

INSPECTION REPORT

Southampton Engineering Training Association Ltd

06 May 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based 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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Southampton Engineering Training Association Ltd (SETA) is a private company, limited by guarantee without share capital and is a registered charity. The company was established in 1970 in Millbrook, Southampton, and is set up as an association with a membership drawn from local engineering companies. The company reports to a board of trustees comprising eight representatives from a current membership of 19 companies. SETA also provides training to apprentices of non-member companies.

2. The chief executive is supported by a training manager and quality manager in managing SETA's government-funded provision. SETA employs 40 staff and uses a small number of part-time specialist lecturers. Twenty-seven staff are directly involved in training and assessment on government-funded programmes. All external assessors are full-time employees of the company and approximately 50 per cent of technical certificates are delivered in-house. The remainder of the programmes are subcontracted to three local colleges.

3. SETA specialises in training in engineering, construction and related disciplines to young people, and funds its training provision through Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council. Most learners are recruited locally but SETA has recently introduced first-year 'off-the-job' training and level 3 technical certificates for apprentices recruited from a wide area of the country. Just under half of SETA's turnover derives from managing and training apprentices.

4. The 2001 census identified that Southampton unitary authority's minority ethnic groups represented 7.6 per cent of the population, compared with 2.2 per cent in Hampshire, 4.9 per cent in the Southeast and 9.1 per cent nationally. The economy of the district is dominated by public administration, banking and distribution sectors, which account for almost three-quarters of all employment. Production and construction account for 15.4 per cent of all employment in Southampton. In February 2005, the unemployment rate in Southampton was 2.1 per cent, compared with 1 per cent in Hampshire, 1.5 per cent in the Southeast and 2.3 per cent nationally.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provider is satisfactory.** More specifically, leadership and management are satisfactory, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Work-based learning in engineering, technology and manufacturing, and in construction are also satisfactory.

6. **The inspection team were broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is consultative and well managed. Clear procedures are laid down for the development of the report in October each year. The board of trustees, staff, employers, subcontracting colleges and learners were all asked to contribute to its development. Although the report overstates some of the company's strengths, it

recognises most of the weaknesses identified during the inspection.

7. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.

SETA has made some improvements since the previous inspection and has taken effective steps to improve the quality assurance mechanisms, to secure quality improvement and raise standards since the previous inspection. Retention has remained good for advanced apprentices in both areas of learning. The number of learners has increased significantly, particularly with new contracts to deliver construction training. Many purposeful actions have been taken to improve the provision for learners. Weaknesses identified during the previous inspection have mostly been dealt with, but the full impact of recent changes to the management of key skills has not yet impacted on learners who are near the end of their four-year programme.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SOUTHAMPTON ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LTD:

- improve retention and achievement rates of engineering apprentices
- clearer management responsibilities and reporting
- higher priority to key skills assessment
- more effective working relationships between assessors and workplace supervisors
- clearer focus on progress and targets during reviews
- more systematic and effective internal verification
- increase and maintain awareness of equality of opportunity
- establish arrangements to identify and manage additional learning support

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Construction			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Apprenticeships for young people	71	3	

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Apprenticeships for young people	141	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. Both areas of learning offered by SETA were reported on and graded. Inspectors visited SETA once in the six weeks leading up to the final inspection visit.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	17
Number of learners interviewed	41
Number of staff interviewed	21
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of visits	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **The retention rates for advanced apprentices in engineering and in construction are good.** In engineering, between 1997 and 2004, SETA recruited 275 advanced apprentices. Of these, 68 have completed the framework and 133 remain in learning. This represents an overall retention rate of 73 per cent. Framework achievement rates for engineering advanced apprentices are satisfactory at 58 per cent. In construction, between 1999 and 2004, SETA recruited 98 advanced apprentices, nine of whom completed the framework and 71 of whom remain in learning. This represents an overall retention rate of 81 per cent. The framework achievement rate for construction advanced apprentices is satisfactory at 53 per cent.

10. **The level of skills and knowledge demonstrated by many advanced apprentices in the final stage of their programme is good.** Pass rates on the craft engineering technical certificates are above national averages.

11. The achievement and retention rates for engineering apprentices are poor at 29 and 36 per cent, respectively. The apprentices represent 9 per cent of the learners currently in engineering.

12. **Construction learners gain useful additional qualifications** to increase their employability.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	4	0	6
Total	0	2	4	0	6

13. The quality of teaching in the training centre is satisfactory. In the better sessions, staff work to well-structured lesson and assessment plans. Good use is made of audiovisual aids and engineering equipment. Effective questioning techniques are used to check learners' understanding and to control the pace of teaching. In some background knowledge sessions there is too much instructing and giving information without adequate explanation. Tutors rely heavily on undirected questioning which allows some learners to remain passive. In construction practical sessions, learners are engaged in realistic projects and work well in teams to overcome problems in site reclamation and preparation.

