage of personal and protective equipment.

14. Apprentices start the level 3 NVQ on their second year of training. During this

year, trainees are assessed using a series of questions based on their knowledge of their specialist areas of competence. HETA's assessors do not formally assess level 3 practical performance evidence until the end of year three. However, many trainees have portfolio and logbook evidence showing that they have performed practical tasks by themselves to the satisfaction of their supervisors well before the formal assessment of practical performance starts. This delay in assessment of practical competencies results in the internal verification of assessment decisions being delayed until near the end of the trainees' programme. Able trainees are not achieving as soon as they are able to. For those trainees who leave the programme early, delayed assessment of practical competencies means they have no record of achievements to take elsewhere should they return to training.

15. In recent years, key skills have been developed and assessed within the training centres during the engineering foundation programme. Much of the evidence is produced by simulation exercises undertaken off the job. Evidence produced by trainees for some key skills assessment lacks substance. Little use is being made of naturally occurring evidence from the workplace for the assessment of key skills and workplace supervisors have an inadequate understanding of key skills requirements and associated competencies.

16. In most companies, 90 per cent of level 3 NVQ evidence is based on the testimony of the trainee's supervisor. The supervisor simply signs a trainee's logbook entry stating that the trainee is competent at the relevant task. Following observation of trainees carrying out tasks, evidence of completion is not substantiated by detailed written judgements made by the supervisor.

Manufacturing

Grade 3

17. HETA has 51 trainees on the manufacturing programme, of whom eight are advanced modern apprentices following a level 3 NVQ in laboratory operations. The remaining 43 trainees comprise 28 advanced modern apprentices, 13 foundation modern apprentices and two trainees on other work-based training programmes for young people. They are undertaking NVQs in process operations. HETA took over responsibility for the management of the work-based training contract for laboratory and process operations trainees in April 1999. Before that time, the TEC contracted directly with the employers. HETA subcontracts most of the training to nine large to medium industrial companies. Each has from one to over 20 trainees employed or on placement. The companies have technical and industrial experts acting as trainees' supervisors and assessors.

18. All laboratory operations trainees start on an NVQ at level 3. These trainees attend HETA's training centre in Hull for three weeks' basic training at an early stage of their programme. This basic training is the only direct involvement of HETA's staff with the laboratory operations trainees. From this point, training is subcontracted. Trainees are trained and assessed and have their progress reviewed

by their sponsoring company's staff. One industrial company, an accredited centre with the awarding body, offers the qualification. Trainees also attend a local further education college on a day-release basis to study for a GCSE 'A' level qualification in a science or mathematics, or a national certificate in a science. Having achieved one of these qualifications, trainees are then encouraged to take a higher national certificate in chemistry at a local university.

19. All process operations trainees spend nine months at a HETA training site in either Hull or Grimsby and initially follow a level 2 NVQ foundation programme in engineering manufacturing together with work on key skills. HETA's staff carry out off-the-job training and assessment. During this period of off-the-job training, staff from the sponsoring company visit trainees weekly or fortnightly to monitor progress. HETA's training workshops used for process operations are equipped to enable trainees to experience single vessel plant operations to multiplant operations. The training centres give trainees exposure to realistic plant operation situations and opportunities for assessment.

20. After the foundation programme, process operations trainees enter employment or a work placement to undertake work-based training towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in process operations or process engineering maintenance. Qualified company employees carry out assessments and verification in the workplace. Reviews of trainees' progress occur in the workplace, either with HETA's staff or company employees. Process operations trainees attend a local college of further education on a day-release basis and follow a course of study leading to a national certificate qualification.

21. The company's self-assessment report identified three strengths and two weaknesses in the area of manufacturing training. Inspectors considered these strengths and weaknesses were not relevant to manufacturing, being more closely related to engineering and generic aspects of the training. Inspectors found two other strengths and three other weaknesses. The grade awarded by the inspectors is lower than that given in HETA's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly effective on-the-job training plans
- ◆ rigorous assessment in the workplace for laboratory operations trainees
- ◆ good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed progression to level 3 NVQ for process operations trainees
- ◆ lack of understanding of their programme by many trainees
- ◆ no awareness of key skills by laboratory operations trainees

22. All laboratory operations trainees and many process operations trainees have well-structured and recorded on-the-job training plans. The plans specify the time

the trainee will spend in different working environments. Activity in different locations and on different tasks is linked to key learning objectives and relevant NVQ units or elements. The plan also includes the name of the assessor. These plans ensure that trainees can progress towards achieving their NVQ in a logical and easily understood manner. Where training plans are absent, as in the case of process operations trainees at one subcontractor, trainees were moved without consideration of training needs and not given the opportunity to be assessed on tasks carried out.

