



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT APRIL 2000

Bolton College Training Unit

SUMMARY

Bolton College Training Unit (BCTU) provides satisfactory training in agriculture, construction, engineering and business administration. Manufacturing, hairdressing and hospitality are less than satisfactory. Training and assessment are not geared to the needs of individual trainees. College terms govern the beginning and end of assessment and off-the-job training. Resources for training and assessment are good. Trainee's retention and achievement rates are poor. Target-setting for qualification and key skills progression is undemanding and lacks focus on the qualification. Induction is comprehensive at all stages and on all sites. Trainees with additional support needs can access specialist facilities. Efforts are made to recruit trainees from under-represented groups within the local community. Accreditation of prior learning is not routine. Little monitoring takes place to ensure employers apply appropriate equal opportunities arrangements. Work-based training and assessments are not well managed. Data are not systematically used to inform decision-making. Procedures for monitoring the quality of work-based learning are inadequate. Internal verification and assessment arrangements are weak in some areas. BCTU exercises little influence over the co-ordination and quality of training and assessment.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	3
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	4
Business administration	3
Hospitality	4
Hair & beauty	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous target-setting for qualification progress in business administration
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ comprehensive induction for all trainees
- ◆ comprehensive college learning support facility available to all trainees
- ◆ active participation in local initiatives to recruit under-represented groups

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of assessments in workplace, slowing progress
- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ no planned work-based training and assessment for most trainees
- ◆ poor target-setting for NVQ and key skills progression
- ◆ poor trainees' review documents
- ◆ little formal accreditation of prior learning



INSPECTION REPORT: BOLTON COLLEGE TRAINING UNIT
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- ◆ no effective management of work-based training and assessment
- ◆ no effective procedures for quality assuring training
- ◆ underdeveloped monitoring of achievements and destinations

INTRODUCTION

1. Bolton College Training Unit (BCTU), formerly known as Bolton Managing Agency and originally run by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, became part of Bolton College in April 1993. BCTU is not a separate company, but the unit works independently from within the main college campus in Bolton.

2. BCTU has a training contract with Bolton and Bury Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE) to provide modern apprenticeship, national traineeship and other youth and adult training programmes. BCTU provides government funded training programmes in nine areas; business administration; hospitality; childcare; construction; engineering; manufacturing; horticulture; hairdressing and foundation studies. There are 453 trainees currently in training of whom 63 have been identified through initial assessment as requiring additional learning support to achieve their qualification. Of these, 400 are employed; 68 are unemployed; 379 are men; 14 have a disability; 453 are white and 15 are from the minority ethnic community. The proportion of trainees from the minority ethnic community is 3 per cent. This is significantly lower than the 11 per cent proportion of minority ethnic students enrolled at Bolton College but broadly represents the 4 per cent of the minority ethnic population in work-based training with all providers in Bolton. BCTU works with a network of 235 different local companies to provide employment or work experience for trainees and the New Deal clients. The table below shows the numbers of trainees and clients by occupational area.

Occupation	Number of trainees
Agriculture	20
Construction	204
Engineering	81
Manufacturing	25
Business administration	51
*Retail and customer service	3
Hospitality	17
Hair & beauty	27
*Health, care & public services (child care)	6
Foundation for work	10
New Deal clients	24
Total	468

* Owing to small number these occupational areas were not separately inspected but formed part of the overall sample group chosen for the inspection

3. BCTU is one of the main training providers for the full-time education and training option of the New Deal. BCTU is also a subcontractor to another local main contractor for the New Deal and provides off-the-job training for the voluntary sector and environment task force options. The full-time education and training clients undertake vocational training, job preparation and key skills training. The work experience aspect of the option is organised by BCTU and each client has 20 days work experience either on a day- or block-release basis. The New Deal clients are guided to specific programmes by the BCTU staff. Any additional learning support arrangements are established and planned at this stage. Clients are then integrated directly into mainstream college courses. The work experience is linked to the vocational training programme where possible and clients are encouraged to gather information and assessment evidence while at work. Clients are currently working in the following occupational areas:

Option	Hair & beauty	Agriculture	Construction	Engineering	Childcare	Business administration	Total
FTET	2		5	2	1	1	11
Employment		1	5	2			8
ETF			5				5
Total	2	1	15	4	1	1	24

4. Bolton College employs 363 full-time teaching and non-teaching staff. BCTU employs 12 staff, comprising one training contracts manager who is responsible for TEC contracts and general unit management, six training developments officers who are responsible for reviewing trainees' progress and monitoring work placements and employers, one workplace assessor in engineering (motor vehicle), one administrative supervisor and three administration officers. Over the last three years BCTU has only appointed training development officers who are vocationally competent in the areas for which they have responsibility.

5. The Bolton and Bury area is largely urban to the north of the centre of Manchester. It has a population of more than 447,000 inhabitants. Unemployment in Bolton stands at 4.1 per cent, compared with Bury at 2.7 per cent, Northwest England at 4.7 per cent and England as a whole at 3.8 per cent.

6. The proportion of minority ethnic groups in Bolton and Bury stands at 6 per cent of the population. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 41 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. BCTU's self-assessment report was produced at the end of January 2000. The report provided a good basis for the inspection team to contextualise BCTU in the Bolton area and as a part of a large general further education college. The report was produced with the work-based training programmes in mind. The college produced another separate report for the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) inspection team. A joint team of FEFC and TSC inspectors inspected the college and the work-based training work of the unit. The unit's manager, who involved the training staff in preparing the various vocational reports prepared BCTU's self-assessment report. The manager prepared the generic aspects of the report. The CCTE provided training sessions for the manager and the unit staff to help them prepare for inspection. The manager attended one of the Training Standards Council's (TSC) nominee-training sessions. Employers and trainees were not fully consulted and did not have any meaningful input into the self-assessment process. Little use was made during self-assessment of data and statistics to show comparative year-on-year trends. Inspectors could not consider a significant number of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report.

8. Inspection was carried out by a team of 10 TSC inspectors for a total of 40 days. They interviewed 20 per cent of all the trainees. They examined assessment procedures, subcontracting agreements, trainees' files and portfolios, staff qualifications and quality assurance and management arrangements. Inspectors interviewed 51 employers, 39 college tutors and 90 trainees. Thirty-seven college managers' were interviewed and 51 work placements were visited. Twenty-four trainees' reviews and 13 assessments were observed and 16 lesson observations were made. The grades awarded to these sessions are shown below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		2	2			4
Engineering	2		3			5
Business administration		1	2			3
Hospitality		1	2			3
Hair & beauty		1				1
Total	2	5	9	0	0	16

