

INSPECTION REPORT

NVQUK.COM Limited Reinspection

16 October 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

SUMMARY

The provider

NVQUK.COM Limited is a privately owned training company formed in April 2000, which provides work-based learning for young people and adults in various regions throughout the United Kingdom. It provides training in care, hospitality, business administration and customer service. NVQUK.COM Limited has grown substantially since the original inspection in July 2001 when there were 112 modern apprentices and nine staff. At reinspection, there were 739 learners, 25 staff and 35 work-based assessors. Most learners are following care training programmes, with 51 advanced modern apprentices, 128 foundation modern apprentices and 490 learners over the age of 25. Most learners started their training programmes in the last six months. There were too few learners in business administration and customer services for these areas to be reinspected.

Overall judgement

The original inspection in July 2001 found that training was satisfactory in all areas of learning. However, leadership and management, including its arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity, were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, hospitality, care and leadership and management are now satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, although quality assurance remained unsatisfactory. The quality of provision is now adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	4	3
Quality assurance	4	4

	Original	Reinspection
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3
Other government-funded provision		3

	Original	Reinspection
Health, social care & public services	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3
Other government-funded provision		3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- good internal communication of organisational developments
- effective actions to improve achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- effective involvement of employers in hospitality learning programmes
- good learner support
- good development of learners' practical skills

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities for learners
- insufficient quality assurance arrangements
- weak initial assessment
- insufficient involvement of care employers in progress reviews
- insufficient internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more analysis and feedback to establish trends
- better management of training co-ordinator caseloads

THE REINSPECTION

1. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 25 days reinspecting NVQUK.COM Limited (NVQUK). Three one-day visits were carried out by the lead inspector in October, November and December 2002, with a final visit by the full inspection team in February 2003. Inspectors visited 27 employers where they interviewed 54 learners and 16 workplace supervisors or managers. Inspectors conducted 26 interviews with training provider staff. They examined learners' files and 51 portfolios of evidence. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report and a wide range of other documentary evidence. Inspectors also observed one keys skills workshop and three individual coaching sessions.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Total	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- good internal communication of organisational developments
- effective actions to improve achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- good staff training and development
- effective development of equal opportunities strategy

WEAKNESSES

- delayed start for some care learners
- no formal monitoring of employers' equality of opportunity
- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities for learners
- insufficient quality assurance arrangements

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more analysis and feedback to establish trends
- better formal communications with care homes
- better management of training co-ordinator caseloads

2. There is good communication from the directors. Internal communication channels have been adapted and developed as the organisation has grown. The new organisational structure, with three contract managers reporting to the board, and training co-ordinators reporting to the contract managers, was launched in December 2002. All staff fully understand their new roles and responsibilities. In January 2003, the directors discussed the development plan that was produced following the self-assessment report. They ensured staff understood the targets for retention and achievement and their role in achieving these targets. A new meeting structure has been developed to formalise the internal communications between training co-ordinators, contract managers and directors. The new organisational structure is now improving communications with senior managers of the large employer with which NVQUK works. There are formal meetings every six to eight weeks and employers are provided with a progress report on each of their learners. There are no formal meetings with the managers of the individual care homes. New assessors are now building good informal working relationships, although communications are poor with some sites.

3. Effective actions have been implemented to improve achievement rates on modern apprenticeship frameworks. Learners are now introduced to key skills at the start of

their learning programmes. Two key skills specialists have been recruited to provide support for assessors and learners. Additional key skills workshops for learners have now started, with a series of further workshops planned to take place around the country. NVQUK is a registered centre for key skills tests. The first group of learners sat their test in January 2003 and more are booked for tests over the next four months. Learners receive individual training and support on test papers before they sit the tests. The contract managers now hold bi-monthly meetings with senior managers of the large employers that they work with. They work together effectively to identify which learners can enrol on the learning programmes. One employer has now agreed to only start new learners after they have completed the initial in-house training and have been successfully employed for six months. All learners who leave the learning programme must now have an exit interview. Reasons for leaving are now recorded and analysed.

4. Staff are provided with good training and development. The large number of new training co-ordinators have been given a general induction and receive good support to help them settle into their new jobs. All staff now receive the same standard of training and support. For example, all staff have attended a keys skills workshop to ensure that they fully understand the keys skills and can provide appropriate support. A one-day training event was held to introduce the new equal opportunities policy. A series of additional training events on equal opportunities issues are now planned. All staff are responsible for maintaining their own continuing professional development logs.

5. There have been delays to the start of learning programmes for some care learners. Some learners who started their learning programmes in September and October 2002 were not visited by an assessor for several months and in some cases for nearly four months. NVQUK discussed this situation with the employer's senior managers but did not ensure the learners were aware of the situation. Learners were unsure of when they would be visited or when they would start to be assessed for their qualification. More training co-ordinators have now been recruited and visit the learners on a regular basis. Some training co-ordinators have large caseloads and they are unable to be as flexible as they would like in making sufficient appointments to meet the needs of the learners. Some part-time staff are currently working more hours than they are contracted for.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

6. NVQUK has developed effectively an equal opportunities strategy. In recent months the company has rectified the original weakness of inadequate management of equality of opportunity. A clear equal opportunities and managing diversity policy has now been developed. This was introduced and discussed with all staff at a recent training day. Additional policies, including a dignity at work policy, are now in draft form. All learners have received a charter that outlines what they can expect from NVQUK. An equal opportunities working group has been established and includes an employer representative.

