



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in the Electrical Training Trust

Report of an Inspection in
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Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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1. Context

The Electrical Training Trust is a private company, limited by guarantee and is registered for charitable status. It is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide an ApprenticeshipsNI programme at level 3 across Northern Ireland in the professional and technical area of electrotechnical services. The organisation is located in modern, well-equipped premises on the Galgorm Industrial Estate, just outside Ballymena.

The organisation is led and managed by the Chief Executive, supported by an executive officer, senior training officer, three training officers, a practical assessment centre manager and a team of eight administration support staff. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprising representatives from the electrical industry.

Currently, the Electrical Training Trust is the only centre in Northern Ireland approved by the National Electrotechnical Training Organisation to administer the three-day practical competency and knowledge assessment for electrical measurement and testing, Achievement Measurement 2 (AM2).

At the time of the inspection, 344 apprentices were registered on ApprenticeshipsNI programmes at level 3. The majority of them are under 19 years old and have progressed directly from secondary education, further education or other training programmes. The remainder of the apprentices are mostly under 25 years old.

According to the records supplied by the organisation, most (94%) of the apprentices hold four or more GCSE passes at grades C or above, or equivalent, on entry to the apprenticeship programme. All of them hold GCSE pass grades in English and mathematics, or equivalent. This is in line with the minimum entry requirements, set by the organisation, of 16 points at GCSE level to include GCSE pass grades in English and mathematics, or equivalent.

At the time of the inspection, three of the regional further education colleges, Belfast Metropolitan College, the Northern Regional College and the Southern Regional College were providing sub-contracted directed training for the professional and technical qualification and for the essential skill of information and communication technology (ICT).

The apprentices follow a four-year programme, comprising: directed training at a further education college and work-based training during years 1 and 2; two further years of work-based training and assessment; and the final three-day practical competency and knowledge AM2 assessment.

2. Overall finding

Overall, the quality of training provided by the Electrical Training Trust is very good.

Overall Performance Level	Very good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very good
Leadership and Management	Very good

Professional and technical areas performance levels	
Electrotechnical services	Very good
Essential skills	Good

What does the Electrical Training Trust need to do to improve?

- To strengthen further the partnership arrangements with the sub-contracted colleges, in order to collectively further embed the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

3. Key findings of the inspection

3.1 Achievements and standards are very good.

Almost all of the apprentices achieve very good or better standards of work. They demonstrate high levels of confidence and competence, particularly in the workplace, where they can: implement safe systems of work; manage their own time to achieve targets; follow complicated procedures and instructions; and communicate effectively with customers, supervisors and work colleagues. Across a varied range of work settings, the apprentices, commensurate with the stage of their training, are able to install safely a wide range of complex electrical systems to industry standards, in compliance with relevant specifications, codes of practice and the current wiring regulations. It is noteworthy that the apprentices strive to achieve high occupational standards, work in a professional manner and use effective interpersonal and organisational skills to plan and complete work as part of a team or individually.

The standards of the apprentices' ICT, literacy and numeracy skills are good or very good. Through the varied aspects of the training programme, the apprentices develop and apply very good ICT skills. They can, for example, use internet search engines and suitable software applications to source, compile and present technical information. The apprentices also develop very good numeracy skills. They use confidently algebra, trigonometry, transposition of formula, and scientific principles to, for example, solve electrical problems and to design electrical wiring systems. The apprentices' literacy skills are mostly good; they can search and interpret information from a wide range of sources, including websites, text books, electrical circuit and wiring diagrams, architectural drawings and British Standards documents, which most of them use effectively to complete extended written answers to assessment questions. A minority of them, however, lack confidence in writing independently and with consistent accuracy in their grammar and spelling. Over the last three years, all of the apprentices achieved their essential skill ICT qualification at level 2.

Over the last three years, based on the information supplied by the Electrical Training Trust, most (78%) of the apprentices are retained, and all of those who remain achieve. In addition, all of the apprentices who completed their training achieved the AM2 assessment.

3.2 The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

The induction programme is well-planned and comprehensive. It incorporates workshops and presentations from staff and other relevant external professionals, including for example, health and safety, well-being, careers support and guidance and learning and assessment techniques. An initial assessment is also carried out to identify any apprentices who may require additional learning support for literacy and numeracy.

