

INSPECTION REPORT

Intec Business Colleges plc

19 January 2007



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*

INSPECTION REPORT

Intec Business Colleges plc

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Intec Business Colleges plc (Intec) was founded in 1982 as a privately owned recruitment and training organisation. In July 2002, Intec became a public limited company. Intec is a national training provider and offers work-based learning for young people and adults in retail and commercial enterprise, business administration and law, information and communications technology (ICT) and education and training. Programmes offered include apprenticeships, Train to Gain, European Social Fund (ESF) and other government-funded courses. At the time of the inspection there were 1,889 learners on programmes.
2. The training that Intec offers is funded through three main sources. First, the provider has direct contracts with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Secondly, it delivers subcontracted provision for large national corporate organisations. Thirdly, approximately 45 per cent of training is privately funded.
3. Intec's head office is in Rugby town centre, with six regional offices throughout England and one in Scotland. Intec reorganised its management structure after the previous inspection and has a managing director and an operations director, seven regional managers and four cross-company managers responsible for finance, quality, marketing and ICT. The company has 110 full-time staff and eight part-time staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Intec's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity. Arrangements for quality improvement are inadequate. Provision is satisfactory in retail and commercial enterprise and in business administration and law.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Overall, the self-assessment process is satisfactory, but is not sufficiently inclusive or critical. A draft report is circulated to staff for comment, and amendments are made in the light of responses. Insufficient attention is paid to eliciting the views of staff, learners, employers and other stakeholders to guide the self-assessment process. The final self-assessment report is descriptive and lacks detail. It does not identify many of the weaknesses identified at inspection and some of the areas it identifies as strengths are in fact no more than normal practice. Apart from the satisfactory grade for equality of opportunity, the grades at self-assessment were higher than the inspection grades.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** The restructuring of the organisation in 2004 and a focus on improved assessment practice have had a significant effect on success rates. Success rates have improved over the past three years and are generally in line with national trends. National vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes in business form a significant part of Intec's training, and success rates for these programmes are a key strength. Intec does not have a planned and systematic quality improvement strategy. The provider has yet to identify a formal and coherent

approach to the implementation, monitoring and review of quality improvements.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC:

- implement appropriate arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support
- improve target-setting and planning for learners
- continue the improvements in qualification success rates
- systematically implement and monitor quality improvements
- implement strategies to rectify the slow progress of some learners
- introduce a more systematic approach to providing training to learners on all programmes

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Retail and commercial enterprise			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Retailing and wholesaling</i>			
Apprenticeships for young people	39	3	
Train to Gain	10	3	
<i>Call centre operations</i>			
Apprenticeships for young people	66	3	
Other government-funded provision	24	3	
Train to Gain	19	3	
<i>Warehousing and distribution</i>			
Apprenticeships for young people	60	3	
Train to Gain	112	3	

Business administration and law		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Accounting and finance		
Apprenticeships for young people	7	3
Other government-funded provision	46	2
Train to Gain	1	2
Administration		
Apprenticeships for young people	148	3
Other government-funded provision	40	2
Train to Gain	40	2
Business management		
Apprenticeships for young people	78	3
Other government-funded provision	110	2
Train to Gain	62	2
Customer service		
Apprenticeships for young people	480	3
Other government-funded provision	445	2
Train to Gain	102	2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors over five days. The areas inspected included leadership and management, quality improvement, equality of opportunity, retail and business. Provision in ICT and in education and training forms a small part of Intec's training and was not included in the inspection. The inspection included work-based learning for young people, and NVQ provision offered through other government-funded provision, the ESF and Train to Gain programmes.

8. Eleven inspectors spent the first three days of the inspection visiting learners' work placements to interview learners, employers and contractors across much of England. The remaining three inspectors spent the first three days in the regional head office. The remaining two days were spent by the whole team reviewing more documents and agreeing the inspection key findings.

9. A key aspect of Intec's provision is the contracting of training from commercial organisations that contract directly with the LSC. To reflect all of Intec's government-funded training and not just its own direct contracts, this inspection is reporting on both. The inspection team used a range of data to make judgements, but this is not reflected in the report's tables as it would not compare directly with other inspection reports where data used is that of the provider's direct LSC-funded contracts only.

