

Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		11-14 December 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of engineering and administration apprentices achieve their framework qualifications.
- Success rates into jobs for learners on employability programmes are very good and well above national rates.
- Apprentices achieve high standards of work and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving their performance which they transfer adding value to the workplace.
- The particularly good selection and recruitment of learners meets both learners' aspirations and the needs of employers.
- Good, well-planned teaching and learning develops learners' vocational skills and improves their promotion and development opportunities at work.
- The strong and successful strategic leaders are very effective in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the unemployed in the regions.
- Managers make excellent use of data and other performance management information to ensure learners make good progress and develop a wide range of vocational and personal skills.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too few teaching, learning and assessment sessions are outstanding.
- Some target setting and recording of long-term aims and aspirations lack precision.
- Not all administration learners have a full understanding of the potential health and safety risks associated with working in an office or retail environment.
- Self-assessment activities do not fully support and promote quality improvement across the organisation.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of the planning of learning and assessments so that all learners are fully aware of the progress they make and targets they are aiming for.
- Increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching, learning and assessment activities by making better use of the observation of the teaching, learning and assessment process to ensure that good and effective practices are shared across the organisation.
- Ensure that training assessors are able to support learners in achieving high levels of English and mathematics to enable all learners to reach the professional standards they require.
- Further develop self-assessment arrangements to improve the quality of the provision by fully involving all stakeholders, making better use of data to support judgements and by clearly identifying timescales for improvement activities.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Outcomes for apprentices at NITAL are good. At the last inspection outcomes for learners were also good. Overall success rates dropped to below national rates in 2010-11 when several apprentices were made redundant. Of the 18 apprentices made redundant in 2010-11 nine are now back in employment. Data for 2011/12 and for the current year show that overall success rates and successes achieved within the agreed time scale improved significantly and are now high.
- All apprentices make at least the progress expected, with many making good progress. In a few cases, the lack of clearly identified individual pre-apprenticeship competencies and skills makes judging the rate of progress difficult. The vast majority of apprentices gain promotion, take on additional or higher level responsibilities at work and where possible they progress to higher qualifications. Employers are highly satisfied with the skills and knowledge achieved by apprentices with many employers able to identify the practical and in some cases financial benefits apprentices bring to the workplace.
- Learners benefit from the high standards expected of them by training assessors and employers. They successfully develop their subject knowledge and understanding. Vocational skills are reinforced and extended through highly relevant practical experiences, excellent guidance from assessors and good support from most employers.
- Apprentices across all programmes achieve to the same high standard, with no significant difference between the performance of different groups of learners.
- Apprentices develop and improve English and mathematics skills by participating in workplace projects, complex engineering work and by producing reports. However, in some instances the professional standards required for effective and authoritative communication are not reinforced and simple spelling and grammar mistakes are not always corrected.
- For a minority of learners, opportunities for enhancements to their training programmes such as the acquisition of additional skills or qualifications, extending their range of experiences or responsibilities in the workplace to broaden their knowledge and understanding of their chosen industry are insufficient. In a few cases, learners are involved in additional activities or achieve extra qualifications but these are not routinely recorded in portfolios or on learning plans.
- Learners on the engineering employability programme make very good progress in the short time available. Attendance and punctuality are excellent, learners develop good personal skills