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture

Grade 3

9. There are 20 trainees in amenity horticulture, of whom 18 are taking NVQs at level 2 and two are at level 1. Nine trainees are working towards the hard landscape option, seven towards sports turf maintenance, three towards nursery and one towards decorative horticulture. There is one modern apprentice. Three trainees have been identified as requiring additional support to achieve their qualification. Most trainees work towards a level 1 in amenity horticulture during their first year of training before progressing to their specialist level 2 option in the second year. BCTU does not have staff with appropriate industrial experience or practical facilities to carry out practical assessments. A specialist agricultural college, approximately 30 miles from Bolton, has been subcontracted to provide the off-the-job training and on- and off-the-job assessment. When sufficient specialist assessment evidence cannot be generated in the workplace additional training and assessment are provided at the specialist college. Trainees attend college for off-the-job training on average one day every two weeks, throughout the college academic year. While at college trainees develop their NVQ knowledge and understanding through formal classroom tuition, carry out plant identification tasks, practice their work skills and have these skills assessed. Staff carrying out training and assessing at the college are occupationally qualified and hold, or are working towards, assessor awards. Nearly all the trainees are employed and all are male. Inspectors considered many of the strengths in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. The weaknesses identified were not all addressed by appropriate action plans. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of good-quality, well-resourced work placements
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training and assessment facilities at the local specialist college

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inappropriate entry level qualifications
- ◆ lack of workplace assessments
- ◆ poor trainees' retention and achievement

10. Work placements are well resourced and provide trainees with appropriate equipment and facilities for learning and skills development. Employers include domestic landscapers, local authority parks departments, nurseries, garden centres, golf courses and football grounds. The good quality of the work placements combined with the type of work they undertake provides BCTU and trainees with

an excellent opportunity to exploit the skills and knowledge they have gained for assessment and qualification purposes. BCTU and its subcontracted specialist college have, in the main, missed this opportunity. Very few assessments actually take place at work. Over half of the trainees have not been visited by their assessor at work. Assessment visits to work are infrequent and most assessment is at the specialist college through simulated work tasks. This is poor practice when trainees normal working day presents endless real examples of skills development and assessment opportunities.

11. The specialist agricultural college provides trainees with a wide range of good practice and classroom facilities along with a new purpose-built library and learning-resource centre. Training facilities include a plant centre, which sells its produce to the public, a range of glass houses and polythene tunnels, a golf course including a pitch and putt area, hard and soft landscape areas and extensive mature ornamental gardens, up-to-date machinery and workshop repair facilities.

12. Achievement rates for the trainees over the last three years have improved slightly from 25 per cent in 1996-97 to 50 per cent in 1998-99. Retention rates match the achievement rates and all the trainees who completed the training over the last three years achieved their qualifications. The training and development officer provides effective pastoral support and helps trainees to resolve training related problems. The training and development officer carries out trainees' progress reviews every four to six weeks while visiting trainees at work. Progress reviews are not sufficiently focused towards qualification completion. Trainees are not clear about what stage in their qualification they have reached.

13. Induction covers health and safety, equal opportunities and information about the qualification requirements. Trainees are well motivated and show a good commitment to their training programme. Apart from the one modern apprentice key skills are not a mandatory part of the training. The modern apprentice began the key skills in information technology very late in training and will have to extend his training programme to complete the modern apprentice requirements. BCTU has a clear strategy to avoid this late training for any future modern apprentices.

14. All trainees spend the first year of training working towards an inappropriately low NVQ at level 1. A maximum of six months is a more accepted average time to complete level 1. By stretching this work out to a full year trainees miss the opportunity to move more quickly onto their individual specialisms. As a result individual progression towards level 2 is slow. Nearly all the trainees are working in jobs which provide appropriate specialist experience for the trainee to access level 2 training straight away. The level 2 award is of greater direct benefit to trainees and employers than the more general level 1 programme.

Construction

Grade 3

15. The BCTU has 189 construction craft trainees and 15 New Deal clients. BCTU also provides training for 29 modern apprentice trainees in technical building studies at national and higher national certificate levels. Off-the-job training is provided by Bolton College, with the exception of gas installation and plastering which is provided by two local further education colleges. Most construction assessment takes place at Bolton College and trainees are encouraged to record their daily tasks carried out in the workplace. Trainees are visited by a training and development officer every six weeks for the purpose of reviewing their progress towards qualification, monitoring health and safety and providing guidance and support. BCTU has four training development officers, one of whom has overall responsibility for all construction trainees. Trainees attend college for a mixture of theoretical and practical training, additional support and assessments. Attendance at college is on a day release basis for the duration of the college academic year. Trainee recruitment numbers have steadily increased over the last three years on youth and technical studies programmes rising from 78 new starts in 1996-97 to 116 in 1997-98. The number of modern apprentices starting has declined in construction craft areas from 54 in 1998-99 to 14 in 1999-2000, and in technical building studies has increased from two in 1996-97 to 30 in 1998-99. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice or related to a generic aspect of the provision. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

Vocational areas	Youth and adult	Trainees requiring additional support	National Traineeship	Modern Apprentices	Total including 15 New Deal clients
Bricklaying		9	1	2	13
Technical studies				29	29
Electrical installation	12			22	35
Gas installation	2			7	9
Plumbing	9	11		13	37
Painting & decorating	6	13	2	1	23
Plastering	3			2	5
Roofing	3			1	4
Wood machining	6		2		8
Wood occupations	14	10	6	3	32
Total	55	43	11	80	219

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good quality college-based training
- ◆ good retention rates
- ◆ carefully chosen, good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ no planned work-based training or assessment for nearly all trainees

16. The quality of off-the-job training is good. Practical demonstrations and training resources are used effectively. Tutors instruct using a variety of techniques ranging from group work to individual coaching. Training is relevant and meets the needs of both trainees and the qualification requirements. Tutors and trainees work closely together. Trainees are well motivated and enthusiastic. Workshops and learning resource areas are equipped with suitable equipment and tools. Tutors are occupationally qualified and experienced in their particular trade.

17. BCTU staff establish the reasons why trainees leave training before completing their programme. Staff also closely review and evaluate how each course is taught. This close scrutiny has contributed to improving retention rates across the whole of the construction area. The retention rates for modern apprentices in all craft areas for 1999-2000 are now good and stand at 92 per cent compared with 55 per cent for 1996-97. In other work-based training across all craft areas the retention rates stand at 68 per cent for 1999-2000 compared with 56 per cent for 1996-97. There is currently a 100 per cent retention rate on the technical building studies programmes. By using trainees' achievement checklists, trainees are encouraged to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress towards qualification. Trainees are clear about their personal qualification progress and understand what is still required to complete their qualification. Work placements are good, providing trainees with carefully chosen, frequent opportunities to learn about the building process and develop their skills. Good skills are quickly learnt and applied in the workplace.

18. Employers and supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the trainees' progress review process. They are not given a copy of the review forms and they are unaware of any agreed actions or targets. The co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is poor. Workplace supervisors are unaware of the qualification and assessment requirements and they are unclear about the progress of trainees towards qualification achievement. There is poor use of work-based evidence in most of the trade areas. Some trainees have made no entries into the work-based evidence recording books and many trainees do not present the books to the off-the-job trainer for qualification and assessment purposes. Workplace supervisors, in most cases, are aware of the evidence recording books but play little part in contributing to them.

