

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Sysco Training LLP**

**24 March 2005**



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
- **learndirect** 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

## Sysco Training LLP

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	3
Overall judgement	3
Grades	3
Key findings	4
What learners like about Sysco Training LLP	10
What learners think Sysco Training LLP could improve	10
Key challenges for Sysco Training LLP	11

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	12
Equality of opportunity	13
Quality assurance	14
Business administration, management & professional	16
Information & communications technology	20
Retailing, customer service & transportation	24
Foundation programmes	29

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sysco Training LLP (Sysco) was established in August 2001 to provide training services that had previously been delivered by a related company known as Sysco Management Consultants Limited. This company had been providing work-based learning and modern apprenticeship training programmes to 150 learners a year for approximately two years. Sysco is a privately owned company with the same proprietors that operate Sysco Management Consultants Limited.
2. Sysco Management Consultants Limited provides head office services to Sysco. The head office and administrative centre for Sysco is based in Knowsley. All learners on apprenticeship programmes are employed and receive training in the workplace. Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes are provided at a training centre based in Liverpool city centre.
3. Following an extensive strategic review of operations in 2004, a new organisational structure has been formed. The senior management team of Sysco comprises the chief executive who is responsible for overall business strategy, a director of training who is responsible for the work-based learning strategy and an operations manager who is supported by an administrative and operational delivery team. This team consists of an administration manager and a recruitment and retention manager who has a sales team of two. In addition there are four product managers who are responsible for teaching, training and learning in specific areas of learning. In total, Sysco has 33 full-time staff and one part-time member of staff.
4. The company has carried out a self-assessment process every year since 2001. The most recent self-assessment report and development plan are the fourth and were produced in November 2004.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

5. Of the 159 business administration learners, 105 are apprentices and 54 are advanced apprentices. All learners are employed in organisations and businesses in the Merseyside area. Employers range from private-sector companies to large government departments. Approximately 75 per cent of learners are women. Of the learners recruited in the current year, one is from a minority ethnic background and six have disabilities. Learners are mostly recruited by direct marketing to companies. All aspects of the programmes, including initial assessment, induction and off-the-job training are delivered in the workplace. This is usually carried out individually. Progress reviews are carried out every nine weeks.

### **Information & communications technology**

6. Sixteen apprentices and six advanced apprentices are working towards qualifications in using information technology (IT). Learners are employed in 11 organisations in Merseyside and in government departments in Merseyside and Sheffield. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. All learners are employed and receive on-the-job training. They also have the opportunity to learn in Sysco's computer workshop in the centre of Liverpool. Advisers visit learners in the workplace every three weeks to provide training and assessment and to carry out progress reviews.

### **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

7. There are 141 learners following programmes in this area of learning. Twenty-nine are advanced apprentices, 76 are apprentices, and 36 are national vocational qualification (NVQ) learners. Fourteen learners are on a programme in retailing, 75 in customer service and 16 in distribution and warehousing. In addition, 36 learners are working towards an NVQ in specialised plant and machinery operations. The duration of programmes is 24 months for advanced apprenticeships, 15 months for apprenticeships and 12 months for NVQ learners. All learners are employed in companies ranging from small local distribution businesses to outlets of large national retail organisations. On-the-job training is carried out by employers. Assessors also provide some individual coaching in the workplace. Off-the-job training for literacy, numeracy and language skills and key skills is provided by Sysco's staff at employers' premises. All assessment is carried out in the learners' workplace by the company assessors who have relevant occupational experience.

### **Foundation programmes**

8. Sysco provides E2E programmes for 56 learners. Fifty-four per cent of learners are women, 20 per cent have a disability and 30 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Most learners are referred by Connexions and schools. Sysco also markets the training to reach under-represented groups. Learners attend training and taster courses in information and communications technology (ICT), administration, and retailing and customer service at the main centre. Subcontracted provision takes place at two other training providers' centres which offer training in care, dental nursing, construction, sports and English for speakers of other languages. Most learners are working towards a key skills qualification in communication at level 1. Learners can work towards ICT accreditation, literacy and numeracy tests and NVQ courses are options for learners. In-house certificates for successful course completion are also available. Work placements in a variety of settings are arranged for most learners. All learners receive an initial assessment on starting their course. Individual support is given to those learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	10
Number of inspection days	39
Number of learners interviewed	71
Number of staff interviewed	56
Number of employers interviewed	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	51
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	9

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

9. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Sysco's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are the company's arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The training in business administration, management and professional, ICT and retailing, customer services, warehouse and distribution is satisfactory. The training in foundation programmes is good.

## GRADES

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		3

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>			<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b><i>Business administration</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	159	3	

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>			<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b><i>Using IT</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	22	3	

Retailing, customer service & transportation		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Retailing</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	14	3
<b><i>Customer service</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	75	3
<b><i>Warehousing and distribution</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	16	3
<b><i>Lift-truck awards</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	36	2
Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Employability/employment training</i></b> - Entry to Employment	56	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

10. **Business administration learners are making good progress towards completing their apprenticeship frameworks.** Most learners are on target to complete their programme in the planned time. Learners are developing good work-related skills. **There were poor retention and achievement rates between 2001 and 2003.**

11. **Retention and achievement rates for ICT apprentices are good. Retention and achievement rates for ICT advanced apprentices are very poor.** Current advanced apprentices are making satisfactory progress.

