

INSPECTION REPORT

Intuitions Limited

08 April 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 **learndirect** 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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Intuitions Limited provides publicly funded and private training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. It is situated in Harrogate and arranges work placements for work-based learning within a 20-mile radius of the town. There are also training facilities in York.

Overall judgement

The quality of work-based learning for hairdressing and beauty therapy training programmes is good. The leadership and management of Intuitions are satisfactory. Equal opportunities and quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The overall quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective internal and external communication structure
- effective staff appraisal and professional development
- well-planned and effective internal verification
- thorough assessment practices
- thorough and effective progress reviews

KEY WEAKNESSES

- low achievement rates
- no written strategic objectives
- insufficient understanding of quality assurance by staff

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OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further develop use of management information system
- improve information in employers' handbook
- better promotion of training to under-represented groups

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 13 days at Intuitions Limited (Intuitions) in April 2002. They visited eight salons and interviewed 24 learners, 12 workplace supervisors and 11 staff. Inspectors observed and graded nine learning sessions. They examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios of evidence, progress reviews, policies and procedures, contracts, staff records, promotional literature, and reports from the awarding bodies. Inspectors studied Intuitions' self-assessment report, which was produced in February 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	9
Total	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	9

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Intuitions is a private limited company, established in 1993. The company provides work-based learning for young people in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Learners are employed in hairdressing and beauty salons within a 20-mile radius of the main site in Harrogate. At the time of the inspection, there were 79 learners. Intuitions is owned by one person who employs three full-time staff and five part-time staff. The company has an administrative office and training rooms in Harrogate. There is another training site in Harrogate and one in York. The main training centre comprises a client reception area, a beauty salon, administrative offices, two hairdressing salons and rooms for teaching background knowledge, training and information technology (IT), as well as a student common room.

3. Intuitions has a contract with the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of work-based learning. The unemployment rate in North Yorkshire was 1.9 per cent in October 2001. In Harrogate the rate was 1.2 per cent. This compares with 3.7 per cent for the Yorkshire & Humberside region and 2.9 per cent for England. The proportion of the population of Harrogate and York from minority ethnic groups is 0.9 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 68 per cent in Harrogate and 54 per cent in York, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Intuitions provides training programmes in hairdressing and beauty therapy which enable young people to gain skills in a real working environment. Learners are well supported by staff who carry out thorough assessments and well-structured progress reviews. Retention rates have improved, but achievement rates are low. Intuitions has recognised that too many learners were leaving without completing the modern apprenticeship framework and has devised an effective strategy for key skills training.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. Intuitions has been under new management since March 2000. There are four senior managers. The new owner, who is also the company director, is responsible for strategy and administration. The director of operations is responsible for key skills training and internal verification. The finance manager deals with company finance, claims and contracts. The training centre co-ordinator is responsible for reception, marketing and recruitment. The technical skills development manager supervises the work of four trainers/assessors and, together with three of the senior managers, provides some training and assessment. Five members of staff act as internal verifiers, and two others are working toward their internal verifier qualification. Intuitions has an equal opportunities and anti-harassment policy, procedures for grievance and appeals, and a range of quality assurance policies and procedures. The company was accredited as an Investor in People in April 2001, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The director and the director of operations share responsibility for the management of quality assurance. Intuitions has produced a self-assessment report each year since August 1998. The most recent self-assessment report was produced in February 2002, in preparation for inspection.

STRENGTHS

- effective internal and external communication structure
- effective staff appraisal and professional development
- well-planned and effective internal verification
- very thorough evaluation of training and assessment

WEAKNESSES

- no written strategic objectives
- inadequate equal opportunities training for staff
- insufficient understanding of quality assurance by some staff

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further develop use of management information system
- improve information in employers' handbook
- vary days on which assessors' meetings are held
- better monitoring of equal opportunities within work placements
- better promotion of training to under-represented groups
- better wheelchair access
- more accessible quality assurance policies and procedures

6. Internal communications within Intuitions are frequent, constructive and well-

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organised. Employees attend regular meetings within their individual work teams, as well as full staff meetings, to discuss a range of relevant issues, including key skills training, health and safety, equal opportunities, and changes to working practices. Full staff meetings are often used as a forum for staff development on key aspects of training, for example, learners' progress reviews. Staff value the meetings, participate actively in discussions and share a strong sense of loyalty to the company.

