

Barriers to completion of full training frameworks by learners in work based training



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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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1. Introduction

As a part of its 2004-2005 remit from the Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn was asked for advice on the 'barriers to completion of full training frameworks by learners in work-based training'. By training framework we mean the NVQ, the specified key skills and technical certificates that the occupational sector requires. This advice paper concentrates on learners on either the foundation modern apprenticeship programme (FMA), or the modern apprenticeship programme (MA). Other work-based training routes are designed around individual learner's needs and do not have a specified training framework, which all learners are expected to attain.

All learners on FMA and MA programmes are expected to complete a specified NVQ, related to the industry in which they are working. In addition, they must also complete a portfolio of key skills. There are six key skills, all available at level 1, level 2 and level 3. Most are available at level 4 as well. The key skills are:

- application of number;
- communications;
- information technology;
- improving own learning and performance;
- working with others; and
- problem solving.

The key skills that the learners must achieve, and the levels at which the learner must achieve them, varies according to the occupational area in which the learner is operating. An example of this is the framework for a learner on an FMA in accounting which requires the learner to achieve application of number at level 1 and communications at level 2. A learner on an MA in electrical installation is required to achieve the key skills of application of number and communications at level 2 and information technology at level 1.

Recently, the requirements of the frameworks have been widened to include the need for learners to successfully complete 'technical certificates'. These are formal qualifications, such as the City and Guilds certificate in business administration (for learners following a business administration framework), or a basic food hygiene certificate (for learners following an hospitality framework), which the learner studies alongside their NVQ and key skills. The award of a technical certificate is evidence of the learner having achieved the practical underpinning skills and knowledge required by their NVQ. However, at the time of most of the inspections included in this paper, there was no formal requirement for learners to complete these technical certificates.

The advice given in this paper is based on an evaluation of Estyn's existing inspection reports of work-based training providers, supplemented by additional evidence where appropriate. This additional evidence includes Estyn inspectors' awareness of developments elsewhere in the United Kingdom and information and judgements drawn from other phases of Estyn's work, such as the inspection of the New Deal. The data tables referred to and included in this paper (appendices 1, 2 and 3) are drawn from Estyn's inspection reports of work-based training providers published between September 2001 and December 2003.

2. Main Findings

- 1 Overall, across all occupational areas, Estyn data from inspection reports for the period 2001-2003 shows that of 2486 leavers from the FMA programme in Wales only 20% of leavers (497) completed their full framework. Of those leavers on the MA programme (1382) only 27% (380) leavers completed their full framework. This represents 33% of all leavers from inspected modern apprenticeship programmes.
- 2 The rates at which learners successfully completed their framework requirements varied widely across the different occupational areas. However, in only three occupational areas: agriculture, business administration and leisure, sport and travel, did over a third of leavers on the FMA programme complete their full framework. In the MA programme, only two occupational areas: agriculture and engineering, had over a third of leavers completing their full framework.
- 3 Nevertheless, in most occupational areas, the achievement of a full NVQ is significantly better with 44% (609) of leavers on the FMA programme and 60% (452) of leavers on the MA programme achieving their full NVQ. A significant reason for these learners failing to complete the full framework is that they do not attain the key skills required by their training framework.
- 4 Good key skills are vital to learners' employment prospects and lifelong learning. Future Skills Wales highlights the needs of employers in this area. Where standards and provision are good, learners start working on key skills at an early stage of their training programme. These are developed and assessed within a vocational context that effectively enables learners to see the relevance of key skills and increases the pace at which they are achieved.
- 5 Inspection evidence shows that there is a great deal of difference in performance between one training provider and another, as indicated by the spread of grades awarded at inspections. There are also differences in the standard of outcomes across the various areas of an individual provider's work, particularly in the larger providers who offer training in a number of occupational areas. The most frequently identified barriers that prevent trainees from achieving good standards and gaining their full qualification framework awards are:
 - poor planning and management of training;
 - failure to adequately improve standards and the quality of training;
 - a lack of emphasis on developing key skills; and
 - variation in employers' involvement in training and availability of off-the-job training.

- 6 As a result, learners do not gain all the qualifications required to meet the full qualification framework. Unless learners' abilities in key skills improve a great deal, Wales will not have the skilled workforce it needs to keep its place in the economy of Europe and the wider world. In England, an Employers Training Pilot is currently underway which pays the employer to release employees for off-the-job training. This has proved successful in engaging both learners and employers. However, no such scheme is available in Wales.

