



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 2000

Thames Valley University

SUMMARY

Thames Valley University offers good work based training in hospitality. Both on- and off-the-job training are given in modern and well-equipped environments and key skills training is well integrated into the vocational programmes. All staff and trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities, which is a regular item on the agenda at staff meetings. The trainees have a well-structured initial assessment, and any additional learning needs identified during this are addressed. However, the information gathered during initial assessment is not used to develop trainees' individual training plans. A well co-ordinated and effective programme has been developed with one employer, but the good relationships with other employers have not been used to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. Thames Valley University has a clearly developed quality assurance system. However, the system has not been sufficiently adapted to accommodate the specific needs of work based training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hospitality	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good integration of key skills training
- ◆ rigorous internal verification
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ effective initiatives to widen participation in training
- ◆ effective response to issues raised by trainees
- ◆ strong internal and external communications

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no certification outside structure of academic year
- ◆ no formal monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no formal monitoring of training in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

1. Thames Valley University's (TVU) school of tourism, hospitality and leisure, is one of five schools within TVU's structure. Originally founded in 1948 as the Acton Hotel and Catering school, which at the time was part of Acton Tertiary College, when Acton Tertiary College later became Ealing College of Further Education, the school became a department within this. Then, in 1990, the college gained polytechnic status, and combined with what was then Slough College of Higher Education. The school merged with the catering school at Slough College of Higher Education, and when the polytechnic was given university status in 1994 and renamed as Thames Valley University, the current school was formed. Hospitality and catering training is now undertaken in purpose built off-the-job training facilities at Slough in Berkshire, and at Ealing in Greater London. Most TEC-funded off-the-job training is carried out at the Ealing campus. TVU also has franchised training facilities in Ireland and India.

2. TVU offers catering training across a wide range of vocational areas including food preparation and cooking, food service, housekeeping and reception. Training is undertaken from a basic craft level up to a higher-level degree in hospitality management. The school of tourism, hospitality and leisure is the first in the country to have introduced an advanced diploma in international culinary arts at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 4, which leads into a degree in international culinary arts, specifically for chefs. The school has recently been approved to offer this science degree to honours level. TVU is one of two centres in the United Kingdom approved to run courses for the awarding body specific to the culinary arts. Three members of staff from the school are members of this body's committee. In addition to programmes funded by the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and the further and higher education funding councils, TVU also offers privately funded courses for both national and international companies. In 1999, TVU opened an academy of Asian culinary arts. This academy provides specialist training programmes, some of which lead to NVQs, using leading chefs from the sector as tutors.

3. The hospitality section of TVU's school of tourism, hospitality and leisure employs 33 full- and part-time academic and training staff, and has two professors of hospitality, one of these is the only professor of patisserie in the country. The school also employs two part-time work-based learning advisors, who undertake trainees' progress reviews and visit the workplace. Administration for TEC-funded training is carried out by the hospitality section's associate dean. TVU has over 1,300 students on full- and part-time programmes in hospitality, catering, and leisure. Of these, 37 are funded by West London TEC, and are following either a foundation modern apprenticeship, or advanced modern apprenticeship in food preparation and cooking. All TEC-funded trainees are employed.

4. The hospitality industry in London and West London is dominated by small to medium sized enterprises, although there has been considerable expansion recently

by the larger chains, particularly in the restaurants and pub sectors. Labour turnover is high. The hospitality industry's national training organisation, estimated that the labour turnover in London in 1998 was 48 per cent for full-time, and 76 per cent for part-time staff. Some organisations have a staff turnover as high as 80 per cent. The hospitality sector makes a considerable contribution to London's economy, with approximately 34,000 people employed in the West London area, with many of these around Heathrow airport.

5. Unemployment rates vary across London and West London. The proportion of people unemployed in November 2000 in London was 3.7 per cent, 3.8 per cent in Ealing, 3.9 per cent in Hammersmith, and 1.5 per cent in Hounslow. This compares with a national average of 3.3 per cent. London and West London have a high number of people from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups was 20.7 per cent in London and 20.8 per cent in West London when measured in the 1991 Census, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

6. In July 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 45.6 per cent in Ealing, 48.9 per cent in Hammersmith, and 46.7 per cent in Hounslow. This compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Those leaving school with no GCSEs accounted for 4.4 per cent of school pupils in Ealing, 4.5 per cent in Hammersmith, and 5.4 per cent in Hounslow.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. TVU's, school of tourism, hospitality and leisure produced its first self-assessment report for TEC-funded training in 1998. The report was initially updated in 1999. Another report was produced in August 2000 in time for this inspection. The associate dean of the school prepared the report with support from the TEC. All staff made contributions, and employers and trainees' views were included in the preparation for the report. Following self-assessment, TVU produced an action plan which it began to implement immediately. Some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had already been rectified by the time of inspection.

