

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
OCTOBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
JANUARY 2002

Qube Limited  
(also trading as  
Business Enterprise  
Consultants)



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 **leardirect** 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 Qube Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for 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 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](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**Qube Limited provides satisfactory training in retailing and customer service and in hospitality. Employers support learners' needs and offer good opportunities for them to gain experience in well-resourced working environments. Qube Limited has a clearly written equal opportunities policy, and learners have a good understanding of the issues relating to equal opportunities. However, the company does not adequately monitor equal opportunities practices in the workplace. Staff visit learners regularly in the workplace, and take account of learners' unusual working hours when planning these visits. There is adequate assessment of learners' key skills requirements, but there is a delay in identifying additional learning support requirements. Some progress reviews are still unsatisfactory. Individual learning plans are comprehensive, and include target achievement dates. The plans are updated regularly. Management of training is now satisfactory. There is an open management style, all staff contribute equally and management responsibilities are clear. Staff have a good understanding of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. The use of management information is good. Staff development is comprehensive. Managers have introduced a wide range of measures to deal with the low number of modern apprentices completing all the requirements of their qualification framework in hospitality, but these have not yet proved effective. Internal verification is excellent and there are comprehensive arrangements for target-setting. The company has thorough quality assurance which helps to maintain achievements in retailing and customer service but not in hospitality.**

## GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

## KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective visits to learners in the workplace
- ◆ good target-setting and short-term action-planning
- ◆ good work placements with supportive employers
- ◆ thorough management of training
- ◆ good use of management information
- ◆ comprehensive staff development
- ◆ outstanding internal verification

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective management action to rectify low framework completion rates in hospitality
- ◆ ineffective quality assurance of hospitality retention and achievement rates
- ◆ ineffective arrangements to identify additional learning needs

## INTRODUCTION

1. Qube Limited (Qube) started to provide specialist training in hospitality in April 1999 and, for a short period of time, called itself Qube Hospitality. The company shortened its trading name to Qube and now offers training in retailing and customer service and business administration and management. Before April 1999, it had traded under the main company name of Business Enterprise Consultants (BEC) since 1990. BEC was a consultancy company, which also offered commercial training to other organisations. At the time of the original inspection, the company had contracts with the former FOCUS Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and the former North London TEC in the trading name of BEC. The former FOCUS Central London TEC was the co-ordinating TEC for the original inspection. At reinspection, the National Training Partnership, and the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) for London Central, London North, Hertfordshire, and Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire fund Qube's work-based learning for young people. The London Central LSC was the co-ordinating local LSC for the reinspection.

2. The company's head office is located in Henley-on-Thames. It also has accommodation in Enfield, north London, comprising administrative offices for work-based learning for young people, and premises for private interviews and meetings. The company employs 31 full-time staff at its two sites. Only the 19 staff at the Enfield site are involved in work-based learning for young people. The company employs 12 part-time assessors to train and assess learners in the workplace. At the time of the original inspection, there were 91 advanced modern apprentices on hospitality programmes and 77 foundation modern apprentices in customer service, although only 39 of these were TEC funded. At the time of the reinspection there were 21 advanced and 199 foundation modern apprentices in hospitality, 26 advanced and 53 foundation modern apprentices in retailing and customer service, and one advanced and nine foundation modern apprentices in business administration and management. Most training takes place in the workplace, but there is some off-the-job training in retailing and customer service, and in food hygiene. Most learners are employed in London and the Southeast. Other learners are in Leeds, Leicester, Milton Keynes, Norwich and Oxford. Hospitality learners work in hotels, restaurants, pubs and nightclubs. Retailing and customer service, business administration and management learners work in call centres, banks, transport and car hire companies and facilities management.