3. Recommendations

- 7 To improve standards and the quality of work-based training and the rate at which learners successfully complete frameworks, there is a need to address the following recommendations:

Recommendations to ELWa:

- (1) ensure that robust contract compliance arrangements, with appropriate targets for full framework completion, are in place;
- (2) provide regular on-going support and training at a national level to help providers evaluate and improve the quality of their training and to raise standards;
- (3) increase opportunities for training providers to share good practice and to promote high standards;
- (4) improve the collection, analysis and use of data and other performance indicators to enable the National Council and providers themselves to quality assure provision, to benchmark their performance accurately and to identify which areas of their work need to improve; and
- (5) maintain awareness of schemes developing elsewhere, for example the Employment Training Pilot, and consider their appropriateness for use in Wales.

Recommendations for providers:

- (1) promote and deliver key skills more effectively to improve attainment of key skills qualifications to enable trainees to complete their 'qualification framework' and to help them achieve their full potential;
- (2) improve the planning and managing of training to make sure that on-the-job and off-the-job training are well matched;
- (3) ensure that all trainees have a minimum entitlement to off-the-job training;
- (4) secure full employer and work-based staff involvement in the training and learning process;
- (5) increase the number of work-based assessors and opportunities for assessment in the workplace;
- (6) consider ways of supporting trainees to gain additional experience before they begin a level 3 qualification;

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- (7) make sure that trainees understand the requirements of NVQs, their qualification framework and training programme;
- (8) set trainees challenging targets for NVQs and key skills and regularly monitor their progress towards them; and
- (9) increase learning opportunities to enable trainees to continue their training bilingually or in Welsh.

4. Evidence

- 8 Data for all occupational areas from Estyn's inspection reports for the period 2001-2003 (summarised in appendices 1 and 2) show that for the FMA programme, only about 20% of those learners who left their programmes in the twelve months before the inspection successfully completed the full framework requirements. A further 24% of the leavers attained their NVQ, but did not complete the full framework. For the MA programmes, only 27% of leavers successfully completed their full framework requirements and an additional 33% attained the NVQ but did not complete the full framework requirements.
- 9 The rates at which learners successfully completed their framework requirements varied widely across the different occupational areas (appendix 2). The highest rate for completion of full frameworks for FMA programmes was in leisure, sport and travel (55% of leavers completed their full framework). The occupational area of agriculture showed the highest rate for the completion of MA (47% of leavers completed their full frameworks).
- 10 Only three occupational areas (agriculture; business administration; and leisure, sport and travel) showed over a third of leavers on FMA completing their full framework. For MA, only two occupational areas (agriculture and engineering) had over a third of leavers completing their full framework.
- 11 The rates at which leavers attained their NVQs are generally much better. For FMA programmes, in only five occupational areas (construction; retail and customer services; hospitality; hair and beauty; and health, care and public services) is NVQ attainment below 50%. For MA programmes it is below 50% in only two occupational areas (retail and customer services and hair and beauty).

5. Barriers to framework completion:

Planning and managing training

- 12 Only about a third of the 57 providers we inspected planned and managed training well. Most learners follow a good induction programme that includes an assessment of their basic and key skills. However, where initial assessment is poor, it is difficult to accurately identify the learners' individual learning needs. In addition, many providers do not make enough use of initial assessment information to inform trainees' individual learning plans. Too many providers do not match their off-the-job training to the requirements of the jobs that the learners undertake. In the worst cases, learners repeat tasks they have already mastered. Many trainees, and some employers have a poor understanding of the requirements of NVQs, the 'qualification framework' and the training programme. Learners are often unsure of what they need to do to achieve their qualifications. More than a third of providers do not set challenging targets for learners for their framework completion or monitor their progress towards achieving them.
- 13 Where providers, employers and work-based assessors work closely to deliver good quality training and assessment, their learners make good progress. However, in many providers, valuable naturally occurring opportunities to assess learners' abilities in the workplace are missed. This is often the case when there is no assessor based in the workplace. This can lead to unnecessary delays in assessment that restrict the pace at which learners complete their qualifications. Many of these learners then become disengaged from the training process and do not complete their NVQ or key skills portfolios.