8. Two inspectors spent a total of eight days at TVU in November 2000. They interviewed 14 trainees and visited nine companies, where 10 employers and work-based supervisors were interviewed. All those involved with the training and assessment process were interviewed, including the external verifier. Inspectors examined all relevant paperwork, including external and internal verification reports and information, trainees' files and portfolios, agendas and minutes of meetings, TEC's contract and audit documents, assessment records, and policies and procedures. They also observed two off-the-job training sessions giving one a grade 1 and the other a grade 2.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hospitality

Grade 2

9. TVU has 37 trainees on TEC-funded programmes in hospitality. There are 27 foundation modern apprentices, and 10 are advanced modern apprentices. All are working towards NVQs in food preparation and cooking. All trainees are employed in prestigious hotels and restaurants, either in central London or the outskirts of the city. Some workplaces have awards for excellence. Most are within short travelling distances from TVU's Ealing campus. Trainees attend off-the-job training sessions for one day each week with TVU. One trainee attends off-the-job training at TVU's Slough campus, which is nearer his place of employment. Trainees are visited regularly in the workplace by learning advisors from TVU. During these visits, advice is given to trainees on the evidence they need to collect for their NVQs, and on structuring their learning. Assessments are also planned. Trainees also receive visits in the workplace from their university tutors, who carry out practical assessments, and trainees' progress is recorded and displayed on a noticeboard at TVU for trainees to see. One-to-one training is sometimes undertaken during these visits. Internal verification is carried out on a regular basis. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified another strength relating to good retention and achievement rates. TVU identified one

weakness with which inspectors agreed, and inspectors also identified an additional weakness. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ highly qualified and occupationally experienced training staff
- ◆ well-motivated and confident trainees
- ◆ modern, well-equipped on- and off-the-job training facilities
- ◆ good integration of key skills and NVQ training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some missed assessment opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ no certification outside structure of academic year

GOOD PRACTICE

One major well-known hospitality company has linked up with TVU to develop a clearly planned programme for trainees. All trainees are given excellent working conditions, such as a maximum of 40 hours each week, to include off-the-job training. The company also provides a mentor for each trainee who is a senior member of the company staff. In addition to visits from TVU staff, the mentor visits the trainees every 12 weeks to give them support and to provide additional training if needed.

10. Most trainees are already working in the hospitality industry when they are referred to TVU by their employers. However, some come directly from local schools and are found suitable employment by TVU. They are encouraged to work for one or two weeks at their future place of employment to decide if the industry is the right career for them. This is often carried out during their last term at school. The employers and tutor from TVU further ensure that catering is the career for prospective trainees by interviewing them all. All trainees start the programme in August or September, depending upon when they start employment. Retention and achievement rates are high. In 1998-99, 78 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices who started training completed their apprenticeship. In 1999-2000, this proportion increased to 86 per cent. Out of the 31 foundation modern apprentices who started the programme this year, 27 are still in training. In 1997-98, all 25 advanced modern apprentices who started training completed the programme, in 1998-99, 98 per cent completed, and in 1999-2000, 75 per cent completed. All advanced modern apprentices who started training this year are still on the programme.

11. Tutors and training staff at TVU are highly qualified, and have good experience of the industry. One member of staff with direct responsibility for work-based training has written several widely used texts for the industry, one of which is published and used in 25 countries. Staff are all qualified assessors, and two are also qualified as internal verifiers. Chef lecturers have good experience working in prestigious establishments, and they keep themselves up to date with the industry. One is currently completing a higher-level degree. Both learning advisors are experienced trainers, and one has managed her own training company.