3. Qube has moved since the original inspection, and it now works in some areas which have a lower proportion of pupils leaving school with good general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs). In 2001, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at a grade C or above ranged from 36.9 per cent in Leicester, 39.6 per cent in Leeds, 40 per cent in Central London, 42.5 per cent in Milton Keynes, to 56.3 per cent in Hertfordshire. The national average was 47.9 per cent, so Hertfordshire was the only area where the number of pupils achieved

above the national average. In September 2001, unemployment rates ranged from 1.2 per cent in Hertfordshire to 4.6 per cent in Leicestershire, which was well above the national average of 2.9 per cent.

4. Qube still trains in areas which, according to the 1991 census, there was a high proportion of people from minority ethnic groups. For example in north and central London the proportion from these groups was 21.1 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively. In Leicester, a new area of operation for Qube, the proportion was 15.1 per cent. However, in Hertfordshire, Milton Keynes and Norwich, it was below the national average of 6.2 per cent by at least 4 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Qube produced its first self-assessment report in September 2000. The second self-assessment report, based on the *Common Inspection Framework*, was completed in November 2001. All staff, and those employers who wished to be included, were consulted and contributed to the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report was informative and included detailed and useful appendices. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. Qube has developed four action plans since September 2000. These plans are detailed and include action points to resolve problems raised at the original inspection. Targets are realistic and are met.

6. The original inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors, who spent a total of 16 days at Qube in October 2000. All key documents relating to training were examined, including training materials, quality assurance documents, internal and external verification documents, questionnaires, data on staff qualifications, and other statistics. Inspectors interviewed 37 learners during 15 visits to workplaces. Fourteen workplace supervisors and employers were interviewed, along with all of the key staff involved in training. Assessment and progress review records were examined, along with learners' portfolios of evidence. Three training sessions were observed, and the grades are given in the table below.

7. The reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of eight days at Qube in January 2002. Inspectors conducted 10 interviews with the managing director, managers and assessors. They examined a range of paperwork including, individual learning plans, NVQ portfolios, records of learners' progress reviews, learners' action plans, files and records, company plans, policies and procedures, analysis of feedback from learners and employers, data on learners' achievements, promotional materials and internal and external verifiers' reports.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Retailing & customer service		1	1			2
Hospitality		1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

**Retailing & customer service  
(customer service)**

**Grade 3**

8. There are 39 foundation modern apprentices in this area, working towards

national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2. The company also has a similar number of privately funded trainees aged over 25 in customer service training. Trainees are recruited directly from employers in the public and private sector. Some off-the-job training is given for theory training. Trainees are located mainly in southern England although there are three in Liverpool, three in Bury and one in Leeds, all of whom are employed by existing clients of Qube. The first trainees on these programmes began in December 1999, and have not yet completed the programme. Induction is carried out in groups, or individually in the workplace, and initial assessments are carried out individually. The internal verifier is employed by Qube, and is also the training manager. There is a team of 12 part-time assessors who visit trainees weekly. Most have been recruited over the past three months, but two have worked for the company since the start of the programme. Since December 1999, 64 per cent of trainees have remained on the programme. Qube identified eight strengths and three weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors considered many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. The grade awarded at inspection is the same as that given in the company's report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent and rigorous assessments
- ◆ good additional qualifications undertaken
- ◆ good work placements

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor key skills assessment practices
- ◆ insufficient use of accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ lack of involvement by trainees in portfolio development

9. All trainees receive visits from their assessor/trainer every week, and sometimes more frequently. Good working relationships are quickly established between the assessor/trainer and trainees. Assessors make detailed observations of the trainees at work, and record verbal questioning as it occurs. Opportunities to use naturally occurring evidence are recognised and taken. Internal verification is undertaken on an ongoing basis. Trainees are making steady progress towards completing their NVQs, and all are clear about the progress they have made. Seventeen trainees have completed their NVQs at level 2 and are now working towards level 3 NVQs.

10. Employers are highly supportive of the training process, and encourage trainees to undertake additional work towards NVQs in processing information using telecommunications or a level 2 NVQ in administration. Employers also allow trainees time off during the working day for their NVQ work if necessary, when work pressures permit. There are currently 18 trainees completing the telecommunications NVQ at level 2, and three trainees are completing additional



NVQs in administration at level 2.

