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Department for  
**Employment  
and Learning**  
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## **Annual Report from Quality and Performance Branch**

### **The Quality of Provision in**

### **Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI,**

### **Further Education and Employment Programmes**

**September 2008 – August 2009**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Key to the implementation of the Department's Quality Improvement Strategy, Success Through Excellence was the establishment of the Quality and Performance Branch (QPB) in July 2006. QPB aims to ensure a holistic approach to quality and contracting issues, by co-ordinating findings from external inspection, quality improvement initiatives, and the on-going managing and monitoring of supplier contracts. To achieve this, the Branch works closely with the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency Northern Ireland (LSDA NI).

1.2 The academic year September 2008 to August 2009 witnessed a period of intense inspection activity, as in addition to the programme of work agreed between QPB and the Inspectorate relating to the quality of provision in Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI, inspections also took place of the Steps to Work programme and in the further education sector.

1.3 This report provides a summary of the quality of provision across Training for Success, ApprenticeshipsNI, Further Education and Employment programmes over the period September 2008 to August 2009.

## **2. TRAINING FOR SUCCESS/APPRENTICESHIPSNI**

2.1 During the year 2007 to 2008, any new supplier in receipt of a Training for Success /ApprenticeshipsNI contract or existing supplier delivering new provision was subject to a longitudinal model of inspection. This is a two phase model of inspection; the first gives the supplier an indication of the developing quality of their provision and of the areas for improvement they need to address before the final phase, normally scheduled at least six months later.

- 2.2 From September 2008 to August 2009, QPB liaised with the Inspectorate to ensure that all suppliers who had undergone phase 1 of a longitudinal inspection now had the process completed and were awarded grades for the quality of their provision. Equally, attention focused on ensuring that outstanding monitoring and follow-up inspections, where the quality of provision had previously been graded as satisfactory, inadequate or unsatisfactory, were completed.
- 2.3 Inspection grades awarded across all sectors range from 1 to 6 and the corresponding descriptors are listed in Table 1 below:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Corresponding Descriptor</b>
1	Outstanding
2	Very Good
3	Good
4	Satisfactory
5	Inadequate
6	Unsatisfactory

**Table 1**

### **3 Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI Inspection Outcomes**

- 3.1 During the period under review, a total of 16 inspection activities took place: one was the first phase of a two phase longitudinal inspection, two

were with one supplier under the longitudinal model, five were phase 2 longitudinal and one was a focused inspection. In addition, seven suppliers who had previously had the quality of their training provision evaluated as satisfactory or less than satisfactory, had follow-up inspections resulting in revised grades. The Inspectorate also carried out surveys into the quality of provision for:

- ApprenticeshipsNI;
- Training for Success;
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a third essential skill (TfS/ApprenticeshipsNI and further education); and
- Personal Training Plans.

3.2 Almost all the inspection grades awarded for inspection activities, during the period September 2008-August 2009, indicated that the quality of provision was satisfactory or better. Table 2 below summarises the grades awarded:

<b>Number of suppliers</b>	<b>Grade awarded</b>	<b>Grade Descriptor</b>
1	1	Outstanding
10	3	Good
2	4	Satisfactory
1	5	Inadequate

**Table 2**

***(Two of the inspection activities were first phase longitudinal and therefore were ungraded)***

3.3 The revised grades awarded to suppliers who had a follow-up inspection showed that all of them had improved the quality of their provision and in just under half (43%), provision had improved by two grades. This can be attributed to the monitoring of their progress between initial inspection and final follow-up and the provision of appropriate support activities.

3.4 The longitudinal model proved effective in supporting most of the six new suppliers, who had gone through a two phase inspection, with a grade only awarded on completion of phase 2. Four of them had significantly improved the quality of their provision during the intervening period between phase 1 and phase 2 and were awarded an overall grade 3 (good) at the end of the inspection process. However, provision in one supplier was just satisfactory (grade 4) and another had failed to make any improvement (grade 5). The latter two have submitted revised quality improvement plans and are going through monitoring inspections visits before a final follow-up, which will result in re-grading of the provision.

#### **4. Main Findings from Inspections and Surveys – Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI (2008-2009)**

4.1 Analysis of the reports from the above inspections highlights a number of recurring themes. Where provision is good, the recurring strengths are the:

- commitment of staff at all levels to promote improvement;
- good quality of the training and learning experiences in both directed training and in the workplace;
- high standards of practical skills, technical knowledge, communication, numeracy and ICT skills demonstrated by most trainees;
- quality of the self evaluation and development planning processes in place to support continuous improvement;

- good quality personal training plans combined with the effective monitoring and review of trainee progress;
- success and progression rates for those trainees who complete their programme;
- good pastoral care arrangements; and
- good links with employers and external agencies to support trainees in their learning.