12. TVU has established a good reputation for hospitality training among

employers and trade organisations. Well-known chefs often hold demonstrations at the school. These chefs act as role models for trainees and help to motivate them to achieve. Trainees are confident in their abilities, and are encouraged by their employers and TVU's staff. Three trainees are employed in a hotel where the head chef has established an excellent library of books and other learning materials for all his staff to use. TVU has display cases of decorated pastillage chocolate goods, and other exhibition work, along with displays of awards it has achieved. This helps interest trainees and to illustrate to them the full breadth of the industry. Trainees are encouraged to progress onto an advanced diploma in international culinary arts, and four former advanced modern apprentices recently gained this award. Trainees also have the opportunity to use TVU's well-resourced library facilities. These are available every day, and are open for 12 hours most days. Most trainees use this facility, either in their own time or as part of their off-the-job theory sessions. Most trainees' portfolios are neatly presented, and use a wide range of evidence. Some use photographic evidence where applicable.

13. Off-the-job training is given on one day each week, and the programme is designed to operate outside of the normal academic year. The programme has a four-week break in the summer, and this accommodates the busiest trading period for most employers. The day is well structured, with practical work being undertaken in the morning and theory in the afternoon. Trainees' attendance is good for these sessions, and employers are always informed if a trainee fails to attend. All trainees are given an additional day off work each week to attend the programme. However, some trainees repeat practical tasks at the school that they have already learned in the workplace. Off-the-job training does not always take account of trainees' work experience.

14. All TVU's trainees receive a high standard of training in modern and well-equipped establishments. Kitchens are well designed. Some establishments are equipped with cook-chill and cook-freeze systems. Workplace supervisors are highly skilled and many have gained industry awards and NVQs. Good resources are available for training. All trainees have access to books, trade magazines, CD-ROMs, and other learning support materials. Facilities are up to date at TVU, and trainees have a wide range of catering equipment to work on.

15. Key skills training is well planned and clearly integrated into the NVQ programmes. All trainees receive a detailed key skills guide which gives good examples of the type of evidence that they can collect from their workplaces, and how this integrates into each NVQ unit. Employers also receive a copy of this. Evidence collected, such as that from stocktaking records or from sorting out a problem with food delivery, is cross-referenced by the trainee and tutor to the relevant key skill during the off-the-job theory training. Additional training sessions are given at TVU's premises for trainees to learn computing skills. Projects and assignments are given to trainees to help them acquire these skills. Key skills are assessed regularly along with the NVQ. Most assessments are undertaken at TVU, and these are supplemented by assessments in the workplace. Most trainees are in the workplace for four to five days each week, and are catering to a high standard in a realistic environment, but these assessment

opportunities are largely missed. Although trainees are encouraged to use witness testimonies from the workplace as evidence, there are very few assessments by observation at work. TVU has recognised this weakness, and has recently started to increase the number of assessments in the workplace, especially for trainees taking NVQs at level 3. There are no work-based assessors.

16. All trainees are assessed regularly, and some achieve their qualifications before the dates identified on their individual training plans. Certificates are not given to trainees, however, until they are approved by TVU's progress-assessment board. The progress-assessment board only sits at set times in the year and trainees cannot complete their frameworks without them.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

17. TVU has an equal opportunities policy which includes all elements of current legislation. Work-based learning advisors have responsibility for ensuring that work placement providers have equal opportunities policies before they agree to support the training arrangements for trainees. Equal opportunities is covered at trainees' induction. Trainees are issued with a student handbook which contains information on equal opportunities and other supporting materials for future reference. Among the trainees, 23 per cent are from a minority ethnic group, nine per cent are women and none have disabilities. Inspectors agreed with two out of the four strengths given in the self-assessment report and they identified additional strengths. The weakness identified in the self-assessment report was considered significant by inspectors, and they identified an additional weakness. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities by all trainees and staff
- ◆ effective initiatives to widen participation in training
- ◆ good use of equal opportunities data
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training facilities for those with mobility difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements

18. Staff and trainees have a broad understanding of equality of opportunity. TVU's equal opportunities policy, complaints and disciplinary procedures are introduced to trainees during the induction. Staff take responsibility for improving the trainees' understanding of equal opportunities. An interactive video is used to

encourage trainees to participate in group discussions covering a range of typical equal opportunities issues. A range of supporting materials is given to trainees to support their learning. Equal opportunities handbooks are also provided for employers by TVU. Staff have a thorough induction in equal opportunities, and workshops are available for staff to update their existing knowledge of equal opportunities. Staff take prompt action where trainees are adversely affected by negative attitudes to equal opportunities in the workplace. If such issues cannot be resolved, then trainees are moved to a more suitable place of employment, and the previous employer is not used again.