23. Laboratory operations trainees are assessed on an ongoing basis by experienced and qualified staff of the employer. In every work placement in which trainees are placed for a six-month period, senior members of staff are allocated as mentors and there are qualified work-based assessors. Assessment by observation of trainees' performance of tasks is planned with the trainee and the appropriate workplace supervisor. All assessments are appropriately recorded. Trainees are given verbal feedback and a copy of the written record, together with action plan targets to achieve in preparation for future assessment. Targets are discussed with the supervisor, and the next six-month work placement provider uses the action plan to ensure that the trainees' learning is enhanced. Laboratory operations trainees are well aware of their progress and achievement.

24. Since HETA took responsibility for the TEC contract in April 1999, the retention rate for laboratory operations trainees has been 100 per cent but no trainee has yet achieved all the targets in their individual training plan. Four trainees who started in 1997 were close to completion of the level 3 NVQ at the time of the inspection. Since April 1999, the retention rate for process operations trainees based in Hull has been 100 per cent. The retention rate for trainees based in companies in the Grimsby area has also been high, at 83 per cent. Five trainees, who started in 1996, have gained the level 2 NVQ.

25. Many process operation trainees were not sure when or if they would start level 3 training. Several trainees had completed their level 2 NVQ over a year ago. Employers indicate that due to safety reasons trainees could not start their level 3 NVQ until they had satisfied the company of their competence to be control room operators. Other trainees had received their level 3 standards but their assessors were unsure of procedures to be followed and when they would start assessing.

POOR PRACTICE

For some process operations learners, a lack of assessment opportunities occurs due to either there being no assessor in their workplace or the assessor being busy elsewhere in the company.

26. Many trainees were found to have a poor understanding of their training programme. They are unsure of their trainee status and the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Most do not understand the relevance of key skills.

27. The modern apprenticeship framework for chemical manufacturing and processing does not require separate certification of key skills. The national training organisation indicates that all the key skills are integrated within the NVQ units. However, laboratory operations modern apprentices were pursuing their NVQ without any knowledge of key skills and assessment arrangements. Assessors and internal verifiers were also unaware of the requirements for key

skills within the modern apprenticeship framework.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

28. HETA updated its equal opportunities policy in April 2001. The policy takes into account all relevant legislation except for the *Human Rights Act 1998* and covers advertising and recruitment. It commits HETA to providing staff training in equal opportunities and all staff have received training within the past year. The policy includes a code of practice for interviewing, a section on harassment and discrimination, procedures for handling complaints, and a statement recognising the contributions that people with disabilities can make. HETA gives each learner a statement of its equal opportunities policy, together with details of its complaints procedure. The company also has a more detailed manual of equal opportunities policies and procedures.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ weak monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ lack of focus on equal opportunities

29. Since the original inspection, HETA has improved learners' understanding of equal opportunities, which is now a strength. The company now puts more emphasis on promoting equal opportunities. Although monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace has improved, it remains inadequate.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ action to encourage women and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds
- ◆ good understanding of equal opportunities among learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring of employers' promotion of equal opportunities

30. HETA encourages applications from groups that are under-represented on its learning programmes. The company's promotional material and displays at careers events include images of women in engineering. Since September 2000, pupils from three local schools have attended HETA's training centre in Kingston upon Hull for half a day each week to work towards qualifications in engineering over two years. Approximately a quarter of the pupils are girls and the schools involved serve areas of deprivation with low rates of achievement. HETA plans to offer this training to more schools, including ones in Grimsby. HETA monitors its recruitment. In each of the past three years, between 30 and 40 per cent of new learners have come from local schools. Currently, there are no learners from minority ethnic groups and only six of the learners in engineering and

manufacturing are women. However, several girls who have nearly completed the training for school pupils have applied to start apprenticeships in engineering in September 2002. HETA also works with a regional organisation which co-ordinates projects between engineering training providers, local schools, employers and the national training organisation for engineering.