Number of inspectors	14
Number of inspection days	70
Number of learners interviewed	116
Number of staff interviewed	84
Number of employers interviewed	54
Number of subcontractors interviewed	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	59

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic leadership

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements to identify and provide literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient arrangements to implement improvements

Retail and commercial enterprise

Strengths

- good success rates for warehousing and distribution apprentices
- good development of practical work skills
- particularly effective partnerships with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress for some learners
- insufficient planning of learning

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good success rates on NVQ-only programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- good partnerships with employers
- particularly effective support from assessors for many learners
- good regional teamwork

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes
- slow progress for some apprentices
- insufficiently systematic approach to providing training
- some unsatisfactory target-setting

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC:

- the flexible and accessible assessors
- 'they improved my confidence - really supportive'
- the opportunity to have their skills recognised
- the pride and self-confidence from gaining their first qualification
- being able to apply new knowledge to work
- the well-organised programme
- 'they get you involved in planning'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC COULD IMPROVE:

- understanding of how progress is managed
- details on what they need to do to complete the programme
- the general complexity of the paperwork
- communication when the assessor is absent
- the amount of information provided about the tests

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic leadership

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements to identify and provide literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient arrangements to implement improvements

10. Intec has good strategic leadership. The three-year strategic development plan demonstrates a clear strategic direction in line with government priorities in vocational training. The restructuring in 2004 has resulted in a clear structure based upon a central core team and seven regions. Each role in the organisation is well defined with clear responsibilities which support the implementation of Intec's strategic approach. The new organisational structure effectively devolves responsibility for provision to regional managers. Previously, national contracts were managed centrally. A key focus of Intec's strategic approach is to establish and extend partnership arrangements with employers. Intec recruits learners and plans programmes through employer engagement. The sales team and regional managers develop effective initial links with employers. They work with employers to identify the most appropriate programmes and plan learners' programmes around each employer's in-house training programme. Regional managers meet monthly with key employers to ensure effective working relationships. This approach is complemented by the relationships maintained by contract co-ordinators and assessors with the learners and their line managers at an operational level. However, in implementing this strategic approach, Intec has focused on developing itself as an assessment centre and has devolved much responsibility for training to employers. This is appropriate where Intec is subcontracted by national employers with an LSC contract for provision. However, in other cases, especially with small or medium-sized employers, Intec takes insufficient responsibility for ensuring appropriate training arrangements.

11. Internal communications are satisfactory. Intec's staff generally feel well supported and well integrated with the organisation. Informal communications by telephone and e-mail are effective in supporting individual members of staff. Intec has a well-established planned cycle of meetings. For example, bimonthly regional managers' meetings are followed by bi-monthly team meetings held by regional managers. Bimonthly standardisation meetings are held by contract co-ordinators in each region to improve assessment practice and disseminate information about awarding body requirements. However, minutes of meetings are not recorded in a standardised format and are not always sufficiently detailed. Intec does not require common agenda items to be covered at regional meetings.

12. The management of resources is generally satisfactory. Intec's staff recruitment and induction procedures are appropriate. A clearly structured induction process is used to familiarise new staff with Intec's procedures, which includes shadowing and mentoring activities. The annual staff appraisal process is used to monitor staff performance and to

identify individual staff development needs. However, performance targets are not always specific and measurable. The identification of staff development needs is limited to qualifications rather than the development of the skills required to carry out job roles effectively. A standardised approach to the staff training activities carried out during meetings has not been introduced to ensure that dissemination of good practice is consistent across the organisation.

13. Intec has inadequate arrangements to identify and meet literacy, numeracy and language support needs. It does not have a formal strategy for skills for life and none of the staff have appropriate qualifications to support learners with additional learning needs. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is not always carried out. Where such initial assessment does take place, a simple in-house assessment tool is used. Where additional needs are identified through this mechanism, Intec does not ensure that diagnostic assessment is carried out to identify the specific needs of the learner or to provide appropriate additional support. Responsibility for providing additional support is generally left to the employer. Some assessors do provide additional learning support, but do not plan and record the support arrangements systematically or monitor their effectiveness.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

14. Intec has a satisfactory policy on equality of opportunity. The managing director has overall responsibility and he completes a yearly report on the subject. This forms the basis of focused target-setting for further improvements. The report is presented to all managers and shared at regional team meetings.