4.2 Where provision is satisfactory or inadequate, the recurring areas for improvement are the:

- lack of genuine upskilling and added value to apprenticeship programmes with too much emphasis on the accreditation of existing competences;
- quality and use of personal training plans in planning for learning;
- monitoring of trainee progress across all aspects of their programme, including workplace training;
- need for better collaboration and planning between most ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 and level 3 suppliers and employers to ensure effective progression for trainees from level 2 to level 3 programmes in the same professional and technical areas;
- need for a broader range of training and learning strategies to promote group, peer and independent learning including the use of technology to enhance the learning experience;
- poor provision for essential skills, especially within the ApprenticeshipsNI programme;
- poor support from professional and technical tutors for the development of trainees' essential skills;
- need to review quality assurance and improvement processes to include the collation and analysis of data on key performance indicators;
- low retention rates; and
- lack of good quality careers education, information, advice and guidance.

4.3 To address the above areas for improvement, QPB liaised with LSDA NI regarding the provision of focused support for individual suppliers and the content of training events for the sector as a whole. Training events for the sector held by LSDA NI focused on:

- Personal Training Plans;
- careers education;
- behaviour management;
- improving self-evaluation;
- review and target setting for trainees; and
- improving retention.

4.4 QPB has also liaised with the Inspectorate to identify good practice emerging through surveys or inspections of individual suppliers with a view to sharing this across the sector. For example, the good practice identified during the survey of Personal Training Plans was shared at a dissemination event in October 2009. Equally, the findings (strengths and areas for improvement) relating to essential skills were shared in September 2009 with essential skills tutors and co-ordinators at a series of meetings with the sector. The development of the Certificate in Teaching, the teacher education programme for work based learning tutors by the University of Ulster, has also been an effective means of addressing recurring themes from inspection. For example, in response to the need for professional and technical tutors to support more effectively the development of trainees' essential skills, the course team in the University has recruited essential skills specialists to provide a series of workshops to:

- a) improve the academic writing skills of individual professional and technical tutors; and

- b) to develop their ability to embed essential skills within their own programmes.

## **5. Further Education**

5.1 This last academic year saw the return of individual college inspections as well as the continuation of surveys.

The inspection activities for further education colleges included:

- an evaluation of the management and leadership of information and learning technology (ILT), and its use to support teaching and learning in each college;
- an evaluation of each college's self-evaluation of their provision in the Priority Skill Areas at level 2 and of their whole college quality improvement plan;
- an evaluation of the quality of each college's provision in the Priority Skill Areas at level 2 including essential skills; and
- an evaluation of the provision for learners with special educational needs or disabilities in further education and training for success.

5.2 The grade descriptors awarded for the overall quality of provision in the Priority Skill Areas at level 2, for each college are summarised in Table 3 overleaf:



Number of Colleges	Grade descriptor awarded
1	Very Good
3	Good
2	Satisfactory

**Table 3**

5.3 Across the professional and technical areas, the best provision was in hospitality. The grades awarded for the quality of provision in each of the Priority Skill Areas are summarised in Table 4 below:

Priority Skill Area	Grades descriptors awarded to Priority Skill Professional and Technical Areas
Hospitality	1 college x Outstanding 3 colleges x Very Good 2 colleges x Good
Tourism	1 college x Outstanding 1 college x Very Good 2 colleges x Satisfactory 1 college x Inadequate 1 college x Unsatisfactory
Computing/ICT	1 college x Very Good 3 colleges x Good 2 colleges x Satisfactory
Construction*	2 colleges x Good 1 college x Satisfactory
Engineering†	4 colleges x Good 1 college x Satisfactory
Essential Skills	2 colleges x Good 3 colleges x Satisfactory 1 college x Inadequate

**Table 4**

***In further education inspections, during this period, grades were not published but the corresponding grade descriptors were used in the reports.***

\* Three colleges had no FE provision in construction

† One college had no FE provision in engineering

5.4 The recurring strengths emerging from the above inspection activities were the:

- good provision of Priority Skill Area level 2 technician and craft courses on a full-time and part-time basis in the majority of colleges including the good opportunities for progression from level 2 up to higher education courses;
- consistently good quality of the provision in hospitality and catering across all six colleges;
- good quality teaching and learning in most of the colleges;
- good or better standards of work produced by students in most of the courses inspected;
- well-qualified staff who have good opportunities to participate in relevant staff development activities;
- collation and interpretation of management information to aid planning in most colleges;
- increased awareness of staff at all levels of issues relating to disability and additional learning needs and the development of more rigorous approaches to initial assessment and planning for learning to ensure that the diverse needs of learners are being met;
- good arrangements for pastoral care and learning support in most colleges; and
- good quality of teaching and learning in the essential skills ICT pilot and the good standard of ICT skills developed by most of the learners.