14. **Training is very effective and meets the needs of first-year learners.** The level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) programme is well managed and provides a range of practical training tasks before formal assessment is carried out. Individual support is given when needed by the experienced and supportive staff. Good emphasis is given to health and safety. Training exercises allow learners to progress at their own pace and provide opportunities for them to practise their new skills. Staff are successful in raising learners' employability skills through particular attention to timekeeping and discipline.

15. **A good range of learning opportunities are provided in work placements.** Employers ensure that learners are given ample training and work to develop their skills. Most learners are given autonomous and challenging tasks to perform. During progress reviews, assessors work well with learners to identify suitable jobs and written evidence for the level 3 NVQ portfolio. However, targets are weak and supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the review process.

16. **For construction learners, assessment in the workplace takes place frequently and is well planned.** The assessor visits learners in the workplace every six to eight weeks. Assessment is well recorded and good use is made of photographic evidence and witness testimonies to support assessment by direct observation. However, for engineering learners there is insufficient assessment by direct observation. There are no assessors among the workplace supervisors. Portfolio evidence is over-reliant on written reports by learners and witness testimony from workplace supervisors.

17. **Many workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in progress reviews.** They meet with assessors after the learner review and they sign and keep a copy of the review document. The progress review document contains an indication of progress made on the NVQ units, but supervisors are not adequately informed about the learners' progress in key skills and the technical certificate. In most cases the supervisor is not involved in a discussion to identify how on-the-job training can be managed to meet the requirements of the NVQ and key skills. Employer training plans are not matched against the requirements of the NVQ and key skills.

18. **Learners make slow progress in providing evidence for their key skills portfolios.** For many learners, assessment of key skills is left until a late stage in the apprenticeship. Many

learners are still unclear of their progress on key skills and give it a low priority. Progress reviews and individual learning plans do not contain milestones data or progress information on key skills. Most workplace supervisors have little understanding or involvement with key skills work.

Leadership and management

19. The management of work-based learning programmes is satisfactory. There are sufficient trainers, assessors and internal verifiers to support learners. Staff are experienced and qualified in their specialist area. The staff development programme is well managed to improve assessment of key skills and teaching on technical certificate courses. Practical resources at the training centre are satisfactory. Internal verification at the training centre is good in engineering, but is not thorough in construction. Many learners understand the role of the internal verifier, but they are not adequately aware of the assessment appeals process.

20. **SETA is committed to continuous development for all employees.** Effective strategic planning is focused on staff development to meet the business needs, with a clear priority on teaching and learning. Twenty staff have attended training in an instructional or basic teaching award over the past year and some are still attending. Several have progressed to the second stage of the programme. Many staff have also been trained as NVQ assessors and internal verifiers. Regular reports on training and development are made to the board of trustees. The company records individual achievement in a professional development log. The staff appraisal process has recently been refined and improved, but it is yet to impact on all staff.

21. **SETA has established very good working relationships with a number of local and national organisations** to develop the training programmes. For example, very effective work has been done to develop the SETA centre as a resource centre for the electrical engineering apprentice programme. This programme specifically meets the needs of learners and local employers who need a workforce with electrical installation experience. SETA is kept well informed of the needs of local industry through the board of trustees which comprises senior staff in large and small local firms. SETA is piloting the 'young apprenticeship pilot' programme, and this has been very successful in attracting a full intake of learners from 10 local schools, and over 30 applications for 12 places for 2005-06.

22. Day-to-day communication within SETA is satisfactory. However, formal meetings and appropriate actions are not always sufficiently recorded. A number of key meetings have been cancelled during recent months and there has been no formal process for some concerns to be shared and discussed in a joint forum. No formal forum exists to share good practice between staff. There are no opportunities to include leadership and promotion of best practice in internal verification.