15. The ethos at Intec is to accept all learners presented to it by employers. Intec works well with employers to encourage training opportunities for all eligible staff. The provider offers clear guidance to employers and ensures that, before starting learners on programmes, all employers have appropriate equal opportunities policies and procedures in place. These are checked at regular intervals. Issues of equality of opportunity are raised in team and management meetings and recorded with action plans. Intec's website for learners features a range of useful resources and links to organisations involved in equality of opportunity.

16. Intec collects and monitors data relating to overall and regional trends, and recruitment and achievement data by learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. It analyses this data to support its setting of clear targets to increase the number of learners from under-represented groups, such as men and members of minority ethnic groups. Intec has made progress in these areas, but it is aware there are still areas of imbalance. For example, the rate of men achieving qualifications is significantly below that of women. Data is reviewed regularly.

17. Overall, the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Generally, learners' induction covers equality of opportunity satisfactorily. Learners receive handbooks clearly stating their rights and responsibilities and the appeals and complaints procedures. At progress reviews, learners are asked questions regarding their treatment in the workplace and their understanding of equality of opportunity. However, inspectors found that the reinforcement of equality of opportunity at progress reviews ranges from good to weak and in some cases the questioning by Intec's staff is superficial.

18. Intec's staff have received insufficient training in equality of opportunity. Intec's equal opportunities policy states that all staff will receive training in equality of opportunity and those working with learners will receive additional training, but the last training session for most staff took place in 2004. However, there is training planned for the current year.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

19. Since the previous inspection, Intec has made some fundamental changes to its operations. The organisational restructuring in 2004 and improved assessment practice have both had an effect on the quality of provision. Management and staff are committed to improving the quality of provision. However, Intec does not have a clear strategy to implement, monitor and review quality improvements.

20. The trend in success rates has been one of consistent improvement for most programmes. Success rates are now good in most NVQ provision and are generally satisfactory in other provision. A workshop held in September 2005 identified a number of key actions to be taken to improve learners' achievement. The actions included the use of monthly data reports to monitor learners' progress by region. Intec has implemented this action. However, it has not reviewed whether the data reports are sufficiently effective in monitoring learners' progress and resolving the issue of slow progress. Intec has not yet effectively implemented the other actions identified at the workshop, such as the commitment to ensuring that framework requirements are fully understood by learners, employers, sales executives and assessors. Inspectors found considerable variation in the degree to which framework requirements are understood, particularly by learners and employers.

21. Data is used satisfactorily to manage the business and monitor learners. The main statistical information is properly maintained on a central computer system managed from the head office. It is up to date, accurate, and can be used to produce a wide variety of reports. The regional managers have reasonable input and access to this information. Routine use of data is sufficient to inform senior management of volumes of training, and the main outcomes for learners. This leads to action and queries when there are variations from the set targets, particularly for regions. Simple quarterly reports that highlight current success rates are provided by the central office, and these allow senior managers to monitor performance at a regional level. Monthly reports provide more detailed individual information on learners and their linked assessors and employers. This data is reviewed by regional managers and contract co-ordinators in conjunction with assessors and employers. It covers progress towards programme completion, assessors' visits and cancelled visits. This data reports on learners individually and specific improvement actions can be taken in response. There are few summaries of learners' performance to aid managers in monitoring quality and improvements in their region. The main management information, particularly for the self-assessment report, uses previous definitions of qualification success. This has allowed Intec to look at its performance, since the previous inspection, in a consistent way. Plans to train staff and formally introduce a system based on the new measures of success are not yet agreed.

22. Some action has been taken to deal with the weakness of incomplete quality assurance arrangements identified in the previous inspection. The quality assurance procedures manual has been updated, a quality assurance team has been formed and meets quarterly, six-monthly audits of learners' files take place and a monthly quality

bulletin is circulated to all staff. The quality assurance procedures manual was last updated in October 2006. However, few changes were made to the content of the manual and insufficient attention was paid to extending the range of procedures to include all aspects of the learners' experience. All staff received a copy of the revised manual in December 2006. Formal staff training has not been planned to ensure that all staff understand the procedures and know how to implement them effectively. The quality assurance team takes primary responsibility for carrying out the quality audits of learners' files. Three audits have taken place. Although consistency in the completion of documents is improving, there are still considerable variations across the organisation. For example, the quality of the learners' experience of progress reviews, target-setting and action-planning is still variable.

23. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory and meet awarding body standards. However, internal verifiers do not all plan their sampling schedule in advance and the senior internal verifier does not maintain and review a record of sampling planning across the organisation. Regular standardisation meetings are attended by contract co-ordinators, internal verifiers and assessors. These meetings are effective in improving assessment practice and extending the assessors' understanding of qualification requirements. Intec has developed a range of additional activities to be carried out by contract co-ordinators, including observations of induction and progress reviews and interviews with learners. These are not systematically planned and the outcomes are not collated or analysed.

24. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. An initial draft report produced by the quality manager in consultation with senior managers is circulated to all staff for comment. The final version of the report takes into account the outcomes of this consultation process. However, insufficient attention is paid to eliciting the views of staff, learners, employers and other stakeholders. The process is not sufficiently inclusive or critical and the report is descriptive and lacks detail. The resulting quality improvement plan does not specify how the actions to be taken are to be implemented. The self-assessment report does not identify many of the weaknesses identified at inspection and some of the strengths it identifies are in fact no more than normal practice. The grades given at inspection are generally lower than those identified in the self-assessment report, although the grade for equality of opportunity is the same.

25. Intec has insufficient arrangements to implement improvement. This was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection. Intec relies heavily on informal and piecemeal monitoring arrangements. It does not have a strategy for ensuring that improvements are implemented consistently across the organisation. Intec is aware of the need to improve the consistency of provision, but has yet to identify a formal, systematic and coherent approach to the monitoring and review of quality improvement initiatives.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Retailing and wholesaling		
Apprenticeships for young people	39	3
Train to Gain	10	3
Call centre operations		
Apprenticeships for young people	66	3
Other government-funded provision	24	3
Train to Gain	19	3
Warehousing and distribution		
Apprenticeships for young people	60	3
Train to Gain	112	3

26. There are 330 learners on the retail and commercial enterprise programmes. Forty-three of these learners are on programmes where the main contract holders are large national corporate organisations. Intec is subcontracted to deliver the training for these organisations. Four learners are advanced apprentices, and 161 are apprentices. Apprentices are on retailing, warehousing and distribution, and call centre operations programmes. Twenty-four learners aged over 23 years old are taking NVQ courses and 141 learners are on NVQ programmes under the Train to Gain initiative.

27. Marketing and/or regional office staff make the initial contact with employers. Regional managers or sales staff then visit employers to establish employers' and learners' requirements. Assessors provide support for learners through monthly visits and three-monthly reviews. Initial assessment is carried out by assessors or, in some cases, sales staff. Routine visits by assessors will usually include assessment of learners' activity, discussion of future work and target-setting and, in most cases, discussions with an employer. Assessors also support learners with aspects of key skills qualifications and technical certificates as appropriate.

Strengths

- good success rates for warehousing and distribution apprentices
- good development of practical work skills
- particularly effective partnerships with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress for some learners
- insufficient planning of learning

Achievement and standards

28. Success rates are good for all apprenticeship frameworks in warehousing and distribution. Success rates have significantly improved over the years and stand at 63 per

cent for 2005-06. For all other retail programmes most success rates are steadily improving and are currently satisfactory. Success rates for all apprenticeship programmes have risen from 16 per cent to 45 per cent. Train to Gain success rates have risen from 54 per cent to 71 per cent. However, for NVQ-only programmes for the over 23 years olds, success rates are declining, having fallen from 76 per cent to 55 per cent.

29. Retail learners develop good practical work skills. All learners are employed at the start of their qualification programme and employers provide a comprehensive induction programme. Learners working within warehousing environments are provided with technical training and accreditation to enable them to use lift truck moving equipment. Retail organisations are ensuring their staff are competent in the core activities required to be effective within a busy retail store. These include merchandising, goods handling, product promotions and teamwork and are transferable between different types of retail outlets. Many learners have significantly increased their level of responsibility since starting the learning programme. Others have developed greater confidence in dealing with customers, either face to face or over the telephone. They are now able to deal competently with difficult customers, understanding the importance of providing consistent customer service. The established mature learners feel the qualifications have helped them to appreciate and understand the bigger business issues. They now fully appreciate the importance of their role within their teams and the need to work together effectively. Career progression is good, with opportunities for all learners to progress at work.

30. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Learners compile case studies based on real work activities to support the assessor in making a judgement on their knowledge of work-related tasks.

31. Some learners make slow progress. Of the current apprenticeship learners, 24 per cent have now gone past their funding date. Some learners experience delays at the start of the programme and appointments between assessors and learners are not always fully maintained. Some learners have not made any progress towards completion of their qualification for several months. Learners' progress reviews do not systematically identify slow progress early enough for each learner.

The quality of provision

32. There are particularly effective partnerships with employers. Intec has a well-established employer base. Employers and Intec work well together to identify the most appropriate qualification or pathway to meet the needs of the business and the learners. Many employers have a good understanding of the qualification routes available for their staff. Monthly meetings take place, supported by progress reports on each learner. Employers use a range of resources to support learners and to support Intec's staff to deliver the programmes effectively. Intec uses the partnerships well to develop improved opportunities for current and future learners. Employers state that Intec offers a professional, well-organised and reliable service.

33. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessors complete an action plan at the end of each monthly visit, which sets out work-based activity required to be completed by the learner. However, the plan often lacks clarity for the learner on what will actually take place on the next visit. Assessors often plan to carry out observations without specifying the task to be observed or how this will be captured. For some mature and established

employees there is a heavy reliance on the learner providing written accounts of activities that have happened. For established and competent level 3 learners there is also a heavy reliance on direct observation at work.

34. The training programmes adequately meet the interests of learners and the needs of the local employers. Intec offers appropriate advice and guidance and learners' work roles are analysed at the start of their programmes to ensure that they are working towards appropriate qualifications.

35. Learning is insufficiently planned. Many learners do not receive an initial assessment of their literacy, numeracy or language skills. Where such initial assessment takes place, the results are not systematically recorded or used to identify where additional support is required. Most learners provide information about their prior attainment and some also complete learning styles questionnaires. However, this information is not used by assessors to differentiate their approach to learners. Training offered by employers may be discussed at an early stage but assessors do not take it into account when planning their approach to programme delivery. Many learners on Train to Gain programmes do not have individual learning plans. Where individual learning plans are in place they are often poorly completed and are not updated to reflect learners' progress. At the start of their programme most learners are identified as competent, since they have acquired the general knowledge through their experience in the workplace. However, the provider does not further develop the learners' technical knowledge. There is no structured approach to how the assessors can build on each learner's existing knowledge.

Leadership and management

36. Internal communications are regular and effective across the different training centres. Staff discuss each learner's progress at monthly team meetings, highlighting any slow progress.

37. Staff are appropriately qualified and staff development is satisfactory. Staff receive two appraisals each year and attend regular individual review meetings with their line managers. However, most training contained in the staff development plans is related to the assessor's role.

38. Intec does not consistently manage the monitoring of learners' progress. Assessors use a percentage system to highlight the progress made by each learner. However, this system is not standardised across the company and is not consistently used. The meaning of the progress percentage is not fully understood.

39. Internal verification is satisfactory. Each regional area has its own internal verifier who monitors portfolio content and the assessment activities being conducted by the assessors. External verifiers make monthly visits and reports are positive about the standardised approach to portfolio presentation.

40. Learners receive adequate information on equality of opportunity issues at induction, including the grievance and appeals procedures. However, in many cases, learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity and assessors do not develop the learners' knowledge on equality and diversity matters.

41. The self-assessment process does not involve all members of staff. The

self-assessment process has not highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

Business administration and law**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Accounting and finance</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	7	3
Other government-funded provision	46	2
Train to Gain	1	2
<i>Administration</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	148	3
Other government-funded provision	40	2
Train to Gain	40	2
<i>Business management</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	78	3
Other government-funded provision	110	2
Train to Gain	62	2
<i>Customer service</i>		
Apprenticeships for young people	480	3
Other government-funded provision	445	2
Train to Gain	102	2

42. At the time of the inspection there were 1,559 learners on a range of programmes in business administration and law. Nine hundred and nine of these learners were on programmes where Intec had direct contracts with eight local LSCs or the LSC's national contracting service. The remaining learners were on programmes where large national corporate organisations have contracts with an LSC, but had subcontracted to Intec for the delivery of the programmes. Intec supports learners working towards NVQs through a range of government initiatives including programmes for over 23 year olds, and a Train to Gain programme that follows on from work on pilot schemes. Intec has also recently recruited 107 learners onto administration courses with ESF support.