7. External communications with employers and work-based assessors are well managed, through regular meetings and frequent written communications. Work-based assessors are clear about their learners' progress, and have sufficient information to link effectively on- and off-the-job learning. They and the employers value the information sent to them by Intuitions about subjects such as key skills and the national minimum wage. There is a handbook for employers which contains information about learners', employers' and trainers' rights and responsibilities, and topics such as health and safety. Although written clearly and well presented, the handbook only briefly mentions employers' roles with regard to equality of opportunity and the learners' right to study leave. It does not emphasise the importance of these issues. Assessors' meetings are always held on the same evening of the week, which makes it impossible for some work-based assessors to attend. Although they receive minutes and handouts from the meetings, they are unable to meet with other assessors, or participate in discussions.

8. The appraisal and professional development of Intuitions' staff are effective. Staff have a formal appraisal twice each year. This is thorough and includes employees' self-evaluation of their performance and a discussion with the director about strengths, areas for improvement, and training needs. Monthly meetings between the employee and their manager complement the annual appraisal, improve performance and foster good working relationships. Issues such as the employees' and learners' progress are discussed, and problems and achievements are shared. The formal appraisals and the monthly meetings result in the setting of personal targets and the identification of professional development needs. Intuitions encourages staff to attend training courses linked to the needs of the company and related to the staff development plan. After attending a training course, staff provide a written evaluation of what they have learned and give a short presentation at a full staff meeting. The self-assessment report identifies the good appraisal and staff development as a strength. When appraisal arrangements prove to be unsatisfactory they are changed. For example, the introduction of peer appraisals required staff to comment on the performance of colleagues, and to propose a grade for aspects of their work. Some comments were over-critical and unhelpful, and had a negative effect on staff. The director has since decided that such appraisals will not be used in that form within the company again.

9. The company director of Intuitions produces a business plan each year. This relates to the financial position of the company, estimates the amount of income that needs to be generated, and the sources available. There are no written strategic objectives for the company. The director has clear plans regarding the future of the company, but has not recorded these or shared them with staff. Although staff have a general understanding of these plans, they are unclear how they will be realised.

10. Intuitions' management information system is satisfactory and is used appropriately. The director has plans to use the system to analyse trends in the performance of learners and assessors.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

11. Intuitions has a clear policy covering equal opportunities and anti-harassment in relation to learners and employees, which includes a named person with responsibility for its introduction. Equal opportunities data are collected and analysed. Intuitions is aware of the low proportion of male learners, or learners from minority ethnic groups and the policy expresses a commitment to remedy this. However, Intuitions' promotional materials are not designed to attract under-represented groups.

12. Intuitions conducts surveys of employers and learners, relating specifically to equal opportunities. In the case of employers, the survey is designed to establish how many salons have a written policy and whether employers are aware of their responsibilities. The self-assessment report identified the need for greater monitoring of equal opportunities within salons.

13. Since the previous inspection, Intuitions has ensured that equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at all staff meetings. It includes equal opportunities in each learners' progress review and staff monitor learners' working conditions in the salons. Intuitions provides equal opportunities training for employers and work-based assessors.

14. Training for staff in equal opportunities is inadequate. It consists of one training session involving the same video which is used as part of the learners' induction. There are no plans for any further staff training to raise their awareness of equal opportunities.

15. The self-assessment report included a reference to the absence of wheelchair access at the main training site. However, there are contingency arrangements to train wheelchair users at other locations where there is good access. Intuitions has identified those employers with access for wheelchair users.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

16. Intuitions has a comprehensive and well-organised system for internal verification. There is a detailed plan, which ensures that internal verification covers all assessors and learners and an appropriate range of NVQ units, and assessment methods. Internal verification is regular, and involves the examination of learners' portfolios, the observation of teaching and assessment, and interviews with learners. Detailed feedback is provided verbally and in writing, which enables assessors to review and improve their assessment practices. There is regular internal verification of work-based assessment, and observation of the training takes place on the job. All tutors evaluate each of the sessions they teach, to identify possible improvements. Assessment is thorough and well planned. Learners have a very good understanding of the assessment process and participate fully. Assessors consider that the thoroughness of internal verification helps them to improve their assessment practice.

17. Intuitions evaluates systematically many aspects of the training programme and assessment process, and makes good use of feedback. Learners' views are sought through a series of questionnaires and regular focus groups. Employers complete questionnaires once each year to give their view of training. Induction, individual training programmes and key skills training are evaluated regularly and thoroughly. The data collected result in changes which benefit learners. For example, as a result of evaluation, changes have been made to the teaching and assessment of key skills on the beauty therapy training programme, and to the design of assessment plans.