23. **There are no formal arrangements or established protocols to deal with learners who need additional support with their learning.** Before starting at SETA, most learners complete an aptitude test, but this is not used to identify additional support needs. Specialist support is not readily available to help staff or learners, and there is no policies for guidance. SETA has some learners with dyslexia but it does not carry out any specific testing and relies on self-declaration. These learners are supported through tests and examinations with extra time or in some cases, a reader to help with online examinations. However, alternative learning materials are not made available.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong strategic support for employee development
- good partnership working to develop training programmes
- purposeful activity to improve provision
- good strategies to promote engineering to women

Weaknesses

- insufficient continuity between staff monitoring and appraisal
- over-reliance on informality
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- inadequate arrangements for additional learning support

Construction

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good use of accreditation of prior learning and attainment
- well-planned programme
- good additional qualifications gained by learners

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews
- slow progress on key skills portfolios
- insufficiently thorough internal verification

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good retention rates for advanced apprentices
- very effective training for first-year apprentices at SETA
- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress with key skills portfolios
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews
- insufficient assessment by observation in the workplace
- poor retention and achievement rates for apprentices

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SOUTHAMPTON ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LTD:

- valuable hand-tool training
- gaining additional skills and qualifications
- experienced trade lecturers who explain the subject well
- working in small groups at SETA
- good food at SETA
- being given responsible jobs in the workplace
- interesting programme
- good teaching
- making your own jobs
- realistic practical work on performing engineering operations
- good opportunities in workplace
- good working relationships with SETA's staff

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SOUTHAMPTON ENGINEERING TRAINING ASSOCIATION LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the training rooms and workshops - they could be more spacious
- not merging groups together
- more reliable suppliers of equipment
- more access to grinding bays and welding bays
- a shorter time to achieve qualifications
- more frequent monitoring visits
- more than 20 weeks at SETA
- less complex paperwork for NVQs
- less boring background knowledge on technical certificate work
- less boring induction at SETA
- more modern tooling in the workshops
- more detail on the course we are doing

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- strong strategic support for employee development
- good partnership working to develop training programmes
- purposeful activity to improve provision
- good strategies to promote engineering to women

Weaknesses

- insufficient continuity between staff monitoring and appraisal
- over-reliance on informality
- insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- inadequate arrangements for additional learning support

24. SETA is fully committed to continuous development for all employees. Effective strategic planning is appropriately focused on staff development to meet the business needs. Twenty staff have attended an instructional or basic teaching award over the past year, and some are still attending. Several have progressed to the second stage of the programme, which has been run by a local college in the provider's premises. Many staff have also been trained as NVQ assessors and verifiers. Of the 27 teaching and assessment staff, 23 now have assessor qualifications and the others have nearly completed their awards. Many staff have completed the four-day health and safety at work first aid award. Training and development are on the agenda of the board of trustees and regular reports are made to them on the progress of staff. The company records individual achievement in a professional development log. The staff appraisal process has recently been refined and improved, but it is yet to impact on all staff. All staff have received appropriate briefings in preparation for appraisal with their immediate line manager. Targets are set and personal objectives are established for each employee. Where appropriate, the training manager reviews appraisals with line managers and makes recommendations to the chief executive for additional learning needs.

25. SETA has established very good working relationships with a number of local and national organisations to develop the training programmes. Very effective work has been done to develop SETA as a resource centre for the electrical engineering apprenticeship programme. These programmes specifically meet the needs of learners and local employers who need a workforce with electrical installation experience. To ensure the programme is appropriate for the learners, a newly accredited training programme has been introduced. SETA is kept well informed of the needs of local industry through the board of trustees which comprises senior staff in local firms. Changes have been made to the delivery of the technical certificates to ensure that learners receive an appropriate balance between practical work and background knowledge sessions at the right time in their training. In order to facilitate this, SETA managers decided to provide the engineering production programmes and technical certificates themselves rather than continue to use local colleges. Close working relationships with a local college have identified a training

route for young engineers to develop welding skills before joining the apprenticeship programme. The 'young apprenticeship pilot' programme has been very successful in attracting a full intake of learners from 10 local schools, and over 30 applications for 12 places for 2005-06. In addition, a 10-week programme with a local school for disengaged year 10 and 11 pupils has provided hands on engineering experience which has improved their awareness of engineering. Close working relationships also exist with local provider networks, where collaboration has developed new training initiatives.

26. SETA is a small organisation where staff can rely on meeting other staff during the day. Day-to-day communication within SETA is satisfactory. However, the recording of formal meetings and appropriate actions is not always sufficient. A number of key meetings have been cancelled during recent months and there has been no formal process for some concerns to be shared and discussed in a joint forum. No formal forum exists to share good practice between staff, and opportunities are not available to include leadership and promotion of best practice in internal verification. Newsletters and information sheets are produced for staff and employers to celebrate success. Learners' targets are often not fully written down at progress reviews, leaving a reliance on learners remembering what they need to achieve.