7. There are currently no formal systems to monitor the effectiveness of employers' equal opportunities policies and procedures. Some sites do not have their company's up-to-date policies and procedures. Some learners are unaware of their employer's policy. NVQUK is developing a service level agreement with employers, that will include expectations on equality of opportunity. NVQUK is now analysing and monitoring the different groups of learners. There is not enough analysis of equal opportunities data in relation to trends in the sector or with specific employers.

8. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities with learners. Learners are introduced to equal opportunities during induction but there is no monitoring of their understanding of these issues after this initial introduction. Some learners do not fully understand their rights and responsibilities. Learners have recently been issued with a learner charter and some learners have completed equal opportunities projects as part of their key skills. Currently there is no formal discussion of equal opportunities during the progress reviews. A new form has now been developed that includes a section on equal opportunities. NVQUK has prepared 12 questions about equal opportunities issues to help training co-ordinators and learners explore effectively the issues relating to equality of opportunity on a monthly basis.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

9. There are insufficient quality assurance arrangements, as identified at the original inspection. A new quality assurance strategy was introduced to staff during the recent training day for the equal opportunities policy. There are some procedures for the administrative activities of the company but there are no formal written procedures for activities relating to the training programmes. There are, currently, variations in the standards to which learner activities are conducted. For example, there are no written guidelines for training co-ordinators on the standards to which forms and documents should be completed. Not all training co-ordinators are using the recently developed forms to plan the collection of evidence or plan learning activities. Individual learning plans are not used effectively or updated as part of the review process. There are not enough systems to evaluate the training, especially on the job. An evaluation form has been introduced and is completed at the end of each workshop run by NVQUK. To date there have only been two workshops, the evaluations from which have not been summarised and do not provide sufficient relevant information to establish trends.

10. There is insufficient internal verification in care. There have been some improvements since the original inspection. An internal verification panel has been established to allow effective sharing of information and practices. However, the current procedures are not being fully implemented. Many of the new assessors, who have been with the company for several months, have not had any of their assessment decisions checked. One assessor has not been observed or had any assessment decisions internally verified for seven months. There are now more internal verifiers and plans are in place for all assessors to be internally verified in the next month. The procedures are currently being updated.

11. In September 2002, NVQUK implemented a series of six questionnaires for learners to return every couple of months throughout their training programmes. The questionnaires focus on different aspects and stages of the training programmes. To date, only the first two questionnaires have been returned and summarised. There are too few responses to enable any analysis across different training programmes or regions. Learners who started their learning programmes before September 2002 have not been issued with the questionnaires. The questionnaires have not been in place long enough to establish trends over time or between different groups of learners. Questionnaires have been issued to employers' senior managers and this feedback has been analysed. No feedback has been collected from the managers in the individual care homes. NVQUK has started to record in the database the reasons for learners leaving their learning programmes. However, there is not enough information to carry this out effectively.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	33	3
Other government-funded provision	24	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- good on-the-job training
- particularly effective involvement of employers in learning programmes
- good learner support

WEAKNESSES

- weak initial assessment
- poor monitoring of learner progress
- late introduction of key skills training and assessment for some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of work-based assessors
- better sharing of good practice in developing portfolios of evidence

12. There is good on-the-job training. NVQUK has continued to build on the strength, identified at the original inspection, of excellent development of skills and knowledge in the workplace. Learners go on a wide range of short training courses with their employers that are above the mandatory training required. Individual and group training, both formal and informal, is carried out by head chefs and restaurant supervisors covering a wide range of occupational skills. Learners are able to work in other work placements to acquire and enhance skills and knowledge to complete their chosen national vocational qualification (NVQ) units. Additional training is provided in specific occupational areas including the use automated tills and dish costing. This has enabled some learners to move in to more senior job role positions. Some learners have had training in cooking to cater for special dietary and religious requirements.

There are good in-house training materials and appropriate textbooks to reinforce the training and help the learners acquire additional knowledge.

13. There is particularly effective involvement of employers in learning programmes. Good communications are maintained between the provider and management staff at employers. Learner recruitment and retention have improved. Employers fully understand the role of the qualifications in the development of their employees. Some employers do not let learners start the learning programmes until they have completed initial in-house training and a specified amount of time in employment. Line managers have a good understanding of the occupational units of the NVQ and work with the provider and learner to ensure job roles and tasks enable learners to fulfil the requirements. There are good working relationships between the training provider and employers. Observation and additional training are carried out at the most appropriate times for both parties. In most cases line managers contribute effectively to progress reviews.