11. All trainees are employed in large organisations which allow them to gain the full range of experience for the NVQ. Most work in call centres in the private sector, in the telecommunications and information technology industries. Evidence is easily collected for customer service and the telecommunications NVQ. A small number of trainees work in a national health service trust, booking patients' appointments. All trainees are in supportive work placements. Workplace supervisors are keen to help trainees. There is good use of witness testimony, exchanges of ideas, and new opportunities for experience are provided if needed.

12. Trainees are informed about key skills at induction but this is not sufficiently emphasised. Trainees are not initially assessed for key skills. All initial training plans include key skills targets at level 1, but not at level 2, which is a requirement of the foundation modern apprenticeship. Although trainees' main qualification is in customer service, those doing the additional telecommunications programme focus on that to begin with, with customer service work cross-referenced or assessed separately afterwards. Trainees are informed that key skills work will be done at the end of the programme, and recording and assessment is left until after they have achieved the other qualifications. New trainees do not have copies of the up-to-date key skills standards. Staff recently attended an awareness-raising session, held by the co-ordinating TEC, for the new key skills, but they do not have materials to help them to train in and assess key skills.

13. Most trainees have been employed in their jobs for at least a year before starting the programme, some for longer, and have already gained considerable experience. Some trainees have already had on-the-job training such as in telephone techniques. This is not always taken into account in their training plans. Some trainees have achieved general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) previously, some at level 3, although not all can produce their certificates. This has not been checked and no account has been taken of their previous key skills experience when planning their programme.

14. Trainees are provided with a portfolio at induction which contains monitoring documents and questions for each qualification. The assessor often completes these with the trainee. Assessors' observations and records of progress reviews from each weekly visit form the major source of evidence, although trainees produce supporting work, case histories and witness testimonies from colleagues and supervisors. Assessors take the portfolios and cross-reference the evidence to the occupational standards. The trainees are therefore not involved in this process. Some trainees have not seen their portfolios for most of their time on the programme.

## Hospitality

## Grade 3

15. There are 91 advanced modern apprentices working towards level 3 NVQs in on-licensed premises supervision. The company has only had trainees on hospitality programmes since April 1999, and so far none have completed the full programme framework. Trainees are employed in a wide variety of establishments such as pubs, nightclubs, ten-pin bowling clubs, hotels, and restaurants. Most trainees work for medium-sized organisations including public house and restaurant chains, while others work for small independent establishments. All training is carried out in the workplace. Twenty trainees are currently working towards NVQs at level 3, and the rest are working towards level 2. Nineteen trainees are completing an additional NVQ in customer service at level 2. The company employs five full-time trainers/assessors, who are organised and managed by a full-time internal verifier. Part-time assessors visit the trainees in the workplace every two weeks, or more if required, to undertake progress reviews and provide training and assessment. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the company's self-assessment report. Some of the strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice, and additional weaknesses were identified during inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the company.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ excellent occupational knowledge of all staff
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ effective, frequent visits made to trainees

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some missed assessment opportunities
- ◆ insufficient targets set for NVQ units on individual plans
- ◆ some trainees on inappropriate training programmes

16. Qube employs highly qualified and experienced training staff who pass on their experience and knowledge effectively to trainees. All have good trade experience and keep updated with industry requirements, through contacts. Most have supervisory or management experience. One member of staff is a former college lecturer and has a certificate in education as well as a broad knowledge of the industry. Another member of staff is a former public house licensee and manager, and is a member of the relevant professional institute. Staff have a wide range of industrial, training and assessment qualifications including NVQs at levels 4 and 5, and assessors and verifiers' awards.

17. All employers give additional support to their trainees when needed, and have developed good working relationships with Qube during their regular visits. Many trainees are given time off for NVQ work, often during working hours. Others

allow trainees time off during their normal working day if the pressures of work can accommodate this. Some employers give trainees additional tasks to allow them to complete the range of requirements for the programme

18. Trainees are highly motivated and keen to learn. They all have an excellent rapport with their trainer/assessor, which is developed through the regular contact between the two. All trainees have the private telephone number of their trainer/assessor, and can contact them at any time. Visits are sometimes arranged at weekends or in the evenings if trainees are working.