19. Achievement rates are poor across the whole construction area. Modern apprenticeship achievement in all craft areas was 5 per cent in 1996-97 rising to 30 per cent in 1998-99. None of the modern apprentices on the building studies programmes achieved the award in 1996-97, only 29 per cent of them achieved in 1997-98 and 23 per cent in 1998-99. Achievement rates in other work-based youth training has fallen from 33 per cent in 1996-97, to 23 per cent in 1997-98 and 13 per cent in 1998-99. The progressions profile for current trainees, however, shows that for those who stay, 55 per cent of youth trainees complete all the requirements of their individual training plans and 20 per cent of modern apprentices also complete their plans.

Engineering

Grade 3

20. The college has 81 trainees pursuing engineering NVQs. Of which 46 are modern apprentices, 13 are national trainees, 20 are on other youth training programmes and one is a New Deal client. One trainee has been identified as requiring additional learning support to achieve the qualification. Fourteen trainees are working towards vehicle mechanical service replacement NVQs at level 1 or 2. Of the remaining 20 trainees on other youth training programmes, 11 are at NVQ level 2 and nine at level 3. The NVQ qualifications range from motor vehicle mechanical and electrical systems repair and servicing, body repair and finishing, vehicle parts, motor vehicle servicing, repair service road vehicles, maintaining public service vehicles and vehicle mechanical and electrical heavy vehicle systems. All trainees are employed in one of 31 different companies. Trainees attend college for one day a week throughout the college academic year. While at college they cover the theoretical aspects of the NVQ, including portfolio building and key skills training where required. A BCTU work-based assessor visits each trainee at work every six weeks. The purpose of the visit is to review trainees' progress and agree on targets for further achievement.

21. Assessment is carried out at work by motor vehicle technicians and workplace supervisors who are employees of the companies. Where off-the-job assessment is required for the theoretical aspects of the qualification this is administered by well qualified and industrially experienced college tutors. All the college motor vehicle tutors are qualified assessors, six members of staff are qualified internal verifiers and two are qualified to accredit prior learning. Over the past four years modern apprentice recruitment has increased steadily from two in 1996-97 to 16 in 1999-2000. Other youth training recruitment has steadily decreased over the same period dropping from 40 in 1996-97 to 24 in 1999-2000. National traineeship recruitment has remained at around 13 per year over the two year period that this training has been available. Trainees' retention rates have been steadily improving over the last three years: in 1997-98 it was 68 per cent, in 1998-99 it was 73 per cent and in 1999-2000, it was 85 per cent across all programmes. Achievement rates over the last four years have been extremely low. Some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal or contractual practice.

Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the grade awarded by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective progress reviews
- ◆ all assessments are carried out at work
- ◆ excellent motor vehicle training resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unplanned on-the-job training
- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ no consultation with trainees or employers about the effectiveness of the training

22. All trainees in motor vehicle training are employed in one of 31 local contracted garages or associated motor vehicle companies. Trainees are visited at work by one of BCTU's occupationally qualified work-based assessors who is also a qualified instructor. For new entrants to training reviews are carried out every four weeks. For trainees who have been in training a number of months the review period is extended to every six weeks. These reviews include the trainee, employer and work-based assessor. Reviews are carried out to a high standard and cover all aspects of the training. Both trainees and employers are fully involved in the review, with comments from both parties being included on the review form. Targets are set for the whole qualification and for individual NVQ unit achievement. BCTU's tutors provide trainees with feedback about their progress and include what future activities need to take place before the next review.

23. All practical assessments are carried out at work. Trainees are assessed at work by industrially qualified and experienced technicians or skilled operatives. Assessment is by observation of trainees' performance and completion of job cards and through witness testimony. A sample of each witness's specimen signature is retained for identification and verification purposes by the work-based assessor and the college's motor vehicle department staff. In addition, the work-based assessor and a member of the college's motor vehicle department staff, who are also qualified assessors, visit employers' premises to carry out assessments. The assessment details are recorded on trainees' assessment forms, signed by a qualified assessor, recorded on the trainees' progress recording and tracking systems and a copy of the assessment is retained by the trainee to be used for individual NVQ unit accreditation.

24. Trainees benefit from excellent physical resources, both in college and at most workplaces. The college has well-equipped motor vehicle mechanical, electrical and body repair and finishing workshops. A classroom-based demonstration diagnostic testing facility provides trainees with access to training on the latest testing equipment.

25. Employers provide trainees with the opportunity to acquire specialist skills and knowledge. These range from motor vehicle mechanical and electrical systems, repair and servicing, motor vehicle parts and body repair and vehicle finishing. Work being carried out by trainees at work is on modern motor vehicles repaired and serviced to manufacturers' specifications. Trainees work under the supervision of well-qualified and industrially experienced staff. Trainees attend a college of further education for one day a week to receive training off the job and tuition in the associated theory.

26. Workplace training is not systematic, planned or structured. Trainees learn as a result of their inclusion in day-to-day tasks. The qualification requirements are identified at work mainly by trainees, work-based supervisors and workplace tutors. This is often unstructured and many opportunities to link the work patterns of the garages to the learning needs of the trainees are missed. Provision is made for trainees to complete NVQ work at college if the employer does not undertake the type of work required for the qualification.

27. The work-based assessor visits employers on a four- to six-week basis to carry out formal reviews and discuss trainees' progression. The progress reporting form used by the work-based assessor for employers gives mainly pastoral information with little space for any written comments.

28. Over the past four years some modern apprentices have achieved NVQs at level 2 and units towards level 3 but none has completed their individual training plan. Retention rates have steadily increased across all motor vehicle training courses, but achievement rates have not improved. No modern apprentice achievements have been recorded over the last four years and youth trainee achievements have declined from 30 per cent in 1996-97 to 22 per cent in 1998-99 because of the then poor retention rate. However, the profile of achievement for current trainees is noticeably improving. Modern apprentices are on target to achieve their individual training plans if they remain on programme.

29. The college motor vehicle section staff have weekly course team meetings which the work-based assessor attends. Less frequent meetings, called by the head of the motor vehicle section, look specifically at the work-based training programmes. The meetings are minuted and action plans are drawn up. Employers and trainees do not attend any of these meetings nor do they see the minutes or action plans. They have no formal opportunity to influence the training. Trainees and employers are given questionnaires but no detailed evaluation and analysis is made of their responses.