particularly in the areas of working with others and communication. They achieve high standards of work and are proud of the wheelchairs they produce and donate to local charities. Three quarters of the learners attending the good security industry training in Birmingham and The Black Country progress into sustainable employment. The more recent provision in Northampton is also good but too many referrals are inappropriate resulting in some participants failing to understand the nature of the programme before they attend.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good and clearly contribute to the continued improvements in success rates for all learners together with the development of high levels of vocational competence. Learners steadily improve their confidence and self-esteem, gaining good employability skills, they are knowledgeable, polite, and represent their employers and NITAL very well.
- Teaching and training supports learners very well. Learners enjoy their training and actively participate in all components of their programme. Knowledgeable and experienced staff motivate and inspire learners to develop levels of vocational skill that result in many being able to assume levels of responsibility and independence that challenge them and further develop their skills and confidence.
- Resources to support learning are good; learners are employed in busy high quality commercial and industrial workplaces that provide frequent opportunities for them to develop and test their vocational competence. Engineering learners' benefit from very well resourced specialist workshops and production units and by working alongside highly experienced engineers. In business administration, many are engaged in customer facing roles using the latest high quality computer software.
- Assessment for most learners is highly effective with detailed and constructive feedback particularly for those observed in the workplace. Most training assessors are adept at ensuring learners evidence their knowledge and understanding. However, in some portfolios written evidence, when marked and reviewed by training assessors, lacks appropriate advice on how the written work could be further improved.
- Reviews of learner's progress are frequent, well-structured and track progress efficiently. Assessors and employers communicate very effectively, enabling reviews to result in targets that encourage learner progression and make best use of the opportunities for appropriate assessment. Generally, targets focus on completing activities that comply with unit specifications, rather than challenging learners to improve their skills and attain their full potential. Additionally, in a minority cases, targets lack sufficient detail to keep some learners on track between visits.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive, includes English and mathematics, vocational aptitude and specialist occupational tests; it is used very effectively to match training to learner and employer needs. NITAL delivers enjoyable and effective programmes for the few learners who are identified as requiring key skills in English, mathematics or ICT. Additionally learners also benefit from the acquisition of one or more of the wider key skills. Learners who already possess the minimum level of key skill qualification are not systematically encouraged to study these at a higher level.
- Engineering learners attending the further education colleges are enthusiastic about their experience at college. One learner summarised his experience by saying 'now we get told something and then get to do it, rather than just having to believe it'.
- Initial advice, guidance and induction are particularly helpful in directing learners to programmes best suited for their development and providing them with a coherent progression route. Employers benefit from NITAL assessors expertise in assisting them to choose appropriate

competence based qualifications best matched to their business needs, which also provide appropriate assessment opportunities to meet learner aspirations.

- NITAL support learners and employers very well. Learners have good access to their training advisors and receive regular and frequent visits from them, which are readily adapted to changing work patterns. Additionally, employers are also particularly supportive, frequently giving work time for study and providing additional specialist training. Pastoral support for learners is sympathetic and highly effective at times of personal difficulty.
- Equality and diversity are effectively promoted throughout the apprenticeship and particularly well during reviews of learner progress. Discussions of topics are effectively set in the workplace context and learners confidently describe the process for dealing with issues and have knowledge of the legal consequences that may result.

Engineering:

Apprenticeships

Good

- Engineering teaching and workplace training are good and reflect the return to the high proportion of learners who now successfully complete their apprenticeships. Short-term target setting drives learner progress well. Many apprentices benefit from detailed workplace training plans, however these are not in place for all employers. Learners gain a range of additional qualifications that significantly enhance their employability such as abrasive wheels certification, business improvement techniques and safe working with chemicals. Occasionally learner records fail to capture this additional training.
- Apprentices develop high standards of vocational and employability skills. In the workplace, learners become valuable employees: for example they are able to assemble and test hydraulic equipment, diagnose and repair complex engineering assemblies and programme computer numerical controlled (CNC) machines. Learners are confident, knowledgeable and polite and represent their employers and NITAL well.
- Learners respond well to the high expectations placed on them by their trainer assessors. In the workplace, they often assume levels of responsibility above that normally expected. They work diligently with high levels of competence, and steadily acquire the demanding skills of their trades.
- Trainer assessors are vocationally experienced and use this knowledge well to enhance the learners' experiences. Additionally, learners benefit from working alongside highly experienced engineers in prestigious workplaces, often very well resourced for specialist processes. In the subcontracted colleges, good learning resources support training well.
- Apprentices have a very well developed understanding of safe working practices, particularly in specialist production areas. They are confident in the use of appropriate personal protective equipment and the need to safeguard themselves and colleagues. Appropriate training successfully raises their awareness of hazardous situations; such as dealing with the presence of asbestos or working in confined spaces or at height.
- Assessment is frequent, regular and thorough for the majority of the apprentices. During observations, assessors are unobtrusive but make good use of detailed questioning to confirm and extend learners knowledge and understanding. Written feedback following assessment is detailed and constructive and effectively supports the verbal feedback.
- Too many portfolios of work-based evidence fail to represent adequately the good development of learners' practical competence. There is an over reliance on written evidence and a limited

variety of other forms of evidence. Some assessors and subcontractor staff pay insufficient attention to the correction spelling and grammar in written work.