19. TVU has embarked upon many initiatives in the local community to widen and increase participation in training from traditionally under-represented groups. It has particularly addressed the inclusion of those from minority ethnic groups and initiatives include advertisements and editorials in selected ethnic publications. TVU works closely with a major employer to ensure that recruitment is targeted to encourage applications from people from minority ethnic groups. Almost 50 per cent of the trainees recruited by this particular employer are from minority ethnic groups. TVU also conducts marketing and promotional activity in local schools which have high populations of minority ethnic groups under-represented in the hospitality industry. Senior staff also play a key role in widening participation by forming effective links with local community groups. They do this by attending meetings for people from minority ethnic groups. TVU has also promoted work-based learning programmes at a show of culturally diverse foods which was held locally.

20. TVU analyses the data it collects on all those who express an interest in training as well as those who actually take up training. It feeds back the results of analysis to employers to help them to target their recruitment, should groups be shown to be under-represented in training. This also helps employers to ensure that their recruitment methods are fair and equal. TVU also analyses data on retention and achievement as trainees progress through training. The results of analysis are discussed in staff meetings and any arising issues are attended to. Also, TVU uses the results of analysis to target the promotion of its training to encourage those from under-represented groups to apply.

21. TVU has excellent resources which allow access to practical off-the-job training and assessment for trainees who have mobility difficulties. Training kitchens have been modified so that those using wheelchairs and those who have restricted growth can use all of the food preparation and cooking equipment and utensils, and are not disadvantaged. Cameras have been installed covering the modified areas so that tutors can at all times be aware of trainees' activity to ensure their health and safety. TVU worked closely with a charitable organisation to raise the money to fund the refurbishment of the training kitchens to this standard.

22. TVU does not formally monitor equal opportunities in the workplace to ensure that trainees are protected. No standard checks are made of employers relating to equal opportunities during training programmes. Initial checks are made to ensure

that employers have equal opportunities policies, and if not, then they are asked to adopt TVU's policy. If issues are identified during progress reviews, or if trainees raise issues during discussions with TVU's staff, then prompt action is taken. However, this action is not formally recorded.

Trainee support

Grade 3

23. Most of the trainees on training programmes offered by TVU are referred to the programmes by their employers. Employers interview trainees to establish their affinity with a career in hospitality. A tutor from TVU also interviews prospective trainees. Trainees receive a full day's induction at TVU, as well as having an induction in the workplace. All trainees are given a students' handbook outlining TVU's policies and procedures, as well as a trainees' handbook about the work-based training programme, and a key skills guide. Trainees are initially assessed during their induction. The learning advisors give additional support to trainees with additional learning needs, and those trainees also have specialist support from TVU's teaching staff. Inspectors identified the same strengths as given in the self-assessment report, and found a further strength. They did not find any of the weaknesses given in the report, but did identify others. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good induction
- ◆ highly supportive employers
- ◆ effective response to issues raised by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some ineffective individual training plans
- ◆ lack of detailed target setting in some progress reviews
- ◆ poor recording of identified additional support

24. Trainees receive an induction as soon as they begin their programmes, either at TVU or in the workplace. They are given a detailed handbook which explains the framework they are following, the programme and the support they can expect to receive. Trainees have a good understanding of their programmes. Trainees are also given a handbook explaining their rights as students of the university, and what benefits and facilities they can use at TVU. They are shown a video about equal opportunities, and staff take the video with them if a trainee is to have an induction in the workplace. Trainees are initially assessed as part of the induction. This identifies any learning support needs trainees have, and TVU provides support for learning needs such as dyslexia. However, the learning support needs are not written onto trainees' individual training plans to ensure that trainees'

progress with these is monitored.

25. TVU's learning advisors visit trainees in the workplace every eight weeks to undertake progress reviews, action plan and to give support. Tutors also visit trainees in the workplace to carry out assessments. Employers are informed about off-the-job training programmes, and regularly attend employers' forum meetings held by TVU. All employers support the trainees by allowing them time off for study and off-the-job training. Most employers provide uniforms, and one large employer provides all its trainees with books and knives. Most employers give trainees time off at the weekend during their first year on their programmes to help them adjust to working in the hospitality industry.

