

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by

Edinburgh and District Employers'
Training Association Ltd

A report by HM Inspectors

31/10/2023

CEO/Principal	Brian Thorpe
External review date	3 October 2023
Provider type	Independent Training Provider
Lead HMI	Joe Mulholland
Apprentice numbers	137

1. Background

External reviews of Modern Apprenticeship providers are planned collaboratively between the provider and HM Inspectors. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provide information regarding provider performance including key data to support this process.

During the review, a team of HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of training provision and the experiences of apprentices and key stakeholders such as employers. During the visit, the team met with staff, apprentices and other stakeholders and explored the quality of training delivery, how well the needs of apprentices are met, and approaches to improving quality of provision.

This report summarises the findings from the visit, awards grades for the three elements and highlights areas of positive practice, areas for development, and any associated main points for action. The report will be shared with the provider, Scottish Government, and SDS. For colleges, the report will be shared with the College Principals and Board or Regional Strategic Body, and SFC. The report will be published on Education Scotland’s website.

2. The provider and its context

Edinburgh and District Employers’ Training Association (EDETA) Limited was established in 1966. Originally based in Leith, EDETA is now based in Kinnaird Park. EDETA is a limited company with charitable status.

EDETA staff design and deliver a range of training programmes including team leadership, information technology, administration and Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in engineering. It also delivers a wide variety of health and safety training courses. EDETA staff work with a number of colleges to support the delivery MA content through sub-contracting arrangements.

The EDETA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible to a Board of Directors appointed from member companies of the Association. Board members meet regularly to discuss how the Association should develop to meet current training requirements.

3. Outcome of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

Leadership and Quality Culture	Very Good
Service Delivery	Very Good
Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices	Very Good

4. Summary of review findings

A summary of the findings of HM Inspectors are set out below.

4.1 Leadership and Quality Culture – Grade: Very Good

4.1.1 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training.

Areas of positive progress

- All staff engage well with relevant industry bodies to keep up-to-date with current practice and benefit from professional learning opportunities. This good practice supports their on-going development.
- All staff engage regularly with apprentices to monitor their progress and set learning goals. This approach ensures apprentices know what they have to do to attain, and helps them to develop ownership of their programme.
- Regular, informal face-to-face meetings between assessors, employers and apprentices, supports apprentices to disclose any additional learning needs that may require further support.
- Strong relationships between EDETA managers and employers ensure a high number of apprentices are recruited onto the apprenticeship programme to help meet employer workforce planning needs.
- Employers provide regular informal feedback on the MA programme to the EDETA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who uses this to develop and improve programme delivery. CEO updates to the EDETA Board of Directors provides assurance that an improvement cycle is embedded.
- All apprentices comment that they are actively involved in enhancing their training experience and outcomes through regular meetings held with their assessor, employer and line manager. This approach builds confidence levels and encourages apprentices to develop skills for learning, life and work.
- Assessors attend regular meetings with their line manager. They participate in standardisation meetings with their colleagues and attend focus groups where they discuss improvements to unit and programme delivery. This ensures that MA programmes match the needs of both apprentices and employers and provides a useful platform for sharing best practice.

- Apprentices and employers value the flexible and tailored support that they receive from EDETA assessors. These partnership arrangements support apprentices to overcome challenges that they face during their MA programme.

Areas for development

- There is no systematic approach to the gathering of employer feedback to inform self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

4.2 Service Delivery – Grade: Very Good

4.2.1 Delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- Assessors, apprentices, college staff, and employers, work collaboratively to ensure the appropriate selection of subjects and teaching units that complement both apprentices' specific job roles and business needs.
- A comprehensive induction to the MA programme and a holistic approach to learning and teaching by all stakeholders prepares apprentices well for their programme and promotes progression pathways.
- Regular one-to-one meetings held with assessors and apprentices support the recording of accurate apprentice progression reports. The views and opinions of employers are routinely sought during these meetings and contribute to the monitoring of apprentice progress.
- EDETA staff plan and deliver additional training and support activities to meet the needs of individual apprentices. This approach supports apprentices well who may have fallen behind with their studies to catch up and stay on track to achieve.
- All apprentices are satisfied with the skills they are attaining for learning, life and work. This ensures they are equipped to undertake their workplace roles with increased levels of confidence.
- Apprentices value the regular and prompt feedback received from assessors in supporting them to achieve their learning goals and progress onto the next level of their programme.