- Reviews are well structured and are effective at monitoring learner progress against individual framework components. However, they do not clearly plan overall progress against that expected for the individual learner. Mostly clear and helpful targets focus learners on tasks that encourage an appropriate pace towards completion of the framework; however, some assessors set targets that lack precision.
- Support for learners and their employers is good. Initial advice and guidance successfully enables learners to progress into employment that matches their aspirations. Initial assessment effectively identifies learners' skills and aptitude for an engineering career. There are coherent progression routes from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships, with further progression for some to higher education.
- Training effectively promotes equality and diversity and reinforces learner understanding particularly well during the reviews of learner progress. Discussions about current news items successfully encourage learners to contextualise the issues relative to their work and their social lives. They are able to recognise inappropriate behaviour and can confidently describe the appropriate procedures for dealing with incidents.

Administration:

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and support the good achievement of skills and qualifications gained by learners. Learning in the workplace motivates the apprentices, who often take on additional responsibilities or gain promotion as they progress. All apprentices attend a NITAL induction programme that includes initial assessments, introduction to health and safety, equality and diversity and health and safety. Learners appreciate the opportunity to network with their peers and use social media to maintain contact. An induction CD is provided, however, this only includes a copy of the induction presentation.
- Apprentices benefit from good workplace training and as a result they quickly extend the range of tasks they are able to carry out confidently. Apprentices gain a good understanding of the skills that underpin their roles, for example telephone skills, dealing with customers, and development of spreadsheets to maintain stock control. Trainer assessors use their occupational knowledge very well to provide expert support to develop underpinning knowledge and advanced apprentices are effectively challenged to carry out research to support independent learning.
- Apprentices' written work in portfolios is good. Well-written personal statements show a high standard of English and spelling. Mathematics projects link clearly to the workplace. Assessment of written work is good. Apprentices receive very clear and constructive guidance on how they can improve further. Employers provide training on bespoke and specialist software packages, however, the process for recording and reflection on the impact of this training is inconsistent.
- Trainer assessors make well-prepared visits to the workplaces, at least monthly and carefully plan assessments to ensure apprentices make good progress. Effective use of feedback extends and challenges learning, with a good use of evidence to link workbook assignments with learners' job roles. Although reviews and assessments are recorded and actions for the next session noted some targets lack sufficiently specific detail to keep the learner on course between visits.
- Assessment is thorough, making good use of a range of evidence sources. Apprentices integrate well into the workplace as team members and are encouraged to challenge working practices

and provide ideas for new ways of working. For example, one employer reported an apprentice queried the existing methodology for filing having learnt about filing techniques on their training programme.

- Trainer assessors review apprentices' progress regularly and engage well in discussing their achievements. Trainer assessors give clear feedback so that apprentices know how well they have done and what actions they need to take to improve. Apprentices find the action plans that trainer assessors complete at each visit useful. Employers meet regularly with trainer assessors during the workplace visits and review apprentices' progress well. However, reviews focus on framework achievement and insufficiently on workplace training or the learning that has taken place.
- The process of matching employers, vacancies and learners is outstanding. Recruitment interviews are thorough and adequately identify apprentices' pre-existing skills and potential. The good recruitment practices ensure apprentices have sustainable job roles, with a clear function within the organisation. They understand the impact of their roles on business function, particularly in small businesses where the breadth of the apprentices' role exceeds the scope of the apprenticeship.
- Programmes are well planned using the results of initial assessment and the outcomes from interview. Individual learning plans are adequate in identifying components for the framework qualifications and dates for achievement are appropriately recorded. However, the recording of learners' short and long-term aspirations is limited. Trainer assessors agree the choice of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) with the apprentice and employer, ensuring that the units effectively reflect their occupational and vocational development and the requirements of their job roles.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of equality and diversity and can explain the relevance to their individual workplaces. Learners develop an understanding of diversity and the impact of disability on individuals, for example accessibility for wheel chair users and parents of young children in a retail environment. Trainer assessors discuss and debate current topics enabling apprentices to reflect on both the potential personal and workplace implications.
- Learners feel safe. Risk assessments are routinely completed. However, there are insufficient links with the learning plan to develop learner understanding of risks in an office or retail environment, minimise risk or to develop wider understanding of the application of equipment and legislation in individual working environments.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Trustees and leaders have designed an ambitious vision for the future, drawing on extensive consultation with employers and local organisations. NITAL's mission, to provide high quality training that leads to sustainable employment, is strengthened by staff through the shared principles of close working with employers and providing training to meet their needs. A sound strategic plan clearly articulates expectations for staff, aims and targets to improve training that meets national and regional priorities. Progress since the last inspection has focused on improving learning and data management. NITAL has a strong capacity for robust sustained improvement.
- Staff purposefully strive to raise the expectations and aspirations of all learners'. Well-structured programmes make good use of time to ensure learners and apprentices are on the most appropriate programme to meet their needs. Staff exhibit a passionate desire to ensure apprentices succeed in training that will advance them through their chosen career. NITAL has a number of good examples of individuals who have progressed from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships and on to undergraduate programmes.