31. HETA's equal opportunities policy is clear. Learners and staff understand the policy well. HETA displays the policy prominently at its training centres. All learners receive a handbook setting out the equal opportunities policy and grievance procedures. Learners receive a thorough introduction to equal opportunities at their inductions. This covers discrimination, harassment and disabilities and uses group activities to enhance learners' understanding. Learners have monthly progress reviews in the workplace with HETA's training co-ordinator, who uses each progress review to discuss a different aspect of equal opportunities.

32. The training co-ordinators now question learners regularly to make sure that they are being treated fairly in the workplace. HETA provides the training co-ordinators with a handbook on equal opportunities, which helps them to ensure that legislation is being correctly interpreted. However, HETA still fails to ensure that employers promote equal opportunities. Contracts with employers do not include a requirement to promote equal opportunities. HETA does not evaluate employers' policies on equal opportunities or hold copies of them. The company does not check whether employers are preventing offensive materials from being displayed. In many learners' workplaces, offensive materials are on display. Nor does the company ensure that employers' learning materials are free of stereotypical images. Procedures for monitoring the quality of recruitment, initial assessment and induction do not refer to equal opportunities.

Trainee support

Grade 3

33. HETA recruits and selects learners for local engineering companies. It advertises opportunities for training in local newspapers and promotes work-based learning at careers events in local schools. HETA sets applicants a series of written tests. At the training centre in Kingston upon Hull, HETA interviews applicants who pass the written tests and then sends details of the successful applicants to employers with vacancies. At the training centre in Grimsby, HETA invites applicants who pass the written tests to an open evening. Employers attend the open evening and select candidates to invite for interview. A few of the larger companies select their own learners and then register the learners with HETA. HETA provides a three-day induction for new learners. Learners at the training centre in Grimsby receive additional inductions from two chemical companies.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ no use of initial assessment as a basis for an individual training plan
- ◆ uninformative individual training plans
- ◆ inadequate progress review-process for trainees in the workplace

34. Since the original inspection, HETA has rectified the first three weaknesses and taken steps towards rectifying the fourth weakness. HETA now assesses new learners' key skills and exempts applicants with appropriate prior achievements from some key skills training and assessment. In preparing individual learning plans, HETA now takes into account learners' prior experience and achievements, along with information gathered through initial assessment, interviews and application forms. This enables some learners to start their training in theory at a higher level and allows learners to receive additional learning support if they need it. HETA has recently improved the structure and content of individual learning plans. The plans now list the units that learners are working towards, the date by which they are expected to achieve each unit and the names of the staff who are responsible for providing training and support. The individual learning plans are updated at learners' progress reviews. Progress reviews are now used to set targets.

GOOD PRACTICE

HETA has a system of yearly awards. The training centres at Kingston upon Hull and at Grimsby each present awards to outstanding learners in each discipline. They also present awards to overall apprentices of the year and to the learners who have made the greatest improvements. The training centres hold ceremonies to present the winning learners with a selection of tools donated by employers and suppliers.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ opportunity to gain additional qualifications
- ◆ good mentoring in some companies

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of involvement of some employers in progress reviews

35. All learners receive training in health and safety which leads to HETA's own awards and nationally recognised certificates. During the foundation phase of their training, learners have the opportunity to achieve additional units of level 2 NVQs. Some learners work towards a qualification in electrical wiring regulations. Learners obtain certificates in using abrasive wheels and can gain a qualification in basic pneumatics. During the first year of their training, learners work towards a certificate in the theory of safe driving. Some employers support learners who wish to progress to higher-level training in engineering.

36. Some of the larger employers assign workplace mentors to learners. Learners receive good pastoral support from their mentors and find them easy to contact. Although some mentors do not fully understand the requirements of learners' qualifications, they understand the need to manage learners' training in the workplace. Some mentors monitor learners' work and intervene if learners' activities are not providing the experience they need to achieve their qualifications.

