

INSPECTION REPORT

**Focus Training
Limited**

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

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

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 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 satisfactory or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. A satisfactory 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 improvement. The descriptors for the four grades are:

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

INSPECTION REPORT

FOCUS TRAINING LIMITED

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Focus Training Limited (Focus Training) was established in March 2000 as a private training company, limited by guarantee, following the liquidation of Focus Training and Assessment in November 1999. Focus Training does not receive direct government funding. Its main administrative centre is in Bolton, Lancashire. Training is provided through distance learning facilitated by dedicated support tutors based at the company's head office. Practical training and assessment are provided during three- or four-day intensive residential courses at health clubs and leisure centres in Bolton, Manchester, Lowestoft, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Romford, Liverpool, Crawley, Tunbridge Wells, and Glasgow. All training and assessments are provided by Focus Training's staff.
2. Focus Training's board of directors includes the managing director, the finance director, the company's solicitor and a non-executive chairman. The senior management team is made up of the managing director, the finance director, the general manager and the chief internal verifier. They have specific responsibility for quality assurance and curriculum development, equal opportunities, and health and safety. The company operates nationally, and has additional contracts in the Orkney Islands and Guernsey. The general manager is responsible for all tutors and support staff who have direct training contact with learners.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	1
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality improvement	1

Sport, leisure and recreation	1
Contributory grades:	
Exercise and fitness coaching	1

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.** Focus Training's leadership and management are outstanding, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. In exercise and fitness coaching the provision is outstanding.
4. **The inspection team is broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** All staff contribute to the self-assessment report, which accurately identifies most of the key strengths and weaknesses in the area of learning, and in leadership and management. Good use is made of key performance indicators, together with feedback from staff and learners, to improve the quality of the service offered to learners.
5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to maintain the quality of provision.** Focus Training has carried out effective actions to promote improvement, and the quality of its provision has improved. Proposed actions to improve quality are specific

and have realistic timescales. Recent strategies to improve completion and pass rates have had a positive impact on the number of learners achieving their instructor qualifications.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learner interviews	63
Number of staff interviews	33
Number of sites visited	4
Telephone support sessions	10

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Success rates are outstanding on all courses.** For example, over 600 learners started courses on circuit training, exercise to music at level 2 and aqua instructor between 2002 and 2004 and they all completed their qualification. The average success rate for all level 2 courses in the same period was 80 per cent.
7. Between 2002 and 2004, 545 learners started the continuing professional development courses in free weights, core stability, and studio cycling. These courses have a 96 per cent pass rate. Of the 3,146 learners who started the gym instructor at level 2 programme between 2001 and 2004, 3,034 have successfully completed, giving a success rate of 96 per cent.
8. **Learners' work is particularly good.** They develop a good understanding of the theory aspects of physiology and exercise and are clearly able to apply this knowledge in practical coaching tasks.

Quality of education and training

9. **The quality of teaching and learning at Focus Training is excellent.** Fifty-five per cent of teaching sessions observed were outstanding. There are over 230 Focus-trained tutors and assessors who are led by a team of chief tutors. The teaching is based on detailed performance analysis to ensure that learners understand the significance of correct and appropriate posture, muscle usage, fatigue and appropriate intensity in training. Tutors question learners regularly and effectively to confirm learners' understanding of theory and practice. **During assessments, learners showed good exercise and fitness knowledge, which they applied skilfully to their practical work.**
10. **Focus Training offers a good range of courses.** The courses are structured well and are tailored to participants' training needs. Clearly written marketing materials set out what each course entails and any prerequisites are clearly defined. Many learners return and attend further courses. Residential practical courses and assessments are held in high-quality commercial environments that have good cardiovascular equipment, resistance machines and free weights.
11. **The learning materials for independent study are comprehensive and of very high quality.** They include theory and practical manuals, workbooks, videos and CD-ROMs, all of which prepare learners effectively for the practical aspects of the course.

12. Initial assessment identifies effectively learners' previous knowledge and experience. Tutors make very good use of this information to structure individual training and assessment plans for each learner. **Learning plans are used well throughout the programme.** Target dates are negotiated for submission of assessments and telephone support calls are booked in advance and recorded on plans. After each call, action plans are agreed for the completion of the next unit or resubmission of work if required.