The training programme for the apprentices is cohesive and appropriately challenging. It ensures that they develop a broad knowledge base and a secure understanding of relevant electrical principles, current regulations and products, together with the development of relevant occupational and transferable skills. Through the provision of a comprehensive practical skills development programme complemented by well-managed workplace training, the apprentices have excellent opportunities to develop and apply a wide range of skills including the installation, testing and fault finding of electrical systems.

The quality of the teaching, training and learning is good or better, with just under one-half of it very good or outstanding. The quality of the practical skills training is mostly very good; the tutors have developed a broad range of well-planned practical tasks to develop the apprentices' occupational skills. These tasks appropriately include stripping cables, installing cables, installing cable containment systems and making termination connections to distribution boards. In these practical training sessions, the apprentices are well-settled and make very good progress in their learning and work. The theory sessions are mostly good. While the apprentices are responsive, work collaboratively and make good progress in their learning, the teaching, on occasions, is didactic and overly assessment-led. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support and enhance the apprentices' training and learning experiences varies, and is largely under-exploited. A more coherent use of online learning platforms and technology is needed to promote and support the apprentices' independent learning and development.

The assessment of the apprentices' technical knowledge is well-planned; the apprentices are making good progress in completing their assignments, and are provided with clear feedback on how to improve their work.

The quality of the workplace training, development and assessment of the apprentices' occupational competences is outstanding. The apprentices have excellent opportunities to further develop and apply a broad range of occupational skills and technical knowledge. Across the four-year programme, the apprentices are provided with an extensive range of experiences to develop their skills in installing and commissioning a variety of wiring systems, with increasing levels of challenge to extend their confidence and capabilities. The workplace assessment of the apprentices is very good; it is well-planned and rigorous, with meticulous recording and tracking. The training officers use effective questioning and probing techniques to assess the extent and depth of the apprentices' knowledge and understanding. A well-established electronic assessment portfolio is used effectively and efficiently to record, track and monitor their achievements and progress. Assessment feedback is timely and supportive, and the apprentices, if required, are provided with well-planned additional support to address any lack of progress. The quality of the apprentices' final practical competency and knowledge assessment for electrical measurement and testing assessment (AM2) is outstanding. Internal verification arrangements are robust.

The quality of the essential skills provision is good overall. Although all of the apprentices hold level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics on entry to the apprenticeship, appropriately additional support is provided to ensure all of the apprentices have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to complete their training programme successfully. The apprentices report that they value highly the additional, well-tailored sessions to address any identified weaknesses in their reading, writing or numeracy skills. While there is a good range of opportunities for the apprentices to develop and apply their ICT skills in their professional and technical work, the delivery of the discrete ICT provision is not always timely enough for those apprentices with specific ICT training needs.

The quality of the apprentices' personal training plans is very good. The planning and tracking of their development is rigorous and detailed. Progress reviews are well-planned and supportive; the assessors sensitively review the full range of each apprentice's workplace training experiences through skilful questioning, and provide clear guidance and targets for future training and assessment, to both the apprentice and their employer.

The quality of the pastoral care of the apprentices is good; they report that they are well-supported, provided with relevant advice and guidance, and additional support if required. While there is evidence of good signposting to additional health and well-being services, a significant minority of the apprentices report that they would appreciate further advice regarding personal and social matters. It is a concern that the arrangements for directed training for a small number of the apprentices include two excessively long training days and this should be reviewed.

The quality of the careers, education, information advice and guidance is good. The organisation's well-designed website offers relevant pre-entry guidance as part of the online recruitment and application process. It also covers a range of helpful information to assist the apprentices in their career planning and sourcing employment opportunities. The induction programme also provides them with access to a good range of careers information and signposting to other information sources. A well-considered schedule of guest speakers and seminars provides the apprentices with insightful perspectives on personal case studies, current opportunities and also the challenges within their chosen career field. The provision could be strengthened further by including better signposting to further progression routes both locally, nationally and internationally and more robust personal career planning.

3.3 The quality of leadership and management is very good.

The apprenticeship provision is led and managed very effectively by the Chief Executive, executive officer and senior training officer, supported by a team of highly committed and professional training assessors and support staff.

There is a clear strategic vision and a cohesive, well-structured management team to maintain and further improve the quality of the training provision and the standards of work achieved by the apprentices. Throughout the organisation, managers and staff are forward-thinking and share a commitment to excellence, with a particular focus on increasing the professionalism and competitiveness of the industry it serves. As a result, the Electrical Training Trust has established very good links with a wide range of electrical contractors across most of Northern Ireland, who have a high regard for the organisation and the training it provides.