Manufacturing

Grade 4

30. There are 25 trainees in manufacturing, of which 22 are in fabrication and welding and three in welding. Ten fabrication and welding companies employ the

trainees. There are three modern apprentices in fabrication and welding. Over the last four years the recruitment of modern apprentices has fallen from 12 in 1996-97 to two in 1999-2000. The recruitment for other work-based trainees has averaged around 10 a year for the last four years. There are three trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 in fabrication and welding, all other trainees are on level 2 programmes. All trainees are employed and attend Bolton College for off-the-job training one day a week. Trainees spend half the day in the college's training workshops and the remaining time covering associated theory and engineering drawing. Trainees are also able to gain additional qualifications while at college, which are above the requirements of the NVQ or modern apprenticeship framework. The remaining four days are spent at work, where trainees receive instruction and gather work-based evidence for assessment. The training development officer visits trainees at college or at work, every four to six weeks to monitor progress and set targets for achievement by the next visit. The training development officer is occupationally qualified and an experienced engineer, and a workplace trainer and assessor. The self-assessment report did not accurately focus on clearly defined strengths and failed to identify some significant weaknesses. The weaknesses identified in the report have received some action, but it is too early to see improvements. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ some innovative off-the-job training
- ◆ relevant additional qualifications available
- ◆ employers actively involved with full NVQ and individual unit selection

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ no work-based assessment for NVQ trainees at level 3
- ◆ late start of key skills training and assessment
- ◆ no target setting for qualifications or key skill progression

31. One college subcontractor carries out most of the off-the-job training at one of two training sites. College tutors have developed a range of computer-based presentations, which provide an effective and realistic learning medium for trainees. These presentations are well designed and help trainees apply the welding theory successfully in the workshop. Off-the-job training is well structured and project-based, to comply with British Standard welding requirements.

32. Trainees also have the opportunity to take additional vocations qualifications including a coded welding certificate. This highly desirable qualification enables trainees to work on a broader range of tasks at work and the award enhances their career opportunities when fully qualified. The NVQs at level 2 and 3 are structured

so that all trainees complete a set of mandatory units and select from a list of optional units to complete the full award. Employers and trainees are actively involved in the choice of the optional units. This helps to include the trainees in the decision-making process and allows employers to help trainees select the most appropriate unit, taking into account both individual trainees' requests and the skill needs of the business.

33. The achievement rate in manufacturing has declined seriously over the last four contract years. Eight per cent of modern apprentices achieved in 1996-97 but this dropped to no further achievements over the next three years. Achievements for trainees on other youth training qualifications have also declined from 44 per cent in 1996-97 to 22 per cent in 1997-98, with no further achievements since. Trainees' retention rates have fluctuated, and now show signs of improvement with retention of modern apprentices at 17 per cent in 1996-97, 57 per cent in 1997-98, 25 per cent in 1998-99 and 100 per cent in 1999-2000. On other youth training programmes the retention rates were 55 per cent in 1996-97, 33 per cent in 1997-98, 75 per cent in 1998-99 and 100 per cent in 1999-2000. Trainees' qualification progress is linked to the traditional college academic year. All training courses start and finish in line with college term dates. Training, learning and assessment time is missed outside term times and trainees' progress toward qualification is slow.

34. There are currently three NVQ level 3 trainees who, as part of the awarding body's qualification requirement, should be assessed at work. BCTU has not carried out any work-based assessments for these trainees. The trainees themselves have only recently received the NVQ unit requirements for level 3. Trainees have a poor understanding of the assessment appeals procedure and are not fully aware of the lack of any level 3 workplace assessment. Key skills training is planned for all trainees, but training started late in the modern apprentices' programme and none so far have completed any key skills units. All key skills evidence is produced by trainees at the college. This is out of context from the workplace and does not meet the awarding body's requirement for the evidence for key skills to be drawn from work.

35. Training development officers carry out trainees' reviews at work or at college. BCTU is contracted to review qualification progress at least every 13 weeks. BCTU carries out these trainees' reviews more frequently. Trainees' reviews do not generally include the workplace supervisor. The reviews do not result in individual achievement targets being agreed on with the trainee and set for completion before the next review. This lack of a clear focus at review, together with the poor target-setting and the failure to include workplace supervisors, is a contributing factor to the low achievement and slow qualification progression rate.

Business administration

Grade 3

36. BCTU has 51 trainees in business administration and accounts training. Of

these, 36 are modern apprentices, six are national trainees, and seven are on other youth programmes. There is one New deal client, and one trainee identified as requiring additional learning support. Twenty-seven trainees are working towards an accounting technician qualification, and 24 towards an NVQ at either level 2 or 3 in business administration. Trainees have the opportunity to take additional qualifications in, for example, desktop publishing, health and safety and word processing. All but one trainee are in permanent full-time employment, in organisation representative of the local economy, including manufacturing and financial services. Trainees are visited at work by staff from the BCTU every eight weeks for the purpose of monitoring and reviewing progress. Employers or workplace supervisors are involved in the review process, which also offers an opportunity for more general issues and concerns affecting training, to be discussed. Some trainees are visited on a weekly basis in response to an identified need for such close support.

37. All trainees attend off-the-job training at Bolton College for one day each week throughout the college year. The tutors responsible for providing the training and assessment have relevant commercial experience, and hold appropriate assessor qualifications. Off-the-job training is classroom based. The morning session is normally used to develop key skills, using a programme of assignments. The afternoon session is used to support trainees in their individual action planning and portfolio building. Inspectors found additional weaknesses to those identified in the self-assessment report and awarded a lower grade than that given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ rigorous target-setting for qualification progression
- ◆ high standard of content in trainees' portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped workplace assessment arrangements
- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ key skills not linked to NVQ requirements

38. The trainees' workplaces are of a high quality and offer trainees an environment supportive of both personal development and progress towards qualification achievement. In most cases, employers premises are modern and well equipped to support on-the-job training. A number of employers and workplace supervisors have had recent experience of completing NVQs themselves. Trainees are integrated successfully into workplace teams, and given roles and responsibilities which promote self-confidence. Workplace staff support the qualification progress review process, and view their attendance at review meetings

as part of their commitment to trainees' progress and development.

39. Since September 1999, trainees have been required to prepare an action plan to monitor their own progress on a weekly basis. Included is the achievement of measurable unit and element targets from the NVQ. The action plans help to link college and workplace activities. The monitoring of action plans and targets is part of the formal eight-week review process. Trainees are clear as to the progress they are making towards qualification.

40. Trainees' portfolios are well organised, and the recording of evidence is clear and appropriately cross-referenced. As part of the college training, time is spent developing trainees' portfolios as a working record of progress and achievement. Trainees can refer to their portfolios to discuss the forms and types of evidence produced. In most cases, this includes appropriate use of witness testimony, and observation checklists from workplace supervisors, confirming trainees' workplace activities and experiences. Much of the evidence generated in the workplace relates closely to agreed targets and action plans, copies of which are prominent in the portfolios.

41. Qualified assessors visit trainees at work, for assessment purposes. This practice is not well developed. Some trainees are not aware that they have been assessed and employers and workplace supervisors have little recollection of these visits. The assessment visits are not planned, so trainees and employers are not able to fully participate in assessment and assessment planning nor do visits coincide with the best assessment opportunities as they occur. Workplace evidence is underused by trainees aiming to demonstrate their competence in key skills. The business administration trainees' assessment evidence is generated through a programme of assignments, completed at college. Trainees view key skills as being separate from their NVQ and as an addition to, rather than an integral part of, their training. While there is clear action planning in respect of the NVQ being followed, this planning does not include key skills.

