

INSPECTION REPORT

Gloucestershire Training Group

24 July 2003



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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

INSPECTION REPORT

Gloucestershire Training Group

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd (GTG) was established in 1978 to provide work-based learning in engineering. It is a group training association, with charitable status, and is owned and managed by eleven local member companies in the engineering, manufacturing and production sector. It also provides work-based learning in engineering for learners from six local non-member companies in these sectors. GTG trains foundation and advanced modern apprentices in electrical and mechanical engineering. Since 1993, the number of member companies and also the number of learners that GTG trains has decreased.

2. GTG's management board consists of a senior representative from each of the member companies and the chief executive of GTG. Four members of the management board, with the chief executive, form the executive committee. The chief executive is also the group training manager and company secretary. He is responsible for the operational management of the company. GTG has 11 staff. The training team consists of a chief instructor and three instructors/trainers, a training officer and a further education co-ordinator who manages the subcontracted background knowledge/technical certificate training. This is subcontracted to three colleges of further education. A training co-ordinator also acts as personal assistant to the chief executive. There are two support staff. GTG is accredited as an Investor in People, this is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

3. GTG funds its training through the Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Approximately 4 per cent of Gloucestershire's employment is in advanced engineering, mainly in the manufacture of measuring instruments, aircraft and motor vehicles. Gloucestershire has a minority ethnic representation of 2.3 per cent, according to the 2001 census, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent. The proportion of school leavers in Gloucestershire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above is high. In 2001, it was 58 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent for England as a whole.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

4. There are 93 learners on the engineering training programmes. Sixteen learners are working towards a foundation modern apprenticeship, six in electrical engineering and 10 in mechanical engineering. Seventy-seven learners are working towards an advanced modern apprenticeship, 33 in electrical engineering and 44 in mechanical engineering. Learners are employed by local companies in the Gloucestershire area. During their first year in training, learners attend GTG's training centre in Gloucester full time and follow the performing engineering operations level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ). On-the-job training is provided at the employer's premises and learners attend one of

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three colleges of further education on a day-release basis to work towards a technical certificate. Learner progress review visits are planned to take place every six weeks.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	40
Number of staff interviews	15
Number of employer interviews	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12
Number of partner/external agency interviews	2
Number of visits	16

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The quality of the training provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, GTG's leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory, but its arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in engineering programmes is satisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. Retention rates for the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. Retention on the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes has increased from 46 per cent in 1997-98 and 1998-99, to 67 per cent in 1999-2000. GTG introduced the foundation modern apprenticeship in 2000 and retention for 2000-01 is

75 per cent.

7. Learners make slow progress towards completing their frameworks. Twenty-five per cent of learners have exceeded their original planned date of completion. Six of the foundation modern apprentices who started the programme in 2000-01 have not completed their key skills. Seven advanced modern apprentices who started in mechanical engineering in 1997-98 and six who started in 1998-99 are still in learning. Most of these learners are working towards the level 3 NVQ.

Quality of education and training

8. Off-the-job training in the workshop centre is good. All learners are trained and assessed to level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations. Learners develop very good practical skills during their foundation year at the training centre. The structure of the training and assessment programme, in both electrical and mechanical engineering, is satisfactory.

9. Learners receive good on-the-job training at their employers' sites. They develop a broad range of engineering skills and gain wide experience. The on-the-job training is well planned to ensure that learners are given the chance to operate in different areas of their workplace. Most employers have modern, good-quality resources available to learners. Learners are given a thorough induction into the workplace.

10. The range and quality of equipment in the mechanical and electronics workshops is satisfactory. There are sufficient machine tools in the mechanical workshops. The electrical and electronics equipment is appropriate and meets the needs of the learners. The computer-aided design (CAD) suite is suitably equipped with industry-standard software systems.

11. The initial assessment of learners' aptitude and skills for the training programme includes satisfactory assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills. Where appropriate, prior learning is accredited.

12. The training programmes are satisfactory and meet learners' needs. Learners are involved in developing their individual learning plans. The workshop training centre provides a realistic work environment.