27. There are no formal arrangements or established protocols to deal with learners who need additional help with their learning. Before starting at SETA most learners complete an aptitude test which is used to determine their suitability for engineering and by employers to select apprentices. However, some learners do not complete this test. SETA does not provide literacy and numeracy support for learners. All new recruits must meet minimum entry qualifications of five GCSEs of grade C or above and complete an aptitude test before being offered a place. During training it is evident that some learners need help with literacy or numeracy or to help develop strategies to enable them to manage their dyslexia. Staff do what they can to provide support, but do not have the knowledge or mechanisms to provide the specialist support that some learners need. Specialist support is not readily available to help staff or learners and there are no policies for guidance. SETA has some learners with dyslexia but they do not carry out specific testing and rely on self-declaration. These learners are supported through tests and examinations with extra time or in some cases, a reader, to help with online examinations. However, alternative learning materials are not made available for these learners.

28. Resources are adequate to support the training programmes. SETA provides a good working environment for employees and learners. Staff have good and relevant industrial experience. Well-appointed workshops form a central area in the training centre with sufficient classrooms available around the periphery to support training needs. Electrical engineering learners are involved in a project within the centre to develop a practical teaching area to enable learners to work on vertical and horizontal surfaces above ground level, and at heights of up to five meters.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

29. SETA routinely monitors recruitment and uses data to develop strategies and actions to promote equal opportunities. Historical data shows that the recruitment of women and learners from minority ethnic groups is low. New strategies have been developed to promote engineering opportunities to girls at local schools. Women careers teachers from local schools attended a full day's training in practical engineering. Strong links exist with a national and European partnership to create change for women and girls in engineering

construction and technology. An open day and taster day was arranged for local schools for year 10 girls. The girls tried wiring electrical circuits, used lathes and plasma cutting, then visited a large local engineering employer. Five of the 12 places on the 'young apprentice pilot' programme for 2005-06 have been reserved specifically for women. All places have now been filled. Marketing materials include pictures of female learners carrying out engineering activities. All learners currently on programme identify themselves as white British, and four are women. SETA has also made several approaches through schools and directly to local minority ethnic communities to attract young people into engineering. One female assessor supports training and assessment, and a female recruitment manager regularly visits employers and liaises with learners.

30. Access to the training facilities for people with restricted mobility is adequate. The workshops, classrooms, toilet facilities and offices are all easily accessible. Where office accommodation is inaccessible, alternative arrangements are made. Very few applications are received from learners with restricted mobility as the work is demanding. However, applications are encouraged from people with disabilities. One learner with paralysis to one side of his body was accepted onto training, but had to withdraw for personal reasons.

31. The equal opportunities policy is out of date. It was written in 2001 and includes procedures for identifying bullying and harassment in the workplace. However, it does not identify changes in recent legislation. The policy is displayed on walls throughout the establishment and is written clearly in an easy-to-follow format. Few incidents relating to bullying have occurred over the past four years, but all have been dealt with appropriately. Procedures and records of complaints exist and show systematic recording of prompt actions and guidelines being followed. SETA's staff who carry out the monitoring of equal opportunities have not been adequately trained. There are no additional training or awareness sessions planned for learners.

32. Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding and awareness of equality and diversity that affects them personally. This is established at induction but is not adequately reinforced during progress reviews or training sessions. The induction programme covers equality of opportunity through video and discussion. There is no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities policies or procedures with employers. Insufficient checks are made to ensure employers' policies or understanding of legislation is up to date. Equal opportunities policies and data is not collected from employers, and employees within small companies are not encouraged or helped to develop their own policies. A new process has just been implemented where learners are required to answer questions at the progress review on equality and diversity. Questions focus on their rights and how they have been treated at work, but do not raise awareness or reinforce their responsibilities in dealing with equality issues that arise in the workplace. However, it has not been applied to all learners, although there are plans to do so. For those learners under the old system, monitoring is insufficient.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

33. Many purposeful actions have been taken to improve the provision for learners and the quality of delivery has improved. SETA made the strategic decision to reduce the reliance on subcontracting to local colleges and have taken control of most of the craft engineering qualifications. SETA is now able to control practical work and background knowledge sessions and can follow a syllabus which is appropriate for the learners' and employers' needs. Weaknesses which were identified at the previous inspection have

mostly been dealt with, but the full impact of changes to the management of key skills has not impacted on learners who are near the end of their four-year programme.

34. The analysis and use of data is satisfactory. Reports are produced regularly and are used to provide strategic and operations performance analysis to board members and staff. Progression data is used well to identify performance at monthly assessor meetings. All data on learners is held centrally and is available to staff through the training manager. Detailed contracts exist with the subcontracted colleges and they allow SETA's staff to receive reports on the learners' progress and attendance. Concerns about the college provision have been identified by SETA and employers, and SETA has acted effectively to resolve these problems.