37. HETA's training co-ordinators visit learners in the workplace each month to

carry out assessments and progress reviews. Learners and training co-ordinators agree on precise targets, which often relate to specific NVQ units. Progress towards the targets is reviewed at the next visit. Learners and training co-ordinators discuss learners' progress at college and at work. The training co-ordinators encourage learners to raise any weaknesses in the training and support that they are receiving from HETA, their college and their employer. Progress reviews are carried out in various ways. In most cases, the training co-ordinator speaks to the learner alone. However, some employers attend progress reviews. In some cases, the training co-ordinator talks to the employer separately. In others, the employer is not involved in the progress review. The form for recording the progress review does not include a space for the employer's comments on the learner's performance and progress. The forms are signed by the learner, the training co-ordinator and a representative of the employer, and copies are given to the learner and the employer. Some of the employers' representatives who sign the forms are not in appropriate positions to attest the accuracy and quality of the progress reviews. Some employers carry out their own, separate reviews of learners' progress, in some cases frequently and in detail, but HETA has no system for co-ordinating these with its own reviews or for compiling an overall record of learners' performance and progress. Some employers do not understand the need to provide appropriate opportunities for learning in the workplace.

Management of training

Grade 4

38. HETA appointed a new general manager in December 1999, following a reorganisation of the company. At the original inspection, HETA employed a general manager, two training centre co-ordinators, five trainers and an administrator. By the reinspection, the company had recruited a third training centre co-ordinator, six further trainers and an additional four part-time administrators, including a management accountant and a quality assurance co-ordinator. Since September 1999, the board of directors has met once each month. The directors issue a newsletter to HETA's staff in between board meetings and can convene at short notice if necessary.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient use of management information
- ◆ no staff appraisal and development programme
- ◆ insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQs and key skills

39. HETA has rectified the third weakness. It now provides workplace supervisors with an induction to NVQs. Workplace supervisors now modify learners' activities to help them develop the skills they require. Changes to progress reviews have improved some workplace supervisors' understanding of learners' work. The other two weaknesses remain, although HETA has made some progress towards rectifying them. HETA has acquired information systems that provide accurate and

up-to-date data on learners' progress but is not using these to set targets or guide decisions. The company has introduced a programme of staff development but has not yet carried out any staff appraisals. At the reinspection, inspectors found two new weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear strategic management

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective management structure
- ◆ insufficient use of data to guide decisions
- ◆ no staff appraisal
- ◆ delayed action to rectify some weaknesses identified at the original inspection

40. When the general manager was appointed in 1999, HETA was close to bankruptcy. The company now has clear strategies to maintain financial stability. The board of directors is supportive of the general manager and regularly reviews and comments on the company's strategies. HETA's aims include improving its training facilities, expanding its work-based learning and increasing interest among young people in engineering and manufacturing as a career. These aims are shared by the company's staff. The company has carried out various initiatives to achieve its aims. It has refurbished its workshops, replaced old equipment, redecorated its training centres and improved learners' rest facilities. It has introduced new technologies such as micro-electronics and robotics and is bidding for funding to expand and improve its learning programmes. HETA has provided basic training in engineering for pupils from local schools. This has encouraged young people to consider engineering as a career and attracted learners from under-represented groups. HETA also has strong links with other organisations. A steering group, comprising workplace supervisors and managers from many of the companies that employ learners, meets regularly to discuss training.

41. HETA does not yet have an effective management structure. At the time of the original inspection, the new general manager was restructuring the company to achieve financial stability. Although the management of the company is open and inclusive, most of the strategic and operational management is still carried out by the general manager alone. Over the past few months, the general manager has started to delegate some operational management to other staff and has hired part-time consultants to assist with managing health and safety and other matters. However, HETA's failure to prepare its staff to carry out management tasks has hindered progress towards the goals in the company's action plan.

42. HETA gathers information about learners' overall performance to ensure that it is complying with its contracts and that the company is financially viable. At the time of the original inspection, HETA did not analyse the data systematically. Information on learners' rates of retention and achievement was not readily

available. The training centres at Kingston upon Hull and Grimsby kept separate records of learners' progress. HETA now holds all data centrally on computer and can quickly generate reports on the performance of trainers and employers. However, the company has no system for using the data to assist with decisions. Although HETA regularly monitors learners' attendance, it carries out little analysis of other data held on the system. HETA's action plans and strategies do not take the data into account. The company does not routinely monitor assessors and work placements by examining data on learners' progress. Nor does HETA use the data to set targets for improvement.

