

INSPECTION REPORT

Introtrain and Forum Limited

18 May 2006



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
- **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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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. Introtrain and Forum Limited was established in 1988. It is based in a retail centre in Cowley, Oxfordshire. The company employs six full-time staff and a part-time key skills tutor.
2. Introtrain contracts with the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council to provide training in hairdressing for foundation and advanced modern apprentices.
3. Introtrain works in partnership with around 60 hairdressing salons. There are 13 work-based assessors. Training is provided for approximately 90 to 110 learners at any one time. All learners are employed in salons in Oxfordshire. The training centre provides practical training and background knowledge off-the-job training. Other training and assessments are carried out on the job. Some learners receive training through open learning.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** More specifically, training in retail and commercial enterprise is good. Leadership and management and the arrangements for quality improvement are also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.
5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical. All staff contributed to the judgements in the report. The self-assessment process identified most of the strengths found by inspectors. The weakness in equality of opportunity was not identified. Inspectors gave higher grades for all aspects of the provision except for equality of opportunity, where the self-assessment grade matched the inspection grade.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** The proportion of advanced apprentices and apprentices who complete their programme within the planned period is improving. Qualification success rates are also improving. The company has dealt with the weaknesses identified during the reinspection in 2003 and inspection grades have improved. The self-assessment report and development plan clearly indicate how strengths will be maintained and weaknesses resolved.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR INTROTRAIN AND FORUM LIMITED:

- maintain good standards during a period of growth
- continue to monitor and improve retention rates
- regularly update and reinforce equality of opportunity for learners and staff
- increase enrichment activities for learners

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Hairdressing		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	108	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Inspectors reported on and graded Introtrain's training provision in retail and commercial enterprise. All the provision was inspected in the same week and judgements were also made about leadership and management, including the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	21
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of employers interviewed	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. Timely completion of frameworks has significantly improved for advanced apprentices and apprentices. In 2003-04, none of the advanced apprentices completed the framework, but in 2004-05, 25 per cent of learners completed and this is in line with national averages. In 2003-04, 17 per cent of apprentices completed the framework and this increased to 47 per cent in 2004-05, which is significantly above national averages.

9. Learners develop good occupational and communication skills. Learners in their first year develop good manual dexterity and their approach to clients is professional. Many

learners develop individual client lists as they progress with their apprenticeship.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	4	3	0	7
Total	0	4	3	0	7

10. Training and assessment are particularly effective. Learners work in well-equipped, busy and supportive salons that provide them with well-planned training and assessment opportunities. Salon assessors encourage and motivate learners, using progress monitoring records effectively to plan assessments. The ratio of staff to learners in the training centre is good. Many learners benefit from individual coaching sessions. Experienced and skilled staff work confidently with learners to develop and extend their skills. Learners who need additional practise or assessments are directed to extra practical training sessions or individual literacy and numeracy support. Learners speak highly of Introtrain's tutors.

11. Introtrain's staff monitor learners' progress rigorously. Development of skills is comprehensively recorded. When a learner is ready for assessment, an assessor is notified and the assessment is arranged. Detailed progress sheets record learners' progress. Individual learning plans are updated when full units are achieved. Learning plans are linked to a 'traffic light' monitoring system, which is displayed in the teaching rooms. Staff make good use of this system to monitor learners' progress.

12. The management of key skills is effective. Key skills sessions are timetabled to begin at an early stage of the apprenticeship programme. They are integrated well with vocational training and learners make good progress during sessions. Pass rates in the key skills tests are good with many learners being successful at the first attempt.

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Schemes of work are linked well to lesson plans. However, lesson plans do not give enough detail about planned learning outcomes. The better sessions include a variety of activities that engage and interest learners. Weaker sessions are over-ambitious and do not fully use questioning to challenge and extend learners' understanding.

14. Progress reviews are satisfactory. They involve the learner, employer and assessor. Learners have adequate time to discuss concerns and to plan assessments. Assessment targets from the previous review are discussed and new targets are established.