42. Trainees' achievement and retention rates are poor. In 1998-99, for example, the retention rate for modern apprentices following an accounting technician qualification was 42 per cent, with 17 per cent achieving the target qualification. In 1997-98, the retention rate for modern apprentices following a business administration NVQ was 50 per cent, with 25 per cent achieving the qualification. Since September 1999, structures and arrangements have been put in place by BCTU to address the issue of poor retention and achievement. New staff have been appointed to monitor and support trainees' progress. Improvements to the interviewing of potential trainees now include detailed discussions at interview to establish that each trainee has the appropriate commitment and understanding of the work entailed to achieve the qualification. The current retention rate for trainees who have entered training since September 1999 is above 95 per cent. This improved profile of retention is matched with the clear evidence that trainees' progress towards qualification is on target for most to achieve their qualification aim.

Hospitality

Grade 4

43. BCTU has 17 trainees following NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3 in food preparation and cooking, food service and front office supervision. Of these trainees, five are national trainees, two are modern apprentices and 10 are on other youth training programmes. Four level 2 trainees are receiving additional learning support. All except three of the trainees are employed. Trainees are encouraged to gain extra qualifications in food hygiene. Training is primarily at work and trainees attend college for off-the-job training one day a week. This training includes theory, development of practical skills, portfolio development and key skills. The college training is given to groups or done on a one-to-one basis. Trainees work for one of 10 local employers, including hotels, restaurants, public houses, a hospice and residential nursing homes. There are four members of college and BCTU's staff involved in providing training, reviews and assessments. These include one training development officer and three tutor/assessors. The training development officer manages the work-based training programme and the three college tutors provide training at college, assessment and verification.

44. All staff are vocationally experienced and hold current and appropriate assessor or verifier qualifications. Most trainees leave their training to take up full-time employment. Over the past four years, no modern apprentice or national trainees have completed their individual training plans. For level 2 training, which includes national trainees and other youth training, retention rates have improved from 57 per cent in 1996-97 to 85 per cent in 1999-2000. Over the past four years, retention rates for level 3 programmes, including modern apprentices, have at best been 33 per cent (in 1997-1998) and at worst been 0 per cent in 1996-97. There has been a decrease in recruitment of modern apprentices from 14 trainees in 1996-97 to one trainee in 1999-2000, and an increase in recruitment to other youth training programmes from seven in 1996-97 to 17 in 1999-2000. The number of trainees leaving with an NVQ increased from 3 per cent in 1996-97 to 48 per cent in 1998-99, and dropped again to 37 per cent in 1999-2000. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment strength concerned with tutors annually updating their industrial skills and also with the weakness linked to assessments. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality, well-informed work placements
- ◆ assessors and tutors involved in annual skills updating
- ◆ good quality of college training sessions

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no workplace assessment and slow progress

- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ inappropriate training strategy
- ◆ trainees and employers not aware of trainee progress or achievement

45. The employers and industrial placements provide trainees with a good range of relevant skills development. Some employers have their own training packages leading to additional qualifications. Trainees who access this in-house training use open-learning study materials, attend external training courses and work with interactive CD-ROM software. All employers are well informed about the qualification requirements, and some are trained as assessors, providing BCTU with a valuable additional resource to the assessment process. Trainees are in positions of responsibility within the kitchens and are an integral part of the kitchen team.

46. Every year the tutors and assessors involved in providing hospitality training, receive a one- or two-week industrial updating secondment. This helps to ensure that the tutors maintain skills and knowledge that are appropriate to current industrial practice. This experience is also used to identify potential work placements and to foster good relationships between local companies and the college.

47. Trainees attend college for one day each week during college term times. The day is split into tutored theory sessions and practical skill development and assessment. Both sessions are well planned and structured. In the theory sessions, the tutor uses a variety of teaching methods and resources to aid learning. The training sessions provide trainees with accurate, detailed and clear information on the knowledge and understanding they require to underpin the practical training sessions. The trainees receive a workbook through which they can revise exercises and questions. Trainees with additional learning support needs receive handouts and a review pack. Those who are unable to attend a training session are accommodated at a late stage, either in smaller groups or through one-to-one tuition. There are schemes of work and lesson plans for the practical training sessions linked to the NVQ units. Training is provided through the use of practical demonstrations and individual coaching. Trainees enjoy off-the-job training and find it useful when they return to work.

48. While the first year of training is dedicated to learning the theoretical and practical aspects of hospitality, all assessments are carried out in a realistic work environment at the college during the second year of training. This means that any opportunity to gather naturally occurring evidence in the first year is missed. Little evidence of skill development or competencies mastered at work is used for assessment purposes. Trainees produce evidence each day at work of their competence and understanding under normal commercial pressures. All this evidence is wasted. There is no formal scheduling of assessment. Any trainee missing college training sessions in the second year also misses the opportunity for assessment. A backlog of assessments builds up towards the end of the second

year. The assessments in the college's realistic work environment are informal. Tutor/assessor feedback to trainees concentrates on the quality and presentation of the dish prepared rather than how the trainee's performance has satisfied or fallen short of the national standards. A recent external verifier's report has identified the need to record the assessment planning and feedback processes more thoroughly.

49. Trainees are unaware of their actual progress towards achieving the qualification or what they have left to do. Some believe that they have completed some NVQ units when they have only completed the theory workbook. The assessor/tutors use a trainee qualification progress-tracking sheet that shows individual completion of units towards the NVQ, but this information is not shared with the trainee.

50. As the trainees complete a two-year training programme, with the first year covering theory and developing knowledge, and the second year focused on assessment, no units of the qualification are assessed in the first year. No assessments take place during the summer. Trainees' programmes are not individualised: they cannot progress at their own pace. College training does not always match the trainees' job roles at work, and in some cases they have little opportunity to apply the college training at work. BCTU does not influence the duties trainees are required to do within the work placements to ensure that the NVQ is relevant. Trainees do not influence which qualification they take.

51. Trainees' retention rates have improved from an average retention rate in 1998-99 of 48 per cent. Most trainees recruited during 1999-2000 are still in training. Achievement rates are poor, with only eight of the 72 trainees that started training on all programmes over the last four years having completed their individual training plans. Some second year trainees are expected to complete their training plans within two months of the inspection. However, these trainees do not have any completed portfolios and have no units that have been signed off as complete by their assessor. The assessor's tracking sheets indicate that some of the units have been achieved but the trainees' assessment logbooks do not correspond to the assessor's records.

Hair & beauty

Grade 4

52. BCTU provides NVQ training at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing. During the college terms, nearly all trainees attend the college's Manchester Road campus for one-day-a-week's off-the-job training. Trainees can attend other local further education colleges in negotiation with BCTU. College-based training takes place within a suite of hair and beauty salons. It includes theory and practical hairdressing sessions and key skills training and assessments. The duration of NVQ level 2 is two years, and level 3 is a further 18 months. Most trainees start training at the beginning of the college academic year having been referred to the college by their employers. Trainees have already had a successful interview to secure employment or a work placement in a hairdressing salon. All employers' salons are subject to

initial and continuing health and safety checks by college staff, to assure their suitability for training.