35. The self-assessment process is adequate. Clear procedures are laid down for the development of the report in October each year. The board of trustees, staff, employers, colleges and learners were all asked to contribute to its development. Although the report overstates some of the company's strengths, it recognises most of the weaknesses identified during the inspection. A development plan is based on the self-assessment report and some actions have already started to improve the weaknesses.

36. SETA has adequate internal verification arrangements for most learners but not for those on the electrical installation programme. New assessors are supported through 100 per cent sampling with effective and appropriate feedback for assessors and learners. A clear audit trail exists to ensure that actions are completed and any changes to work are identified for the internal verifier to follow up on re-submission. Internal verification of electrical installation programmes is not thorough.

37. SETA has adequate quality assurance policies relating to most aspects of training. There is also a clear process to monitor amendments to policy. However, some policies are out of date and have not been amended for four years. The policy identifies the approach to quality assurance in most aspects of training, but does not contain sufficiently detailed procedures to ensure consistent evaluation of these processes. For example, while learners' accommodation is checked personally by the chief executive and police checks are made on landlords, no policy records how this will be accomplished. There are policies to include monitoring of training, teaching and reviews. Teaching and review sessions have been observed over the past two years by SETA's staff, external assessors and tutors of staff on teaching qualifications. SETA does not have a consistent observation policy or profile of grades. A new observation protocol has recently been introduced and all staff have been told how their performance will be measured. However, there are no direct links between performance monitoring during these observations and an individual's personal appraisal.

38. Feedback is collected regularly from employers and learners. Learners are surveyed annually at the end of phase 1 training and employers are consistently monitored during visits by staff and through regular employer forum events. The results of learner feedback are analysed and used to make changes. A recent change to a teaching venue was made after learner feedback identified excessive noise from the sheet metal fabrication area.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas Apprenticeships for young people	71	3

39. SETA started its apprenticeship programme in electrical installation in 1999. Following a successful assessment, SETA was recently appointed as a regional training centre. Apprentices recruited from a wide area of the country receive training for their full-time first-year off-the-job training, key skills and technical certificates at SETA. Approximately half of these apprentices are not local to Southampton and accommodation is provided by SETA.

40. There are 71 advanced apprentices working towards the electrical installation or electro-technical technicians qualifications. All current learners are employed by local companies or are sponsored by the industry training board. First-year learners spend between 20 and 46 weeks in the training centre working towards their NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations (electrical installation and commissioning) and their technical certificate. In the second year, learners spend eight weeks in SETA's workshops and the rest of their time in the workplace following the NVQ at level 3 in installation and commissioning. After the second year, learners spend another 18 months in the workplace gaining experience and continuing to follow the NVQ at level 3 in installation and commissioning. Learners are encouraged to achieve the NVQ at level 2 in the first year and the advanced apprenticeship within 42 months. Key skills evidence has started to be drawn from their work on the NVQ and the technical certificate, specific key skills assignments and their subsequent work in the workplace. A few learners continue their studies and work towards a higher national certificate (HNC) in electrical and electronic engineering.

41. All construction learners are recruited as advanced apprentices. The training and assessment for the NVQs, technical certificates and key skills are carried out on site at SETA. Workplace assessment and internal verification is carried out by SETA's staff.

42. Learners are recruited through direct advertisements, referrals from Connexions, personal contacts and from careers fairs attended by SETA's staff. A few learners are recruited directly by employers or the industry training board and then referred to SETA for training. All applicants attend an initial assessment and selection process including an interview, literacy and numeracy tests, mechanical aptitude tests and a spatial awareness test. Individual support is given by assessors and supervisors in the workplace. There is a satisfactory induction into the company.

Strengths

- good retention rates
- good use of accreditation of prior learning and attainment
- well-planned programme

- good additional qualifications gained by learners

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews
- slow progress on key skills portfolios
- insufficiently thorough internal verification

Achievement and standards

43. The retention rates for advanced apprentices are good. In construction, between 1999 and 2004, SETA recruited 98 advanced apprentices, nine of whom have completed the framework and 71 remain in learning. This represents an overall retention rate of 81 per cent. Framework achievement rates for construction advanced apprentices are satisfactory. In 1999 SETA recruited nine advanced apprentices, eight of whom completed all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. However, in 2000 SETA recruited eight advanced apprentices, none of whom have yet achieved, although two remain in learning. The achievement rate for the 15 leavers is 53 per cent. The level of skills and knowledge demonstrated by advanced apprentices in the final stage of their programme is good. Employers view them as valuable members of the workforce.