13. Telephone tutors provide outstanding home-study support for learners. They maintain regular contact with each learner, providing a familiar and consistent reference point at times negotiated with learners. They are particularly adept at managing the telephone sessions to ensure that each learner gets the most from their tutorial. Learners get a quick response to submitted written work. **Telephone tutors also work effectively with learners who have been identified as needing additional support with aspects of their training.**

14. The role of chief tutors is effective in ensuring consistently high standards across all training programmes and at all venues. The chief tutors provide good support for part-time tutors. They report on the performance of each trainer and learner, and the quality of the venue, after every course. These reports are used by the senior management team to identify problem areas. Managers take swift action to follow up any points raised.

Leadership and management

15. Focus Training is led and managed exceptionally well. The senior management team meets monthly. The items which form the team's meeting agenda come from staff across the organisation. The business of the senior management team is conducted in a crisp and effective manner without unnecessary bureaucracy. All staff regard their input as a valuable and valued part of the management process. Throughout Focus Training, a team approach is taken to the company's work. The reception staff, the sales team, the administrators and the trainers all take the view that they are part of a team and that their contribution counts.

16. Focus Training has developed a very comprehensive and innovative management system built around the ISO 9001:2000 standard. Key performance indicators for all staff and company processes are within the system, including detailed process maps for every stage of a learner's experience with Focus Training.

17. Senior managers have ready access to data relating to all aspects of the business. Retention and achievement data, financial projections, feedback from learners and chief tutors' reports are regularly reviewed, carefully analysed and used to aid management decision-making.

18. The staff appraisal and development system is particularly well developed. All full-time tutors receive an annual appraisal and a six-monthly review. All staff have targets set at their annual appraisal, which are monitored at the six-monthly reviews. All staff were consulted in the design of the system and regard the system as being supportive, useful and informative. A wealth of staff training and development has resulted from the appraisals and reviews, responding both to the company's needs and to personal aspirations. Part-time staff have access to staff development, receive regular communication with chief tutors and are included as if they were full-time members of the team.

19. Monitoring of tutors' performance and of programmes is very thoroughly and regularly carried out. All tutors are observed at least twice a year. They are given helpful feedback on their performance that helps them to improve.

20. **There is a genuine understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity within the company** and appreciation of the differing needs of staff, learners and potential learners. The curriculum and assessment appeals policy and process are comprehensive, well written and readily available to learners. All procedures are provided in the learner handbook on enrolment and the handbook includes clear terms and conditions of their contract with Focus Training. All staff are given a handbook during their comprehensive induction, which includes the company's equal opportunities policy. All complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively recorded.

21. **Learners who have additional learning needs are given strong support.** Those who have poor literacy can submit assignments through discussion with support tutors. Learners are supported, and arrangements are made for their theory work to continue, until such time as they are ready to take assessments.

22. Focus Training collects data by age group, ethnicity and gender, although it does not make full use of the information to identify trends. Although no targets are set for specific groups, learners are attracted from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Currently, there is a 50/50 split between men and women on the programmes.

23. **Focus Training has outstanding quality assurance arrangements which are contributing to high completion and success rates.** There is a clear focus on quality improvement, which comes from senior managers and is evident throughout the company. A detailed quality assurance manual includes a broad range of policies and procedures that covers the whole business. All senior managers have clearly defined quality assurance responsibilities. The senior management team encourages all staff to contribute to the development of the quality management system. **Effective monitoring arrangements ensure that each stage of the training programme meets a consistently high standard.** A comprehensive database enables staff to monitor accurately the progress of a learner throughout their course.

24. The company makes good use of feedback from learners, chief tutors, tutors, staff, internal verifiers and awarding bodies to continually update and improve the service offered to learners.

25. **The internal monitoring of training and assessment is extremely thorough.** New tutors are closely mentored by chief tutors and are given detailed performance feedback to develop their tutoring and assessment skills. Standardisation training is provided, which gives tutors the chance to discuss judgements and share ideas. There is a thorough sampling strategy both for the home study aspect of the programme and the practical training and assessment. Verification records are detailed and provide good feedback to tutors.