53. Trainees are visited in their salons by the training development officer, who is a hairdresser, and who also teaches part-time at the college. Trainees' progress reviews occur every six weeks in the first year, every eight weeks in the second year of NVQ level 2 programmes and every 10 weeks for NVQ level 3 trainees. Currently there are 22 salons in the Bolton area providing employment or workplace experience for BCTU's trainees. Each trainee has an initial assessment before training starts to ensure that trainees have an appropriate training plan and qualification. The initial assessment also identifies any additional learning support needs a trainee may have to achieve the qualification. There are 27 hairdressing trainees, including one NVQ level 2 New Deal client. Four trainees are modern apprentices, and of these two are following NVQ level 3 and two are in their second year of NVQ level 2 training. There are 17 national trainees and five trainees on other level 2 NVQ work-based training programmes for young people. Trainee numbers have fluctuated over the last four years, from 24, to 34, to 23 trainees between 1997 and 1999. Inspectors confirmed some of the strengths in the self-assessment report and found others to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors also confirmed many of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality salon workplaces
- ◆ good standards of hairdressing skills demonstrated by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ missed work-based assessment opportunities
- ◆ poor qualification and key skills understanding by workplace supervisors
- ◆ no structured on-the-job training

54. BCTU contracts with a range of good-quality local salons for work-based training. The salons are modern and well equipped using a range of professional hairdressing products. The salon treatments and clients offer opportunities for trainees to progress well and cover the NVQ requirements. The salons are well decorated, clean and tidy. They have good health and safety practices, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, such as aprons and rubber gloves for chemical work. Trainees are smartly and professionally dressed in both on- and off-the-job training environments. The standard of the trainees' hairdressing skills are good.

55. Trainees carry out a wide variety of treatments both in the college training salons and in the workplaces. These include modern styling, waving, and colouring

techniques and both modern and traditional cutting and styling. Most trainees work on their own clients each week in their salons as well as in the college training and assessment sessions. The training development officer visits trainees in their salons according to their individual needs every four to 10 weeks. The visits are to review on- and off-the-job progress with the trainee and the employer and to discuss any issues of concern. Teamwork between the hairdressing trainers at the college and BCTU's staff is good. Frequent informal communication helps to address training issues and maintain regular communication with employers. Formal communications includes regular meetings and sharing trainees' attendance records. The close proximity of BCTU's offices to the college hairdressing facilities used by nearly all the trainees also helps to maintain close teamworking. Retention rates on all training programmes are satisfactory and improving. In 1997-98, this was 41 per cent. In 1998-99 it was 65 per cent and in 1999-2000 it was 72 per cent.

56. Achievement by trainees of all aspects of their individual training plan targets is poor. No modern apprentices completed their individual training plans in 1997-98. In 1998-99, 20 per cent completed. For national trainees who have finished their programmes, 37 per cent completed their individual training plans in 1998-99. For trainees on other work-based programmes for young people, 11 per cent completed in 1996-97, 6 per cent completed in 1997-98, and none completed in 1998-99. Trainees' progress towards their qualifications is slow and there is a lack of NVQ unit accreditation throughout the programme. Nearly all NVQ hairdressing practical assessments and key skills assessments take place only in the second year of the level 2 programme. College hairdressing staff expect that trainees will attend for the full two years of the programme to complete the level 2 qualification. The off-the-job delivery and assessment strategies are planned to use this time. There is no fast tracking for the more able or experienced trainees. Some trainees have experience of working in hairdressing salons prior to starting. Those with prior experience do not achieve significantly quicker than other trainees. Most trainees only complete one NVQ unit (shampooing) and the key skill information technology unit at level 1 by the end of their first year at college. In first-year practical hairdressing classes, trainees lose their own training time as they have to act as models for other members of the group. Second-year NVQ level 2 trainees and NVQ level 3 trainees are encouraged to bring friends and family to college salon sessions to ensure that they have clients for training and assessment.

57. The assessment of theory through written and oral work is often carried out separately to the related practical skills. Little use is made of work-based evidence. Too much assessment is by simulated assignments in college. NVQ level 2 and 3 portfolios contain a limited range of evidence, most of which is the direct observation of practical skills in the college salons, or college-based theory work. Progress towards the NVQ level 3 is slow; no units have been completed after six months on the programme. Nearly all the key skills training and assessments use hairdressing-related terminology and case studies, but it is carried out in simulated college conditions. Work-based salon stylists who are qualified assessors are not included in the college's internal verification processes; and the internal verifier does not visit employers' salons or observe BCTU's assessor. There is no

observation of the salon-based assessors' practices to quality assure their work, support them or share good practice.

58. Salon employers and stylists who supervise the trainees at work have a poor awareness of the criteria and requirements of the NVQs and the key skills awards. Workplace supervisors lack an awareness of the detail of the different units and elements of the awards to help trainees identify appropriate treatments for training and assessment activities. Employers have recently been given copies of the BCTU's new employers' handbook, which contains much useful information relating to the work-based training programmes.

59. The salons' on-the-job training activities are not structured to relate to the NVQ requirements and the on- and off-the-job training activities are not synchronised. Salon trainers lack knowledge of the off-the-job training programme content, the way it is structured and the order in which the topics are delivered. On-the-job salon training activities are not systemically monitored, reviewed and evaluated by BCTU or college hairdressing staff.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

60. Bolton College has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. It is all embracing, covering the student charter requirements, access to support, discrimination, bullying and so on. It does not, however, specifically refer to work-based training. BCTU has adopted the college's equal opportunities policy for its own use. This meets the requirements of the TEC. All of BCTU's staff have a copy of the policy and a summary statement is issued to all trainees. There is a separate induction pack for trainees who have been identified as requiring additional training support. Of the 468 trainees, 379 are men. Only 15 trainees (4 per cent) are from minority ethnic groups. Minority ethnic groups make up 8 per cent of the local population. Fourteen trainees have disabilities. Sixty-three have been identified as requiring additional learning support. Equal opportunities data are monitored on a monthly basis. Some analysis of these data takes place, and equal opportunities plans are based on this information and reviewed annually. Equal opportunities statements appear on most of BCTU's documents. Inspectors awarded the same grade as was given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive celebration of trainees' achievements
- ◆ publicity materials available in languages other than English
- ◆ effective use of specialist facilities for trainees with additional support needs
- ◆ active participation in local initiatives to address under-representation

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little awareness by trainees or employers of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ little monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements

61. Although BCTU recruits only 4 per cent of trainees from minority ethnic groups, this percentage is broadly representative of the number of trainees from minority ethnic groups entering work-based training from the local community. BCTU effectively publicises the achievements of all trainees in the local press. This includes examples of a young woman building studies trainee who has won the construction trainee of the year award for the second year running; women gas fitters, and those from minority ethnic groups achieving the light vehicle car technicians certificate. Publicity material with non-stereotypical images is distributed by BCTU to local employers. These are used at careers events on large display boards and on leaflets and other publicity materials. BCTU produces publicity material and information, in languages other than English, which are spoken in the local population. Interpreters from the ESOL unit of the college are available to translate for applicants as necessary.