Improving standards and the quality of training

- 14 Thirty one per cent of providers were graded as being good or better for the management of quality (graded at grade 1 or grade 2). These training providers have good systems for self-evaluation that lead to effective action plans designed to improve the standards of training. However, the management of the quality of training is a major weakness (graded at grade 4 or below) in about 40% of providers. This prevents learners from reaching their full potential. These providers give a low priority to monitoring and evaluating their performance and the quality of training. The provider's collection and analysis of data and other performance indicators to evaluate performance and identify trends over time is often poor. Not enough use is made of information about what learners achieve or the numbers who complete their training. This information would help providers find out which part of their training provision they need to improve. Planning for improvement also takes too little account of the views of learners, staff, employers, and other interested stakeholders.

- 15 In some cases, training advisors and work-based supervisors do not know how to help learners to improve their key skills or help them to understand how improving their key skills can help with their learning. Learners often develop good key skills in their day-to-day work, but many valuable naturally occurring opportunities for their development and assessment are missed.
- 16 There is currently not enough regular on-going support and training available at a national level to help providers improve the quality of their training and to raise standards. For example, work-based training providers have not benefited from training available to colleges of further education and schools to support the development of key skills.

Working with employers and off-the-job training

- 17 In spite of the importance that they attach to having employees with good key skills, as indicated by Future Skills Wales research, too few employers understand and value key skills qualifications. Many employers are unable or unwilling to provide opportunities in the workplace for learners to achieve the full range of NVQ units and key skills needed to complete the occupational framework.
- 18 Some employers we met during inspections, confirmed that work-based training provides their employees with suitable training, which enables the employees to achieve relevant qualifications. However, there are other employers who regard their trainees as a source of cheap labour who need only short-term training to meet their immediate job roles. In some occupational areas, such as production, manufacturing or service industries, training often stops or takes a poor third or fourth place to other workplace activities. Some employers only encourage the trainee in those areas that are directly relevant to their own business. Others do not have the capacity to provide opportunities for trainees to gain wider experiences, because there is little scope in the business activity in which they are engaged.
- 19 There is a significant difference between providers in the amount of time they allocate to off-the-job training. This can vary from one or two days each week to none at all. Where the expectation is not clear, it sometimes causes friction between employers, learners and training providers. To overcome this, one large training provider has included an expectation of one day off-the-job training in their contract with employers. The provider does not contract with those who cannot agree to this entitlement. A minimum entitlement to off-the-job training for all work-based learners would help to ensure that they have equal access to an important element of their training. This entitlement should extend across training for the technical certificates, key skills and the other aspects of the underpinning skills and knowledge that learners need to complete their NVQs.
- 20 There are many good examples of workplace training in operation. In Mid-Wales, one training provider uses a 'shared apprenticeship' scheme. This involves engineering apprentices working in several companies over a period of time, which enables them to experience working within different environments and with different resources and staff. This arrangement effectively enables the learners to take

advantage of opportunities that are not always available in their own workplaces and to achieve their qualifications. Learners' framework completion is improved as a result.

- 21 A work-based training provider attached to a large college, established an innovative 'work exchange' scheme, which enables employers to release trainees for an additional week of off-the-job training on four occasions during the year. Training staff carefully liaise with employers to make sure that trainees are 'exchanged' for full-time hairdressing students with similar skills who can take over the trainees' role in the salon. Both groups of learners benefit from this experience. In particular, trainees use the time to work on key skills, develop underpinning knowledge and put together their portfolios of evidence.
- 22 Many employers are not proactive enough in promoting training in the workplace. In a recent inspection, an agreement had been reached with the industry where a small percentage of the fees paid for all contracts awarded to companies supplying programmes for HTV, BBC, and S4C was retained by the commissioning television company and paid instead to the training provider. The training provider then used this money to provide supplementary training for learners on FMAs and MAs in the media industry. Employers' benefit from the high standard of training provided for their staff and from the steady supply of learners in their teams. Learners benefit from the opportunity to have training in state-of-the-art technology and experience involvement in live projects.
- 23 There is good progression from lower levels of training, such as foundation for work and Skillbuild programmes to programmes leading to qualifications at levels 1 and 2. Progression is often good from level 2 to level 3 qualifications. However, problems sometimes arise when a learner moves straight from level 2 to level 3 without the experience or job role to enable him or her to make good progress or achieve all the requirements of the occupational framework. Where this occurs, learners often become de-motivated and leave their training early.
- 24 A better way forward might be to fund an employer to support a learner for a further fixed period to enable the learner to gain additional experience before progressing to level 3. This strategy would require rigorous on-going monitoring by the training provider to make sure that the learner receives adequate support and is making good progress towards the next level. This additional support will help the learner overcome the problems of transition from working at level 2 to working at level 3 and provide an opportunity for the learner to develop the skills necessary to make some clear initial progress at the higher level. This should help keep the learners motivated and encourage them to stay on the training to complete their framework.