13. Additional individual learning support for key skills development and support for off-the-job training is available to learners. The arrangements to provide this additional support are satisfactory.

14. There is insufficient observation and assessment in the workplace. There is an over-reliance on witness testimony. Some learners have not had recorded assessments for more than three months and some learners have no work prepared for assessment. GTG does not always take action to follow up learners who have not received recent assessments.

15. **Target-setting is weak in some progress reviews.** Clear, attainable and measurable targets are not routinely set. Where targets are identified, these are not always sufficiently detailed or challenging. Some recent progress reviews set more realistic and attainable targets.

Leadership and management

16. **Internal communication at GTG is good.** Managers are approachable and staff are involved in discussions about the learning programmes. Staff and board members make valuable contributions to the self-assessment and business planning processes.

17. The management and planning of off-the-job training at GTG's training centre are satisfactory. Learners value the skills and experience they develop in their first year of training at GTG. However, learners do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how their training activities can contribute to their key skills evidence.

18. Management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support is satisfactory. Although GTG does not have a policy for basic skills support, the thorough induction arrangements for learners include satisfactory assessment of their numeracy and literacy skills.

19. GTG's management of subcontractors is satisfactory. Detailed service level agreements are in place. There are regular and effective meetings with each of the subcontractors, at which learners' progress, attendance and support are discussed and actions agreed.

20. Arrangements for staff development are satisfactory. Useful and relevant training sessions are arranged for staff and some individual staff development is supported by GTG. However, there is no structured evaluation of this training.

21. Resources are satisfactory and meet the needs of learners. Staff are appropriately qualified for their roles at GTG. The equipment at the training centre is well managed and maintained. There is an extensive range of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, with good internet facilities and access to a virtual learning environment.

22. **Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity issues.** Equality and diversity are promoted effectively during the induction programme. Equality is regularly monitored during learners' progress reviews. GTG has a clear and effective procedure for complaints. Learners are well protected by GTG's management of equality of opportunity.

23. Internal communication of GTG's commitment to equality and diversity is satisfactory, although staff job descriptions do not include the need to ensure equality in their working practices. GTG's policy for equality of opportunity does not include policies for bullying and harassment.

24. The promotion of equality is satisfactory. GTG actively participates in a range of local career events. It has a display stand, which includes positive images to promote engineering careers to women. However GTG's recruitment leaflet does not provide information on the company's policy for equal opportunities.

25. **GTG does not make sufficient use of data to analyse and monitor equality of opportunity** across the range of its activities. Retention and achievement rates are not systematically monitored in the context of equality of opportunity. There is no action plan for equality of opportunity.

26. **Access to the first floor of the training centre is poor for people with restricted mobility.** This does not adversely affect current learners. The access to the workshop, training rooms and facilities on the ground floor is satisfactory.

27. **Effective use is made of learners' feedback.** GTG has a first-year apprentice committee which provides a useful forum for learners. Learners make a valuable contribution to the self-assessment process. GTG uses the analysis of feedback from learners effectively in planning training and staff development.

28. **Progress to bring about improvements is slow.** Action-planning is not sufficiently detailed to give effective support to learners. Many learners have made little progress in working towards their NVQ and/or key skills since they completed their foundation year at GTG's training centre. There is little target-setting for staff or use of performance indicators to improve the quality of training.

29. **The monitoring of policies and procedures for quality assurance is inadequate.** There is no routine monitoring of these procedures to ensure compliance or to measure their effectiveness. The policies for quality assurance are not adequately reviewed on a regular basis. Arrangements for quality assurance do not ensure that GTG's policies and procedures are consistently applied.

30. **Internal verification is ineffective.** It does not take place until near the end of the learning programme. There is no overall sampling plan for the internal verification process. Feedback on assessment is not routinely provided. However, some recent improvements to assessment plans and monitoring of assessment have been introduced.