12. **Achievement rates for retailing, customer service, distribution and warehousing apprenticeship programmes are poor.** All current learners are making satisfactory or better progress. Development of learners' vocational and personal skills is good.

13. **There is good progression and personal development on the E2E programme.** Learners overcome various barriers to learning and experience changes in attitude and behaviour during their time on the programme. Learners acquire the necessary skills for participation in the workplace.



## Quality of education and training

14. Ninety-five per cent of learning sessions observed during the inspection were judged to be satisfactory or better.

15. **There are good links between different aspects of the business administration programme, which support learners.** Learners quickly learn to reference evidence with confidence and to identify any gaps in their learning. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their portfolios and their learning.

16. **ICT trainers very effectively plan learning.** Training is particularly well related to real-life contexts. Good use is made of learning resources for retailing and customer service learners. Sysco ensures learners with limited access to computer-based learning resources are well supplied with relevant paper-based materials.

17. **Teaching for E2E learners is good.** Trainers demonstrate sensitivity when teaching and make good use of appropriate topics to stimulate and engage learners. Learners are challenged during sessions.

18. **Support for retailing, customer service, warehouse and distribution and specialised plant and machinery operations is good.** Support for E2E learners is excellent. Learners who receive support are regularly monitored. Very good support is also available for learners on placement.

19. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the sector. All learners receive an appropriate induction and initial assessment. Support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory.

20. The content of the apprenticeship programmes is relevant to the learners' work roles. Programmes and levels for individual learners are suitably identified during the induction process.

21. There are some inconsistencies in business administration assessment practice. The method of assessment used is not always appropriate for learners with literacy needs and does not take account of different learning styles. Employers are often insufficiently involved in identifying assessment opportunities.

22. **Target-setting for E2E learners is ineffective.** Targets are vague and too general to be useful. Learners are not always aware of which targets they are working towards.

## Leadership and management

**23. Sysco has a clear strategic direction and has managed organisational change effectively.** The company has a detailed annual business plan and a three-year development plan. Clear targets for organisational performance are set and monitored. Sysco has restructured its operational structures to meet the emerging needs of learners. Recent initiatives have been effective in improving the ICT advanced apprenticeship programme.

**24. Internal communications are particularly effective.** Communications between staff are open and frequent. Each member of staff meets with their line manager every month to thoroughly review individual learners' progress, individual performance and recruitment. Sysco's intranet provides good access to a wide range of information.

**25. There is strong support for staff development.** Staff are encouraged and supported to develop their professional and vocational skills. Training needs are effectively identified through individual performance reviews that take place every month, as well as an established annual staff appraisal process.

**26. There is a good range of support activities to meet individual needs.** An effective system to identify support needs for learners and provide a suitable response is well understood and used by staff. Training and assessment arrangements have been sensitively adjusted to better fit with learners' personal circumstances.

**27. Equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactorily managed.** Learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues are satisfactory. All staff and learners receive an appropriate induction.

**28. Satisfactory use is made of management information systems.** Sysco has effective database systems for monitoring learners' progress. Learners' progress reviews and target dates for achievement are routinely monitored to identify any areas for action. Satisfactory support is provided to develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. Resources are managed effectively.

**29. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory.** The quality assurance system includes clear arrangements for the monitoring of subcontractors. Internal verification is satisfactory. Sysco has a satisfactory self-assessment process.

**30. There are inadequate strategies for attracting under-represented groups into vocational training.** The participation rate for learners from under-represented groups has been low. The gender balance in occupational areas conforms to stereotype.

**31. Sysco does not routinely collect sufficient feedback from learners on apprenticeship programmes or from employers to evaluate the programmes fully.** Feedback mechanisms are insufficient to allow regular and systematic evaluation of the company's programmes. The questionnaire used does not effectively focus on the different stages of learners' training.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- clear strategic direction and effective management of change
- particularly effective internal communications
- strong support for staff development
- good range of support activities to meet individual needs

### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate strategies for attracting under-represented groups into vocational training.
- insufficient feedback from some learners and employers

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### ***Business administration***

#### *Strengths*

- good progress for current learners
- effective links between different aspects of the programme to support learning

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor retention and achievement rates between 2001 and 2003
- inconsistent assessment practice

## **Information & communications technology**

### ***Using IT***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes
- very effective planning of learning
- good recent initiatives to improve course management

#### *Weaknesses*

- very poor retention and achievement rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes

## **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

### ***Retailing***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

### ***Customer service***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

### ***Warehousing and distribution***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

### ***Lift-truck awards***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

## **Foundation programmes**

### ***Employability/employment training***

#### *Strengths*

- excellent support
- good teaching
- good progression and personal development

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective target-setting

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SYSCO TRAINING LLP:**

- the ability to gain a qualification while at work - 'it's a good way of learning'
- the approachable and helpful staff at Sysco - 'I never got listened to at school but now I can get answers to questions'
- the opportunity to develop personal skills - 'I smile a lot more and have more respect for other people'
- the availability of help at Sysco - 'I know I can always telephone Sysco and get the support I need'
- the good practical skills they have developed - 'makes me more confident working with customers'
- 'the level of personal attention during training and assessment'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK SYSCO TRAINING LLP COULD IMPROVE:**

- 'less paper-based work and more work done online'
- 'let us achieve more than one licence for forklift truck driving'
- 'ensure I have the same assessor throughout my training'
- 'during assessment use taped discussion instead of all the writing'

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR SYSKO TRAINING LLP:**

- improve retention and achievement rates
- develop arrangements to increase the feedback from some learners and employers
- fully implement the planned strategies for attracting under-represented groups into vocational training
- continue to improve the quality of training
- maintain the pace of improvement

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

#### Strengths

- clear strategic direction and effective management of change
- particularly effective internal communications
- strong support for staff development
- good range of support activities to meet individual needs

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate strategies for attracting under-represented groups into vocational training.
- insufficient feedback from some learners and employers

32. Sysco has a clear strategic direction and has managed organisational change effectively. The company has a detailed annual business plan and a three-year development plan. Sysco sets very clear targets for organisational performance against a number of key performance indicators. For example, the company has targets for the number of learner referrals, and improvements in retention and achievement rates. These targets are communicated effectively to staff through meetings and the company's intranet. Following a thorough strategic review of the company and its local environment in the past year, Sysco restructured its operational structures to meet the emerging needs of learners and to improve the company's performance. The company has consolidated most of its training and administrative activities on one site. At the same time, Sysco has carefully reviewed all of its employee's job profiles. Employees are successfully appointed to the revised posts with specific performance targets and key performance indicators negotiated for each employee. Sysco has clearly identified the need to build additional capacity in the areas of quality management, customer relations, training delivery and key skills, and has appointed new staff to these areas.

33. Internal communications are particularly effective. Communications between staff are open and frequent. A clear calendar of meetings is published well in advance, and a team meeting takes place every month at an external venue to share information on key developments and organisational performance. Product group managers meet each month with senior managers and data and customer relations staff to review learners' progress and employee performance. This information is then shared with the training adviser and assessors in subsequent group team meetings which are held each month. In addition, each employee meets with their line manager every month to thoroughly review individual learners' progress, individual performance and recruitment. Detailed notes are made of these meetings, including actions agreed to support learners. Sysco's intranet provides good access to a wide range of information, including all company policies and procedures. Staff also have good access to individual and group performance data. In addition, the company celebrates the success of its employees and



operates an incentive scheme of nominating an employee of the month and of the year.

34. There is strong support for staff development. Staff are encouraged and supported to develop their professional and vocational skills. Many staff have progressed through the company to more senior positions and have been supported in gaining additional qualifications appropriate to their new roles in the organisation. The company has achieved a national award made to organisations investing in the development of their staff. All staff are able to apply for additional training at any time during the year. Training needs are also identified through individual monthly performance reviews, as well as through an established annual staff appraisal process. At present, 27 staff are working towards at least one award. Sysco supports staff financially for external training activities which are directly related to the company as well as wider professional management development. Sysco regularly arranges in-house training for all staff. For example, a recent event was held on disability discrimination.

35. Satisfactory use is made of management information systems. Sysco has effective database systems in place for monitoring learners' progress. Learners' progress reviews and target dates for achievement are routinely monitored to identify any potential areas for action. Regular management reports are produced to aid the monitoring of a number of key performance indicators. These reports are effectively used at different management levels to monitor and review overall company performance and individual employee performance.

36. A satisfactory structure and system is in place to support the development needs of learners in literacy, numeracy and language. All new learners are initially assessed using a nationally recognised computer-based test. Where a learner is identified as having support needs, support is arranged in-house, using appropriately experienced staff. Good specialist support for example, in dyslexia, is provided for learners through links with external agencies. In one case, a learner who has a hearing impairment was provided with an interpreter.

37. Resources are managed effectively. Trainers and assessors are experienced in their vocational areas, and some staff hold advanced professional qualifications. Learning resources for learners are also adequate. Additional learning resources, such as workbooks, have been developed in some areas to support effective learning. Training accommodation is adequate.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

38. There is a good range of support activities to meet individual needs. An effective system to identify support needs for learners and provide a suitable response is well understood and used by staff. Training and assessment arrangements have been adjusted to better fit with learners' personal circumstances. Learners make good use of an out-of-office-hours telephone helpline. A range of issues including those relating to health, housing and self-image has been dealt with sensitively and effectively. Support provided by Sysco's staff includes appropriate referral to external agencies for specialist help. Sysco provides financial help to learners to help them overcome barriers to

employment and attend training. Learners on the E2E programmes receive financial incentives to attend work placements. A free bus service is provided to encourage attendance.

39. Equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactorily managed. Procedures are available to staff on the company's intranet. While the procedures are adequate they do not always contain sufficiently detailed guidance for staff. Staff contribute to the production of an annual equal opportunities action plan. The plan is used to improve a range of equal opportunities activities, such as the effectiveness of initial employer vetting. Activities have been satisfactorily implemented to clarify staff responsibilities and monitoring arrangements. A working group meets regularly to monitor and update policies and share good practice. This has led to some useful suggestions and actions to improve the learning experience. Equality of opportunity is a standing item on the agenda for area of learning team meetings.

40. All staff and learners receive an appropriate induction that includes reference to equality of opportunity. However, not all learners can recall the content of the induction in detail. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues is satisfactory. They know how to seek help or raise a concern and are confident issues will be dealt with appropriately. The programme of training for staff is satisfactorily tailored to meet the needs of learners. A recent staff survey has been used as a basis for the planning and delivery of relevant equality and diversity training.

41. There are inadequate strategies for attracting under-represented groups into vocational training. The previous recruitment strategy of recruiting from existing employers' staff has not effectively ensured that under-represented groups are targeted. The participation rate for groups from under-represented groups has been low. For example, between 2001 and 2005, no learners from minority ethnic groups have been in training in retailing, ICT or warehouse and distribution. The gender balance in occupational areas tends to conform to stereotype. Many recent improvements have been made in the collection and analysis of data. A series of regular and useful reports are now produced. Analysis of areas of learning has identified issues for further action as part of the equal opportunities action plan. Until recently, Sysco did not effectively use data to influence recruitment strategies. Targets have not been effectively set or implemented to aid monitoring. Sysco has recently implemented comprehensive strategies to redress the balance in participation rates by under-represented groups. However, it is too early to make a judgement on the effectiveness of these initiatives.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

42. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. Most of the existing quality framework was developed last year. There is now a clear framework in place. The quality assurance policy and procedures were also extensively revised. The new policy and procedures have been satisfactorily communicated to all staff. The quality assurance system also includes clear arrangements for the monitoring of subcontractors against service level agreements. All staff have good access to the quality assurance procedures through the intranet and computer memory sticks.

43. Sysco has established an audit team to carry out compliance monitoring procedures which are now being implemented progressively against a well defined annual plan. For example, there are now additional procedures which include the regular monitoring and observation of assessors' performance, and the regular audit of subcontracted activities.

44. There is a satisfactory system in place for internal verification which meets the standards of national awarding body. Within each area of learning, internal verifiers establish an annual plan for the verification of their team of assessors. This plan reflects the experience of each assessor, with less experienced assessors being given additional support. Internal verifiers meet regularly with assessors and learners. Portfolios are appropriately sampled at various stages of training. Standardisation meetings are held regularly to share good practice. However, notes of some meetings are insufficiently detailed to inform any assessors unable to attend.

45. There is a satisfactory self-assessment report and self-assessment process in place. Sysco produced its fourth self-assessment report in November 2004. This was updated in March 2005, before inspection. Staff throughout the company have been closely involved in the development of the self-assessment report. Within each area of learning staff contributed an analysis of programme strengths and weaknesses for the company's self-assessment report and development plan for the coming year. The comments of clients and subcontractors were also considered in the development of the report. A series of workshops was held to discuss overall findings. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. However, some strengths identified by the company were regarded as normal practice by inspectors.

46. The provider uses all learners' and employers' feedback promptly and effectively to improve training programmes. On E2E programmes, feedback is gathered routinely through a regular learner forum and leads to effective changes. For example, induction arrangements were modified to add more opportunities for learners to meet each other and gain confidence. Action was taken to improve the development of learners' E2E passports, and refreshment machines were made available to learners. However, Sysco does not routinely collect sufficient feedback from learners on apprenticeship programmes or from employers to evaluate the programmes fully. Although the company has some feedback mechanisms they are insufficient to allow regular and systematic evaluation of its programmes. The annual questionnaires sent to employers and learners on apprenticeship programmes have very poor response rates. The questionnaire used last year did not effectively focus on the different stages of learners' training. The company has recognised this weakness, and taken measures to improve the position.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business administration</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	159	3

#### **Business administration**

##### *Strengths*

- good progress for current learners
- effective links between different aspects of the programme to support learning

##### *Weaknesses*

- poor retention and achievement rates between 2001 and 2003
- inconsistent assessment practice

### Achievement and standards

47. Current learners are making good progress towards completing their frameworks. Six apprentices have recently finished their programmes two months ahead of their planned completion date. Technical certificate results have improved with 80 per cent achievement in the most recent examination. Assessors are making good use of concessions and accreditation of prior learning. Most learners are on target to complete their framework in the planned timeframe. There is appropriate action-planning which takes place at each assessment visit. These short-term actions are clear and detailed. Learners understand exactly what is required of them before the next assessor visit. This was particularly helpful to one learner who has progressed from the E2E programme and is finding the new qualification quite daunting. Assessors work hard to build a good rapport with the learners. Many learners say that they appreciate the individual attention they receive. Plans for each meeting are shared with the learners and the objectives are agreed. Individual learning plans are effectively used to monitor learners' progress and plan future training. They are used effectively to monitor and maintain learners' progress. Learners understand their value and use them successfully to monitor their own achievements.

