

Ayrshire College

**A report on the review of off-the-job training in
engineering Modern Apprenticeships by HM
Inspectors**



The external review process

Key features of external review

External reviews will be structured according to the quality framework *External quality arrangements for the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-job training*, which can be found on Education Scotland's website.

Reviews will involve the 12 core quality indicators, which provide the minimum requirements for Education Scotland to evaluate the delivery centre against the six high-level questions. There will be scope for review teams to use other quality indicators in the framework in a proportionate way, depending on identification of risk or excellence or analysis of a centre's context.

Reviewers will report the outcome of external review visits in terms of strengths and areas for development with grades awarded for each of the six high-level questions. After each review visit to a centre, the team will provide verbal feedback on key strengths and areas for development to senior managers and contractors. The Lead Inspector (LI) for the visit will discuss and agree with the review team provisional grades from the six point scale to assign a grade to each of the six high-level questions.

These grades will be incorporated into the national report on the industry sector. The national report will have grades for each of the six questions. It will reflect findings from all of the delivery centre visits and will be published after all the review visits have taken place by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

This report contains the grades awarded by the team for the six high-level questions:

- Grade 1 EXCELLENT – *Outstanding and sector leading*
- Grade 2 VERY GOOD – *Major strengths*
- Grade 3 GOOD – *Important strengths with some areas for improvement*
- Grade 4 SATISFACTORY - *Strengths just outweigh weaknesses*
- Grade 5 WEAK – *Important weaknesses*
- Grade 6 UNSATISFACTORY – *Major weaknesses*

Grades will be awarded in the following six areas:

- **Outcomes and impact**

1. How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?
2. How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?

- **Service delivery**

3. How good is our delivery of training?
4. How good is our management of the delivery of training?

- **Leadership and quality culture**

5. How good is our strategic leadership?

Global judgment based on evidence of all key areas, in particular Outcomes, Impact and Leadership.

6. How good are internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance our provision and delivery?

1. Introduction

The external review by Education Scotland took place from 5 to 7 May 2015.

We examined learning and teaching and other important activities that impact on the quality of the apprentice experience. We evaluated these against the three high level principles of Outcomes and Impact, Service Delivery and Leadership and Quality Culture, using the 12 reference quality indicators outlined in *External quality arrangements for the review of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-job training April 2015*.

During the review, the review team identified examples of practice worthy of dissemination (listed at the end of this report). These examples may appear in the published national report.

The external review team talked with apprentices, staff at all levels and employers.

2. The centre and its context

In carrying out the external review of Ayrshire College, Education Scotland took the following context fully into account.

Since vesting day on 1 August 2013, the college has worked with partners to raise awareness of the new college and the possibilities it presents to the people, communities and businesses of Ayrshire. Strategic engagement with employers and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) partners supports the college to regularly review and realign their core provision to meet the skills needs of the region.

The college is working with employers across the region to support a range of models to deliver Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), including day release and workplace assessment. MA starts in 2014-15 show a significant increase in Engineering.

At the time of the external review, 190 apprentices were involved in off-the-job training in Engineering across campuses in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Nethermains.

3. Outcome of external review

Grades were awarded in the following six areas:

Outcomes and impact	
How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?	Very good
How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	Excellent
Service delivery	
How good is our delivery of key training?	Very good
How good is our management of training delivery?	Excellent
Leadership and quality culture	
How good is our strategic leadership?	Excellent
Capacity for improvement	
How good are internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance the delivery of training?	Excellent

Areas of positive practice

- very high levels of outcomes and progression for apprentices;
- effective responses to local and national policies;
- wide range of programmes available that meet the needs of employers;
- highly effective employer engagement;
- apprentices are highly motivated during their off-the-job training;
- highly committed college staff who are skilled and experienced;
- good resources;
- apprentices develop high levels of vocational skills;
- effective stakeholder engagement with local authorities, schools and other agencies; and
- clear vision and direction with *Building for the future through learning and skills* as a priority.