31. **The self-assessment process is not sufficiently evaluative.** Some of the action-planning is unclear. Most action plans are not clearly linked to the areas identified for development. The self-assessment process is not effective as a tool to bring about improvements.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good internal communication

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- good understanding of equality of opportunity issues by learners
- effective use of feedback from learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to monitor equality of opportunity
- some poor access to the training centre for people with restricted mobility
- slow progress to make improvements
- inadequate monitoring of quality assurance policies and procedures
- ineffective internal verification process

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good off-the-job training in the workshop
- good on-the-job training

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing their framework by learners
- insufficient workplace assessment
- weak target-setting in some reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT GLOUCESTERSHIRE TRAINING GROUP:

- the way the training makes them more confident
- the end of year project
- the quality of the training - 'it's a good place to learn'
- the way all the staff show an interest in them - 'the friendly atmosphere'
- the good mix of class work and practical work
- the support they receive from their tutors

WHAT LEARNERS THINK GLOUCESTERSHIRE TRAINING GROUP COULD IMPROVE:

- the integration of key skills with the main NVQ
- the information provided on using the national standards to work towards their qualifications
- the infrequent contact with their employer during the first year of training
- the access to the IT network - 'we should each have our own user name'
- the option to be on first name terms with all staff, instead of just some
- the duplication of paperwork - 'we often have to write the same thing twice, once for our employer's daily log book and again for our NVQ portfolio'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE TRAINING GROUP:

- set and achieve performance targets to bring about effective and timely improvements to the quality of the programmes
- improve the planning and effectiveness of assessment for the on-the-job training
- improve target-setting in progress reviews
- develop and use effective monitoring arrangements for quality assurance policies and procedures
- develop and put into practice effective processes for internal verification
- make effective use of equality of opportunity data to establish action plans and set performance targets

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good internal communication
- good understanding of equality of opportunity issues by learners
- effective use of feedback from learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data to monitor equality of opportunity
- some poor access to the training centre for people with restricted mobility
- slow progress to make improvements
- inadequate monitoring of quality assurance policies and procedures
- ineffective internal verification process

32. Internal communication is good. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Managers are approachable and encourage staff to communicate effectively, plan training well and resolve issues quickly. The frequent staff meetings are planned in advance and are well attended. The minutes of these meetings accurately record the actions to be taken and also which members of staff are responsible. Staff and board members make valuable contributions to the self-assessment and business planning processes. Useful performance review reports are provided to staff. These show the number of learners in training and how many leavers have completed their framework. Clear reasons are provided for any changes to the data in these reports. Board members receive accurate data on which to base their planning and business decisions and they closely monitor and control GTG's financial arrangements. Communication between the group training manager and members of the board is effective.

33. GTG's management and planning of the off-the-job training at its workshop training centre are satisfactory. Learners value the skills and experience they develop in their first year of training at GTG. They understand how this part of the programme contributes to their modern apprenticeship and effectively prepares them for the on-the-job training in their work placements. Learners also enjoy and benefit from the group projects that they carry out at the end of their first year of training. However, they do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how these projects and other training activities can contribute to their key skills evidence. GTG celebrates learners' achievements and holds an annual awards evening.

34. Management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support is satisfactory. Although GTG does not have a policy for basic skills support, the thorough induction

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arrangements for learners include satisfactory assessment of their numeracy and literacy skills. These skills are assessed as part of the comprehensive initial assessment process, which also includes appropriate aptitude tests specific to the sector.

35. GTG's management of subcontractors is satisfactory. Detailed service level agreements are in place for each of the three colleges of further education that provide subcontracted off-the-job training on a day-release basis. These agreements include a clear requirement for the subcontractor to nominate a member of staff for each learning and business function identified within the contract. There are regular and effective meetings with each subcontractor, at which learners' progress, attendance and support are discussed and actions agreed.

36. Staff development is satisfactory. Some individual staff development needs are identified at appraisal and GTG responds to these needs. Relevant training sessions for staff are held at GTG and recent topics have included equal opportunities, key skills, business planning, review and assessment and training for the new assessor and verifier units. However, there is no structured evaluation of the training received.