- Trustees know and understand the provision well. They are closely involved in shaping the development of NITAL in future planning and monitoring current performance providing robust challenge and support. The trustees support the development of employability programmes recognising the importance of the charities philanthropic role to use their extensive links with employers to provide very good job preparation experience for unemployed learners.
- Performance indicators for assessors focus clearly on the success of learners. The monthly meetings effectively bring together all aspects of the assessor's role. Staff training is effective, concentrating on improving assessors' skills in conducting all aspects of their work. College subcontractors, who provide knowledge qualifications for engineering, are managed well. Employability programme subcontractors provide good learner performance data and frequently communicate with NITAL staff.
- The well-structured quality development plan focusses on activities to improve learning. The implementation of actions is monitored closely through quarterly quality meetings, with staff held to account, however, not all improvements are sufficiently time limited. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but some identified strengths are norms. The report is overly descriptive and lacks the critical judgements supported by detailed data analysis. Otherwise, data are used well to monitor and manage learner performance.
- Good curriculum management is supported by a wide range of effective strategies that improve learning and assessment. The thorough and challenging programme of observations of teaching and learning are very well developed; they have a good focus on learning and effective identification of improvements to assessment practice. However, not all good practice is effectively shared.
- Working relationships with employers are outstanding. They are purposeful and productive, improving the learning experience for apprentices. NITAL staff make very good use of feedback from apprentices and employers to plan and review its work. Staff constantly strive to promote and advertise training and employment opportunities. They conduct a monthly analysis of responses to the NITAL and NAS websites, social networking sites and face-to-face activities to determine how best to make contact with potential learners.
- The apprenticeship and employability programmes very closely meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local community. Apprenticeship programmes provide very good opportunities for progression into and through employment. The employability programmes develop employment specific skills that have been particularly successful in establishing sustained employment opportunities for many learners.
- NITALs approach to equality and diversity is very good. Equality and diversity training for staff and trustees has been good, learners' awareness is raised effectively through intelligent use of posters and display information and the learner handbook. Equality and diversity is energetically promoted through induction and further reinforced in learner performance reviews. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. There are no discernible gaps in achievement between groups of learners. Good use is made of a model equality and diversity policy to support employers who do not have an independent policy. Incidents and complaints are managed decisively and appropriately recorded with identifiable resolutions.
- NITAL meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and staff. Arrangements are supported by frequently reviewed policies, appropriate training and effective cooperation with a range of agencies. Employment checks are appropriately made and the management of health and safety is effective.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	2				2			
	Outcomes for learners	2				2			
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2			
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	2
Administration	2

Number of learners aged 14-16	6
Number of community learners	N/A
Number of employability learners	186
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Tresham College ■ Northampton College ■ Peterborough Regional College ■ Milton Keynes College ■ Mercury Training Services Ltd ■ Mymar.

Additional socio-economic information

The provider is situated in Corby but recruits learners and works with employers from a much larger area, mostly within the East of England and the West Midlands. The unemployment rate in the East of England is 8.3% and slightly higher in the West Midlands at 8.8%, both higher than the national average. The main employment in the East of England and West Midlands is retail, wholesale and the service sector but a significant number of people work in manufacturing.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Nigel Evans HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Operations Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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