26. TVU's staff respond promptly to issues raised by trainees. There are several examples. One trainee was harassed in the workplace by another member of staff. As soon as the trainee reported this, action was taken immediately by TVU and the employer, and the other member of staff was reprimanded. Follow-up support was also given to the trainee to ensure this was not repeated. TVU's staff have been working with one head chef to encourage provision of more suitable training for a trainee, but, as this is proving unsuccessful, they are currently in the process of finding different employment for this trainee. One employer was not paying trainees the minimum wage, and was encouraged by TVU's staff to address this and make improvements to other working conditions.

27. Assessment of trainees' basic and key skills learning needs is undertaken during their induction with TVU. However, this information is not transferred to their individual training plans. Neither is any additional learning support. Individual action plans lack detail and do not give information on trainees' individual targets for the completion of units. Most trainees have identical target dates. As there are relatively few trainees, staff become familiar with their learning requirements on an informal basis. However, trainees' identified learning needs can potentially be overlooked, and there is no planning to take account of their individual learning styles.

28. Progress reviews are held every 10 weeks as contracted, and trainees and employers share in this process. Copies of the records of progress reviews are kept by the employer, trainee and in the trainee's file. Target-setting is inadequately recorded, however, and does not always give details of the work trainees need to achieve before their next review. The reviews focus on progress towards the NVQ, and do not always clearly identify additional courses which trainees take. Several forms have been used to record details from progress reviews, which has confused some trainees.

Management of training

Grade 3

29. TVU has a small team which manages the TEC's contract and provides work-based training. The team comprises two part-time, work-based learning advisors

and two lecturers who provide off-the-job training. The lecturers also give training towards NVQs for full-time students and teach a range of other industry related courses. TVU works closely with its employers to ensure that the overall programmes meet with the needs of the industry as well as the needs of the trainee. The work-based learning advisors are responsible for the welfare of the trainees and for conducting regular progress reviews in the workplace. The team reports to the associate dean of the school of tourism, hospitality and leisure, who has overall responsibility for the TEC contract. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, although they found some to be more relevant to other sections of the report. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses, and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong internal and external communication
- ◆ effective deployment of staff
- ◆ good monitoring of trainees' achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ unstructured on-the-job training for some programmes

30. TVU's managers and staff work well as a team and have good working relationships with trainees and their employers. Many of the head chefs and second chefs are former students from TVU. There are regular informal and formal meetings between the lecturers and work-based learning advisors to allow discussions of issues concerning any part of the training programmes. Formal meetings are minuted. In addition, there are meetings between the work-based learning advisors to discuss their work and to provide assistance to each other as required. Employers are kept up to date regarding the progress the trainees are making, and feedback is given on the trainees' attendance and attitude to work, as well as on their practical and theoretical abilities. Employers and trainees hold TVU in high regard. The lecturers are in regular contact with the chefs where the trainees are employed. They discuss a broad range of issues, including the menus trainees are working on. Methods of communication include telephone, e-mail, and faxes as well as visits to the workplaces. Some of the working relationships have been developed over several years as employers send trainees to TVU regularly. Trainees are also well informed of their progress through weekly feedback sessions between them and their lecturers, as well as from visits to the workplace by their learning advisor.

31. Staff are effectively deployed and are assigned responsibility for specific contracts. This ensures that the trainee and the employer consistently deal with the same person for specific aspects of the programmes. There are clearly defined job

descriptions for the different job roles, each specifying the duties and responsibilities. The learning advisors' responsibilities include reviewing health and safety at employers' premises, monitoring employers' equal opportunities policies and reviewing trainees' progress. Main duties for the lecturers include contributing to the development of new programmes and the evaluation of the teaching and learning experience. Staff fully understand their roles and participate in the overall achievement of the programme objectives.

32. Employers, together with TVU, have been instrumental in the development of a work-based training programme which meets with the requirements of the industry. Two major participating employers have worked with TVU to design and implement a training programme which provides the breadth of knowledge and skill trainees require and which fits within the national training organisations modern apprenticeship framework. The trainees at one employer work together, while trainees with another employer integrate with trainees from other employers who are working towards the same chef qualification.