19. Some trainees work in busy establishments, and have good opportunities to collect additional evidence for assessment. However, there is little use of witness testimonies or diverse evidence from the workplace, and a heavy reliance upon observation. Some trainees bring in cameras so that they can use photographic evidence, but this practice is not used across the programme and has only recently been introduced. Key skills work is not well integrated into the NVQ programme, and is often left until the end. Trainees are aware that they have to complete key skills, but not of how this fits into the NVQ work which they are doing. Although most trainees are progressing at a satisfactory pace, those working in busy establishments are not always given sufficient guidance on the type of additional evidence to collect from the workplace.

20. All trainees receive good training in the workplace. Training is carried out by experienced supervisors or managers and supplemented by one-to-one training by visiting associates. Employers also allow time to complete assessments and progress reviews, and are flexible in their arrangements with the visiting trainer/assessor. Some employers pay for necessary books and uniforms, and one employer also pays for taxis to take staff home in the evenings. Training is often carried out to employers' requirements, with little direction given by Qube. All employers have copies of the NVQ requirements, but no target dates for completing NVQ units are identified on individual training plans.

21. In 1999-2000, some trainees left the programme early after completing level 2 NVQs and key skills, with 53 per cent of trainees remaining on the programme. This year, 60 per cent are still on the programme. All trainees have been placed on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme without a complete initial assessment of their needs. Some trainees are working in jobs which do not include a supervisory element, which is required for the level 3 NVQ. The company has recently recognised this in its action plan, and has started to address the problem. It has gained a new contract with the TEC to take trainees onto a foundation modern apprenticeship, with the opportunity to convert to an advanced modern apprenticeship if appropriate.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

22. QUBE has adopted BEC's equal opportunities policy which is reviewed annually and updated if required. The company's policy is available to all staff and the self-employed part-time assessors. Overall responsibility for equal opportunities lies with the operations director. Detailed information on equal opportunities is given to all trainees at the start of their programme. This includes a copy of the NVQ appeals procedure and an appeal form, should a trainee wish to appeal against an assessment decision. As part of the pre-placement check, employers are asked for a copy of their equal opportunities policy. If they do not have one, Qube works with the employer to produce one. Of the 136 trainees on the programmes, 52 per cent are women. Forty-nine per cent of trainees on hospitality programmes are women and 59 per cent on customer service programmes. There are no trainees who are recognised as having a disability. Seven per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Of the 15 full-time staff, seven are women. One is from a minority ethnic group and none are classed as having a disability. Of the 12 part-time assessors, 11 are women, and none are from a minority ethnic group or classed as having a disability. Equal opportunities is always an agenda item at the monthly team for hospitality. The customer service team are in the process of establishing regular team meetings.

23. The self-assessment report did not contain sufficient narrative to provide evidence for the areas identified as strengths or weaknesses. The one strength was considered to be no more than normal practice and inspectors agreed with the one identified weakness. Two further strengths and one weakness were identified by inspectors, who awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities issues by trainees
- ◆ rigorous complaints procedure

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic monitoring of employers' equal opportunities procedures
- ◆ insufficient use of equal opportunities data

24. Qube's equal opportunities policy is detailed and comprehensive. It includes reference to relevant legislation. The policy is further supported by a number of procedures covering a range of issues such as complaints, grievance and discipline. Trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues, which are covered during their induction to their programme. The information covered at induction is reinforced by support material given to trainees. Some trainees, particularly in customer service, also receive detailed information on equal opportunities during their induction to the work placement, at further training

events and through updates organised by their employers. Trainees are aware of equal opportunities issues and their impact on them as employees and trainees. Some hospitality trainees work in potentially vulnerable environments such as nightclubs. They are particularly well protected in the workplace. There are a range of measures for staff, such as panic buttons in all bar areas, closed circuit television and fully trained security staff.