18. All Intuitions' staff share a commitment to improvement. However, some have insufficient understanding of their role with regard to quality assurance and are unsure how to improve consistency to benefit learners. Many are unclear about the link between effective quality assurance and improving staff and learners' performance. Intuitions has quality assurance policies and procedures for most aspects of training and assessment. Although satisfactory, these are not held in a central quality assurance file. Staff are unclear about the importance of the policies and procedures in establishing an acceptable standard of performance and ensuring consistency.

19. The director of operations wrote the self-assessment report and arrived at the judgements and grades after consultation with learners and employers. The self-assessment report is detailed and provides useful contextual information about the training provision, and good guidance for evidence in support of the judgements made. It identifies accurately some strengths and weaknesses, but overstates the importance of some strengths. The self-assessment report is supported by a detailed and appropriate action plan which is updated regularly.

Good Practice

The director of Intuitions builds and maintains staff morale with team-building and social events and acknowledges staff publicly for particularly worthwhile contributions. Staff appreciate this.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	79	2

20. Intuitions provides training in hairdressing and beauty therapy for young people in Harrogate and the surrounding areas. The company offers modern apprenticeships and NVQ training. Of the 79 learners currently in training, 69 are training in hairdressing and 10 are training in beauty therapy. There are 46 foundation modern apprentices, and 24 advanced modern apprentices. Nine learners are completing NVQs in hairdressing or beauty therapy. Of these, eight are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing and one is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in beauty therapy. All of the learners are employed in salons. Intuitions recruits learners directly and employers refer learners to the company for training. A two-day induction programme covering all aspects of the modern apprenticeship framework, as well as health and safety and equal opportunities, takes place at the beginning of the training programme. Basic and key skills are assessed during induction and there is a test to identify learners with dyslexia. Pre-programme taster days have been introduced within the past 12 months, enabling potential learners to experience the hairdressing and beauty sector and to understand the skills needed. There is pre-entry guidance and counselling to ensure that learners are recruited to training programmes which meet their career aspirations and employers give learners an induction to their salons. Learners join the training programme throughout the year and most attend Intuitions' training centre once a fortnight, where they gain practical skills and background knowledge. Some learners attend only for the background knowledge aspect of the training programme, as their salons provide all of the practical training. Hairdressing and beauty therapy modern apprentices spend their remaining time at work, where they receive on-the-job training. Intuitions also has two alternative venues for training which are located more conveniently for some learners. One is in Harrogate and the other is in York. Key skills training and assessment are an integral part of the training programme. The employers offer a broad range of experience from small to large high-street establishments. All learners have an individual learning plan. Progress review meetings take place every six weeks. Internal verification includes all work-based assessment and assessment within the training centre. There are 39 work-based assessors operating across 50 salons. There are 39 hairdressing salons and 11 beauty salons.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	4		15		40											
Retained*	0		0	0	18	45											
Successfully completed	0		0	0	4	10											
Still in learning	4		6	40	14	35											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	17		46		33											
Retained*	0		27	59	19	58											
Successfully completed	0		4	9	11	33											
Still in learning	15		23	50	8	24											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		3		15											
Retained*	0		3	100	8	53											
Successfully completed	0		1	33	6	40											
Still in learning	5		2	67	2	13											

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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STRENGTHS

- thorough assessment practices
- thorough and effective reviews
- comprehensive strategy for the implementation of key skills
- effective and adaptable individual learning support

WEAKNESSES

- low achievement rates
- inadequate use of accreditation of previous experience

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of initial assessment process

21. Assessment practices are thorough and staff apply these consistently within the training centre and in the salons. Learners on all training programmes have a clear understanding of the assessment process and are aware of the appeals' procedure associated with assessment. Assessment is available on demand. Learners who complete their assessment plans are able to identify and understand fully the relevant units, elements and performance criteria within the formal assessment document. Learners' knowledge of the qualifications is thorough. They demonstrate an understanding of the range of the performance criteria. Key skills assessment opportunities are identified and are integral to assessment plans. Intuitions encourages learners to identify assessment opportunities which occur during their everyday work. This also occurs during the six-weekly progress reviews. In beauty therapy, all assessment occurs in Intuitions' commercial salon. This is a realistic working environment catering for a diverse group of clients. Regular meetings with work-based assessors deal with changes in legislation, standardisation of assessment practices and changes to the modern apprenticeship framework. These meetings are well attended by employers' representatives, who use the opportunity to share experiences and good practice. All assessment records are completed thoroughly to awarding body standards. Assessors, while unobtrusive during observation, are quick to notice any difficulties encountered by learners. Feedback is given both verbally and in writing. Assessors ask questions effectively. Their questions relate to aspects of background knowledge. Learners are expected to maintain and update records of progress in their portfolios of evidence. This information is also held centrally and is discussed in

progress reviews. Learners' portfolios of evidence are comprehensive and provide an accurate reflection of learner performance.