44. Most of the learners who complete their frameworks are supported to achieve a good range of additional qualifications. All learners achieve additional qualifications in health and safety and first aid while following the framework. Many learners also obtain additional qualifications including 16th edition wiring regulations, and AM2 testing, which accredits practical experience and the site safety passport. Some learners continue their studies to achieve the HNC in electrical and electronic engineering. A few learners have progressed to responsible positions in their companies.

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

Inspection:

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	41		17		11		12		8		9	100				
Retained*	0		0		1		1		6		9	100				
Successfully completed	0		0		0		1		0		8	89				
Still in learning	36		15		9		9		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

The quality of provision

45. The teaching in the training centre is satisfactory. In the practical sessions, learners work well together on realistic practical tasks. Staff plan activities well and supervise learners closely. Learners are given responsibility as team leaders within groups to increase their confidence and capabilities. Assessment is thorough and good verbal feedback is given frequently. Effective informal questioning techniques are used to check learners' understanding. There are good links between background knowledge and associated practical work. Some learners displayed good research skills in sourcing suitable health and

safety signs to be used on-site throughout the practical activities.

46. Training is well planned and effectively meets the needs of learners and employers. The inductions include effective training in health and safety, and first aid and learners can achieve basic qualifications in these topics. The NVQ programme is well planned and well managed, and provides a suitable range of practical training tasks before formal assessment of competence. Practical training activities allow learners to progress at their own pace while working in groups on site with reclamation and preparation. There is a good focus on health and safety throughout and staff instil the importance of punctuality, timekeeping and discipline. Individual vocational support is given when needed by the experienced and supportive staff, but learners have insufficient access to specialised support for additional learning needs. Assessment in the workplace takes place frequently and is well planned. The assessor visits learners in the workplace every six to eight weeks. Assessment is well recorded and good use is made of photographic evidence and witness testimonies to support assessment by direct observation.

47. SETA effectively uses accreditation of learners' prior learning and achievement. Information on learners' prior achievement is collected at induction and is used to plan learners' programmes. For example, one adult learner who had already completed an NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations comprising six units was not being recognised by a different awarding body where the award comprises eight units. SETA's assessors and managers worked closely with the learner to ensure that prior achievement was recognised and the learner could proceed quickly to the level 3. Other learners who already have key skills qualifications or general certificates of secondary education of appropriate grades, have them recognised but still contribute to key skills classes to ensure discussion and lively debate.

48. The results of the initial assessment and aptitude tests are used in the recruitment process to identify the most appropriate programme for learners, but they are not used to plan effective, specialised individual support. SETA's staff send the assessment results and candidate information to selected employers that have identified vacancies. Learners are satisfied with the recruitment process and most gained employment in a workplace that suited their abilities and career aims. Similarly, employers consider that there is a good match of candidates to vacancies. However, learners with support needs have insufficient access to specialist support.

49. Learners make slow progress in providing evidence for their key skills portfolios. Very few learners have completed key skills tasks. Most have taken the examinations and have been given a useful assignment on rewiring a kitchen to work towards key skills. However, there has been insufficient focus on progressing the key skills portfolios and the key skills assignment. Many of the learners who were recruited in 2003 and earlier have not made sufficient progress in identifying key skills evidence for assessment and have not started the assignment. For many of these learners, assessment of key skills has been left until too late in their apprenticeship. Very recently, assessors have started to identify key skills evidence and have set targets at progress reviews. However, many learners are still unclear of their progress on key skills and give it a low priority. Progress reviews and individual learning plans do not contain milestones or progress information on key skills. Most workplace supervisors have little understanding or involvement with key skills work.

50. Progress reviews are weak. Although progress reviews take place every six to eight

weeks, the targets are not sufficiently explicit and records are not sufficiently detailed. Few workplace supervisors are involved in the progress reviews and in most cases are not involved in a discussion to identify how on-the-job training can be managed to meet the NVQ and key skills.