25. Few complaints are made, although where they have, prompt action has been taken and clearly recorded. Owing to the frequency of the visits by Qube's staff to the trainees, many issues are dealt with before they develop into complaints. The complaints and NVQ appeals procedures are covered in detail during induction, and trainees have a good knowledge of them. Internal verifiers have visited many of the trainees in their workplaces. This has helped trainees to understand the role of the internal verifier and also their right of appeal regarding assessment decisions.

26. Qube does not systematically monitor employers' equal opportunities procedures. A pre-placement check by its staff ensures that potential placements have an equal opportunities policy. However, there is no further monitoring of employers with regard to equality of opportunity. All trainees who join the programme are already employed and are nominated by the employer for the training programme. However, there is no rigorous check to ensure that the selection procedure ensures equality of opportunity. During progress reviews, questions are often asked of the employer relating to equality of opportunity, although this is not recorded. The progress review forms do not include any reference to equal opportunities issues.

27. Regular data are collected regarding participation in the training programmes in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability. Little use is made of these data to widen participation in the training programmes. The data are not analysed in order to identify under-represented groups or to prompt further investigation and action with regard to equality of opportunity. There has been no staff development in this area to date, although this training need has been recognised by the company.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

28. Learners are already employed before they start training. Qube's sales and marketing team promotes its training programmes to employers. Qube's staff advise potential learners on available training. Initial assessments help learners to choose the most appropriate level of qualification and training programme. Induction takes place at the workplace in group or individual sessions. Learners are given written details of their programmes of training, equal opportunities, health and safety procedures and policies and the appeals procedure. Assessors review learners' progress every 12 weeks. Learners have a key skills assessment later in their training which identifies the level of support they need to achieve the

qualification.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor individual training plans
- ◆ poor initial assessment
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews

29. Since the original inspection, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, Qube has resolved the weaknesses of poor individual learning plans and initial assessment. Individual learning plans now cover the framework fully and contain target dates. The initial assessment process is more thorough. Although not fully resolved, Qube has made good progress in remedying the weakness of ineffective progress reviews. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective visits to learners in the workplace

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor progress reviews
- ◆ ineffective arrangements to identify additional support requirements

30. As the self-assessment report recognises, arrangements for visiting learners in the workplace are thorough and effective. Each learner has a nominated member of Qube's staff as their first point of contact. Assessors visit learners at least every three weeks, depending on learners' needs, to monitor and assess their training, to carry out progress reviews and to check on their wellbeing. The visits are recorded on log sheets and in learners' records. Assessors visit hospitality learners in the evening, if this is more convenient for the learners. At the end of each visit, learners receive a written action plan which sets out what the assessor and learner have agreed should be achieved by the next visit. Whatever they agree is monitored to check learners' progress and then assessed during the following visit. Learners are well prepared for assessment and receive a copy of the assessment plan.

31. Since the original inspection, the overall quality of learners' progress reviews has improved, including the procedures and forms for recording progress. Learners' progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks. Administrators remind assessors when progress reviews are due. At the end of the progress review, learners are asked to comment. The employer, learner, assessor, internal verifier and administration team are all given a copy of the progress review. Most employers are involved in the progress reviews. Internal verifiers check the quality of the progress reviews and provide feedback to assessors. However, some progress reviews are still unsatisfactory. The records of these reviews contain insufficient detail on learners' progress, have no meaningful targets or do not

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Assessors set up an appointment with another employer for two learners who were not happy in their jobs. They are now joint licensees of one of the employer's pubs.*

provide long-term direction. Assessors ask questions about equal opportunities and health and safety but the questions lack detail and often are not successful in identifying problems. The self-assessment report recognises these weaknesses. Qube is carrying out staff development to improve the poor progress reviews.