33. The lecturers have developed good systems to monitor trainees' progress on individual NVQ unit achievement. Details of progress are entered onto the monitoring sheet once the units have been internally verified. The monitoring sheets are displayed on notice boards in the corridor at TVU's premises so that all the trainees have access to the information. Trainees are able to compare their progress against that of other trainees. The information contained on the monitoring sheet is in addition to the trainees' personal records of their progress which are contained in their portfolios.

34. There is a detailed scheme of work covering the off-the-job training for all the programmes which includes the actual dishes to be produced, and in what quantities. However, trainees sometimes find themselves preparing and producing dishes which they have already produced in the workplace. The programme is set in advance, and there is little room for flexibility to meet the individual learning needs of trainees. Trainees are encouraged to keep a record of work done in the workplace so that it can be used as supplementary evidence when their NVQ units are being assessed.

35. Trainees spend four days in the workplace and attend one of TVU's premises on one day each week for off-the-job training. Some trainees do not have a written training programme for the time they spend in the workplace. However, most trainees are structured on the job programmes in the workplace, which link workplace activities to off-the-job training. Most trainees spend five to six months gaining experience from working in the various sections within the production kitchens. Some trainees spend longer working in a particular section than originally planned. For some trainees, there is no plan to show the order in which they will cover the sections in the production kitchens, or what training they will receive while in the sections. This means that trainees are less able to know when they can collect evidence relevant to particular assessments. This is not the case for one programme which the employer and TVU have planned together.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

36. TVU has a quality assurance handbook which embraces all of its activity. Quality assurance arrangements are not specific to the different programmes TVU offers. This handbook is currently in the process of being reviewed owing to organisational restructuring. TVU has a clearly defined structure for reporting and communication. There are regular meetings between the various departments involved in the training towards NVQs. Minutes of all formal meetings are recorded and an annual monitoring report is produced. This is a report written for TVU's academic board giving details of the quality of training and of trainees' progress. TVU carried out its first self-assessment based on the quality statements in *Raising the Standard* in October 1998, and this was subsequently updated in October 1999. A new self-assessment report was submitted in August 2000 in preparation for this inspection. Most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report relating to quality assurance were found by inspectors to be more relevant to the occupational area or other generic areas. Inspectors identified one significant weakness, but did not find the other weakness to be significant. They identified additional strengths. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous internal verification process
- ◆ clear use of trainees and employers' feedback to plan continuous improvements
- ◆ thorough self-assessment process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of training in the workplace

37. TVU has a rigorous internal verification process. All of the trainees' portfolios are verified at different stages during their programmes. Portfolios are usually first internally verified once the trainees have completed two NVQ units. Internal verifiers observe 20 per cent of the assessors' assessments. Comprehensive observation notes and feedback records are kept of these observations. In addition to this, all completed NVQ portfolios go before TVU's annual programme assessment board before certificates are claimed from the awarding body. Reports from external verifiers have been good.

38. TVU has systems to collect feedback from trainees and employers regarding the quality of training and the content of NVQ programmes. Feedback is collected formally using questionnaires twice a year, while trainees are still in training, as well as informally during progress reviews. Lecturers regularly visit or are in telephone contact with employers to ensure that they are satisfied with the training arrangements. This is in addition to the work of the learning advisors. Regular,

work-based training meetings are held at which representatives attend on behalf of trainees and the main employers. The outcomes of these meetings are fed into the annual monitoring report, and corrective action is taken as appropriate. Positive outcomes so far have included modifications to the off-the-job training programme, more regular internal verification and improved teaching resources. The latest annual monitoring report for the NVQ at level 3 in food preparation and cooking showed that 95 per cent of trainees were happy with the standard of teaching, the support received from the tutor and the level of knowledge they had gained from the programme.

39. The self-assessment process has helped TVU to identify most of the key issues relating to work-based training. An action plan has been produced, and some identified weaknesses have been rectified or were being worked on before the inspection. The programmes are regularly reviewed through TVU's subject head meetings, and prompt action is taken by subject heads if needed. Employers' views are regularly sought when TVU's staff contact the guild of chefs, academy of culinary arts, and other hotel and catering associations.

40. TVU does not have formal procedures for the quality assurance of the training given in the workplace. TVU's staff monitor the quality of training on an informal basis by talking with trainees and employers, but nothing is recorded. There is an over-reliance on TVU's overall quality assurance system which is not specific to work-based training and the knowledge of members of the work-based training team.