15. The range of curriculum enrichment is limited. Activities that extend and introduce learners to products, techniques, practices and experiences which are not routinely associated with their normal work are few. Introtrain no longer runs regular competitions and demonstrations for learners. Most learners have not received any enrichment experiences.

Leadership and management

16. Introtrain has implemented particularly effective strategies to raise standards. The managing director assumed personal responsibility for making improvements in the

provision following the poor reinspection report in 2003. Information about learners' progress against their individual learning plan is rigorously monitored during weekly meetings, which all staff are required to attend. Learners who are not making sufficient progress or are struggling with aspects of the programme are given individual support and clear targets for improvement. Qualification success rates for apprentices are now good and significantly higher than the national average for hairdressing. The proportion of advanced apprentices who complete the framework within the planned period has significantly improved. Current learners are making good progress.

17. Data is used well to monitor performance. The company collects accurate data on recruitment, retention and success rates. This information is used during the weekly staff meetings to monitor the company's performance and the progress of individual learners. The managing director personally monitors the progress of learners who are at risk of leaving the programme early. Staff are given targets for raising achievement. Wall displays show the progress of each learner against their individual learning plan. Learners and staff know how much progress they have made and what they need to do to achieve.

18. Introtrain has very effective arrangements for quality improvement. The company now has good procedures in place which are reviewed annually. Staff are fully committed to quality improvement. Monitoring of learners' progress has been improved and is now rigorous. There is thorough recording and use of information about learners and employers.

19. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities. Induction for learners is carried out on company premises, but insufficient time is given for discussion of equality and diversity. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality during progress reviews. Learners are able to recognise direct discrimination, but have insufficient awareness of the wider implications of equality as it affects their job roles. There is insufficient regular updating of staff on equal opportunities.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective strategies to raise standards
- good use of data to monitor performance
- very effective arrangements for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Strengths

- significant improvement in timely success rates
- particularly effective training and assessment

- particularly good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient action-planning to support skills development
- limited range of enrichment activities

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT INTROTRAIN AND FORUM LIMITED:

- 'really helpful - can go to them whenever you need anything'
- very supportive about personal things
- 'I love going to college - best day of the week'
- always have patience to explain things as often as necessary
- off-the-job training - would like more days each week
- 'I have become much more confident and developed good communication skills'
- 'when I found it hard, tutors gave me extra time and support'
- very friendly and supportive tutors
- really enjoy going to college, made some good friends and enjoy the training
- 'I have started to enjoy learning and written work'
- tutors are always available to help you, you can stay behind after class

WHAT LEARNERS THINK INTROTRAIN AND FORUM LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- distance to training centre
- the number of shows and competitions
- sometimes the training is a little routine, not enough exciting things to look forward to
- tutors need to get you ready for key skills on advanced apprenticeships

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- particularly effective strategies to raise standards
- good use of data to monitor performance
- very effective arrangements for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity

20. Introtrain has implemented particularly effective strategies to raise standards. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The managing director assumed personal responsibility for making improvements in the provision following the poor reinspection report in 2003. Information about learners' progress against their individual learning plan is rigorously monitored during weekly meetings which all staff are required to attend. Learners who are not making sufficient progress or are struggling with aspects of the programme are given individual support and clear targets for improvement. None of the learners have exceeded the period for which they are funded. Qualification success rates for apprentices are now good and significantly higher than the national average for hairdressing. The proportion of advanced apprentices who complete the framework within the planned period has significantly improved. Current learners are making good progress. The initial assessment and advice and guidance procedures have been strengthened to ensure that learners are on the right programme. A detailed action plan clearly identifies how strengths will be maintained and weaknesses dealt with.

21. Data is used well to monitor performance. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. The company collects accurate data on recruitment, retention and success rates. This information is used during the weekly staff meetings to monitor the company's performance and the progress of individual learners. The managing director personally monitors the progress of learners who are at risk of leaving the programme early. Staff are given targets for raising achievement. Information about the reasons given by learners who leave the programme early is analysed and appropriate actions are taken to improve the retention rates for current learners. Wall displays show the progress of each learner against their individual learning plan. Learners and staff know how much progress they have made and what they need to do to achieve.