Areas for development

- a few issues relating to health and safety;
- college processes for quality improvement are not sufficiently focused on the MA programmes;
- recognition of prior learning; and
- involvement of apprentices in planning their own learning.

4. OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

How effective is the centre at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?

Average attainment rates for apprentices completing off-the job training elements of the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes are high. In most areas, rates are significantly higher than the national average of 75%, and withdrawal rates are very low. The college's outcome agreement sets out targets for MA contracts, based on intelligence from the local community and the engineering delivery team. These targets are used effectively to support the bid for contracts and support the further development of highly effective partnerships with employers. Progression by apprentices onto level 3 programmes (on-the-job training) is 100%, with attainment rates of 86% for completed MAs. The college is achieving its key contractual performance targets and is regarded as a low risk, high quality provider by Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

How well do centres adhere to statutory principles and guidance?

Almost all staff proactively engage with employers as part of a well-developed college strategy to design and deliver off-the-job training for apprentices in engineering that suit employer needs. All programmes are well-designed to meet the lead body standards of the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (SEMTEA), EMTA Awards Ltd (EAL) and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The college takes good account of national and regional policy development and uses these drivers well to inform contractual bids and curriculum planning for MAs. Useful standardisation meetings are held regularly by college staff to ensure that awarding body standards for engineering are met across all campuses. However, during the external review, a few staff did not enforce standards for health and safety rigorously.

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?

The college offers a wide range of programmes to support access to apprenticeships, off-the-job training opportunities and on-the-job continuation. Employers – value highly the flexibility of the college delivery arrangements, which - they -negotiate with the college to best suit their business needs. The college is taking positive action to address the need to recruit more females into engineering apprenticeship programmes and is involved in a number of initiatives to progress this.

Quarterly review meetings are carried out to good effect by college staff which support apprentices well to identify future learning goals and to monitor their achievements.

Employers also contribute effectively to these reviews and help to review goals with business needs in mind. Although core skills attainment rates are high, apprentices identify that they frequently repeat some content which they may have covered previously before the start of their apprenticeship programme. A few staff do not take full account of prior learning to inform planning and delivery for some individual apprentices. Feedback from employers and apprentices is very positive. Employers are confident that apprentices are benefitting from their off-the-job training at college and are developing good vocational skills.

How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?

The college has a well-developed strategy - to support the delivery of MAs. It engages well with a range of key stakeholders, consults market economy data and listens well to college teams to inform its curriculum planning process. The college takes good account of local and national policy and priorities including CPPs, Developing Scotland's Young Workforces (DYW) and SDS's Regional Skills Assessment, to ensure their curriculum provision is fit for purposes and addresses these well. Engagement with employers is at the centre of its vision. It works hard to develop meaningful relationships with employers and other stakeholders and has developed a strong reputation for meeting their needs in a very responsive and flexible way.

Staff are proactive in engaging with existing partners and employers, whilst also promoting the college to other employers in the area through a range of forums and interactions. Apprentices and staff regularly engage with schools to promote, *Girls into Engineering*, and modern apprenticeships as real career opportunities. All employers are highly satisfied with the training provided by the college, with most employers involved in the planning of the programmes. Apprentices are also very satisfied with their college experience. However, opportunities to fully engage apprentices explicitly in the evaluation of programmes are not fully embedded.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY

How good is our delivery of key training?

How well does the design and delivery of training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?

The college offers a range of provision at levels that meets the needs of local employers well. The college works very effectively in partnership with employers and the engineering industries more generally. The college tailors programmes to suit employers' requirements, and their preferred mode of delivery, which they value highly. The engineering areas within the college are well-resourced, with some areas equipped beyond industry standards. Generally, the classroom and workshop environment is spacious and creates an appropriate environment for off-the-job training to take place effectively. However, the environment in the Kilmarnock campus is dated and although new equipment is available, some of the general classrooms don't allow the full range of teaching techniques to be used by staff. Occasionally, connectivity is variable in some classrooms and interactive whiteboards cannot be used due to too much light.