Leadership and management

51. There are sufficient numbers of trainers, assessors and internal verifiers to support learners. The construction programmes are well planned and assessment is frequent. Technical certificate subjects complement practical training throughout the programme. Construction staff are suitably qualified and experienced in their specialist area. Sufficient focus is given to staff development to improve assessment and delivery of the vocational programme, technical certificates and key skills. Most staff are currently following or have recently achieved teaching qualifications. Practical resources at the training centre are satisfactory and meet the learners' needs. Internal verification is not thorough on construction programmes at the training centre. Internal verification events are not sufficiently recorded and there is no overall sampling plan to ensure that the requirements of the awarding body are met. The internal verification process on the technical certificate takes place at the end of the programme, and for the NVQ, it is not frequent or regular enough. Feedback from the internal verifier to the assessors is not sufficiently detailed to allow assessors to identify how they could improve. Action plans are not systematically drawn up or followed. Many learners understand the role of the internal verifier but they are not adequately aware of the assessment appeals process.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other contributory areas</i> Apprenticeships for young people	141	3

52. There are 141 engineering learners at SETA. Thirteen are apprentices and 128 are advanced apprentices. All learners are employed. SETA currently works with 63 engineering companies which range from small to medium-size engineering companies to some that are divisions of multi-national corporation. SETA recruits learners and matches them to suitable employers, who then interview them. All first-year learners attend four days a week at SETA's training centre in Southampton, where they work towards a level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations. Most learners attend day-release classes at the SETA training centre for training on the technical certificate in craft engineering. Thirty-seven advanced apprentices attend one of two local colleges on day release to work towards a national certificate for technicians. A few other learners attend a local college for technical certificates in specialist crafts which are not offered by SETA. Some learners progress onto an HNC in engineering in the latter stages of their programme. Most learners complete the performing engineering operations units in a 20-week block. At that stage, some learners go to work with their employer and others stay at SETA for up to another 26 weeks to work towards additional NVQ units and a 'design and make' project. Each year SETA recruits and supports a few unemployed learners as apprentices on the 20-week programme. SETA helps these learners to gain employment, and a few progress to advanced apprenticeships.

53. After the first-year block of off-the-job training, the advanced apprentices spend the remaining years of their apprenticeship working at their employers. For many, this involves three years of on-the-job training in a variety of different sections of their company. They work towards a level 3 NVQ, typically engineering production or engineering maintenance. Workplace progress reviews and assessments are carried out by one of SETA's five assessors. Most of the work on key skills is currently assessed by SETA's staff in the latter years of the apprenticeship. All internal verification is carried out by SETA's staff.

Strengths

- good retention rates for advanced apprentices
- very effective training for first-year apprentices at SETA
- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress with key skills portfolios
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews
- insufficient assessment by observation in the workplace
- poor retention and achievement rates for apprentices

Achievement and standards

54. The retention rates for advanced apprentices are good. Between 1997 and 2004, SETA recruited 275 advanced apprentices, 68 of whom have completed the framework and 133 remain in learning. This represents an overall retention rate of 73 per cent.

Framework achievement rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory. Between 1997 and 2000, SETA recruited 113 advanced apprentices, 59 of whom have completed all aspects of the apprenticeship framework and 12 remain in learning. The achievement rate for the 101 leavers is 58 per cent. The level of skills and knowledge demonstrated by many advanced apprentices in the final stage of their programme is good. Pass rates on the craft engineering technical certificates run at SETA have been above national averages in recent years.

55. The achievement and retention rates for apprentices are poor. Between 1999 and 2002, SETA recruited 14 apprentices. Only four learners have completed all aspects of the framework and none remain in learning. This represents an achievement rate of 29 per cent. Between 1999 and 2004 SETA has recruited 47 apprentices, four of whom have completed the framework and 13 remain in learning. This represents an overall retention rate of 36 per cent. The apprentices represent 9 per cent of the total learners currently in engineering.

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		2000-01		1999-00		1998-99		1997-98	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	41		28		39		51		41		31		22		19	100
Retained*	0		0		1		13		29		24		21		19	100
Successfully completed	0		0		1		8		15		16		15		13	68
Still in learning	36		24		29		27		10		1		1		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		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	10		23		7	100	2	100	4	100	1	100				
Retained*	0		3		3	43	0	0	4	100	1	100				
Successfully completed	0		0		3	43	0	0	1	25	0	0				
Still in learning	7		6		0	0	0	0	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

The quality of provision

56. The quality of teaching in the training centre is satisfactory. In the better sessions, staff work to well-structured lesson and assessment plans. Good use is made of audiovisual aids and engineering equipment. Effective questioning techniques are used to check learners'

understanding and to control the pace of teaching. There are satisfactory links between background knowledge and associated practical work. However, in some of the background knowledge sessions there is too much instructing without adequate explanation. Teachers rely heavily on undirected questioning which allows some learners to remain passive. Attendance on the day-release craft engineering classes is typically in excess of 80 per cent.

57. Training meets the needs of first-year learners very effectively. The induction sessions include effective training in health and safety, and first aid, and learners gain additional basic qualifications in these topics. The level 2 NVQ programme is well managed and provides a range of practical training tasks before the formal assessment. Individual support is given when necessary by the experienced and supportive staff. Good emphasis is given to health and safety. Training exercises allow learners to progress at their own pace and provide opportunities to practise their new skills. Learners work on optional units that are chosen by their employer to meet the specific needs of the workplace. Staff are successful in raising the learners' employability skills through particular attention to timekeeping and discipline. Learners and their employers value the skills developed in the basic training before entry to the workplace. One employer was very impressed by the high level of fabrication and welding skills developed in such a short time. Learners who stay on for an additional 26 weeks are able to endorse their NVQ with additional units and they work in groups on 'design and make' projects. Learners are justly proud of their projects and they have the opportunity to present their work at a formal prize-giving ceremony each year. The projects provide additional opportunities for gathering evidence for the key skills portfolio.

58. A good range of learning opportunities are provided in work placements. Employers ensure that learners are given ample training and work to develop their skills. Many learners spend the second year of the advanced apprenticeship on a planned sequence of placements in different sections of their company. Following identification of the final placement, learners are able to develop their skills and competence. Most learners are given autonomous and challenging tasks to perform. Some are involved in testing of re-conditioned aircraft engines, and others work on electrical fault finding on production-line control systems. During progress reviews, assessors work well with learners to identify suitable jobs and written evidence for the NVQ portfolio. At one large petrol-chemical company, learners often achieve the level 3 NVQ within 18 months. Some employers arrange for learners to travel to other locations to gain the required evidence for their NVQ. For one small group of learners, their mechanical engineering programme does not directly meet the vehicle repair skills practised in their workplace.

59. The results of the initial assessment and aptitude tests are used in the recruitment process to identify the most appropriate programme for learners. Staff send the assessment results and information on the learner to employers who have identified vacancies. Learners are satisfied with the recruitment process and most gained employment in a workplace that suited their abilities and career aims. Similarly, employers consider that there is a good match of learners to vacancies.

60. Learners make slow progress in providing evidence for their key skills portfolios. Learners who were recruited in 2003 or earlier have not made sufficient progress with their key skills. For most of these learners, assessment of key skills is left until a late stage in the apprenticeship. First-year project work has not been submitted for key skills assessment by

many older learners. During the past year, managers have taken action to raise the understanding and confidence of staff in working with key skills. Some assessors now identify possible key skills evidence during progress reviews with learners. Many of the older learners have been given a series of assignments to use for key skills evidence. However, too many learners are still unclear of their progress on key skills and give it a low priority. Progress reviews and individual learning plans do not contain milestones or progress information on key skills. Most workplace supervisors have little understanding or involvement with key skills work. SETA has recently started to incorporate key skills assessment into first-year training, but as yet this has had little impact on learners.

61. Many workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in progress reviews. Assessors meet with learners in the workplace at six-weekly intervals to discuss progress and to examine evidence. However, most of these meetings do not adequately involve workplace supervisors. Many workplace supervisors meet with assessors after the review and they sign and keep a copy of the review document. The progress review document contains an indication of progress towards the NVQ units, but supervisors are not adequately informed about progress towards key skills and the technical certificate. In most cases the supervisor is not involved in a discussion to identify how the on-the-job training can be managed to meet the requirements of the NVQ and key skills. Employer training plans are not matched against the requirements of the NVQ and key skills.

62. Insufficient assessment is made by direct observation of performance in the workplace. There are no active assessors among the workplace supervisors. Portfolio evidence is over-reliant on written reports by learners with witness testimony from workplace supervisors. Much of this evidence bears only a signature from the expert witness in the workplace. There is insufficient written evaluation by many observing witnesses. This area of weakness was identified during the 2001 inspection. Internal verifiers have initiated some improvement. Effective action has been taken to ensure that the assessment process is continuous throughout the on-the-job training.

Leadership and management

63. There are sufficient trainers, assessors and internal verifiers to support learners. Engineering staff are experienced and qualified in their specialist area. The staff development programme is managed to meet SETA's improvement targets, in particular to improve assessment of key skills and teaching on technical certificate courses. Practical resources at the training centre are satisfactory for the first-year learners, but some specialist areas, such as programmable logic controllers, are not to current industrial standards. Internal verification at the training centre is good, with detailed feedback to assessors on the quality of assessment and what needs to be done to improve. Internal verification of level 3 NVQ assessment is satisfactory. At the frequent meetings between assessors and the internal verifier, the main agenda items refer to improving assessment practices. However, the internal verification process is too focused on the end of the advanced apprenticeship programme. Many learners understand the role of the internal verifier but they are not adequately aware of the assessment appeals process.