37. Resources are satisfactory and meet the needs of learners. Staff are appropriately qualified for their roles at GTG. Each member of staff has a job description that provides a clear outline of their role and responsibilities. The ratio of training staff to learners is adequate. However, the main internal verifier is responsible for the verification of assessments for too many learners. The equipment at GTG's training centre is well managed and maintained. There is an extensive range of ICT equipment, with good internet facilities and access to a virtual learning environment. Although the small selection of books available is basic, these are supplemented by the online facilities that learners can use.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

38. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively during several sessions of the two-week induction programme. These learning sessions are well designed to develop the learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Learners are encouraged to consider and discuss issues taken from a video showing acted examples of discriminatory behaviour in a workplace. Equality is regularly monitored during learners' progress reviews. GTG has recently introduced a comprehensive checklist to monitor equality of opportunity in the workplace. This is used at each progress review and reinforces learners' understanding of the issues. The records of this process are well maintained. Learners know how to raise issues that are of concern to them. GTG has a clear procedure for complaints. Learners are aware of this procedure and understand how to use it. Complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively by GTG and learners are protected by GTG's management of equality of opportunity. The company also has a well-established arrangement for an elected apprentice committee that represents the first year learners. This committee has equal opportunities as an agenda item at each of its meetings. It provides a useful forum for discussing equality issues and also helps to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

39. GTG has a clear commitment to equality and diversity. Internal communication of this commitment is satisfactory, although a statement of equality of opportunity is not displayed at GTG's premises. Equality of opportunity is an agenda item at all staff meetings. Staff training and development has included an update session on equality of opportunity and the training co-ordinator has recently participated in equality and diversity training. However, staff job descriptions do not include the need to ensure equality in their working practices. The staff profile broadly reflects the community GTG serves and several members of staff were previously modern apprentices. Staff and learners are provided with appropriate information on GTG's policy and approach to equality of opportunity when they join GTG. GTG's policy for equality of opportunity is reviewed annually and any changes are recorded. However, the policy is not sufficiently detailed. For example, it does not include policies for anti-bullying and anti-harassment.

40. GTG's promotion of equality is satisfactory. The company participates in career events organised by several local schools, one of which is a girls' school. GTG has designed a display stand, which includes positive images to promote engineering careers to women. GTG is an active member of the county careers and engineering group and participates in initiatives to promote modern apprenticeships in engineering, for example the county skills fair. There are three female learners and three learners from minority ethnic groups. The recruitment leaflet produced by GTG is written in appropriate and accessible language, however it does not provide information on the company's commitment to equal opportunities.

41. Data are available for each learning programme, but are not monitored and reviewed effectively in relation to equality of opportunity. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. GTG does not make sufficient use of data to analyse and monitor equality of opportunity across the range of its activities, or to monitor early leavers from the programme and the length of time spent on the programme by learners. Retention and achievement rates are not systematically monitored in the context of equality of opportunity. Although some informal monitoring is carried out, GTG does not systematically use the data available to analyse the performance of different groups of learners. The data are not used to identify performance indicators or to set targets. GTG does not have an action plan for equality of opportunity.

42. Access to the first floor of the workshop premises is poor for people with restricted mobility. The electronics training room, computer rooms and offices on the first floor can be accessed only via a stairway. This does not affect current learners. The access to the workshop, training rooms and facilities on the ground floor is satisfactory.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

43. GTG makes effective use of learners' feedback. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. GTG has long established arrangements for a first year apprentice committee. Learners nominate and elect their representatives to this committee. It acts as a useful forum to share ideas and concerns that relate to the training environment at GTG. The apprentice committee provides feedback on behalf of

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the learners to GTG's management and this has influenced a range of improvements. For example, the lighting in the milling area has been improved and a refrigerator was provided for learners' use. Learners also make a valuable contribution to the self-assessment process by completing feedback questionnaires. GTG makes good use of the analysis of learners' responses in planning its annual staff training days.