5.5 The recurring areas for improvement arising from the inspection activities were the:

- variation in the quality of provision in individual professional and technical areas, in particular tourism and hospitality;

- quality of the provision in travel and tourism which is poor in two colleges;
- quality of the provision in essential skills which is good in only two colleges. Weaknesses in essential skills include poor attendance, the lack of integration into the professional and technical areas, the limited range of teaching strategies, the poor use of technology to enhance the learning experience and the poor levels of achievement;
- limited further education curriculum offer in the Priority Skill Areas at level 2 in two of the colleges;
- more consistent and effective use of technology to enhance the quality of learning across all the Priority Skill Areas in most colleges;
- need for some colleges to extend links with industry to all Priority Skill Area level 2 courses;
- provision of effective careers information advice and guidance, including the use of the Individual Student Learning Agreement (ISLA) to engage students more effectively in developing their own learning and employability;
- limited flow of information that accompanies young people with special educational needs transferring from schools to further education or training;
- variation in the quality of accommodation and resources within individual colleges;
- variation in the quality of the self-evaluation processes and whole college quality improvement planning across the six colleges; it is good or better in two colleges, and only satisfactory in the other four;
- lack of holistic evaluation by individual colleges of their full range of provision (further education and training); and
- need for more effective staff development in self-evaluation and quality improvement planning, and for a fundamental cultural change within the colleges to bring about sustained self-managed improvement.

- 5.6 In response to the above findings, QPB liaised with the Inspectorate to plan appropriate follow-up inspection activities. As a consequence, all programme areas graded satisfactory, inadequate or unsatisfactory will be subject to monitoring inspection visits and final follow-up inspections where the quality of the provision will be re-graded.
- 5.7 To address the areas for improvement, QPB collaborated with LSDA NI and others to implement appropriate support programmes. For example, the findings from the survey report on Self-Evaluation in Priority Skills Areas at Level 2 were disseminated to the curriculum managers and to the quality managers from each of the colleges. Training in self-evaluation processes has also been planned to complement the Inventing the Future Programme being delivered to college managers. The use of technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning has been a recurring theme for a number of years. Over the last year, in response to this issue, the University of Ulster has embedded the pedagogical use of ICT into the revised Post Graduate Certificate in Education (FE). QPB is currently working with both the Inspectorate and LSDA NI to plan how best to share the good practice and the recurring areas for improvement identified during these inspections.

## **6. Employment Programmes**

- 6.1 During this period three first phase longitudinal inspections for the new Steps to Work provision took place. In preparation for the Steps to Work inspections, QPB / LSDA NI and the Inspectorate visited good practice provision in England and held training events for Lead Contractors on the new quality indicators used to evaluate the quality of Steps to Work

provision.

6.2 The Steps to Work provision in three of the contract areas had phase 1 inspections and the main strengths identified from these activities were the:

- commitment of staff at all levels to promote improvement in the interests of participants;
- good quality work placements in two of the contracted areas; and
- positive working relationships developed between the lead contractor, sub-contractors and Department staff in the majority of the contracted areas.

6.3 The main areas for improvement were the:

- development of an internal management information system to monitor and track the participants' progress across the contracted area;
- collation, analysis and use of data to inform planning and promote improvement; and
- sharing of good practice across all of the sub-contracted provision, for example in Core Gateway and Jobsearch.

6.4 In response to the first phase of the Steps to Work inspection activities, QPB continues to work closely with all stakeholders to identify and implement an appropriate range of support activities for lead contractors. These include further training on the quality indicators and on self-

evaluation processes with a particular focus on how to self-evaluate the quality of provision across the range of sub-contractors. Lead contractors are currently undertaking a three day programme on distributed management with a particular focus on developing appropriate management information systems, organised by LSDA NI.

## **7. Annual Submission of Self-evaluation Reports and Quality Improvement Plans for Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI and Steps to Work Programmes**

- 7.1 Each year suppliers are required to submit a self-evaluation report and quality improvement plan to QPB for their Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI and Steps to Work provision. If a supplier submits an evaluation of their own performance that is less than satisfactory, they are required to re-submit within eight weeks from the date of feedback. Any supplier who requires support in this process can avail of help from LSDA NI.
- 7.2 Over the years, the quality of the self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans has improved significantly. The process started in 2003-04 and in that first year, 40% of both Jobskills and New Deal suppliers submitted reports that were less than satisfactory. This number diminished steadily over the years until in 2007 just 9% of Jobskills and 4% of New Deal suppliers had to re-submit. It was disappointing that the percentage of suppliers having to re-submit Training for Success/Jobskills reports had risen for 2007-2008 from 9% to 19%. However, this year that number has once again fallen to 9%. So far two self-evaluation reports have had to be re-submitted under the Steps to Work provision.

## **8. Future Work Plans**

- 8.1 The year September 2009 to August 2010 will see a continued period of intense inspection activity across the Department's funded programmes. In Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI, there will be no survey inspections but rather a focus on the quality of provision in individual supplier organisations. In Further Education, the main area of work will be a survey into the quality of provision in the Priority Skill Areas at level 3 and in Steps to Work the aim will be to complete the inspections of the lead contractors. QPB will continue to work with ETI and LSDA NI to monitor and support quality improvement across all provision.

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**Further information:  
Quality and Performance Branch  
3rd Floor  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Lesley Buildings  
61 Fountain Street  
Belfast BT1 5EX  
Tel: 028 9044 1888  
Fax: 028 9044 1861**