Most apprentices are highly motivated and engage with their off-the-job training with commitment and enthusiasm. In almost all classes, staff relationships with apprentices are purposeful and productive. Most full-time apprentices have the opportunity to reflect on their progress during weekly guidance sessions with their *Learner Advisor* who also delivers part of their training. Additional support or remediation sessions can also be arranged where apprentices identify specific support needs. The formal quarterly review meetings which apprentices undertake in the workplace also allow them to reflect in detail on their progress.

How well is training delivered?

Staff plan the delivery of programmes well, to take account of employer needs, the needs of apprentices and geographical locations. College staff are knowledgeable and well-qualified to deliver the apprenticeship programmes across a wide range of engineering disciplines. They share their knowledge well through regular and routine team *Standardisation Meetings*.

Apprentices develop their confidence during their time at college and they work well independently in classes on allocated tasks. Apprentices contribute well to class discussions. Staff provide one-to-one support effectively which allows apprentices to progress at their own pace.

Almost all teaching areas allow wi-fi access. The development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) into a more enhanced *Ayrshire Moodle*, whilst at early stages, already provides relevant materials for apprentices who may be unable to attend the college, or who wish to study outside their college time. Apprentices are encouraged to access online content independently prior to the start of their programmes. Apprentices enjoy their college programmes and benefit from the skills they develop through off-the-job training, which underpins what they do back in the workplace. However, for a few apprentices, the importance of standards in relation to the basic employability skills of attendance and punctuality require to be reinforced.

How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?

The college has in place comprehensive quality arrangements, which the staff delivering apprenticeship programmes follow as required. Although self-evaluation activity is undertaken by the STEM teams, much is not disaggregated sufficiently for a specific focus on MAs. Where areas for improvement are identified, teams discuss strategies across the programmes, which often include enhancements to programmes that affect apprentices. Staff discuss delivery and materials development to good effect and make improvements to enhance the skills developed by apprentices. However, apprentices are not fully aware of the class representative system in the college, and many day release apprentices are not familiar with how they might influence the planning or delivery of their training. Whilst most are aware of an annual student survey undertaken by the college, they are not engaged in how the results could affect them. However, apprentices identify that through strong partnership working with college staff they are confident that any direct feedback they provide to them is usually acted upon.

How well do employers and apprentices participate in the development and planning of training?

Apprentices on full-time programmes have the opportunity for weekly guidance and review conversations which are built into their programmes. Staff are effective at working on a one-to-one basis with apprentices to negotiate and agree next steps for individuals. They provide helpful feedback from on-going assessment in class which helps apprentices to plan and prepare well for final examinations and tests. However, apprentices are not fully aware of how they might be involved in planning their learning, although they can identify discussions, through monitoring carried out by their assessors and employers, where targets are reviewed and adjustments made

Employer forums and strong employer engagement across the engineering areas provides strong intelligence to inform programme planning and delivery. The college responds promptly to feedback from employers where programmes don't exactly match their requirements, and generally provide solutions. Effective, regular communication with employers based on mutual respect and a strong commitment to employer engagement allows the college to share plans and targets for the future with local companies.

How good is our management of training delivery?

How well does the centre work with partners to improve outcomes for apprentices?

College staff have been very effective in establishing strong partnership arrangements with local companies and other stakeholders. The college has an effective relationship with SDS, and is regarded as a high quality provider. Regular discussions and workplace visits by college staff ensure that apprentices are supported well across their apprenticeship programmes. The college is a highly respected partner providing a recruitment service for local employers. The recruitment and selection of potential apprentices are carried out to good effect by the college, adding value to the employers as a result. Staff and managers work well with local schools at primary and secondary level to attract more young people into engineering and are actively considering the

development in the future of Foundation Apprenticeships. The college aligns their priorities well with the recommendations of DYW, and their work in relation to addressing the gender imbalance is beginning to have impact. The opportunities for further learning beyond completion of apprenticeship programmes are substantially enhanced through the strong articulation arrangements and guaranteed places which the college has in place with universities.

6. LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY CULTURE

How good is our strategic leadership?