62. There are two specialist units within the Bolton College, one for people with visual impairment and the other for those with hearing impairment. BCTU's trainees have unrestricted access to these facilities. Neither BCTU nor the college collect statistical data on the usage of these facilities by trainees.

63. BCTU is involved in a number of initiatives to help attract people from groups not traditionally represented in training. These include pre-school leavers to long- and short-term unemployed people and those disaffected from education and training. Initiatives are undertaken with the buildings department of the local authority. This enables BCTU to make contact with a group of individuals who would not normally access training.

64. Employers have their own equal opportunities policy or are given BCTU's policy to adopt and use. At induction, trainees are given information about equal opportunities. The assessment and appeals procedure is not clearly understood by trainees. They are unclear how to appeal against assessment decisions. Most trainees only have a superficial understanding of how the grievance procedures support them and how to process a complaint although they did know the name of whom they should contact. Some complaints have been received, however, and these have been responded to quickly by BCTU, with issues being resolved for all parties concerned. Any complaint received is recorded in a central file, and action is also recorded. Employers are unclear about how they can promote and improvement equality of opportunity in the workplace. No effective monitoring takes place to ensure trainees, employers and subcontractors understand and support an agreed equal opportunities policy.

65. BCTU's staff receive equal opportunities information as part of their induction and staff have recently attended training that considered equal opportunities support at recruitment. However, there is no equal opportunities staff training or updating on a planned or regular basis. BCTU uses Bolton College's equal opportunities policy which has not been adapted to focus on the specific needs of work-based training. The policy is four-years old and has not yet been reviewed.

Trainee support

Grade

GOOD PRACTICE

A hospitality trainee required additional learning support, so he has discrete one-to-one tuition, and some of the qualification assessment and training materials have been put onto audio tape for him. The trainee receives feedback on his audio-tape responses within the week.

66. Trainees are recruited directly from the careers service, from schools, through employers or are full-time college students. Bolton College's student services section arranges for school link visits and vocational 'taster' sessions within all occupational sectors of the college. BCTU's staff attend careers functions within the local area. All prospective trainees are interviewed by staff or referred directly into training schemes by the college's student services department. Prospective trainees are assessed by qualified training development officers from BCTU on their suitability for a training programme and advice is given on appropriate courses. Those prospective trainees, who are identified as requiring additional learning support, undergo a basic literacy and numeracy skills test to analyse any specific learning needs. At this stage, a training and development officer is located to each trainee. The training and development officer generally carries out the NVQ induction. BCTU's trainees use the college's student services and the learning support facilities. Nearly all BCTU' trainees attend college, where they receive a further course induction before starting NVQ training. Key skills training is provided for all trainees, except those in horticulture, irrespective of whether it is a required part of the NVQ framework. Trainees are visited at work by the training and development officer at frequencies of between and 10 weeks, depending upon individual needs. Retention rates have been improving throughout the training. The training and development officer is the main link between the employer, BCTU and Bolton College's tutors. The training and development officer monitors trainees' progress towards their qualifications. Trainees have an induction into the workplace and this is usually provided by the employer or workplace supervisor. The self-assessment report contained strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Other strengths and weaknesses were found and inspectors awarded the same grader as was given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive school links and recruitment initiatives
- ◆ good induction at BCTU, the subcontractor and in the workplace
- ◆ frequent pastoral support during reviews
- ◆ comprehensive college learning support facilities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor trainees' review documents
- ◆ no systematic accreditation of prior learning

67. BCTU uses the student services, guidance and learning support facilities of Bolton College. The college has effective links with some 40 schools in the Bolton area. Student services' staff, occupational tutors and training development officers visit schools to carry out 'industrial awareness' days. Year 10 and 11 school pupils are also invited into the college for one- or two-week taster sessions. This enables them to have experience of a chosen occupational area. These sessions enable prospective trainees to explore employment and further education options. Some of these school pupils have progressed onto hair and beauty training and construction programmes.

68. Most prospective trainees are referred from the careers service, but some apply to BCTU directly and others are transferred from college courses. Prospective BCTU trainees complete an application form and a basic skills assessment test. The training and development officer responsible for the trainees chosen occupational area follows this initial assessment with careers advice and guidance. Those prospective trainees who are identified as requiring learning support are either referred back to the careers service or to the college's student services. The training development officers then arrange interviews for the prospective trainees with an employer. Those who are successful come back to BCTU for the first of three induction sessions. Those who are unsuccessful have further interviews arranged until employment is secured.

69. Trainees commence their work placement or employment with a company induction programme. New companies undergo a scheduled screening test by BCTU to ensure that the company can provide the training and range of experience required for the qualification. Health and safety checks are carried out on the premises. This health and safety inspection is reviewed every six months to ensure no changes of circumstances are affecting the trainees' welfare.

70. Training development officers liaise with the trainees and college tutors on a regular and informal basis. Trainees' retention rates in some areas has improved considerably owing to an increase in formal trainees' reviews. These are now every four weeks for first-year trainees, four to eight weeks for second-year trainees and 10 weeks for third-year trainees. Where appropriate, trainees are visited more frequently. This action is in response to an identified weakness of poor trainees' retention and NVQ achievement rates.

71. The college has a range of learning support facilities which can be used by trainees as well as college students. The support staff are experienced and well qualified. These resources include special equipment and computer software for those who have physical, hearing and sight impairments. This is in addition to

support facilities for those with dyslexia or literacy or numeracy difficulties. The college guidance centre helps trainees who require assistance with social and personal problems. All BCTU's trainees are reminded of the student services, guidance and learning support facilities by a variety of colourful posters, placed around the college. The student services facility is easily accessible and is located opposite the college's main reception area.

72. BCTU's trainees' review documents do not allow for the clear recording of individual trainee's NVQ unit progression or for detailed records of any progress targets set between BCTU and the trainee. Trainees do not receive a copy of the review documents to enable them to control their own progress and meet set targets by the next review. Employers and workplace supervisors are not always involved in the trainees' review preventing them from engaging with the trainees' progress. Some employers do not routinely receive a copy of the trainees' review.

73. BCTU does not systematically accredit trainees who have prior learning or experience. For example, hairdressing trainees who have extensive experience of Saturday hairdressing work do not have this experience taken into account. Engineering trainees with level 2 engineering foundation qualifications are recruited onto other level 2 and 3 engineering programmes without credit being given for prior qualifications or experience.