22. The managing director provides clear strategic direction. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of the strategic direction of the company. The company has a clear three-year business plan, which identifies a range of strengths, weaknesses and threats to the business. The plan is closely tied in with the company's key objectives and with the priorities set by the LSC.

23. Internal communications are good. The managing director chairs a weekly meeting which all staff attend. Minutes are recorded and circulated to all staff on the same day. Actions, timescales and responsibilities are clearly identified. Staff feel well supported and

there is a good team spirit.

24. Training and development for staff is good. Tutors are well qualified and occupationally experienced. All staff have an appropriate teaching qualification and several are working towards the second stage of a teaching qualification at level 4. Training and development is closely tied in with the company's needs and with individual preferences. Tutors have attended training courses on dyslexia, risk assessment, and health and safety. Tutors regularly update their occupational skills by working in the commercial salon owned by Introtrain.

25. The management of learning support is effective. Learners have a comprehensive initial assessment before they start the programme. An individual action plan with appropriate targets is produced and shared with learners and tutors. Monitoring of literacy and numeracy targets is good. Introtrain works with a local Connexions initiative to provide literacy and numeracy support for learners on level 2 programmes. At the time of inspection, four apprentices are receiving this specialist support. The managing director regularly monitors the progress made by learners who are receiving additional support.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

26. Introtrain has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which covers the relevant legislation. Learners receive a copy of the policy during induction. There is a clear statement of the management's commitment to equality and diversity. Equal opportunities data is regularly collected and analysed. Equality and diversity targets are satisfactory. Salons that do not have an equal opportunities policy are required to comply with the policy set out in a booklet issued by the sector skills council for hairdressing. Good working relationships are promoted with under-represented groups. For example, the company offers an evening class in African-Caribbean hairstyling and runs a hairdressing workshop at a local school for children with special needs. Clear assessment procedures and guidance promote equal access to assessment.

27. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities. Induction for learners is carried out on company premises, but insufficient time is given for discussion of equality and diversity. Teaching materials are unbiased, but classroom opportunities to widen the discussion are not sufficiently used. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity during progress reviews. Learners are asked questions which refer only to how they are treated at work, and routine questions on equality which do not promote understanding. Learners are able to recognise direct discrimination but have insufficient awareness of the wider implications of equal opportunities, as it affects their job roles. There is insufficient regular updating of staff on equal opportunities and there are no systems in place to ensure that existing staff understand the current legislation and its implications.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

28. Introtrain has very effective arrangements for quality improvement. The company now has good procedures in place which are reviewed annually. These procedures are reinforced during annual workshops for assessors and weekly meetings for staff to ensure that they are familiar with changes in procedures. For example, one meeting was used for assessors to examine progress reviews to check that standard procedures had been followed and to ensure that every learner has the appropriate level of support. Staff are committed to quality improvement. Monitoring of progress has improved and is now

rigorous and qualification success rates are improving. There is a company ethos of continuous improvement which focuses on the learners' experience. For example, flexible learning packs are used for those who are unable to attend off-the-job training. There is thorough recording and use of information about learners and employers. For example, the company maintains a detailed register of all the salons it uses, which contains information about the size, décor and type of clientele. It also has a comprehensive list of learners and their strengths, preferred learning styles and barriers to learning. This information is used to match learners to the most appropriate working environment to meet their individual needs.

29. The arrangements for internal verification are good. There is a comprehensive sampling plan which includes all learners and assessors. Regular standardisation meetings take place and they are recorded. The verification process is well planned, regular, and effectively supports the assessment process.

30. The company regularly monitors teaching and assessment in the classroom and the workplace. Experienced staff are observed at least twice a year and inexperienced staff, more frequently. There is clear feedback to teachers and assessors, and good action-planning which is used as a basis for subsequent observations.