48. There was poor retention and achievement rates between 2001 and 2003. In 2001-02, 21 per cent of advanced apprentices and 20 per cent of apprentices completed their frameworks. In 2002-03, 14 per cent of advanced apprentices and 22 per cent of apprentices completed their frameworks. The retention rates for advanced apprentices were 39 per cent in 2001-02 and 32 per cent in 2002-03. There are a number of learners still in learning from 2003-04. There is a trend towards improvement in both retention

and achievement rates for the apprenticeship programme. Learners develop good work-related skills including self-confidence, an interest in learning and effective teamworking.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		51		28		56									
Retained*	0		6		9		22	39								
Successfully completed	0		4		4		12	21								
Still in learning	25		26		3		0	100								

\*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																
Apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	58		112		128		93									
Retained*	0		29		60		50	54								
Successfully completed	0		17		31		19	20								
Still in learning	51		48		6		0	100								

\*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																
NVQ Training																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					1		2									
Retained*					1	100	1	50								
Successfully completed					1	100	1	50								
Still in learning					0	0	0	0								

\*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

49. There are good links between different aspects of the programme from the start of the training, which support learners. Particularly close links are made between NVQ units and modules of the technical certificate with similar content. These are studied at the same time with effective use being made of cross-referencing of evidence to avoid

duplication. Learners quickly learn to reference evidence with confidence and to identify any gaps. They understand clearly how the NVQ, keys skills and technical certificate interrelate. This process encourages learners to take responsibility for their portfolios and their learning.

50. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the sector. Resources include paper-based workbooks, textbooks and question sheets. There are also software programmes, some of which are interactive. All staff are supplied with laptop computers which they use effectively at assessment meetings to promote learning. However, resources are not always used appropriately and are often not adapted to accommodate individual learners' needs. Employers provide suitable rooms and make time for learners to meet assessors.

51. The content of the apprenticeship programmes is relevant to the learners' work roles. Programmes and levels for individual learners are suitably identified during the induction process through the use of appropriate assessment tools. Employers state that the skills developed by learners are relevant and allow them to extend learners' job roles and in several instances offer promotion. Most advanced apprentices have transferred to the programme after successful completion of the apprenticeship programme. Some learners are able to use training offered by their employers to complement their qualification.

52. Support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors offer support between visits and employers are keen to help in the development of their employees. Two learners who were identified at initial assessment as needing literacy and numeracy support are receiving regular visits from Sysco's staff who are specially trained in this area.

53. All assessments meet the requirements of the awarding body. Internal verification processes are satisfactory. However, there are some inconsistencies in assessment practice. Knowledge and understanding for NVQ units and the technical certificate are assessed through workbooks and written questions. This method of assessment is not always appropriate for learners with literacy support needs and does not take account of different learning styles identified at initial assessment. Employers are often insufficiently involved in identifying assessment opportunities. There are insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. Employers do not always recognise the important link between on- and off-the-job training. They do not receive sufficient information on the content of off-the-job training. Many employers are not involved in the development of the individual learning plans. However, employers are very supportive of the learners and provide good working environments.

## **Leadership and management**

54. There is satisfactory management of training. At a strategic level, managers set a clear direction leading to effective training. Recent organisational changes are being implemented effectively at Sysco. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to the success of their learners. Communication in the department is satisfactory. There are regular team meetings to monitor targets, standardise delivery and share good practice. There are

meetings between individual staff and their line manager every month to review progress against performance indicators. Information from meetings is effectively shared with all staff.

55. Learners are well supported by Sysco. They have an appropriate understanding of their rights and responsibilities and how the law can protect them at work. Learners know how to complain and are confident that any issues raised will be dealt with effectively and confidentially.

56. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Individual performance targets linked to the company's strategic objectives are agreed at annual appraisals. Regular monitoring of these targets is effective in raising standards. However, there is some inconsistency in the collection of feedback from learners and employers. There are satisfactory procedures for dealing with complaints and learners are fully aware of the appeals procedure. Sysco ensures that all employers and learners have copies of appropriate policies on topics such as health and safety and equality of opportunity. The self-assessment process involves all members of the business administration team. The self-assessment report for this area of learning is detailed and thorough. The inspection team identified many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. However, inspectors considered some of the strengths in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice.

**Information & communications technology**

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

**Using IT***Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes
- very effective planning of learning
- good recent initiatives to improve course management

*Weaknesses*

- very poor retention and achievement rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes

**Achievement and standards**

57. A good and improving proportion of learners complete the apprenticeship framework. Retention rates are good. Learners develop good practical skills that are valued by their employers, and improve their efficiency at work. Those learners currently on programme are progressing satisfactorily, given their prior achievements. Historically, retention and achievement rates for the advanced apprenticeships are very poor. No advanced apprentices have achieved an NVQ, technical certificate, or completed their period of intended learning. However, those advanced apprentices currently on programme are making satisfactory progress. Five of the six learners have met realistic target dates for unit and key skills achievement. Two learners observed are developing very good practical skills by integrating desktop programmes to provide sophisticated solutions to their employers' IT needs.



