

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: TUI UK and Ireland
Date of visit: 19 June 2008

Context

TUI UK and Ireland (TUI) provides apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship training in travel and tourism for its staff who are employed in Thomson's travel agencies. At the inspection in February 2007, the overall effectiveness of the provision was judged to be satisfactory. TUI's leadership and management were graded as good, and its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement as satisfactory. The quality of the travel and tourism provision was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What progress has TUI made in improving the low overall advanced apprenticeship framework success rates for learners in England?	Reasonable progress
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TUI has made reasonable progress to improve the low overall advanced apprenticeship framework success rates for learners in England. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07, success rates have risen from 34% to 43%. In the current year, the rate by period 6 was 57%. Timely success rates during the same three-year period show a strongly improving trend. In comparison to the previous year, the 2006/07 rate had doubled to 32%. For the current year TUI has maintained this improving trend with timely success rates similar to the national rate. However, while improving, other overall and timely success rates are consistently below the national average. Since the previous inspection, TUI has introduced a range of changes aimed at improving success rates. It has restructured the management of training to clarify roles and lines of responsibility. Learners' progression route now usually includes completion of an apprentice programme before starting advanced apprenticeship training. In addition, TUI has significantly increased pay and other financial incentives learners can receive on successful achievement of agreed performance targets.

What progress has TUI made to improve the promotion of training as part of its strategy to increase the low participation of under-represented groups?	Reasonable progress
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TUI has made reasonable progress to improve the promotion of training as part of its strategy to increase the low participation of under-represented groups. The provider has identified a range of social and cultural barriers to participation in training and has implemented strategies to rectify the situation. Recruitment videos now include an appropriate range of non-stereotypical imagery of work roles. TUI also uses such imagery on the company website and in their careers materials that are used for careers education within schools. TUI target careers days, including schools and local and national events, to promote work and training opportunities attended by individuals from specific community groups. Since the previous inspection, TUI has improved its management information system. It now produces an appropriate range of data and reports to aid the monitoring and evaluation of activities to improve the participation and success rates of under-represented groups. While recruitment of males for the current year has improved since the previous inspection, it is still low at 8%. The number of minority ethnic learners starting programmes remains low and is at a similar level to that identified at the previous inspection. The framework achievement rate for males is significantly lower in 2005/06 when compared with the rate for females. However, in the following year the rate more than doubled, though it is still well below that for females. Success rates for minority ethnic groups are generally comparable to the total learner population.

The quality of provision

How much progress has been made in improving the badly managed aspects of the selection process for permanent employment?	Significant progress
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There has been significant progress made in improving the badly managed aspects of the selection process for permanent employment for learners on programme. TUI implemented the selection process as a result of changes to its arrangements for service delivery. Since the previous inspection, the provider has totally changed the application process, which is now available via the Internet. TUI ensures that prospective learners for whom the Internet is an inappropriate means of application can gain access to an alternative application process that does not disadvantage them. Unlike at the time of the previous inspection, TUI ensures that all applicants have access to the same information on the selection process. This includes details of the training programme, eligibility, available employment opportunities and locations. Following a satisfactory initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills, applicants attend an interview and 'taster' day. Processes to ensure candidate feedback have been improved and include written feedback following the initial assessment stage as well as verbal feedback after completion of the interview and 'taster day'.

Leadership and management

What progress has TUI made to improve its analysis and use of data?	Significant progress
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TUI have made significant progress to improve its analysis and use of data. At the previous inspection, managers and staff did not have a fully effective understanding of both learner performance and how this performance compared with previous years. In addition, the subcontractor was not able to provide sufficiently timely and accurate data. TUI has changed its subcontractor and now receives relevant data on time. The provider's management information system now produces a wide range of performance data, which staff effectively use in relation to each aspect of the learners' apprenticeship framework. Information on individuals' progress is available through the management information system within days of learners' progress reviews taking place. Similarly, the provider routinely records data on learner attendance at training sessions. The various data elements are analysed on a monthly basis. The information is accurate and effectively used by managers and other staff to monitor learners' progress, attendance and where relevant, to determine what remedial action may be required. Currently, no learners on programme are beyond the end of their projected completion date. In the current year, there are a significant number of learners completing their apprenticeships early. This was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.

How much progress has been made to improve the insufficient analysis and comparison of evaluations and feedback?	Significant progress
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TUI has made significant progress to improve the analysis and comparison of evaluations and feedback. At the previous inspection, some questionnaires did not provide useful information nor did they provide information that could be easily analysed. Since then, TUI has redesigned all questionnaires and other evaluation tools so that they can provide both qualitative and quantitative feedback to the organisation. This process has involved standardising the various documents in use. For example, the document used to gather feedback from learners as they complete their programmes, is the same one used throughout the organisation. TUI has widened the scope of the information captured to include learner feedback on key aspects of their learning journey including training sessions, portfolio completion, work circumstances, and the quality of support from assessors. The information now also includes the quality of training delivered by individual trainers, training delivered at different locations and across particular regions. The provider has effectively used feedback to benefit learners. For example, TUI has recently identified that learners' satisfaction with the effectiveness of 'icebreaker' sessions has started to decline. Managers shortly expect to use this as a development point with trainers as part of a strategy of improving the quality of the sessions. However, TUI is not currently analysing and using learner feedback for comparative purposes by gender or other specified group.

What progress has TUI made to develop quality improvement arrangements and ensure that the self-assessment process and development plan drives forward improvements?	Reasonable progress
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TUI has made reasonable progress to develop its quality improvement arrangements and ensure that the self-assessment process and development plan drive forward improvements. A quality manual, with clearly defined processes and procedures, has been developed and introduced. Managers have focused particularly on the aspects of quality improvement that support improved learner progress and achievement. TUI has improved its service level agreement with the subcontractor to secure a greater clarity as to the subcontractor's role and the required standard of performance. The agreement has specific key performance indicators to aid the monitoring of performance. TUI advisers appropriately monitor the quality of the learners' experience. The frequency with which the advisers monitor their welfare, work circumstances, health and safety and equality of opportunity has improved.

In other areas there has been less progress in improving quality assurance and improvement arrangements. TUI has improved the observation of training through the development of a single set of observation criteria, common paperwork, and training of most staff involved in the process. However, there is no moderation process for training session observations. The organisation is aware that some observations do not reflect consistency in judgements and grading. Quality assurance through observation is part of the internal verification process. Other key aspects of learning, such as progress reviews, are not part of an effective observation process that drives forward quality improvement. TUI does undertake use of external research and some benchmarking. However, this is limited and does not fully identify good practice that informs the development of quality assurance and improvement processes.

Both the self-assessment process and report are satisfactory. TUI's quality assurance consultant has used an appropriate range of data to develop the report's evaluative judgements. However, there is insufficient use of externally sourced information to inform comparative judgements. Monitoring of the self-assessment's associated quality improvement plan is effective. The management team give a high priority to activities to meet targets. Actions identified in the self-assessment and development plan have contributed to improvements, particularly in learner performance.