14. Good learner support is provided by the training provider and employers. Effective learner visits are carried out each month. Where additional learning needs have been identified, appropriate support is provided. Help with literacy and numeracy is given through individual support and other appropriate resources. Learners are provided with good support to help improve their self-confidence. Some learners have been helped to overcome personal issues. Some learners are receiving specialist individual support, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and information technology (IT) training through local college provision. One learner has had work shift patterns varied to help manage a medical condition. Another learner who is pregnant has, with the advice of the provider and the co-operation of the employer, changed the units of study and the job role to assist in the completion of the qualification.

15. Initial assessment is weak. There is no structured approach to initial assessment, a weakness identified at the original inspection. NVQUK has implemented a range of initial assessment tests and questionnaires. These are not appropriate to all learners. In some cases they do not clearly identify the potential learning needs of the individual learner, especially those who speak English as an additional language and those who have overseas educational qualifications. No assessment is made of the needs of the learners from different age groups and minority ethnic groups. There is insufficient acknowledgement of prior experience and life skills for those who have been out of education for some time. Individual support needs are not clearly identified during initial assessment.

16. Monitoring of learner progress is poor. Individual learning plans are not used to monitor individual learners' progress. Many learners do not know how much work they have completed and how much they have left to complete. Regular progress reviews are carried out with the learners and targets are set to be completed before the next visit. The progress reviews do not provide an overview of the learners' progress. This information is now being collated on the company database.

17. Key skills training and assessment are introduced late for some learners, a weakness identified in the original inspection. Thirteen learners on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes are currently working towards their key skills qualifications and have completed most of their NVQ units. Key skills training and assessment are not carried out as an integral part of the overall framework. Some learners have completed good project work for their key skills. Key skills training and assessment are now introduced at the start of the learning programme. A greater emphasis is now placed on the use of evidence to support key skills and the occupational units.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	179	3
Other government-funded provision	490	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- good learner support
- good development of learners’ practical skills
- effective use of key skills projects
- good, clear short-term target-setting

WEAKNESSES

- weak initial assessment
- insufficient involvement of employers in progress reviews
- insufficient internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better access to learning support materials

18. Learners receive good support. Training co-ordinators visit learners each month and more frequently if required. These visits are with individuals and small learner groups, with visits sometimes taking place outside normal working hours. Training co-ordinators have good working relationships with learners and help them improve their self-confidence. Some learners who were considering leaving have been supported by the training co-ordinators to continue with their learning programme. Learners are allocated a work-based mentor who is able to support planning for practical activities. Workplace supervisors provide good guidance and support for the learners by helping organise work activity from which evidence can be collected, and enabling learners to meet with assessors while at work.

19. There is good development of learners’ practical skills. Learners use their skills effectively and with confidence in the workplace. They have a good knowledge and

understanding of the professional and ethical responsibilities of their occupational setting. They are able to assess their own practices as they learn new skills and fully understand the importance of their clients' individual rights and needs. Suitably qualified named members of staff provide witness testimonies in response to activities in the workplace. Learners can carry out considerable additional training in the workplace, a strength identified in the original inspection. Some of this additional training is mandatory and some is relevant to specific NVQ units, with additional knowledge in caring for the elderly.

20. Key skills projects are used effectively. Key skills training and assessment are now integrated effectively with the learning programme. This rectifies the weakness identified at the time of the original inspection. Learners now start work on the key skills at the beginning of their learning programmes. Learners carry out specific projects that are designed to link directly to the NVQ requirements as well as promote key issues within the care homes, such as equal opportunities and health and safety. Learners working towards NVQs only are also encouraged to make good use of key skills projects.

21. There is good, clear target-setting. During progress reviews, training co-ordinators and learners discuss recent work, and evidence collected since the last visit is checked and assessed before new targets are agreed for completion by the next visit. These targets are specific and demanding. The detail of these targets ensures that learners fully understand what they have to do, and the support they can access in order to successfully complete their work.

22. Initial assessment is inadequate. At the original inspection, the weakness of no systematic initial assessment was identified. New learners now complete an initial assessment of their basic, occupational and transferable skills to help identify additional learning needs. The form of testing being used does not adequately identify specific learning needs or the required support. Some learners have only had their learning needs identified several months after starting their learning programmes. Some learners were originally placed on the incorrect level of learning programme. Some initial assessments have not been fully completed. A number of papers show no evidence of marking and the learners are not aware of their results. The information is not analysed and there is not enough recording of individual learning needs or how additional support will be provided.

23. There is insufficient involvement of employers in progress reviews. Employers do not routinely take part in progress reviews with the learner and the training co-ordinator. Their views on learners' performance and progress are not collected before the review takes place. Employers usually receive verbal feedback after the progress review. However, some employers are not advised about assessment plans or the outcome of assessor visits. The progress review record sheets are not adequate for sufficient detail to be recorded. New forms have recently been produced to improve the involvement of the employers.

24. There is insufficient internal verification. Most portfolios of evidence have not been internally verified. There are no records for internal verification in the portfolios of evidence or in the assessor's files. The current procedures do not identify learners who have not been assessed for over three months or poor assessment practice. The assessor responsible for the poor assessment practice has now left the company and these issues have been rectified effectively by the new contract managers.

Good Practice

NVQUK provides transport for learners to attend key skills workshops.

Poor Practice

Some learners who started their learning programmes several months ago have not been registered with the appropriate awarding body.