32. Qube has improved its initial assessment since the original inspection. All learners have an initial assessment of their occupational aptitude before starting their training. This helps assessors to identify the most appropriate training programme and to develop realistic individual learning plans. There is a delay in identifying learners with additional learning needs. There is no diagnostic assessment to identify learners with additional learning needs. The key skills assessment is carried out later and sometimes identifies learners with additional needs. There is no effective screening or accurate information to show how much support learners may need. It can take up to three months for Qube to identify that a learner has additional learning needs. Qube has started to resolve this weakness by giving staff a checklist of key indicators and a set procedure to follow to help them to recognise learners with additional learning needs earlier. Qube has bought a diagnostic system which will indicate specific learning needs such as dyslexia as well as identifying learners with additional learning needs. It is too early to say whether this has been successful or not.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

33. Qube is a private training company, which used to trade under the name BEC. The company's work-based learning for young people is managed from its offices in Enfield. The managing director is responsible for this provision. The management team consists of the managing director, the head of field operations, head of sales and marketing, head of operations and head of finance and compliance. A team of business managers and assessors is responsible for training and assessment. Business managers and assessors act as internal verifiers. There is an administrative team in Qube's offices in Enfield for the company's work-based provision. Since the original inspection, all areas of learning have been brought into a single management structure. Qube has equal opportunities policies and arrangements for applying them.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor understanding of programme frameworks by staff
- ◆ unclear management responsibilities for some staff
- ◆ poor sharing of good practice
- ◆ insufficient staff training

34. All these weaknesses have been dealt with. Staff now understand the modern apprenticeship frameworks. All staff are trained on the frameworks and are informed promptly of any changes to the modern apprenticeships. Qube has

reorganised its management structure to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility for staff and consistent practice across the company. There is a wide programme of staff development which includes guidance on, recognition of, and assistance for, learners' additional needs. Inspectors awarded the same grade for management as the self-assessment report but found different strengths and weaknesses.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ thorough arrangements to manage training
- ◆ good use of management information
- ◆ comprehensive staff development

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of effective action to deal with poor framework completion rates in hospitality

35. There are comprehensive arrangements for the management of training. Qube has an agreement with its providers of workplace training about what training is needed. Each individual learning plan includes a detailed statement specifying what training the work-placement provider is responsible for and what Qube will provide. Workplace training is monitored by assessors who visit regularly. Internal verifiers and business managers check that the appropriate training has taken place. Internal verifiers also monitor the quality of inductions, learners' progress reviews and action plans. Staff are clear about their responsibilities. Assessors and internal verifiers are given guidance manuals which explain clearly their roles and what they have to do. The guidance manuals emphasise training and the needs of the learners. All staff have a clear job description. There are regular staff meetings to discuss training and achievement. Minutes of these meetings are not sufficiently detailed to be informative.

36. The use of management information is good. The company has an effective system for collecting information on learners. It gathers data on gender, ethnicity, progress, starts, early leavers, progress and achievements of qualifications and the modern apprenticeship frameworks. Qube uses the data to produce reports on learners' performance across the company, for a geographical area and a particular area of learning, for specific times and for each of its employers. It also produces reports on achievement and retention rates for learners from under-represented groups. Managers use this information well to monitor and analyse the performance of learners. Qube also uses the information to help develop actions to improve achievement and retention rates. These rates have improved in retailing and customer service, but not in hospitality.

37. At the original inspection, insufficient staff training was a weakness but this is no longer the case. Qube now has thorough procedures for staff development and training. The training and development policy is succinct and relevant. All staff are



appraised annually and their training needs are assessed. This information and any training needs established at induction contribute to the staff development and training plan, which is reviewed every six months. Costs are budgeted and allocated and the staff development and training programmes are set up and evaluated. Training is provided by Qube and by external organisations. Where appropriate, information from training is passed on to other members of staff at team meetings. The wide and appropriate range of staff development programmes includes health and safety, equal opportunities, assessors' and internal verifiers' training, training to teach key skills, a diploma in management studies and a masters degree in computing. Visiting speakers attend team meetings to discuss relevant topics, for example the accreditation of prior learning. These strengths were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