Appendix 1

Tables to show outcomes for FMA and MA by occupational area:

The tables below show the aggregated data tables for foundation modern apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships, taken from our reports of inspections undertaken between January 2001 and December 2003.

Overall outcomes across all occupational areas

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	2491	2486	609	497	18	183	324	131	729
MA	1952	1382	452	380	18	88	188	63	197

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Agriculture

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	49	63	22	31	0	1	7	7	2
MA	35	30	11	14	0	0	5	0	0

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Construction

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	92	79	30	8	0	7	12	4	17
MA	79	88	33	29	0	2	7	0	23

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Engineering

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	354	296	79	77	3	11	47	9	79
MA	744	583	217	243	0	18	53	20	28

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

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Manufacturing

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	610	575	193	97	0	42	26	27	188
MA	7	8	2	2	0	12	0	1	1

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Business administration

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	291	346	63	118	5	21	37	15	84
MA	333	203	46	61	8	7	25	7	32

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Retail and customer services

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	317	445	93	35	0	7	87	6	215
MA	132	146	48	1	1	3	34	2	54

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Leisure, sport and travel

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	48	69	15	38	0	20	4	14	4
MA	165	74	39	3	0	13	8	8	5

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Hospitality

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	141	134	29	25	2	17	32	7	27
MA	39	48	19	7	0	6	15	2	14

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

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Hair and beauty

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	190	166	26	49	3	18	26	15	28
MA	63	53	9	11	1	19	11	4	2

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Health care and public services

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	396	310	56	50	5	29	46	27	85
MA	424	197	51	52	8	8	28	19	38

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

M – Media & design

Leavers/completers 2001/2003									
	New starters during this period	Total Leavers this period	Leavers gaining full NVQ award	Leavers gaining full framework ¹	Leavers gaining part NVQ of 6 or more units	Leavers gaining part NVQ of between 1 and 5 units	Leavers without gaining a qualification ²		
							Related Employment	Other employment	Unemployed
FMA	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
MA	7	7	5	0	0	0	2	0	0

Key: MA – Modern Apprentices, FMA – Foundation Modern Apprentices

Notes to tables:

1 – Before 2003, the achievement of an NVQ and three key skills was used as the measure of framework completion.

2 – The number of leavers gaining either a full qualification or part qualification plus those leaving without a qualification should add up to the same number as the total number of leavers. However, difficulties in gathering data from providers means this is not always the case.

Appendix 2

Table showing percentage completion rates for foundation and modern apprenticeships by occupational area for 2001-2003:

Occupational area	% Of leavers completing their full framework	% Of leavers attaining NVQ only or complete their full framework
Overall	FMA	44
	MA	60
Agriculture	FMA	84
	MA	83
Construction	FMA	48
	MA	70
Engineering	FMA	53
	MA	79
Manufacturing	FMA	50
	MA	50
Business administration	FMA	52
	MA	53
Retail & customer services	FMA	29
	MA	34
Leisure, sport & travel	FMA	77
	MA	57
Hospitality	FMA	40
	MA	54
Hair and beauty	FMA	45
	MA	38
Health, care & public services	FMA	34
	MA	52
Media & design	FMA	100
	MA	71

Appendix 3

Table showing the distribution of grades awarded by occupational area, 2001-2003:

Occupational Area	Number of providers awarded grade				
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Agriculture	1	2			
Construction	1	1	6	4	
Engineering	5	9	10	3	
Manufacturing		4	5	2	
Business administration	2	4	17	4	
Retail, customer services		2	4	2	
Leisure, sport & travel	1	1	1	2	
Hospitality		1	4	4	
Hair & Beauty	1	3	3	1	
Health care & public services		2	8	5	2
Media & design	1				
Total	12	29	58	27	2