31. Feedback is regularly collected from learners and employers. Employers are surveyed annually. Satisfaction surveys for learners are carried out after induction, and then during the programme and on exit. Learners also complete a short survey each term. Questionnaires are analysed using commercially available software, and actions are identified and discussed at the weekly meeting. However, trends from surveys are not always analysed.

32. The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical. All staff contributed to the judgements in the report during a series of meetings which were led by the managing director. The self-assessment report is closely tied in with the company's business plan and three-year development plan. The report identified most of the strengths found by inspectors, but the weakness in equality of opportunity was not identified. Inspectors gave higher grades for all aspects of the provision, except for equality of opportunity where the self-assessment grade matched the inspection grade.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	108	2

33. Introtrain has 108 learners on hairdressing apprenticeship programmes, of whom 19 are advanced apprentices and 89 are apprentices. Eight of the learners are men. Learners are employed in 59 salons in Oxford and the surrounding areas. Thirteen salons have their own work-based assessors. The length of training programmes for apprentices and advanced apprentices is 24 months. Advanced apprentices progress onto the programme after completing the apprenticeship and a short entry test. They attend off-the-job background knowledge training every third week. Apprentices attend off-the-job background knowledge and practical training for one day each week during the first 18 months of training. In the past six months, all assessments have been carried out in the workplace. Skills development and formative assessment is completed in the training centre. Work-based assessors or Introtrain's staff carry out summative assessments in the workplace. Apprentices are mainly recruited through employer contacts, but some are referred by Connexions. All learners are interviewed and are required to complete a literacy and numeracy test before they are offered a place. They complete a further initial assessment if there is evidence of an additional support need. Tutors monitor learners' progress every month at the training centre. Formal progress reviews involving the employer are carried out in the workplace every 12 weeks.

Hairdressing

Strengths

- significant improvement in timely success rates
- particularly effective training and assessment
- particularly good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient action-planning to support skills development
- limited range of enrichment activities

Achievement and standards

34. Timely completion of frameworks has significantly improved for advanced apprentices and apprentices. In 2003-04, none of the advanced apprentices completed the framework, but in 2004-05, 25 per cent of learners completed the framework and this is in line with national averages. Of the nine advanced apprentices with planned end dates in 2005-06, 78 per cent have completed the framework to date. The proportion of timely framework

completions by apprentices in 2003-04 was 17 per cent. This improved to 47 per cent in 2004-05, which is significantly above national averages. Of the 51 apprentices with a planned leaving date in 2005-06, 58 per cent have completed the full framework to date. None of the learners have exceeded the period for which they are funded.

35. Retention rates are satisfactory. Strategies to improve retention rates have recently been implemented. Learners receive three months' salon training before they are enrolled on to an apprenticeship programme. Advanced apprentices have to complete an entry test before they are admitted on to the programme. These strategies have not yet produced significant improvements in retention.

36. Learners develop good occupational and communication skills. Learners in their first year develop good manual dexterity. Their approach to clients is professional and many develop individual client lists as they progress with their apprenticeship. Apprentices working in a practical session completed foil highlights, many of which were to a commercially acceptable standard.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	9	44	43	11	32
		timely	8	0	27	0	20
	2004-05	overall	7	29	40	29	29
		timely	7	29	28	29	20
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	21	71	62	48	49
		timely	23	22	38	17	30
	2004-05	overall	77	52	48	51	41
		timely	74	49	32	47	28

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

37. Training and assessment are particularly effective. Learners work in well-equipped, busy and supportive salons that provide them with well-planned training and assessment opportunities. Salon assessors encourage and motivate learners, using progress monitoring records effectively to plan assessments. The ratio of staff to learners in the training centre is good. Many learners benefit from individual coaching sessions. Experienced and skilled staff work confidently with learners to develop and extend their skills. Learners who need additional practise or assessments are directed to extra practical training sessions or individual literacy and numeracy support. Learners speak highly of Introtrain's tutors. They value assessors' frequent salon visits and their quick responses to telephone calls and text messages. Learners who do not have access to a work-based assessor receive monthly assessment visits from Introtrain's staff. Requests for extra assessment visits are arranged within a few days. If work-based assessors have difficulty in arranging clients for learners to be assessed on, Introtrain's assessors make suitable arrangements for learners at the training centre.