38. Managers have not resolved the poor rates of framework completion in hospitality. Hospitality forms 72 per cent of the company's work-based provision, and completion rates are very low. Since Qube started providing modern apprentice programmes in hospitality, fewer than 1 per cent of learners have achieved all the requirements of the framework. However, 55 per cent of learners achieve an NVQ. In retailing and customer service, the second largest area of provision, 54 per cent of learners completed the framework and 63 per cent achieved an NVQ. Managers have reorganised the company's management structure, reviewed recruitment, strengthened induction and provided more staff training. At the time of the reinspection it was too early to judge if this action would improve the rate of framework completions in hospitality.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

39. Qube has procedures and arrangements to assure the quality of its provision. The quality assurance policy sets out Qube's commitment to quality assurance including the review process. A quality assurance strategy explains how the company will maintain and improve training for its learners. The company's working procedures set out the standards for all work including training and assessment. The head of finance and compliance is responsible for quality assurance in the company. Qube holds the ISO 9001 quality standard, an international quality assurance standard, and was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 1999. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor monitoring of training in workplace
- ◆ slow implementation of some quality assurance procedures

40. Qube has made good progress since the original inspection in dealing with the first weakness. Assessors visit the workplace frequently to ensure that training is appropriate, and internal verifiers and business managers review the assessors.

Quality assurance procedures are now well established and are an integral part of operations. Inspectors awarded the same grade for quality assurance as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ outstanding internal verification procedures
- ◆ thorough target-setting

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of impact of quality assurance on hospitality retention and achievement rates

41. Internal verification is of a very high standard. The company prepares comprehensive monthly sampling plans. Internal verifiers decide how many assessments to sample for internal verification based on the experience, expertise, and qualifications of the assessor. Most verification is carried out in the workplace and includes observation of assessments and checking learners' portfolios. Internal verifiers interview learners to make sure they understand the assessment process. Internal verification takes place during and at end of the learners' NVQ training. Internal verifiers give assessors thorough verbal and written feedback. They prepare an action plan to deal with any problems. The internal verification co-ordinator moderates verifiers' judgements, checks for consistency, and checks to see that standards are maintained. After moderation, the co-ordinators give feedback to the internal verifiers. Internal verifiers hold regular meetings to discuss internal verification problems and to pass on updates from the awarding bodies. External verifiers' reports describe the internal verification arrangements as excellent.

42. Qube has well-established and thorough target-setting methods. This strength is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Targets are set for learners in their action and individual learning plans. The company sets targets for recruitment, for retention rates, and for the achievement of qualifications and completion of frameworks. These are set at a number of levels, including for each assessor's group of learners, each of the company's geographical areas and for each area of learning. Targets are based on past performance but also take into account the need to continually improve learners' performance. Some targets are not realistic, as they are too challenging. Achievements are reviewed monthly against the targets. If any targets are not met, Qube tries to work out why, and then tries to resolve the situation. This has worked in retailing and customer service but not in hospitality.

43. Qube's quality assurance is comprehensive. There are thorough methods to collect the views of learners and employers. Learners are given questionnaires during training and when they leave. Employers and staff are also asked for their views. Qube uses the questionnaires to produce a summary. Findings from the questionnaires are evaluated and action points are established to resolve problems. There is no formal method to show if action points have been carried out. There

are also clearly written quality assurance procedures including policies and work procedures to set standards for training and other activities. The company regularly updates the action plan from the self-assessment report. Better quality assurance has led to improved initial assessments, more detailed and regularly updated individual learning plans and more informative learners' files.

44. Inspectors agreed with most judgements in the detailed self-assessment report prepared in November 2001. They found key strengths and weaknesses that the company had not identified and found that some judgements were not significant. The report's key strengths and weaknesses were not supported directly by evidence although sources of the evidence were indicated. Inspectors awarded the same grades as those given in the self-assessment report.