Communication within the organisation and with its stakeholders and sub-contractors is effective. The staff in the sub-contracted colleges report that there is regular and frequent communication with staff from the Electrical Training Trust, with an appropriate, strong focus on the apprentices and their progress. The apprentices, including their employers and parents, are also provided with high quality information about the apprenticeship programme and are regularly well-informed about their progress. The quality of the communication is enhanced significantly with the investment in, and effective use of, appropriate electronic management technologies, including a customer relationship management tool (CRM), a robust management information system, and an electronic assessment portfolio.

There is an appropriate staffing complement; the assessors and tutors are all appropriately vocationally qualified, experienced and work hard to support the apprentices and maintain high standards of work. A minority of the vocational tutors, however, have not yet completed an appropriate teaching training qualification. There are good opportunities for the staff to undertake continuous professional development, which includes training on renewable energies, safeguarding vulnerable groups, portable appliance testing, and equality and diversity.

The Electrical Training Trust has achieved externally accredited standards for quality, including ISO 9001/ 14001 and Investors in People (IIP), which underpin the organisation's culture for, and commitment to, continuous improvement and excellence. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are good. Through well-established quality monitoring and stakeholder questionnaires, the organisation has identified accurately key areas for improvement. The overall self-evaluation report does not, however, include separate evaluations from the sub-contracted colleges. Although the organisation does undertake evaluative monitoring activities within the sub-contracted colleges, including surveys, focus groups, and meetings with staff, which are used to good effect to identify key areas for development, the findings and subsequent improvement planning are not collectively and formally adopted by the sub-contracted colleges and the Electrical Training Trust. This limited maturity in the partnerships with the sub-contracted colleges inhibits robust and efficient planning for improvement, including the sharing of good practice. Within the Electrical Training Trust, a comprehensive electronic project management tool is used effectively to track and monitor improvement actions identified for its various projects, which also includes tracking the progress of the annual quality improvement plan.

The quality of the accommodation and the learning resources is mostly very good. The organisation's accommodation, including the specialist training and assessment facilities are outstanding; they are modern, welcoming and maintained to a very high standard. There is a well-considered investment in appropriate ICT resources and modern training and assessment facilities, which greatly enhance the quality of the apprentices' learning experiences and the efficiency of the management of the programme. In the sub-contracted colleges, the quality of the training facilities is mostly very good; the workshops and classrooms are bright, spacious, and well-resourced with consumables, tools and modern equipment. There is a need to enhance further these training resources with a better and more extensive range of new technology and to embed a more cohesive approach to the sharing and use of ILT to enhance learning.

The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. It is appropriate that the Electrical Training Trust is currently planning a full review and audit by an external agency to ensure its policies and procedures are up-to-date and implemented fully.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the quality of the training provided by the Electrical Training Trust is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the apprentices; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

5. Inspection method and evidence base

The inspection focused on:

- the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the achievements and standards; and
- the quality of provision for training and learning.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of training supplier organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-iqrs-work-based-learning.htm>

A team of six inspectors observed a total of 179 apprentices in 25 training and assessment sessions, and 89 apprentices were interviewed in the workplace or in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the Chief Executive, the executive officer, the training officer, 17 tutors and assessors, and 15 employers. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and session plans, and apprentices' personal training plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

The inspection also focused on the arrangements for care, support and guidance and safeguarding of vulnerable groups. The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number with comments
Apprentices	344	31	9%	2

The returns show that nearly all of the apprentices are mostly very positive about their training programme. A significant minority reported that they do not receive sufficient advice about personal and social matters. There were only two written comments, including one regarding extra time during examinations for apprentices with learning support needs.

6. Information about the Electrical Training Trust

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of trainees and apprentices	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	344	100%
Total	344	100%

Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Electrotechnical services	344	100%
Total	344	100%

Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme

Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
Percentage of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	79%
Percentage of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	79%
Percentage of learners with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	100%
Percentage of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	94%
Percentage of learners with no qualifications	N/A

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments at week 4 of year one who completed their occupational training framework, measured over the full duration of their course.
Achievement	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed their occupational training framework and who fully achieved their framework qualification.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.

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