43. There are 713 apprentices altogether, with 480 of those on customer service programmes, 78 on team leader courses, 148 on administration and seven on accounts programmes. Two-hundred and thirty-one of these learners were on advanced apprenticeship programmes. Four-hundred and thirty four learners were on NVQ programmes for learners aged over 23 years old. These range from level 4 management courses to several hundred learners on customer service courses at levels 2 and 3.

44. Marketing and/or regional office staff make initial contact with the employers. Regional managers or sales staff then visit employers to establish employers' and learners' requirements. Initial assessment for applicants may involve a review of application forms, curriculum vitae, information from interviews, and consideration of previous achievements or results from key skills tests. After learners have been inducted onto the appropriate course they are visited in the workplace by Intec's assessors. They carry out assessments, set targets for the learners and complete 12-weekly formal reviews. Accountancy learners attend off-the-job training. All other learners are supported in the workplace.

Strengths

- good success rates on NVQ-only programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- good partnerships with employers
- particularly effective support from assessors for many learners
- good regional teamwork

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes
- slow progress for some apprentices
- insufficiently systematic approach to providing training
- some unsatisfactory target-setting

Achievement and standards

45. The development of workplace skills is good. Learners benefit by having good opportunities to gain skills and further develop those they have already acquired at work. For many learners the programmes provide the first opportunity they have had for recognising what they can achieve at work and what they are good at. For some, the taking of responsibility for the first time is a big step which develops self-confidence. In other cases contributing to the improvement of work procedures and having the satisfaction of seeing improvements being used is significant. In many cases, employers' training programmes support Intec's activities and learners benefit from gaining recognition of their achievements. Learners working towards level 2 qualifications carry out tasks unassisted and demonstrate good skills in dealing with customers. For example, one learner has developed sufficient skills and confidence to effectively take on supervisory duties when his team leader is on holiday.

46. The success rates on NVQ-only programmes are good. Over the past two years, success rates have improved from 75 per cent to 80 per cent and many of the existing NVQ learners are making good progress. The overall success rate for apprenticeship programmes in 2005-06 was 53 per cent. However, the 2006-07 in-year success rate for advanced apprentices and apprentices has improved to 63 per cent with 400 learners already having finished their programme.

47. The success rate on the advanced apprenticeship programme has improved over the past three years from 25 per cent to 42 per cent in 2005-06. However, this is still unsatisfactory.

48. Some learners are making slow progress towards framework completion. Many have started well but have not progressed at an acceptable rate. Others have had significant delays or late delivery of an important aspect of the programme, such as key skills qualifications. The reviews have not been sufficient in identifying slow progress. In 2005-06, only 39 per cent of apprentices and 26 per cent of advanced apprentices achieved success within their appropriate timescale. Thirteen per cent of current advanced apprentices are out of their funded period and 18 per cent of apprentices are currently out of funding. In respect of learners on the team leaders' programme the current figure is 32 per cent. One customer service apprentice who should have finished

almost a year ago is still collecting the necessary NVQ evidence. In another case a learner who is halfway through her time has only achieved 10 per cent of the evidence towards the NVQ and has yet to start her key skills programme. Some learners have missed appointments or have changed their jobs. In some cases, programmes have been disrupted by employers' operational constraints. The provider has also had significant changes of assessment staff in some areas.

The quality of provision

49. Intec works very effectively with employers and jointly plans strategies to provide programmes leading to national qualifications. Employers value the close links that Intec's staff have with them, and their responsiveness. Intec collaborates very well with employers to promote the programmes. It provides good-quality marketing materials and promotional events. Intec's staff meet employees and provide effective advice and guidance to enable them to make informed decisions before joining programmes. Once programmes are set up, monthly meetings between employers and Intec take place when progress is monitored and programmes reviewed. Intec responds well to employers' requirements and adjusts and develops programmes to meet company aims. Many programmes are built on long standing and durable relationships with employers. In other cases, programmes are new. Here employers value the effective information and education provided by Intec to enable them to set up and provide NVQ programmes. Programmes often incorporate funded and unfunded learners, which adds value to the employers' provision.

