

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: QinetiQ, Boscombe Down
Date of visit: 27 May 2008

Context

QinetiQ Limited (QinetiQ), Boscombe Down, supports the Ministry of Defence (MoD) by performing flight trials of new aircraft, airborne equipment and weapons to assess safety and suitability. Approximately 2,000 members of staff are based at Boscombe Down. QinetiQ contracts with the Gloucester and Wiltshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide advanced apprenticeships. The apprenticeship currently has two engineering pathways; mechanical and avionics. Training takes place in the flight engineering services training centre (the training centre) which is managed within the technical division of the aircraft test and evaluation sector.

QinetiQ was inspected in February 2008 when its overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, leadership and management, and equality of opportunity were judged to be satisfactory. The engineering provision was good, as were achievement and standards, and the quality of provision.

Achievement and standards

At the previous inspection, achievement and standards were judged to be good. How much progress has QinetiQ made in further improving the outcomes of training?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in maintaining the high success rates of apprentices. The training centre has made satisfactory progress in redefining the length of the advanced apprenticeship programme, which has changed on a number of occasions in previous years. However, this has resulted in no achievements being recorded in 2006/07. Discussions are ongoing with the LSC to resolve perceived discrepancies in data held on the provider gateway. In 2007/08 success rates were outstanding with all 11 apprentices achieving their qualification and all gaining employment within QinetiQ. Provisional data for 2008/09 indicates that success rates remain at a high level. All of the learners completing in 2008/09 have been offered employment within QinetiQ.

The training centre has continued to develop its training to increase apprentices' employability and community involvement. Greater co-ordination between the training centre and placements within QinetiQ has improved the opportunities for apprentices to complete national vocational qualification (NQV) units and gain further

hands on experience. Apprentices are regularly involved in projects to support local communities, for example in the last three years ambitious projects to develop sculptures for public display has been successfully completed. Well received team building activities for new apprentices have been increased since the previous inspection and QinetiQ now fund learners to attend a range of sporting activities.

Quality of provision

At the previous inspection insufficient planning took place of some training. How far has the training centre succeeded in resolving this area for improvement?	Reasonable progress
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QinetiQ has made reasonable progress in improving the planning of training since the previous inspection. A programme co-ordinator has been appointed. An overall training programme for each year's intake of apprentices is now in place. The training activities within the school are now recorded for each trainer and these are reviewed weekly with the quality training manager. Appropriate adjustments are made, where necessary, to subsequent timetables. Timely meetings of all trainers are held to review the weekly scheduled training and to identify any potential problems. The training programme does not, however, contain sufficient overall detail or interim targets to effectively support its delivery. A plan of each apprentice's final year work-placements for the on-the-job training has been developed, but is not sufficiently linked to information on what units need to be completed. Appropriate monthly progress reviews are taking place, but they do not adequately record the apprentice's progress to date.

How much progress has been made in reducing the reliance on witness statements on the NVQ programmes?	Reasonable progress
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Reasonable progress has been made in reducing the reliance on witness statements on the NVQ level 3 programmes. The range of evidence collected has been increased appropriately. Since the previous inspection, communication between the workplace supervisors and the training centre has clearly improved. Suitable training has been provided for workplace supervisors to familiarise them with the requirements of the NVQ units. The scheduling of on-the-job training and assessment has improved. A mobile assessor has been appointed who visits the workplace to conduct and record observations and assessments of apprentices completing tasks for the NVQ at level 3. Suitable professional discussions now take place between the assessor and apprentice away from the workplace and assessors record these as an audio document. However, no written record of the discussion is produced to be included in the apprentice's portfolio although there is a document provided to record this evidence. Appropriate internal verification visits take place to observe the assessor

carrying out observations and assessment in the workplace. Assessors do not provide apprentices with an overall record of their assessments.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in developing the quality improvement arrangements for the training programme?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection quality improvement arrangements for the training programme were ineffective. Reasonable progress has been made in improving arrangements. Internal communications have been improved. Staff now have access to a useful computer based information recording and dissemination system. Daily team meetings have been introduced. QinetiQ has appointed a quality training manager who has carried out a comprehensive review of existing arrangements. Very recently a quality assurance manual has been introduced. Guidelines for tutors have been published to improve the consistency of lesson planning. Observations of teaching and learning in training sessions have been introduced, however, the structure of these observations is inadequate to fully support improvement. Observation documentation is designed to record the strengths and areas for improvement of training sessions, but the focus is too tutor centred with insufficient attention given to the learning taking place.

How much progress has been made in increasing the effectiveness of self-assessment and post inspection action planning in analysing the provision and achieving improvement?	Reasonable progress
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QinetiQ has made reasonable progress in improving the effectiveness of self-assessment. Post-inspection action planning has been reasonably effective in guiding improvement. The post-inspection action plan covers the areas for improvement noted at the previous inspection comprehensively. Significant changes have been made to the staffing of the centre. QinetiQ's capacity to improve and expand its training has increased satisfactorily. Reasonable progress has been made in resolving five of the six key areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The planning of training, judged an area for improvement at the previous inspection, has improved. High apprenticeship success rates and job outcomes have been maintained. The use of data remains an area for improvement. The latest self-assessment report, published in December 2008 is, largely descriptive and provides little or no analysis of progress towards resolving identified areas for improvement. Staff and workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in the report's preparation. Some staff are unclear as to the basis for judgements in the report. The training centre is aware of the need to revise its approach to structured self-assessment as the training centre grows in size and complexity. It is currently researching approaches used by similar providers.

<p>The further promotion of equality of opportunity was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. How much progress has been made since then in improving this aspect of the provision?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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QinetiQ has made reasonable progress in resolving areas for improvement related to equality of opportunity. The training centre has had some success in increasing the number of women applying to join the apprenticeship programme. For the 2009 recruitment cycle, six women have successfully completed aptitude tests and are awaiting interviews, compared with two in the previous year. A bursary scheme, to engage potential learners who are still at school, is now fully established with two men and two women benefiting from it in the current year. QinetiQ has made reasonable progress in improving learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Training centre apprentices receive appropriate training in diversity and dignity at work, provided by an external organisation, as part the induction programme. Each apprentice is now provided with a well written handbook detailing the concepts of equality of opportunity together with apprentices' rights and responsibilities. Equality of opportunity is now a standard agenda item for staff meetings and arrangements are in place to consider equality of opportunity at apprentices' reviews.

<p>How much progress has been made in ensuring that the training centre meets government requirements for safeguarding learners?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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At the previous inspection, arrangements for safeguarding did not meet government requirements, reasonable progress has been made in resolving this area for improvement. A member of staff has been appointed as child protection officer and they have received appropriate basic training for the role. QinetiQ has established a suitable central record of vetting checks on staff although this is still not comprehensive in its coverage. Most training centre staff and workplace supervisors have undergone vetting checks in the last six months and checks have been requested on a few very recently recruited supervisors. Apprentices, who may be involved in work with schools or in supervising younger learners, have also been subject to vetting checks. Training centre staff have not, however, received any basic awareness training in safeguarding.