How effective is leadership for partnership working and delivery of training?

The overarching vision and direction for the college is clearly outlined in their strategic plan. Targets and goals reflect the needs of the business community and align to the Ayrshire Economic Partnership. These are clearly communicated to staff who recognise the importance of employer engagement as a key driver for delivery. The college has aligned effectively the planning and delivery of MAs in engineering to DYW. Strategic links with employers are strong. The college actively engages in the North Ayrshire engineering forum, holds breakfast meetings with employers to consult on their practice in terms of meeting industry needs and uses this intelligence -to good effect to confirm the relevance of MA provision. The college is engaged with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Ayrshire Councils' Economic Development Department to encourage new employers to engage with apprenticeships. Employers are fully involved in the strategic and operational planning of the MA engineering provision. Engineering staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and have a strong commitment to meeting industry standards. They work well with college managers in shaping and delivering the strategic direction of the MA engineering team.

How well do leaders secure improvements in the quality and impact of training?

Apprentices are confident in taking forward areas of concern with college staff to inform change. They are listened to, and appropriate actions are taken in response to their comments. However, the full benefits of the current college processes for quality improvement are not yet fully realised with specific reference to the MA programmes. The college does not generally clearly differentiate their strategy for MAs from the wider quality improvement activity of the Directorate. Their analysis of data would also be more helpful with a sub-set focused on MAs in Engineering. The college meets SDS performance requirements effectively. This has recently resulted in an increased contract value for engineering apprenticeships.

7. CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

How good are our internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance our provision and delivery?

Outcomes for apprentices at Ayrshire College for off-the-job training are high.

Managers and staff in Ayrshire College have a strong commitment to employer engagement which is at the heart of college plans and strategies. Partnership working in relation to the engineering MA provision is particularly strong and the college has developed a reputation for high quality training and responsiveness to employer needs. Specialist areas have been developed within the college and particularly strong partnerships exist within the aeronautical industries.

The college quality arrangements are used appropriately in relation to self-reflection activities by the teams delivering MAs in engineering. However, staff do not currently disaggregate some of the general analysis of data and improvement activity carried out by the STEM teams, in order to present a clear, focused review of MAs in particular. The college recognises this as a worthwhile exercise which would show a clearer picture of their success.

Feedback from employers and apprentices is very positive and informs the review and development of programmes for the future. Apprentices are not yet fully aware of how they might influence the planning or delivery of their training.

8. Signposting excellent practice

During the Education Scotland external review, the review team identified examples of practice worthy of dissemination. These examples may appear in the published national report:

- **Partnership of the Year with Ryanair – SQA finalist**
- **Magnificent Women in their Flying Machines – *Girls into Engineering***
- **Composite Materials Centre of Excellence for Scotland – accredited by the National Skills Academy for Process Industries**
- **Online aircraft licence module exams for the Civil Aviation Authority - one of only 4 sites in the UK; very important to support aircraft maintenance partners who need some of their apprentices to become licenced engineers**
- **GE Caledonian partnership working – twilight delivery to get through apprenticeship in one year**
- **GSK/SQA/College joint development of customised award in manufacturing**
- **Bulldog Week at Ayr campus – remediation over the summer**

9. What happens next?

This report will inform the national report.

Janet P Gardner
HM Inspector

10. Further information

For further information about Education Scotland, the external review methodologies, or other information about reviews, see www.educationscotland.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

HM Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
LI	Lead Inspector
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SEMTA	Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies
EAL	EMTA Awards Ltd
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
DYW	Developing Scotland's Young Workforce
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Appendix 2

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs
12	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner		↑	Professional Apprenticeship
11			↑	Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10			↑	Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate
8	Higher National Diploma	↑	Diploma Of Higher Education	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	↓	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
6	Higher	↑	↓	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
5	National 5 Intermediate 2	↑	↓	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2
4	National 4 Intermediate 1	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ 1
3	National 3 Access 3	↑	↓	
2	National 2 Access 2	↑	↓	
1	National 1 Access 1	↑	↓	