Areas for development

- The tracking of learner progress and portfolio evidence gathering is largely paper-based. The majority of learners and employers would welcome the introduction of a digital approach to portfolio building.
- A few apprentices are dissatisfied with aspects of sub-contractor delivery arrangements and highlighted issues with class sizes and staffing.

4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training.

Areas of positive progress

- EDETA staff have strong working relationships with partners. They are very flexible and create bespoke arrangements to meet employer and apprenticeship needs on an individual

basis.

- Through regular standardisation meetings and informal conversations, EDETA staff ensure a consistent approach for ongoing improvement to apprentice training.
- Quarterly board meetings with employers and EDETA staff ensure regular reflection on strategic and operational direction and delivery. Employers are satisfied that they are given opportunities to drive change and support improvement.
- Weekly action plan meetings are attended by all staff and these meetings address any emerging issues within the MA programme and support improvement.
- EDETA staff come from a range of industry backgrounds and are supported well to engage in professional learning to ensure they keep up-to-date with industry requirements. This includes National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) qualifications and degree qualifications.

Areas for development

- There are no areas for development.

4.3 Safeguarding and Meeting the needs of apprentices – Grade: Very Good

4.3.1 Achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery

Areas of positive progress

- EDETA staff take cognisance of and understand their role in promoting and supporting equality and diversity. They ensure these themes are promoted and highlighted throughout the programme.
- Apprentices are supported well by staff through regular conversations and completion of progression reports. Apprentices value this approach and report a high level of satisfaction with their assessors and their programme.
- EDETA ensures all stakeholders involved in the apprenticeship programme have robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place.

Areas for development

- MA achievement rates have declined over the last three years and are below the sector average.

4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance

Areas of positive progress

- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure apprentices understand and comply with health and safety legislation and associated policies and procedures, both in the workplace and at college. This ensures apprentices are prepared well to undertake workplace responsibilities.
- Effective partnership working ensures EDETA staff are fully aware of support arrangements for apprentices whilst at college or within the workplace. Apprentices benefit from tailored

support activities and appropriate interventions.

- Assessors participate in standardisation and internal verification activities which help manage assessment and verification arrangements well. This ensures the consistency of assessment decisions across assessors. This practice supports the credibility of units and awards including identification of quality concerns and improvement planning.
- EDETA staff ensure quarterly apprenticeship reviews are completed and processed to meet Skills Development Scotland (SDS) service level agreement requirements. This helps to ensure apprentices are on track to achieve or can access further support if required.

Areas for development

- There are no areas for development.

4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- All employers are positive about their relationships with EDETA. They are satisfied with the training provided and the progress their apprentices are making. They report that apprentices are prepared well for their chosen careers.
- All apprentices value the opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion with their EDETA assessor, to disclose any additional support need or equalities information. This has resulted in an increase in the number of apprentices disclosing personal information around disabilities or care experience.
- While there is not yet a systematic approach to recording post-programme destinations, employers confirm that almost all apprentices are retained in employment after completion of their apprenticeship.
- All apprentices can identify personal progression milestones and share positive aspects of their experience in their MA programme which has improved their skills for learning, life and work.
- Apprentices are encouraged to celebrate their achievements which helps raise their aspirations to progress in their chosen career and recognises their sense of belonging with their employer.

Areas for development

- Employers and EDETA staff recognise that for some key groups, apprentice recruitment is low, for example, the recruitment of female apprentices to the MA engineering programme.

5. Main points for action

- There are no main points for action.

6. Examples of highly effective practice

- None identified.

7. What happens next?

HM Inspectors are confident that the provider has the capacity to continue to improve and HM Inspectors will make no further visits to the provider as a result of this review.

Joe Mulholland
HM Inspector

Appendix 1 Grades used in reporting

A common grading scale is used in making judgements for provider reviews:

- 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

Summary

- An evaluation of **excellence** applies to training which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellence* represents an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies the very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
- An evaluation of **very good** applies to training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement, and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of *very good* represents a high standard of training, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide training without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the provider will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of **good** applies to training characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* represents a standard of training in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the provider should seek to improve further the areas of important strength but take action to address the areas for improvement.
- An evaluation of **satisfaction** applies to training characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of *satisfactory* indicates that apprentices have access to a basic level of training. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the provider should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of **weak** applies to training which has some strengths but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of *weak* may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish apprentices' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the provider.
- An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** applies when there are major weaknesses in training requiring immediate remedial action. The training experience for apprentices is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for training evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to

effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the provider.

Appendix 2 Evaluative Terms

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.