44. The self-assessment report identified weaknesses in on-the-job progress reviews and the assessment process but progress to bring about improvements is slow. The on-the-job review and assessment processes are inadequate for level 3 NVQ learners. Action-planning is not sufficiently detailed to give effective support to learners. Some employers do not contribute enough to the review process. GTG has recently introduced more frequent and comprehensive reviews. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes. Completion of the modern apprenticeship framework for some learners is slow, with a significant number exceeding the funding period specified for achievement of their qualification. Many learners have made little progress in working towards their NVQ and/or key skills since they completed their foundation year at GTG's training centre. GTG is ineffective in its target-setting for staff and in its use of performance indicators to improve the quality of training. GTG does not have a structured scheme for the observation of training. GTG has introduced effective detailed and specific service level agreements for the subcontracted providers of the day-release training.

45. The monitoring of policies and procedures for quality assurance is inadequate. GTG has developed a range of useful quality assurance policies and procedures for the training it provides to learners. However, these do not adequately monitor the quality of training. There is no routine monitoring of the procedures to ensure compliance or to measure their effectiveness. The policies for quality assurance are not adequately reviewed on a regular basis. The arrangements for quality assurance do not ensure that GTG's policies and procedures are consistently applied. There is no procedure for monitoring the quality assurance system. Procedures are not dated and it is not always clear when a procedure has been updated. Some informal audits of the procedures are carried out, however the results are not recorded. The monitoring arrangements detailed in the procedures are not followed. For example, where procedures require formal reports, these are not forwarded to the group training manager as specified. Although the range of activity covered by most of the procedures is clear, it is not always clear who is responsible for the actions identified.

46. Internal verification is ineffective. Some recent improvements have been made to the processes, for example individual assessment plans and monitoring sheets are used appropriately. However, there is no overall plan for assessment or internal verification. Very little direct observation of assessment is recorded. In some learners' portfolios, evidence is not well referenced. Internal verification does not take place until near the end of the learning programme. There is no overall sampling plan for internal verification. Feedback on assessment is not routinely provided.

47. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently evaluative. Although GTG's staff, learners and board members were effectively involved in the self-assessment process, some of the action-planning to respond to identified weaknesses and maintain strengths

is unclear. Most action plans are also not clearly linked to the areas identified for development. The self-assessment report and action plans are not sufficiently effective as tools to bring about improvements.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	93	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good off-the-job training in the workshop
- good on-the-job training

Weaknesses

- slow progress in completing their framework by learners
- insufficient workplace assessment
- weak target-setting in some reviews

Achievement and standards

48. Retention rates for the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. Retention on the advanced modern apprenticeship programmes has risen from 46 per cent of learners who started their training programmes in 1997-98 and also 1998-99, to 67 per cent for 1999-2000. The retention rate for the foundation modern apprenticeship for 2000-01 was 75 per cent, however, there are insufficient data to indicate trends in retention rates for this qualification.

49. Learners make slow progress towards completing their frameworks. The planned completion date of the modern apprenticeship programme has elapsed or been extended for a quarter of all the learners. For example, six of the foundation modern apprentices who started the programme in 2000-01 are still in learning. They achieved the level 2 NVQ during their first year with GTG. However, some of these learners have not completed their key skills portfolio to meet the framework requirements. Seven learners who started the advanced modern apprenticeship programme in 1997-98 and six who started in 1998-99 are still in learning. All of these learners are working towards the advanced modern apprenticeship in mechanical engineering. Most learners on the advanced modern apprenticeship programme are working towards their level 3 NVQ. However, some learners have recently completed their portfolios for this qualification.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		18		19		27		79		39					
Retained*	0		0		1		18		36		18					
Successfully completed	0		0		0		2		15		4					
Still in learning	19		12		14		16		9		7					

*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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		6		8											
Retained*	0		0		6	75										
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0										
Still in learning	5		5		6	75										

*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

Quality of education and training

50. First year off-the-job training at GTG's workshop training centre is good. All learners are trained and assessed to level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations. Appropriate attention is paid to safe operating procedures in GTG's workshop. Learners develop very good practical skills during their foundation year at the training centre. This is recognised and valued by their employers. The structure of the foundation training and assessment programme, in both electrical and mechanical engineering, is satisfactory. Learners are able to follow their progress on clearly presented wall charts in the workshops. The instructors are appropriately qualified. There are sufficient instructors in each resource area to provide individual assistance for learners when required. At the end of their foundation year programme, the learners take part in a team design and manufacture project that includes the mechanical and electrical elements of their training. The learners formally present the results of these projects to employers, workplace supervisors and GTG's staff.