22. Progress reviews are effective and the review process is thorough. Review meetings include a senior member of staff, the learner and the employer. They take place in the workplace every six weeks, or more frequently when necessary. This emphasises the importance of the review process. Employers understand their role within the review system. Learners negotiate challenging, but realistic targets which are then discussed and agreed with the employer's representative, who is usually the workplace mentor or assessor. Progress reviews are detailed and well documented. Records are held centrally with a copy kept in learners' portfolios of evidence. The previous review is referred to constantly, in order to assess progress and the achievement of targets. The review covers the modern apprenticeship framework and highlights equal opportunities, health and safety and, if appropriate, key skills training.

23. Intuitions has developed a thorough approach to key skills training which is applied consistently. As a result, learners and employers understand key skills very well. All paperwork, including handouts and assignments, is standardised across all areas. Learners demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of key skills training and its place in the modern apprenticeship framework. Key skills training is regarded as an integral part of the training programme. Learners' portfolios contain key skills logs, which are cross-referenced to evidence in the portfolio. Assessment planning and schemes of work highlight clearly any opportunities for the development of key skills and raises employers' awareness of them. A skills' audit of all staff identified the need for a programme of professional development.

24. Intuitions provides learners with effective individual support and arranges off-the-job training to suit learners' requirements. Most learners attend the training centre once every two weeks for practical training and background knowledge. Intuitions' staff visit one salon for two hours each week to provide one-to-one support with any learner who has specific learning difficulties. Those learners training on the level 3 NVQ, telephone Intuitions to arrange practical assessments in the workplace. Training co-ordinators always accommodate these requirements, even at short notice. Staff are keen to remove barriers to achievement. For example, one learner, absent due to sickness, but requiring a final written assessment in order to qualify within the allotted time, completed the assessment at home with a member of Intuition's staff in attendance. Staff also accompany learners on visits to a range of external support agencies. Intuitions has reproduced all of the schemes of work and learning materials, including the induction package, in a format suitable for use by learners with dyslexia. Learners with dyslexia also attend specialists in Harrogate or York for two additional hours each week for specific support. The high level of individual support means that learners are well motivated, enthusiastic, and value all aspects of their training programme. Employers are involved fully and are keen to take an active role in ensuring learners' progress and development.

25. The number of learners on both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships

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increased significantly in March 2000 when Intuitions acquired a contract from another training provider. Many of these learners had been given an inadequate initial assessment. Seventy-five per cent of the advanced modern apprentices did not have the potential to complete the level 3 NVQ to which they had been recruited originally. Many of these learners had specific learning needs which had not been met. Their progress was slow and their key skills development was poor. Intuitions devised an action plan to develop learners' key skills and to diagnose learners' needs. Retention rates have improved over the past three years. Learners' retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship rose from 58 per cent in 1999-2000 to 88 per cent in 2001-02. A similar improvement in retention rates took place among advanced modern apprentices, and for learners on NVQ training programmes. Overall, achievement rates are low. Achievement of the full modern apprenticeship framework by foundation modern apprentices declined in 2000-01 to less than 10 per cent. Currently, 88 per cent of foundation modern apprentices are still on target to complete their training programme. Achievement rates on the advanced modern apprenticeship also fell in 2000-01, but current retention rates are high and all learners are due to complete their training on target. For learners on NVQ training programmes, there was an achievement rate of 40 per cent in 1999-2000 and 33 per cent in 2000-01. All of the 2001-02 learners have been retained and are due to complete their qualification within the target time.

26. A self-assessment exercise during the induction process identifies learners' previous achievements and experience. Intuitions consults learner's former employers to verify abilities and competences. The company considers performance in earlier examinations when assessing key skills. However, insufficient use is made of the accreditation of previous learning when devising the learners' individual learning plan.

27. Intuitions recognises the need to identify more accurately any potential personal and social barriers to learning at the start of the training programme, in order to further improve retention rates. At present, Intuitions deals with problems when they occur. Better use of initial assessment tools is required to highlight and prevent difficulties promptly.

Good Practice

In preparation for their progress review meetings, learners are asked to consider a set of questions relating to current practice, strengths and weaknesses within the training programme and their progress to date. As a result, learners are well prepared for any discussions in the review meeting.

Poor Practice

In contravention of good health and safety practice, an infant was present in the commercial beauty salon during a busy session. A range of treatments, including epilation, were being provided while the child was sitting on the floor and eating. This created a potential hazard to the learner, client and the child.