Management of training

Grade 4

74. BCTU is a separate, although not autonomous, wholly owned subsidiary department of Bolton College. It has its own staff who are directly employed by the college. One of the main college directors has overall responsibility for BCTU. The BCTU manager sits on the college management board and has parity with the other college curriculum area managers. Lines of communication, job roles and the BCTU's organisational structure are clearly defined. The college director responsible for work-based training has only recently taken over this role. Also, some of BCTU's staff have extended their roles to include work-based assessment, but not across all occupational areas. BCTU has its own business plan for the current year, which is founded on the main objectives of the college's strategic plan. BCTU presently subcontracts all training and most assessment to five further education colleges, one higher education institute and one training provider. The most significant of these subcontractor arrangements is between BCTU and Bolton College itself, which has enrolled 91 per cent of all BCTU's trainees. BCTU is charged for the services that the college offers, and is regarded as a separate cost centre in this respect. BCTU has a team of six training development officers and one work-based assessor. Most are vocationally qualified for their area of responsibility and all are qualified assessors. The main roles of the training development officers are to conduct trainees' progress reviews, to be the first contact for trainees' welfare support, and to liaise with employers and college tutors. Some of the training development officers assess trainees at work. Trainees

are either employed or are on work-experience placements. Training is with 235 employers throughout the local area, ranging from small independent businesses to local authorities. There are recorded procedures for staff recruitment and an established appraisal system. The college has been recently re-accredited with the Investors in People Standard. BCTU has, within the past 12 months, introduced a set of 10 key performance indicators aimed at improving the provision, which set targets that go beyond contractual obligations. It is too early to establish how successful BCTU has been in achieving these objectives, and little reliable evidence is available to measure any significant difference at this stage.

75. The self-assessment report quite accurately identified the key strengths and weaknesses of the management of training. The text in the self-assessment report, however, lacked judgement and was very descriptive. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective communication with subcontractors
- ◆ comprehensive subcontractor arrangements clarify responsibilities
- ◆ focused development for BCTU's staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no effective management of work-based training and assessment
- ◆ little use of comparative data to inform management decisions
- ◆ inflexible programmes of learning
- ◆ infrequent assessment

76. BCTU's staff work closely with Bolton College's personnel department. There is regular liaison between training development officers and college tutors, which involves at least weekly meetings, and, in many cases, daily contact. Much of the communication is informal but effective. Each occupational sector in the college also has formal team meetings which are generally attended by training development officers. There are similar strong links with BCTU's other subcontractors.

77. Contracts have been agreed between BCTU and each of the subcontractors. These stipulate certain requirements and clarify the level of service that is expected. BCTU has rigorous selection criteria for all its subcontractors. BCTU contracts individually with each occupational sector at Bolton College. Sector heads sign agreements and BCTU ensures that all relevant college co-ordinators and tutors are aware of their responsibilities. BCTU closely monitors that the standards of service are being met. This is done through personal contact between training development officers and subcontractors' staff, review meetings with trainees and

regular feedback from trainees and employers. Action is taken if performance is causing concern. One agricultural college completely changed its off-the-job training arrangements in response to negative feedback from employers about losing their trainee at peak periods.

78. BCTU's staff access the same staff appraisal and development programme as their main college colleagues. All college tutors have an annual round of industrial secondment, where they spend a whole week updating their professional skills. This is not yet available to BCTUs' training development officers.

79. Work-based training lack structure and planning. Training is often inflexible and employers are not fully involved in training and assessment. The co-ordination between off-the-job training run by the college and skills development at work is ineffective and many opportunities are missed to collect assessment evidence from the workplace. Employers are generally unclear about their trainees' progress towards qualifications. Where employers provide in-house training, BCTU often fails to record this or is unaware that this training has been undertaken.

80. The present management-information system does not allow easy access to statistical data. This has been recognised by managers who have recently purchased a new database. This is, in the first instance, being installed to improve the main college's management information and will then be used for BCTU's trainees. Until now, data have been used to monitor trainees' performance against the TEC's contractual targets only. There has been no use of statistical data to analyse retention and achievement across the different occupational areas. BCTU has access to a range of both qualitative and quantitative data. It does not systematically use this information for action-planning purposes. Management decisions are not routinely guided by a detailed analysis of trends.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

81. BCTU has a range of quality assurance procedures to control nearly all the key aspects of training and meet the contractual requirements of Bolton and Bury CCTE. BCTU's training contracts manager is responsible for quality assurance. The self-assessment report failed to adequately address the quality of the training. The training contract manager produced it using the results of questionnaires given to trainees and employers. BCTU and the college's staff were all encouraged to participate in producing the self-assessment report and their comments were used to compile the final draft. The report is more descriptive than evaluative. BCTU has reviewed and restructured the quality assurance systems and staffing for work-based training. However, changes are still in the early stages of implementation and many are not fully established.

82. BCTU has adopted the comprehensive quality assurance manual of Bolton College. The quality assurance manual does not refer to, or contain any procedures directly linked to, work-based training. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that

given by BCTU in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective quality assurance procedures for subcontracted off-the-job training
- ◆ effective action planning for identified weaknesses

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no procedures for quality assuring on-the-job training
- ◆ underdeveloped monitoring of achievements and destinations
- ◆ some inadequate internal verification procedures

83. BCTU's quality assurance procedures are designed to incorporate all college activities. The training provided by Bolton College is quality assured through the college's own observation of classroom activities. This monitoring is linked to staff development, and is effective.

84. Subcontractors, employers, BCTU's staff and trainees' views were sought as part of the self-assessment process. Each was sent a series of questionnaires, and survey. The analysis of the feedback provided the basis for the self-assessment report. An action plan was produced by BCTU, based on its self-assessed strengths and weaknesses. BCTU, through its monthly team meetings, monitors the progress of the action plan. As a result of self-assessment and action planning some improvements in training have been made. For example, it was recognised that some trainees were taking nearly two years to complete foundation-level qualifications. A change made to the methods used to manage and organise this training has reduced the training period from up to two years to an average of seven months. BCTU relies heavily on the co-operation of subcontractors to resolve any issues identified through self-assessment. It does not monitor subcontractors to ensure that changes are made and there are no formal arrangements with any subcontractor to ensure that issues identified through self-assessment, or by any other means, are effectively resolved.

85. The college's quality framework, which has been adopted by BCTU does not include arrangements to quality assure work-based training. BCTU is not able to formally establish and influence the standards of training, assessments and learning for trainees at work. The monitoring arrangements for quality assuring work-based training are underdeveloped and BCTU is unable to make informed recommendations for continuous improvement. BCTU has no reliable data on trainees' achievements and destinations. There is insufficient investigation as to why trainees' achievements and retention rates are higher in some occupational areas than others. Training development officers, who carry out assessments at work, do not record these activities in the same way. Different methods are used by different assessors and there are no arrangements for identifying and sharing

good assessment practice.

86. Internal verification in some occupational areas lack rigour, planning and sufficiency. For example, in hairdressing, work-based stylists who are qualified assessors, are not included in the college's internal verification processes and the internal verifier does not visit employers' salons. There is no observation of the salon-based assessors' practices to check the quality and improve their work, or share good practice. In manufacturing, internal verification is not planned or systematic. In hospitality, a recent external verification report requested action to be taken to review the internal verification systems and prepare detailed sampling plans. There is no thorough internal verification of key skills training. There are no formal procedures to ensure that internal verification is being carried out.

87. The self-assessment report accurately identified a number of significant weaknesses, however, references to the quality and standard of training and assessment were not emphasised. Judgements in the report relied heavily on the analysis of questionnaire responses and failed to fully reflect the quality of the training.