50. All learners really value the frequent and effective support provided by mostly enthusiastic and knowledgeable assessors. Many examples were found of assessors offering learners the opportunity to contact them by telephone, e-mail or text at any time. Learners use this facility and normally receive prompt responses to maintain progress. Assessors make regular visits to learners and will offer support outside usual working hours. Assessors are mindful of personal needs and circumstances and offer a supportive pastoral role to improve motivation and a sense of achievement. Assessors provide a very comprehensive introduction to the qualification and this enables the learners to fully understand the requirements which will be made of them from an early stage. The assessors will review thoroughly the components of learners' existing work duties and explore the wider potential for job rotation to determine extension opportunities for progression, promotion and achievement of key skills qualifications. There is a careful match of learners to qualifications and this will often take account of much more than the match of duties to the appropriate NVQ, as well as personal and aspirational issues. Assessors provide guidance and support for learners to collect a range of evidence, including photographs and tapes of professional discussions to speed up the assessment process. Learners are encouraged and supported to recognise the full potential of their personal and vocational skills and this considerably enhances confidence in some learners.

51. Intec's assessment of learners' achievement is satisfactory. Assessors make monthly visits to conduct assessments using a wide range of methods. They take considerable care in analysing and determining the evidence, including making extensive observations. Adequate feedback is given to the learners and suitable plans are made for the next visit. Assessors' written reports of the assessment, including observations, are largely descriptive and lack sufficient judgements. The customer service NVQ portfolios lack a systematic method of identifying learners' knowledge and understanding requirements. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory and meet the awarding bodies' requirements.

52. Some target-setting is unsatisfactory. Assessors visit the learner in the workplace every four weeks and complete an assessment plan/review document. Some targets are too broad and are generally concerned with a whole unit rather than a specific task. Targets are not specific, realistic, measurable or within a set time frame. Often they are not fully understood by the learner. There is some poor recording, both of the previous targets and additionally when targets are changed. Targets not completed from one plan are not always effectively carried over to the next. Targets in the individual learning plans are not always revised. Examples of poor targets set include 'Unit 1 and 2 further recording done, but more to do on next visit'. In other cases the target set is for the assessor to assess by observation on the visit, but what is to be observed is not recorded.

53. Intec has an insufficiently systematic approach to providing training. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Intec sets very few learning-related objectives to enhance the learning experience. It has insufficient procedures to identify and use opportunities to extend learners' skills and knowledge so that they gain the maximum value from their training course. Intec does not use the results of assessment to plan learning activities which will enrich learners' abilities. Too many learners experience only assessment without significant action being taken to improve their vocational skills. There is too little differentiation based on learners' prior levels of skill or learning. The learning experience they receive is based too much on the capacity and willingness of employers to provide training, with too little input from Intec. The needs of those learners requiring additional literacy, numeracy or language development are not appropriately assessed or met.

Leadership and management

54. Regional teamworking is good. There is effective communication between staff teams in the regions. Assessors comment positively on their feelings of a shared sense of purpose and the availability of their manager to provide guidance and support. There is a good structure of minuted meetings. This includes standardisation meetings and monthly team meetings which feature significant discussion on best practice where assessors can describe what has worked well, any new ideas they might have, and good resources they have used. Regional managers and training co-ordinators provide good personal support for assessors by arranging work schedules to meet their personal circumstances. Where there have been some staff absences, good cross-regional co-operation has ensured that assessments continue to minimise the effect on the progress of the learners.

55. Assessors are in the main occupationally competent, many having up-to-date experience, and are supported by some longer-serving members of staff. They have attended awarding body updating sessions and have shared information from these sessions with their colleagues.

56. Intec has satisfactory arrangements to monitor equality of opportunity. Intec provides suitable support to learners with physical disabilities such as impaired vision or restricted mobility. Learners' rights and responsibilities are covered at induction and most assessors also ask simple follow-up questions during progress review. However, Intec does not provide all learners with enough opportunities to explore or discuss the wider aspects of equality of opportunity and diversity. For some learners, their understanding of these issues does not improve significantly during their training course.

57. Intec has satisfactory procedures for internal verification. Since the previous inspection there are better arrangements for monitoring learners' progress and providing all assessors with appropriate tools and resources to support learners effectively. Quality audits have identified some weaknesses, such as some inadequacies in the targets that assessors set for learners. The self-assessment process does not involve all members of staff. The self-assessment process has not highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