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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		15		6		4									
Retained*	0		0		0	0	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	0	0								
Still in learning	1		5		0	0	0	0								

\*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																
Apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		29		30		23									
Retained*	0		10		19	63	14	61								
Successfully completed	0		7		18	60	11	48								
Still in learning	1		15		0	0	0	0								

\*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

58. Trainers very effectively plan learning. There is good use of the new level 3 technical certificate to devise good detailed schemes of work, and from these, trainers plan individual learning well. Learners use vocational skill scans effectively to identify their training needs. Workplace supervisors also contribute to planning learning by identifying their priorities for the learners. Learning takes place in the workplace, where trainers make good use of laptop computers to demonstrate techniques. Trainers also direct learners to websites with further relevant online learning. Training is particularly well related to real-life contexts, and learners become very motivated as they appreciate how they can use their new skills in their jobs. However, in some lessons there is insufficient monitoring of learning and practice of key techniques that are part of the desktop programmes.

59. Resources are satisfactory. Learners benefit from access to a wide range of varied learning materials. The materials are available on CDs, online and as paper-based resources. There are sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications and experience to deliver the programme. The training centre has computers which meet current commercial expectations. However, some workstations are cramped with insufficient room for learners' own notes and their learning materials.

60. Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough, and identifies learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs, and existing vocational skills. Systems to support literacy, numeracy and language needs are well understood by staff. No learners are currently receiving support. Preferred learning styles are also assessed but not sufficiently taken into account in planning learning activities. Assessment is frequent and thorough and considers an appropriate range of evidence types. It is effective in helping learners identify where they need to develop skills and improve their performance. Final assessment meets external requirements. Short-term planning of assessment and learning activities is good, but longer-term planning of activities to generate appropriate evidence is sometimes insufficiently detailed. Some assessment is inefficiently used to extend the scope of assessment to all parts of the framework.

61. Support for learners is satisfactory. Apprentices receive good advice on the suitability of the programme. Employers are questioned effectively to ensure the learners' job roles provide sufficient opportunities to generate evidence required for the framework. The same process has been used for the advanced apprenticeship programme. However, many advanced apprentices have insufficient opportunity to generate appropriate evidence. Progress reviews are frequent and effective. During progress reviews, learners receive good access to pastoral and personal support.

### **Leadership and management**

62. Operational management of training is satisfactory. Management of the advanced apprenticeship programmes was poor but has improved. Many learners were on unsuitable programmes. Recent initiatives to improve the programme have been successful. The NVQ in using IT has been replaced with the new qualification and a technical certificate has been introduced. The programme has been well planned to link these aspects to the key skills qualification. Identification of individuals' learning needs is effective. A similar model is also benefiting apprentices. Assessors are observed teaching key skills and IT as well as assessing. Observation records are detailed, and appropriate staff development follows from them. Communications in the department are good. Regular meetings are effectively used to discuss learners' progress and staff contributions achieving company targets.

63. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities is satisfactory. Assessors reinforce this at progress reviews. Recent initiatives to increase the proportion of female advanced apprentices have had some success. There has been insufficient targeting to raise the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups.

64. Quality assurance is satisfactory. The self-assessment process involved all staff who had the opportunity to comment on the draft report and contribute to the resulting development plan. However, managers make insufficient use of feedback from learners and employers when drawing up the self-assessment report. Internal verification is satisfactory. It ensures assessment decisions are reliable, and that assessment meets the requirement of the awarding bodies. Managers have developed a satisfactory

management information system. However, data on learners' progress against targets is not always complete.

**Retailing, customer service & transportation**

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Retailing</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	14	3
<b><i>Customer service</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	75	3
<b><i>Warehousing and distribution</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	16	3
<b><i>Lift-truck awards</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	36	2

***Retailing****Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

***Customer service****Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

***Warehousing and distribution****Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- poor completion rates for apprenticeship frameworks

***Lift-truck awards****Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills
- good use of learning resources
- good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

**Achievement and standards**

65. Completion of apprenticeship frameworks is poor. Only seven of 87 advanced apprentices completed the framework during the period 2001-03. Completion of the apprenticeship framework over the same period peaked at 16 per cent in the year 2002-03. However, 52 per cent of advanced apprentices, and 42 per cent of apprentices from the year 2003-04 are still in learning. All learners are now making satisfactory or better progress towards completing the framework. Some learners are ahead of target achievement dates. Forty-one learners have progressed from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships in the past year. Progress towards key skills achievement is now satisfactory. Achievement rates for specialised plant and machinery operations NVQs is satisfactory. Retention rates on this programme has improved substantially across the area of learning in the past two years.