43. At the original inspection, HETA had no system for appraising staff and offered no staff development. HETA now encourages staff to make suggestions for their development and the general manager has suggested courses that will enable individual staff to contribute to the company's strategies. All staff have had relevant training within the past year. Three staff are following courses at an advanced level. HETA records all staff training and asks participants to evaluate it. However, HETA has not yet introduced staff appraisals. The company prepared a schedule which involved completing all staff appraisals by December 2001 but it has not yet carried out any appraisals. Consequently, there is no information available from staff appraisals to guide decisions about staff development or to guide decisions to delegate management tasks. Some staff are unclear about management's expectations of them and about their roles in helping the company to achieve its strategic aims.

44. Although HETA has made progress towards rectifying most of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection in September 2000, it was slow to start to rectify them. It did not attempt to obtain employers' equal opportunities policies until September 2001. It did not introduce new paperwork for learners' progress reviews until November 2001 and it did not start to improve its systems to assure quality until more than a year after the original inspection. Therefore, many of the systems that HETA has introduced since the original inspection are not yet benefiting learners.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

45. HETA is writing and introducing new procedures to assure quality throughout the company. Since the original inspection, it has appointed a part-time member of staff with responsibility for assuring quality.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of formal arrangements for quality assurance
- ◆ insufficient use of data to shape action plans
- ◆ no systematic use of feedback from learners in the workplace and employers
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of subcontractors

- ◆ weak internal verification of work-based assessments

46. HETA now has a quality assurance policy and procedures for some aspects of work-based learning but these are inadequate. Inspectors have commented on the weakness in using data in the section on management of learning. HETA now seeks feedback from learners about the quality of their training but few learners respond. HETA still fails to assure the quality of work-based training. Internal verification remains weak. Inspectors awarded a lower grade for quality assurance than that given in the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ full involvement of staff in devising quality assurance procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate arrangements for quality assurance
- ◆ insufficient collection and use of feedback from learners and employers
- ◆ weak internal verification
- ◆ weak self-assessment

47. A committee of staff from across the company meets monthly to assist with devising arrangements to assure quality. The committee's minutes record actions to be carried out and the names of those responsible. Each set of minutes is reviewed at the next meeting to monitor progress. Staff in each area of the company are responsible for writing the procedures for their area of work.

48. HETA's arrangements to assure quality remain inadequate. The existing procedures were written towards the end of 2001. They consist of brief descriptions of the steps to be taken, together with forms for staff to complete. Some procedures do not identify who is responsible for each step and there are no written instructions for completing the forms. There are no procedures for monitoring important activities such as inductions for new learners and employers, learners' progress reviews, and health and safety checks on employers. HETA does not co-ordinate or audit the procedures. The company has no trained internal auditors and no schedule for auditing. HETA has a service level agreement with one of its two subcontractors. It seeks feedback from learners about the quality of the subcontractors' training and acts promptly to deal with any problems that learners identify. However, HETA does not monitor subcontractors' training, assessment, internal verification or performance against agreed targets. Nor does HETA view the findings of the subcontractors' own monitoring.

49. HETA does not seek sufficient feedback from learners and employers. It distributes a questionnaire to learners but few learners return it. HETA does not use the responses to plan improvements and does not tell learners about any changes it has made as a result of their comments. The company does not issue questionnaires to subcontractors or employers.

50. Internal verification is weak. In engineering, internal verification of level 3 NVQs consists mainly of examining learners' portfolios towards the end of their learning programmes. Internal verifiers have only recently started to observe assessors and some assessors are not yet being observed. Internal verifiers do not question learners to assess their understanding of assessment. HETA has not followed the internal verifiers' recommendations for training assessors. Internal verifiers at the two training centres follow different practices. At the training centre in Grimsby, there are regular, minuted meetings between the internal verifier and the assessors. At Kingston upon Hull, however, there are no minutes of the internal verifier's meetings with assessors or lists of actions agreed at them. The internal verifiers do not meet to discuss assessment or share good practice.

51. In September 2001, HETA updated the action plan prepared after the original inspection. The resulting document identified actions that had been carried out, actions that were still in the process of being carried out and actions that would form part of the next action plan. HETA did not prepare a further self-assessment report or action plan for the reinspection. The general manager decided on all the grades and involved only senior staff in self-assessment. Learners, employers and subcontractors were not involved.