26. The writing of a formal self-assessment report is a new initiative. All staff contributed to the final report and feedback from learners was used to shape the final judgements. The key strengths identified in the report broadly matched inspectors' judgements.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR FOCUS TRAINING LIMITED:

- maintain the high quality of support offered to learners
- integrate more fully the self-assessment process with the current quality assurance arrangements

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

Contributory grades	Contributory grade
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality improvement	1

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- excellent communication between managers and staff
- innovative and effective management of training
- good use of extensive management data
- good staff appraisal and development system
- outstanding quality assurance of training
- particularly thorough internal monitoring of training and assessment

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

27. The chief executive of Focus Training not only has the role of managing director but is also the company's quality manager. This reflects the very high priority that the company places on the continuous improvement of the quality of services it provides for learners. The company has a board of directors, chaired by a non-executive director and including the company's solicitor, accountant, managing director and finance director. The board meets quarterly and its agenda focuses clearly on key management issues and strategic aspects of the company's business. Full records are kept of each meeting and any resultant actions to be taken.

28. The senior management team (SMT), comprising the managing director, the finance director, the general manager and the chief internal verifier, meets monthly. Discussion points for the team's meeting agenda come from a wide variety of sources. A topic remains on the SMT agenda until the team agrees it has been satisfactorily resolved. Focus Training's administrative staff, training staff, learners and partner organisations all feed ideas for improvement into the SMT agenda and are clearly notified about the outcome of the team's meetings in relation to those ideas. The business of the SMT is conducted in a crisp and effective manner without unnecessary bureaucracy. All staff regard their input as a valued part of the management process.

29. Focus Training has developed a very comprehensive and innovative management system built around the ISO 9001:2000 standard. All aspects of the company's business are covered by the system, including the quality assurance of training, company policies and procedures and extensive process maps for every stage of a learner's experience with Focus Training. The system was designed with the help of external consultants. Each member of staff was involved in shaping the process maps and procedures around their individual role. All staff can access the system on their computers and it is fully used. The system is a key tool for all staff in carrying out their jobs and in allowing them to contribute to the company's continuous improvement processes. As part of their two-week induction, all new staff are thoroughly trained in how to use the management system. The key

performance indicators for staff and company processes are on the system and their measurement and improvement are closely monitored. The senior management team carries out a six-monthly management review of the system and its use to ensure compliance and ISO audit credibility, and to review any aspect of the system which needs improvement or alteration. Some aspects of the company's work, such as recruitment and handling of complaints, are not supported by written policies. Having said this, there is no ambiguity about how these processes are carried out and, for example, complaints are all thoroughly recorded and dealt with.

30. Senior managers have access to data relating to all aspects of the business - from initial contact with a prospective learner to eventual qualification – as well as all the related company activities and costs. This data is carefully analysed and used to aid management decision-making. The changes made following analysis of the management data have included the company moving to give its own training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), more emphasis on practical training, and the restructuring of the way its health-related fitness training is delivered. The management system is linked to a comprehensive database which enables staff accurately to monitor the progress of a learner throughout their time with Focus Training. If at any point a learner is not making the progress expected of them, appropriate action can be taken to assist them. The managers' close monitoring of the available data is used sensibly to guide the company's drive towards continuous improvement.

31. Throughout Focus Training there is a team approach to the company's work. This is not merely the intention of senior managers, it is also the real perception of the staff. Reception staff, the sales team, the administrators and the trainers all take the view that they are part of a team and that their contribution counts. The company has a line management appraisal system. All staff are appraised annually and their performance is reviewed twice within the year. All staff were consulted in the design of the system and the appropriateness of the processes and pro-forma used. Staff regard the system as supportive, useful and informative. From the appraisals and reviews a wealth of staff development has resulted, in response to personal aspirations as well as business needs. Training has ranged from the development of specific information and communications technology skills, through assessor training to nationally accredited teacher training. One of the part-time peripatetic trainers is taking a degree in sports science as part of their staff development and a senior manager is studying for membership of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants. In addition to the formal processes for identifying development needs, staff are encouraged to approach their managers any time they identify a need themselves. The company works hard to make the most of its home-grown talent and members of staff have been enabled to develop their qualifications from level 2 to full professional recognition.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

32. There is a genuine understanding and appreciation within the company of the differing needs of staff, learners and potential learners. The company's policies to support staff in their approach to equality and diversity are adequate, although the anti-bullying and harassment policy and guidance relate only to how learners should deal with problems relating to other learners and do not cover problems with staff. The curriculum and assessment appeals policy and process are comprehensive and well written. Learners can easily get hold of them. The handbook that learners are given when they enrol contains all the relevant policies and procedures. It includes clear terms and conditions of the learners' contract with Focus Training. Staff induction is comprehensive. All new staff receive a handbook which includes the company's equal opportunities policy, although there is no information on combating bullying and harassment. Staff can access all policies through the quality management system.

33. There is no written complaints procedure or policy to show how complaints are dealt with. Despite this, all complaints are dealt with promptly and recorded clearly. There are examples of effective handling of complaints. Negative comments from learners' feedback forms are followed up and individuals receive written responses.

34. A range of methods is used to recruit staff. Planned recruitment campaigns and direct contact with part-time trainers and tutors are used to attract staff. Tutors and trainers are fully included in staff development. Part-time staff can take up training opportunities, receive regular communication with chief tutors, and are included as if they were full-time members of the team.

35. Until recently, staff have been kept well informed of developments in equality and diversity by partner organisations. Tutors who join the company now without a formal teaching qualification are put through a certificate in work-based learning which includes a unit on discrimination.

36. Many learners are recruited by word of mouth or recommendation. The written marketing materials are, however, fully inclusive and reflect a diverse range of people. The prospectus clearly sets out any prerequisites for joining courses. Focus Training relies on learners declaring any additional learning needs at their initial assessment. Those learners who do so are very well supported by a range of methods including individual support from tutors. One overseas student who has good spoken English but poor written English submits assignments and discusses his work with tutors. Learners are supported and arrangements made for theory work to continue until such time that they are ready for assessments. Two Iranian learners were provided with dictionaries to help them through written theory papers.

37. Learners who have personal problems are given time to resolve them. Further support is given to learners who wish to withdraw from courses because of external pressures. Learners are interviewed and, where possible, a revised programme is negotiated to provide the best programme to suit their needs.

38. Focus Training collects data by age group, ethnicity and gender. Although no targets are set, learners are attracted from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Currently, there is a 50/50 split of men and women on the programme. Although the data is collected, it is not used fully to identify trends. There has been some specific targeting of learners, including an initiative to attract more Asian women.

Quality improvement**Contributory grade 1**

39. Focus Training has outstanding quality assurance arrangements which contribute to high completion and success rates. Completion rates on level 2 and level 3 courses have averaged 97 per cent between 2001 and 2004. Success rates over the same period have averaged 80 per cent on level 2 courses and 56 per cent on level 3 courses.

40. There is a clear strategic focus on quality improvement. The quality management system is linked to a comprehensive database which enables staff to monitor accurately learners' progress throughout their time with Focus Training. All senior managers have clearly defined quality assurance responsibilities. The senior management team encourages all staff to contribute to the development of the quality management system. They have been trained how to use the system and do so frequently. A strong feature of the quality process is the attention given by telephone support tutors to close analysis of individual learner performance on each course. The senior management team closely monitors company performance every month. Rates of retention, achievement and completion, chief tutors' course reports, feedback from learners, complaints and course development are standing agenda items. Focus Training uses key performance indicators effectively to judge the quality of service it offers. These indicators include targets for learners' achievement, course recruitment, tutors' observation grades, learners' progression, course administration and financial performance. The company has held ISO 9001:2000 accreditation since December 2002.

41. Focus Training has a detailed quality manual which includes a broad range of policies and procedures for the operational and functional aspects of the business. There are minor inconsistencies between the policy documents held on the company's system and those provided to staff and learners. The learner experience is clearly set out and effective monitoring arrangements ensure that each stage of the training programme meets a consistently high standard. All tutors are trained by the general manager and one other chief tutor to ensure consistency of course delivery. All company auditors have been trained and work to a clear quality audit plan. Action-planning is used effectively to resolve any quality issues that are raised.

42. The company has a well-established and highly effective quality assurance cycle that includes quarterly internal audits, a minimum of three observations of each tutor each year, internal and external monitoring, feedback from learners for every course, monthly customer satisfaction surveys, chief tutor reports for every course, and the recent introduction of the annual self-assessment review. The collective impact of these arrangements has led to significant improvements in the quality of tutoring and support for learners, and in the standard of venues used for practical training and of distance learning study materials. Monitoring the effects of the changes has allowed Focus Training to establish a direct link between some of the changes made and an improvement in achievement rates.

43. Focus Training makes good use of feedback from learners, chief tutors, tutors, staff, internal verifiers and awarding bodies to continually update and improve the service it offers to learners. For example, the home study learning materials were completely redesigned in response to declining achievement on the theory paper and negative feedback from learners about the usefulness and clarity of the materials. This led to significant improvements in the theory pass rates on the level 2 gym instructor and exercise to music courses and on the advanced fitness instructor course. The theory pass rate on the level 2 gym instructor course rose from 74 per cent in 2001-02 to 89 per cent in 2003-04. The exercise to music pass rate moved from 50 per cent to 93 per cent during the

same period. Between 2002 and 2004, the pass rates for the advanced fitness instructor course rose from 44 per cent to 60 per cent.

44. The internal monitoring of training and assessment is extremely thorough. New tutors are closely mentored by chief tutors, who give detailed feedback on performance to develop tutoring and assessment skills. All tutors must complete the course they are going to deliver and assess. Individual development plans are agreed with staff to deal with any points identified and appropriate training is provided. The inspectors judged teaching and learning to be excellent. Every observed session was very good or outstanding. Tutors get a detailed induction, which focuses on the verification procedures, assessment planning and paperwork and learner feedback. Standardisation training is also included. This gives tutors the opportunity to discuss judgements and share ideas. There is a thorough sampling strategy both for the home study aspect of the programme and the practical training and assessment. All elements of the programme are sampled, including telephone support, candidate portfolios, practical and theory sessions, and practical assessments. Sample plans are updated every three months to include all tutors, all courses, all elements of the courses and approximately 15 per cent of learners. Verification records are detailed and provide good feedback to tutors. External verifiers' reports highlight excellent assessment practice. Focus Training has direct claim status and direct tutor/assessor approval.

45. The writing of a formal self-assessment report is a new initiative. The self-assessment report produced for inspection is the company's first. Previously, a self-assessment report was completed as part of a wider quality assessment written by a local further education college for which Focus Training offered exercise and fitness courses. All staff contributed to the final report and feedback from learners was used to shape the final judgements. The key strengths broadly matched inspectors' judgements, although some aspects that the company identified as strengths were merely examples of normal practice. The report does not include grades for the occupational area or leadership and management. The development plan to remedy the identified weaknesses is satisfactory.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 1

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Exercise and fitness coaching	643	1

Scope of provision

46. Focus Training offers Central YMCA Qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 in exercise and fitness. Most courses are completed through a combination of distance learning, telephone tutorials and a three-day practical training and assessment residential. Three broad career paths are offered, which are gym instructor, aerobic instructor and personal trainer. Underpinning these career routes is a range of vocational qualifications, including fitness instructor courses at level 2 and 3, circuits, ante- and post-natal exercise, step, aqua, nutrition and weight management, lifestyle and fitness assessment, business and marketing, sports conditioning, health-related fitness for children, CPR, sports injury, training in different environments, studio cycling, older adult exercise and exercise to music. Most learners are individuals seeking their first qualifications. Most of the learners work in the industry, in public- and private-sector leisure centres, gyms, sports centres, hotels and schools. Learners are recruited directly by Focus Training or referred by their employers. Most learners pay for courses themselves and often return to complete courses at a higher level. They receive an induction that includes details about the training programme, assessment and appeals, equal opportunities, and health and safety. Each learner has an individual training and assessment plan, a teaching and learning contract and a health assessment. All assessors and internal verifiers are Focus-trained staff. Support tutors maintain regular contact with learners and carry out progress reviews every two weeks.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- outstanding success rates
- high-quality teaching and learning
- particularly effective support for home study
- very effective analysis of coaching performance
- good range of professional courses to meet the needs of learners and industry

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity in the home study modules

Achievement and standards

47. Success rates are outstanding on all courses. For example, between 2002 and 2004 over 600 learners on circuit training, exercise to music at level 2 and aqua instructor courses achieved 100 per cent retention rates. Between 2002 and 2004, 545 learners started the continuing professional development courses in free weights, core stability, and studio cycling, with a 96 per cent pass rate. The most popular programme is gym instructor level 2. Of the 3,146 learners who started the programme between 2001 and 2004, 2,565 have successfully completed. This is a success rate of 82 per cent. Over the

same period, the average success rate for all level 2 courses was 80 per cent and for level 3 it was 61 per cent. Across all programmes, the average retention rate between 2001 and 2004 was 97 per cent. Focus Training's senior management team reviews retention and achievement figures every month.

48. Learners produce high-quality work in response to home study exercises. Through questioning, they demonstrate good understanding of the theoretical aspects of physiology and exercise. During practical sessions learners are clearly able to apply this knowledge in practical coaching tasks.

49. Learners are given clear and unequivocal guidance on what is expected of them during assessment. Clear and effective marking sheets are used to record learners' performance during assessment for all courses. These sheets are also used well to provide feedback to learners and identify areas for improvement for those requiring a resit examination. Theory papers are provided and marked by the awarding body. All assessments are conducted under awarding body guidelines and non-tutoring assessors run all practical assessments.

Professional Qualification Exercise and Fitness								
Qualification Title Level 2 CYMCA Gym Instructor								
	Aug 04-Jan 05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Starts	514		1094		1014		1038	
Retained	472	91	982	98	1014	100	1038	100
Achieved	353	68	874	89	923	91	768	74
Still in learning	119	32	108	11	0	0	0	0

Professional Qualification Exercise and Fitness								
Qualification Title Level 2 CYMCA Exercise to Music								
	Aug 04-Jan 05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Starts	96		150		196		156	
Retained	96	100	150	100	196	100	156	100
Achieved	84	88	139	93	114	58	79	50
Still in learning	12	12	11	7	0	0	0	0

Professional Qualification Exercise and Fitness								
Qualification Title Level 3 CYMCA Advanced Fitness Instructor								
	Aug 04-Jan 05		2003-04		2002-03			
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Starts	112		217		227			
Retained	104	93	206	95	227	100		
Achieved	62	55	129	60	100	44		
Still in learning	42	37	81	40	127	56		

Professional Qualification Exercise and Fitness								
Qualification Title Level 3 CYMCA Nutrition Management								
	Aug 04-Jan 05		2003-04		Jan 2003-Jul 03			
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Starts	104		160		46			
Retained	104	100	160	100	46	100		
Achieved	89	85	110	69	26	57		
Still in learning	15	15	50	31	20	43		

Quality of provision

50. The quality of teaching and learning at Focus Training is excellent. Of the 11 taught sessions observed during inspection all were graded good or better, of which 55 per cent were outstanding. Staff are well qualified, highly experienced and knowledgeable. They are active trainers in the fitness industry and bring great enthusiasm to their work. They provide high-quality practical training with accurate and detailed performance analysis and movement breakdown. Practical demonstrations were particularly good. Tutors provided subtle coaching points to ensure that learners understood the significance of correct and appropriate posture, muscle usage, fatigue and appropriate intensity in training. Learners' understanding was regularly confirmed through questioning and demonstration. Repeated references to practical sessions ensured that theory was soundly grounded in experience and helped learners to make conscious links between theory and practice. Tutors demonstrated high skill levels in breaking down movements and identifying incorrect performance, providing corrective feedback and coaching learners in fault analysis. As potential instructors, learners must show that they can analyse their clients' performance and quickly identify poor practice and give corrective feedback.

51. Comprehensive and good-quality independent study packages include theory and practical manuals, workbooks, videos and CD-ROMs. The quality of the pre-course home study work provides an excellent foundation for the practical element of the course. The theory is frequently referred to during practical sessions and learners are fully involved in regular question and answer debates. During assessment learners demonstrated good exercise and fitness knowledge, which they applied effectively to their practical work.

52. Initial assessment of individual learning needs is conducted as a telephone interview. Learners also complete forms on which they can identify any additional learning support they think they require. This system is very appropriate for the way the programmes are delivered. Telephone support tutors, who are well-qualified practising fitness trainers, confirm learners' needs at the start of the course. The first submitted written module is used by staff to check for potential additional support needs. Learners' prior achievement and experience are quickly recognised and taken into account to appropriately tailor courses. Focus Training has a clear policy and strategy to guide staff in dealing with prior experience and learning. Learning plans are used well throughout the programme. Target dates are negotiated for submission of assessments and telephone support calls are booked in advance and recorded on plans. After each call, action plans are agreed for the completion of the next unit or resubmission of work if necessary.

53. Tutors provide very good telephone support to learners. During the home study period all learners have a minimum of six telephone contact sessions with tutors. Learners can also telephone at any time to request additional support. Telephone tutorials are negotiated with learners to fit their lifestyle. Planned telephone tutorials coincide with giving learners a quick response to submitted written work. Tutors use the sessions very well to test learners' knowledge and confirm their understanding, while also providing

additional tutorial support to meet learners' training needs. Additional sessions are provided for learners who need more support. A deaf learner receives telephone support via internet messaging. One learner who has dyslexia was provided with a writer for the final written examination. Focus Training applies financial penalties for non-completion of modules or missed telephone calls. This helps to focus learners on completion and deadlines, although individual extensions are negotiated.

54. Well-written and comprehensive tutor packs help tutors to deliver their courses effectively. Chief tutors work with different part-time staff and move between courses and venues to ensure consistent standards across programmes and areas. Chief tutors report on the performance of each trainer, learner and the venue after every course. The general manager uses this information to identify problems and plan improvements. Residential practical courses and assessments take place in high-quality commercial environments with good cardiovascular equipment, resistance machines and free weights. There are over 230 Focus-trained tutors and assessors, who are led by a team of chief tutors.

55. Training programmes are well structured and are tailored to learners' requirements. The courses are clearly explained in the marketing materials. Any prerequisites for joining a course are clearly defined. Many learners return and attend further courses after completing their level 2 gym instructor course. A good range of appropriate training programmes is promoted well through suitable marketing materials.

Leadership and management

56. The programmes of learning are managed exceptionally well. The senior management team has overall responsibility for the planning, development and quality of all programmes. Retention and achievement data, feedback from learners and chief tutors' reports are regularly reviewed by the senior management team. If a problem occurs, effective action-planning takes place to overcome it. Individual staff members are given responsibility to manage the problem and report back to subsequent meetings. All staff are trained in the quality management system and regularly use it to monitor performance and progress towards individual and company targets.

57. All staff have targets set at their annual appraisal, which are monitored at the six-monthly reviews. Focus Training intends that by the end of 2005 all tutors will hold or be working towards a recognised general teaching qualification and has given all staff targets to support this aim. The monitoring of tutors' performance is very thorough and carried out regularly. All tutors are observed at least twice each year and are given effective feedback that promotes improvement. The self-assessment report provided a good picture of the area of learning. Most strengths identified in it were also identified during inspection.

58. Learners are not given sufficient background information to give them a full understanding of recent equalities legislation and the effects of legislation on the fitness industry. Learners have little appreciation of the latest race equality and disability discrimination legislation or awareness of recent amendments to the Children Act, all of which may have an impact on their role as an instructor. Focus Training does not give support materials for these subjects to provide learners with base-level information which can be built on during training. During training, however, learners are offered numerous examples of how to manage clients to best suit their needs.