38. Staff rigorously monitor learners' progress and it is comprehensively recorded. When a learner is ready for assessment, an assessor is notified and assessment is arranged. Detailed progress sheets record learners' progress. Individual learning plans are updated when full units are achieved. Learning plans are linked to a 'traffic light' monitoring system and are displayed in the teaching rooms. Staff make good use of this system to monitor learners' progress. Particular attention is given to learners who have fallen behind with their work. For example, staff may arrange extra salon visits or require the learner to attend additional sessions at the training centre.

39. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are adequately supported. All new learners complete an initial assessment and additional assessments are carried out for those who have additional needs. Introtrain supports a number of learners who have additional literacy and numeracy needs, through frequent reviews and personal support.

40. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Schemes of work are linked well to lesson plans. However, lesson plans do not give enough detail about planned learning outcomes. Of the seven teaching sessions observed by inspectors, four were good and three were satisfactory. The better sessions are well planned with a variety of activities that engage and interest learners. Weaker sessions are over-ambitious and do not fully use questioning to challenge and extend learners' understanding.

41. The management of key skills is effective. Key skills sessions are timetabled to begin at an early stage of the apprenticeship programme. They are integrated well with vocational training and learners make good progress during sessions. Pass rates in the key skills tests are good and many learners are successful at the first attempt. Support for learners who need extra help with key skills is good.

42. Progress reviews are carried out every three months. They involve the learner, employer and assessor. Learners have adequate time to discuss concerns, and to plan assessments. Assessment targets from the previous review are discussed and new targets are established. Reviews are heavily focused on assessment planning and scheduling, with insufficient emphasis on training and learning. For example, after one learner showed concern about her cutting skills, there was no learning plan prepared to improve her skills and confidence in cutting. Comments by one employer about a learner's limited client communication skills, did not lead to appropriate actions for improvement.

43. There are few curriculum enrichment activities provided by Introtrain. Activities that extend and introduce learners to products, techniques, practices and experiences which are not routinely associated with their normal work are limited. Introtrain no longer runs regular competitions and demonstrations for learners. Most learners have not received any enrichment experiences.

Leadership and management

44. Curriculum management is very effective in creating an open atmosphere which encourages an ethos of shared responsibility. Management is inclusive and responsive. Staff views are regularly sought and actioned. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are enthusiastic and diligent in their duties. Staff continually evaluate and adapt curriculum practices, and implement actions for improvement. Since the reinspection, key processes and paperwork such as schemes of work, lesson planning,

assessment, monitoring of learners' progress and internal verification have been reviewed and are now well structured and effective. Weekly curriculum meetings focus on learners' progress and achievement. Staff know and understand the importance of retention and achievement. They play a full role in evaluating the programmes as part of the self-assessment process. Staff are occupationally well qualified and all have an appropriate teaching qualification.

45. The promotion of equality of opportunity for learners and employers is satisfactory. Good attention is paid to health and safety in the workplace. Learners' understanding of equality, and health and safety is satisfactory. However, there is insufficient reinforcement of equality during reviews. Learners are given a handbook which includes good explanations of their rights and responsibilities.

46. A well-managed internal verification system is in place. Internal verifiers effectively observe and sample assessors' judgements and records. Monthly schedules of verification activities are provided to internal verifiers by the lead verifier. Any resulting assessor actions are clearly recorded, together with an expected completion date. Assessors record actions and inform verifiers when they have been completed.

47. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths of the provision, but not the weaknesses. Inspectors identified different weaknesses and gave a higher grade than that in the self-assessment.