51. Learners receive good on-the-job training at their employers' sites. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. They are closely supervised in the early stages of their training and are gradually given more responsibility in the workplace. The workplace staff who supervise the learners are experienced and skilled. Learners

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develop a broad range of engineering skills and gain wide experience. The on-the-job training is well planned to ensure learners have the chance to operate in different areas of their workplace and in most cases, they use modern, good-quality resources. Employers give learners a thorough induction into the workplace. Learners understanding of health and safety issues is reinforced very effectively in most of the workplaces. Learners value their on-the-job training programmes and appreciate the support their employers give them.

52. Following the foundation year of their programme, learners attend one of three colleges of further education, on a day-release basis, to study for their technical qualifications. The arrangements for this part of the modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. Learners usually follow these qualifications at the national certificate level. Learners are encouraged and supported by their employers and GTG to progress to higher national qualifications.

53. The range and quality of equipment in the mechanical and electronics workshops is satisfactory. There are sufficient machine tools in the mechanical workshops. Although some machinery is old, it is kept in good order and is suitable for the needs of the learner. As a result of an initiative proposed by the apprentice committee, there have been recent modifications to improve the workshop lighting systems. A suitable computer numerical control machining area is used in the delivery of one module of the level 2 NVQ. The electrical and electronics equipment is appropriate and meets the needs of the learners. A CAD suite is suitably equipped with industry-standard software systems that learners use to complete a CAD unit for the level 2 NVQ.

54. GTG's arrangements for initial assessments are satisfactory and include assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills. Where appropriate, prior learning is accredited. GTG carries out a satisfactory initial assessment of learners' aptitude and skills for the training programme, on behalf of the employers. Most learners have achieved GCSEs at grade C or above and many of the employers require this level of achievement before they offer a work placement to a learner.

55. The engineering programmes are satisfactory and meet learners' needs. Learners are involved in developing their individual learning plans. The foundation year at GTG's training centre provides a realistic work environment. Learners find the activities they carry out during the programme relevant to their career plans. First year learners enjoy the challenge and teamwork of the end of year project.

56. Learners are able to request additional individual learning support from GTG for key skills development and also support for their off-the-job training. The arrangements to provide this additional support are satisfactory. GTG also provides satisfactory pastoral support for learners.

57. There is insufficient observation and assessment in the workplace and many learners rely too heavily on witness testimony as evidence of their competences. Some learners have had no assessments recorded in the past three months and some learners have no work prepared for assessment. GTG's arrangements for assessments place the

responsibility on the learner to request an assessment. Although GTG responds promptly to the learners' requests, it does not systematically follow up learners who have not received recent assessments.

58. Target-setting is weak in some progress reviews. Workplace progress reviews normally take place at six-weekly intervals. These effectively review activities since the previous review and general targets are agreed and recorded for the period to the next progress review. However, clear, attainable and measurable targets are not routinely set and where targets are identified, they are not always sufficiently detailed or challenging. Historically, short-term targets have been vague and insufficiently detailed regarding continuing progress towards gathering work-based evidence and completing practical tasks. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Some recent progress reviews set more realistic and attainable targets. Key issues such as equal opportunities and health and safety are reinforced effectively during progress reviews. Learners and employers are provided with a copy of the progress review form. Reviews of progress for first year learners at the training centre are satisfactory and a copy is provided to the learner's employer.

Leadership and management

59. The day-to-day management of the engineering programmes is satisfactory. Training in GTG's workshop is well managed. However, co-ordination of the arrangements for assessment and verification of learners' evidence for the NVQs and key skills is weak. There is insufficient target-setting for the achievement of the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship frameworks. Arrangements for equality of opportunity in on-the-job and off-the-job training are satisfactory. Communication between staff is good. The staff team are fully involved in discussions about all aspects of the programme. The frequent assessor and training officer meetings provide useful opportunities for staff to share good practice.