66. Development of learners' vocational and personal skills is good. Learners are employed by organisations that recognise the value of training and developing their staff. Learners have the opportunity of experiencing a wide range of work tasks, and many have been given additional areas of responsibility. Learners have become more confident, particularly in dealing with customers, and improved their motivation. They have gained a greater awareness of their wider job roles and responsibilities. This is recognised and valued by employers. Learners progressively develop their job-related skills and knowledge, and some have been promoted during their time on programme. The development of their learners' skills and confidence has made them much more effective in work situations.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	22		44		28		59									
Retained*	0		0		8		16	27								
Successfully completed	0		0		2		5	8								
Still in learning	4		23		2		0	0								

\*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																
Apprenticeships																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		103		168		186									
Retained*	0		17		57		49	26								
Successfully completed	0		9		27		16	9								
Still in learning	31		43		2		0	0								

\*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																
NVQ Training																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	33		55		51		88									
Retained*	0		32		27	53	57	65								
Successfully completed	0		31		25	49	56	64								
Still in learning	28		8		0	0	0	0								

\*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

67. Good use is made of learning resources. Retailing and customer service learners receive comprehensive learning materials specifically designed to provide knowledge for their technical certificates. These learning packs are divided into discrete subject modules and are effectively used in preparing learners for their external tests. Subject knowledge also links accurately with key skills, employment rights and responsibilities and relevant NVQs, providing some evidence for the learner's portfolio. Sysco has ensured learners with limited access to computer-based learning resources are well

supplied with relevant paper-based materials. Assessors make good use of laptops in the delivery of learning sessions such as health and safety. All assessors have mobile phones, so that learners can contact them at short notice. A good range of resources is also used widely by assessors for key skills, and literacy, numeracy and language training. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. All staff are appropriately qualified and occupationally experienced.

68. As identified in the self-assessment report, support for learners is good. Employers support and encourage learners on their programmes, and readily assist learners with suitable evidence and information. Employers' in-house training enhances learners' knowledge and skills, and broadens their opportunities for progression and promotion. One learner was sent on a two-day diversity course and others have had financial training to enable them to move into different departments. Assessors' visits to learners are frequent, and they adopt a very flexible and responsive approach to the timing of visits. Assessors are very thorough in their approach, and individual learners value the support they receive. For example, one customer service learner who has a hearing impairment has had considerable help to access evidence of prior achievement.

69. The standard of teaching, training and learning is satisfactory. Training of learners takes the form of individual coaching in the workplace. Sessions observed by inspectors were judged to be satisfactory or better. Training is effectively planned to enable learners to progressively develop their skills and knowledge. Sysco's staff develop good working relationships with learners. Learners participate well in training sessions that are designed to meet individuals' preferred learning styles.

70. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners are interviewed to identify their prior achievements, learning objectives, career aspirations, and any potential barriers to achievement. Together with an occupational skill scan, this enables a suitable individual learning plan to be devised.

71. Induction is satisfactory. Learners are taken through the induction process over several weeks. Effective use is made of workbooks to develop learners' understanding of topics. These topics are regularly reinforced during progress reviews with question cards to monitor and reinforce learners' awareness.

72. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. Diagnostic tests are used during induction to identify any additional support needs. Support is provided by assessors using a range of workbooks which are used in workplace coaching sessions. Sysco has recently appointed specialist learning advisers to meet learners' needs which are outside assessors' capabilities. However, they are not routinely used to support learners' needs currently.

73. Assessment and verification practice in this occupational area are satisfactory. Learners' portfolios are well organised, and the range of evidence presented is sufficiently wide. Recording of assessment is good, with some highly detailed observation reports by assessors, and satisfactory completion of evidence reference sheets. Sampling plans for internal verification are satisfactory. Assessors' observation schedules match with actual

observation report records. Feedback to assessors is adequate, although there is sometimes no evidence of assessor action following sampling. Standardisation meetings take place every month. In a number of instances activities are not recorded in sufficient detail.

74. The range of programmes offered is satisfactory and meets the needs of the learners and local employers. Optional units offered meet learners' job requirements, with a choice of framework routes in customer service to meet individual progression needs. Learners progress to level 3 qualifications and management training where appropriate.

### **Leadership and management**

75. Operational management of the area of learning is satisfactory. Following recent changes, the number of staff in the occupational area has been increased. Staff work as a cohesive, highly-motivated team, and have introduced a number of improvements to processes such as internal verification. Formal and informal communication is good. Promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of relevant equality and diversity issues. Learners demonstrate an adequate, although often limited, awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted and reinforced at progress reviews. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Data is effectively used to monitor learners' and the team's progress towards the achievement of targets. Staff training is good with further development of staff occupational up dating planned for the near future.



## Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Employability/employment training</i></b> - Entry to Employment	56	2

### ***Employability/employment training***

#### *Strengths*

- excellent support
- good teaching
- good progression and personal development

#### *Weaknesses*

- ineffective target-setting

## Achievement and standards

76. There is good progression and personal development on the E2E programme. During 2004-05, around 50 per cent of learners have progressed into employment, education or apprenticeship programmes. Since the programme began, the progression rate has increased from 11 per cent to 51 per cent. Learners have overcome various barriers to learning and have experienced changes in attitude and behaviour during their time on the programme. Motivation levels are raised and learners acquire the necessary skills for participation in the workplace. Learners also experience a growth in confidence as a result of their learning. They achieve both in-house and external certificates. For example, learners who participate well during sessions can gain an 'overall participation' award which is awarded every week to a learner who has demonstrated good participation levels during sessions. Learners can also achieve good attendance and first aid certificates. Some have achieved external qualifications in literacy, numeracy and key skills. Learners effectively measure and monitor their own progress and talk with confidence about the difference the E2E programme has made to their lives.

## Quality of education and training

77. Teaching is good. Trainers and managers have a good understanding of their client group and understand learners' previous difficulties with education. Training is planned to meet the needs of the learners. Trainers demonstrate sensitivity when teaching and make good use of appropriate topics to stimulate and engage learners. Trainers make good use of motivational language during sessions and also offer praise and encouragement to learners. Learners are challenged during sessions and ICT facilities such as the whiteboard are used to make sessions more interesting. In one class a trainer

giving individual numeracy support to one learner made effective use of a variety of everyday materials to demonstrate use of data. There is lively discussion in many of the groups. For example, one group discussed stereotypes and all learners were included in the discussion through small group and pair work. Most sessions are well planned with clear aims, objectives and learning outcomes.

78. Initial assessment is comprehensive and is planned as a series of taught sessions which include a range of activities. Each session has clear aims and objectives. Results of all assessments such as diagnostic assessments and learners' likes and dislikes are recorded. There is regular monitoring and review of progress and clear feedback is given to learners. Assessed work contains helpful comments to enable learners to identify areas for improvement or areas of strength. Progress reviews are satisfactorily based on comments from tutors, key workers and the senior mentor who has responsibility for the provision of support.

79. There is excellent support for learners. A mentor offers dedicated support to learners. Key workers are assigned to each learner. Staff use external services to offer appropriate additional support to learners. Learners can access daily support up to 8pm. Learners who receive support are regularly monitored. Detailed records are kept of the support given and action points for support activities are negotiated with the learners. A traffic light system is used to identify whether learners are at high, medium or low risk. This information is effectively communicated to tutors and key workers who respond quickly to individual needs. Learners are given advice on progression routes into employment or training by an employment liaison officer who has access to an extensive bank of employers. Learners who progress into employment or training continue to receive support from the senior mentor who keeps records of after care contact and any support that is arranged. Very good support is also available to learners on placement. There is regular communication between the senior mentor and partners, employers and learners. In addition partners and employers have a good understanding of learners' needs and also offer support as appropriate. For example, one employer operates a buddy system for learners on placement. The buddy is assigned to look after a learner during their placement and to offer support and guidance.

80. Resources are satisfactory. Some good and pleasant accommodation is used for sessions. Rooms are spacious and well lit. However, access to rooms in one building was poor. Tutors are well qualified for their posts and have a range of experience such as previous work as trainers, assessors, managers and carers.

81. The programme satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners. Learners' evaluations are taken seriously and have been used as a basis for the development of the curriculum. Certificates and awards have been incorporated into the programme to raise learners' motivation levels and to encourage them to achieve. For example, in-house certificates are used to recognise and celebrate achievement in attendance. Learners can take national tests in literacy and numeracy and gain NVQ units, computer and key skills qualifications. Learners speak highly about the increase in personal motivation from attending activities such as trips to outdoor pursuits centre. They gain in confidence through the well-structured teambuilding activities.

82. Target-setting is ineffective. Learners' files contain documents which list targets but these are often vague and too general to be useful. The review documents also refer to targets but these are not linked to the targets written in the activity plans. Learners are not always aware of which targets they are working towards.

### **Leadership and management**

83. There is good operational management of the E2E programme. Staff have a good understanding of the client group and a clear sense of direction. Meetings are regular and productive. A new system of case conferences has been introduced to enable all staff to meet together to review the programme and discuss learners' needs and progress. Staff are well supported by their manager and have good access to opportunities for staff development. Many staff are enrolled on courses to support their work or to enhance their development. Staff work to clear performance targets and receive regular feedback from their manager. There are close working relationships with partners and one partner commented on the recent improved communication.

84. Equality of opportunity are promoted and learners understand their rights and responsibilities. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are satisfactorily reinforced during progress reviews. A structured question approach is effectively used to monitor learners' understanding of equal opportunities and health and safety.

85. Quality assurance is satisfactory. Learners are given an induction pack which they take to their work placements to ensure consistency of approach. A quality assurance file has recently been established, containing a range of procedures. Learners' views are sought and acted upon. For example, one comment from a learner about a boring induction process resulted in changes to the programme to remedy the learner's concerns. Staff were involved in self-assessment process but not all of the partners were fully aware of the process or the report's contents. The self-assessment report did not fully reflect the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection.