

Electrical Installation

A report on the external review by Education
Scotland of training in Electrical Installation
Modern Apprenticeships

September 2020

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Context

Education Scotland has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake external reviews of the off-the-job and on-the-job training elements of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes, within each of the industry sectors. The strategic vision outlined by the Scottish Government in Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy¹ (YES) is for a post-16 education and training sector in which:

- all provision, regardless of provider, is focused on providing young people with the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to support Scotland's economic growth and maximise their life chances;
- all providers and their key stakeholders work together regionally and nationally to ensure high quality provision that meets the needs of learners and employers; and
- the relevance and quality of this provision, the extent to which it supports economic growth and post-16 reform, and the outcomes learners achieve are evaluated through an appropriate blend of self-evaluation, external scrutiny and public reporting through a national quality assurance and quality improvement system.

The particular context for MA Electrical Installation

Two organisations in Scotland are contracted to deliver MA Electrical Installation programmes with funding from Skills Development Scotland (SDS). They are Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust (SECTT), and Glasgow City Council, operating as City Building.

SECTT is the major contract holder, and was established in 1990 to manage the Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) training schemes. It was established by SELECT and Unite the Union, who appoint an equal number of Trustees to the Board as their representatives. The SJIB training scheme is designed to regulate the entry, conditions of service, training and education of all persons in the electrical contracting industry, with a particular focus on apprenticeships. SECTT manages the apprentices throughout their training from the first day of induction and training, to becoming a qualified electrician, and beyond. SECTT sub-contracts the off-the-job training within the MA programme to 19 organisations across 21 locations in Scotland.

Glasgow City Council delivers on-the-job and off-the-job training to its apprentices in electrical installation through its training organisation, City Building, established from the former Building Services Department. City Building operates as a construction and property maintenance business within the public, private and third sectors. A key purpose for the organisation is to provide and secure sustainable employment and provide craft apprenticeships, with a firm focus on social renewal, employee development and training. Currently, apprentices undertake their off-the-job training at the training centre in Queenslie, Glasgow.

The review of SECTT, and a sample of their sub-contractors, took place over a period from October 2019 to February 2020. The external review team spoke with apprentices, staff at all levels, employers, and made visits to sub-contractors in 12 different locations. At the time of the review, there were 2,372 apprentices in the 16-25 years age category and 430 apprentices who are in the 25+ category. The review of City Building was carried out in November 2019. At the time of the external review visit, there were 62 apprentices in training, spread over the four years of the MA Electrical Installation programme.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-young-workforce-scotlands-youth-employment-strategy/>

Summary of grades

The overall grades for each of the high level questions from the quality indicators, summarised from the two contract holders, are shown below:

Outcomes and impact		Service delivery		Leadership and quality culture
How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	How good is our delivery of training?	How good is our management of training delivery?	How good is our strategic leadership?
good	very good	very good	good	good
excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent

A grade of excellent describes an evaluation of training in which apprentices' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies 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.

A grade of very good describes an evaluation of training characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement in this evaluation, 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 contract holder will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

A grade of good describes an evaluation of 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 contract holder should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, but take action to address the areas for improvement.

Summary of findings

Outcomes and Impact

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

How effective are training providers at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?

Areas of positive practice

- The combined achievement rates across both contract holders was 78.4% for 2018-19. This has improved significantly over the last three years.
- The number of apprentices in training for the sector has been stable over a three-year period. Through effective recruitment arrangements, both contract holders consistently achieve or exceed their SDS target for apprenticeship starts each year.
- Individual apprentices achieve substantial success in a wide variety of competitions. In both organisations, this is celebrated well through various events, marketing and social media channels.
- Overall, the majority of apprentices are progressing through their off-the-job and on-the-job training at a pace that suits them and their employers.

Areas for development

- There are some apprentices who are not progressing through their apprenticeship at an appropriate pace, taking more than the recommended five years to achieve their Final Integrated Competency Assessment (FICA) successfully. The majority of apprentices require resits to be successful in their FICA.
- There is limited awareness among some apprentices about how they achieve the core skills elements which are embedded in the MA qualification. They are also unclear about the importance and relevance of core skills more generally in the workplace and beyond.

How well do providers adhere to statutory principles and guidance?

Areas of positive practice

- Sub-contractors, contract holders and employers place high priority on health and safety principles and legislation, setting and expecting high standards of workshop and site practice from apprentices. All apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety practices.
- Health and safety procedures and regulations are covered particularly comprehensively in induction arrangements, and are recapped well through the MA programme during off-the-job sessions and through effective workplace practice when apprentices are on-the-job.
- Relevant directives and regulations relating to the industry are well understood by contract holders and are effectively shared with sub-contractors through regular, regional consortium meetings.
- Internal verification is implemented appropriately by training officers and sub-contractor staff. Awarding body reports from SJIB confirm compliance with required standards.
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) external verification reports over the recent past indicate a high level of compliance with the programme framework and standards.
- For one contract holder, there is above national average representation across genders within their apprentice group, those who have self-identified disabilities and those from the Black and

Minority Ethnic (BME) community. This success is due to effective working with partners such as Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS), Who Cares? Scotland and Equate to consider the representation of learners from the four main groups in equalities. As a result, the contract holder continues to recruit higher numbers of candidates from these groups.

Areas for development

- Opportunities are missed to use more fully SQA external verification reports from the sub-contractors, who are the SQA approved centres, in improvement discussions and informing actions. Currently, these reports are not routinely shared with the contract holder.
- Overall, despite a number of proactive approaches in marketing and promoting programmes to attract more female candidates, together with colleges offering pre-apprenticeship electrical installation programmes to establish a better gender balance, the number of females starting and completing an apprenticeship remains very low.
- Nationally, the numbers of apprentices on the MA programme who have an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty, or are from a BME group, or identify as care experienced, are low.

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?

Areas of positive practice

- All apprentices are well informed about the potential for progression through their apprenticeship towards the FICA end test, and what opportunities lie beyond. This is covered to good effect through induction programmes for first stage apprentices, and through skill refresher sessions at various stages throughout the programme.
- The block release pattern for off-the-job training works well for most apprentices and employers and provides sufficient flexibility to meet the business needs of most companies.
- Where pre-apprenticeship programmes are offered by sub-contractors, they are meeting the needs of employers well, helping with the recruitment of potential apprentices who have the appropriate mix of skills and aptitudes for entry to the MA programme.
- Apprentices' progress is monitored well using OneFile to good effect. Evidence portfolios are submitted electronically, and other evidence is shared between apprentices and employers, to support suitable connections across on-the-job and off-the-job aspects of the programme.

Areas for development

- In general, sub-contractors have insufficient knowledge of the level of core skills which apprentices have previously gained as they commence their programme. Apprentices' core skills achievement is communicated centrally with SQA, but sub-contractors are not routinely informed about the level of success or otherwise for their individual apprentices.
- Apprentices' personal information is frequently not shared with sub-contractors in advance of them starting the MA programme. As a result, sub-contractors are required to collect information from apprentices which has already been asked of them. This sometimes delays access to the required support for apprentices at the start of their programme.

Service Delivery

How good is our delivery of training?

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

Areas of positive practice

- The schedule of delivery for off-the-job training is clearly mapped and fits the requirements of the qualification well. This ensures that apprentices are well-informed about the component parts of the qualification.
- Almost all apprentices, across all three stages of the MA apprenticeship, recognise the relevance of their off-site work and they relate this to good effect when back on-site.
- Lesson plans are in place for almost all off-the-job sessions, which outline and support training sessions well. All apprentices have developed appropriate training plans which enable them to plan their learning and monitor their progress.
- Training officers monitor apprentices throughout their programme well through regular visits and reviews, during off-the-job training, and also on-site visits.
- Progress reviews are carried out to good effect in line with SDS requirements. Apprentices discuss their progress and agree objectives for the next period of their training. For the majority of first stage and second stage apprentices, these reviews are recorded in detail within OneFile, which apprentices interact with effectively.
- Towards the completion of their training, apprentices are provided with the opportunity to discuss the FICA prior to undertaking this assessment. Generally, apprentices find this useful preparation.

Area for development

- During the second year of the MA programme, off-the-job training is almost all theory-based. A few apprentices find this less motivating than the good mix of practical and theory they have experienced in year one.

How well is training delivered?

Areas of positive practice

- Relationships between all apprentices and training staff are respectful and supportive. Apprentices regard most lecturers in sub-contractors as knowledgeable and helpful in their delivery.
- Overall, most training staff are highly qualified and illustrate practice well through their own experience and relevant up-to-date knowledge of work practices. The standards set by training staff during off-the-job training are generally high.
- Class groups are managed well and actively encouraged to work independently and confidently from an early stage in their training. When required, apprentices also work well in groups.
- Most apprentices are motivated to work hard and engage well in the work of their practical classes. In general, apprentices are confident that they will achieve their MA qualification. They recognise the value of the qualification in relation to the work they do on-site and for their future progression.

- Overall, the training facilities and tools used by apprentices for their off-the-job training are of a good standard for the programme. Most classroom areas benefit from good quality ICT resources and connectivity, which apprentices value highly. Handouts prepared by training staff are of a high quality.

Areas for development

- A few sub-contractors' workshop areas do not allow sufficient access to reliable ICT. This limits opportunities for staff to make learning more interactive. A few workshops and some tools, although fit-for-purpose, are also in need of updating.
- Generally, apprentices are passive learners during theory sessions and are more motivated by practical sessions. The delivery of theory sessions does not support them to remain engaged and enthusiastic.

How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?

Areas of positive practice

- Relevant staff within sub-contractors attend regular consortium meetings to discuss MA programme issues and to network with other sub-contractors.
- In the best examples, apprentices provide feedback on the MA programme to staff through a variety of formats which are core to the general quality improvement arrangements.
- Training staff delivering off-the-job training share practice and discuss issues relating to apprentices and their progress regularly in informal settings, which often leads to improvements in delivery.
- In the best examples, each class appoints an apprenticeship representative who attends regular meetings with training centre staff and managers to discuss issues. Apprentices are able to identify where changes have been made as a result of this representation.

Areas for development

- Opportunities to standardise delivery and assessment practice across all sub-contractors are missed. Whilst aspects of awarding body reports are discussed within some consortium meetings, this is not done on a systematic basis. There is scope for all consortiums to meet together more regularly to share practice more effectively and learn from each other.
- Feedback to apprentices about the FICA before resits does not include the representation from the relevant sub-contractor. Sub-contractors are not made aware of the success rates of their apprentices who have previously completed all other aspects of the MA programme successfully. This limits sub-contractors' ability to learn from FICA feedback and review or adjust any aspects of their provision in response.
- Response rates by apprentices to surveys and feedback questionnaires administered by sub-contractors are often low.

How good is our management of training delivery?

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

Areas of positive practice

- Nationally, SECTT works effectively with a good range of partners to ensure the appropriate national standards for the MA qualification are maintained and that further development is progressed as required.

- Partnership working is particularly strong with SJIB, the organisation governed by representatives from SELECT, and Unite the Union, the recognised trade union of the electrical contracting industry in the UK. Employer representatives and Unite the Union agree the conditions of service or wage rates, within the electrical contracting industry in Scotland, and help to protect the future for apprentices in the industry.
- SECTT works effectively with SELECT, Scotland's trade association for the electrical industry to support industry standards and ensure that work carried out by its member companies is of the highest quality, and is safe.
- City Building actively liaises with SECTT and SJIB in relation to qualification development and FICA testing requirements. They are regular contributors to SECTT consortium discussions where issues are raised.
- One particularly effective partnership, demonstrating a substantial commitment to Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) recommendations and partnership working is with Glasgow secondary schools. Currently, this activity results in approximately 100 pupils each year having the opportunity to sample the range of areas within the construction sector that they may like to consider for an apprenticeship programme in the future.
- Well-developed partnerships by one contract holder with organisations that offer particular support to care experienced young people, and those who may have been disengaged during their time at school, has been highly effective in attracting apprentices from SDS priority groups to undertake the MA programme in electrical installation.

Areas for development

- There is further scope for more challenging partnership working with the sub-contractors involved in the delivery of the MA programme.
- Sub-contractors are mostly passive, limiting the scope for more focused discussions particularly around areas for improvement and quality of services. Plans for the future could also be better informed through more regular, robust discussions with sub-contractors

Leadership and Quality Culture

How good is our strategic leadership?

How appropriate and influential are the contracted provider's vision, values and aims?

Areas of positive practice

- SECTT is a registered charity constituted by a Trust Deed entered into by SELECT, the Electrical Contractors Association of Scotland and Unite the Union. There are six Trustees, three of whom are appointed by SELECT, and three by Unite the Union. The Board of Trustees of SELECT oversees the operations of SECTT in relation to the MA programme to good effect.
- In order to guide and focus the operations of SECTT, the Trustees of SELECT have in place an appropriate mission statement, which is supported by ten specific strategic objectives in the Strategic Plan for the year 2019.
- The SELECT Training and Skills Development Committee meets regularly to monitor progress by SECTT, in relation to their operational targets within the Strategic Plan. Senior staff from SECTT routinely provide an update report to the committee.
- Staff and managers within SECTT have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to managing the delivery of the MA qualification, alongside contributing to wider developments within the electrical installation sector more generally.
- City Building contributes well to Glasgow City Council's strategic vision around inclusive growth, creating jobs and investment, reducing poverty and ensuring more people are in work and training.
- City Building apprentices are generally targeted and recruited from some of the most deprived areas in Scotland, with over half of apprentices living in the two most deprived areas.
- There is a strong social ethos within City Building that training and employment of apprentices can be a particularly powerful route to a better life, which all staff understand well.
- City Building's apprenticeship programme was awarded the Queens Award for Enterprise in 2018. More recently, City Building achieved the Investors in Young People Gold Award for their outstanding work. The organisation was also awarded the Customer Service Standard in 2018. These awards have contributed well to the high level of motivation across the organisation.

Area for development

- There is insufficient focus from SECTT on equality and diversity issues within their strategic and operational planning processes. There are few specific and measurable targets to support progress in key areas and to help contribute towards Scottish Government and SDS targets.

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

Areas of positive practice

- SECTT provides a range of appropriate locations and centres to ensure that apprentices have a choice of convenient locations in which to undertake their final test.
- Team leadership and the operational management of the MA programme within both contract holders is effective. Overall, training staff are highly motivated and understand the needs of apprentices well.

- Administration staff are key to the effective communication with employers and apprentices, within both organisations, providing timely information on apprentices' progress throughout the programme. Operational teams meet on a regular basis and are supported well by administration staff.

Area for development

- Priority areas are insufficiently clear within the Approved Centre Agreements negotiated with sub-contractors, particularly in defining the quality of services. Sub-contractors' contribution to the overall SDS contract success should be made clear, in order to develop a stronger sense of collective responsibility in key areas.

How well do leaders secure improvement of quality and impact of training?

Areas of positive practice

- SQA external verification reports received by sub-contractors over the recent past show a high level of compliance, satisfying the programme requirements well, with occasional good practice identified.
- Apprentices are asked to respond to survey questionnaires on a regular basis. In addition, they are able to contribute feedback through their regular discussions with training staff on an informal basis.
- Employers are surveyed from time to time. In addition, a few employers have also been involved in employer forums or working party groups. Employers are also actively encouraged to contribute fully to the progress reviews carried out with apprentices.

Areas for development

- Not all sub-contractors reflect sufficiently on their delivery of the programme to support improvements in training for apprentices. Often, MA issues are combined with other general engineering programme discussions and specific MA issues are not disaggregated sufficiently.
- Sub-contractors do not have sufficient, direct involvement in the self-assessment report produced by SECTT to satisfy SDS. There is an over-reliance on anecdotal, informal contributions from sub-contractors to the review and any plans for improvement.
- There is insufficient direct involvement by employers in development discussions and working groups, to strengthen their impact and ensure they contribute fully to improvements for the future.

Recommendations

Contract holders should:

- continue to improve the national achievement rates for apprenticeships, with a particular focus on the issues relating to the FICA;
- develop more effective strategies, working with employers, to increase the number of female candidates and the proportion of apprentices from SDS priority groups who embark on the MA programme;
- improve the awareness of apprentices in relation to core skills within the MA qualification and their relevance and importance in the workplace and beyond;
- improve engagement with employers to ensure they are involved fully in discussions regarding national development of the qualification and its delivery for the future;
- enhance partnership arrangements with sub-contractors to define the quality of services and to better inform improvement strategies for MA programmes;
- work with sub-contractors to improve the consistency of the arrangements for self-evaluation and continuous improvement of the MA programmes, and;
- work with Education Scotland and SDS to share and develop practices from those centres or sub-contractors with particularly effective practice.

Education Scotland should:

- monitor and review the quality of the off-the-job elements of electrical installation apprenticeships in all colleges in Scotland which sub-contract with SECTT.

SDS should:

- continue to support contract holders to improve the proportion of apprentices from SDS priority groups, and;
- support contract holders to share and develop excellent practice.

Appendix 1 – External review methodology

Education Scotland's external review of the on and off-the-job training elements of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) builds upon and complements SDS current quality assurance arrangements. These arrangements require all non-college training providers to demonstrate they are meeting SDS quality standards as set out in the SDS Quality Assurance Framework. SDS takes assurance of MA programme delivery from Education Scotland's external review of colleges, which focus on the contribution made by training providers and the quality of the training they deliver.

A team of HM Inspectors from Education Scotland and Associate Assessors (AA) from SDS and colleges conduct external reviews. Associate Assessor input ensures that each review team has the expert knowledge and industry-related experience to ensure a full and well-informed review process.

External review approaches incorporate:

- observation of training activities;
- discussions held with training managers and staff; and
- discussions held with employers and apprentices.

Upon conclusion of the external review, a written report is provided to each contract holder by Education Scotland. This includes the grades awarded for each of the five high-level questions posed during the review. The findings from each of the visits are brought together to generate this national report, which is published by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. National reports are designed to inform Ministers about the quality of the on and off-the-job training elements within specific MA programmes. The report will also assist contract holders and sub-contractors in preparing and implementing their quality improvement and enhancement agendas, and includes examples of excellent practice where identified.

Appendix 2 – Grade exemplification

The grades awarded to each of the elements are:

- excellent - outstanding and sector leading
- very good - major strengths
- good - important strengths with some areas for improvement
- satisfactory - strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak - important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory - major weaknesses

Grade illustrations

- An evaluation of excellent applies to provision in which apprentices' experiences and achievements are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies 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 provision characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for development and any that do exist do not significantly diminish apprentices' experiences. While an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to make provision without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the centre will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.
- An evaluation of good applies to provision characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for development. An evaluation of good represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact on apprentices. However, the quality of apprentices' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which development is required. It implies that the centre should seek to improve further the areas of important strengths, but take action to address the areas for development.
- An evaluation of satisfactory applies to provision characterised by strengths which just outweigh areas for development. An evaluation of satisfactory indicates that apprentices have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences. However, while the areas for development will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of apprentices' experiences. It implies that the centre should take action to address areas for further development while building on its strengths.
- An evaluation of weak applies to provision which has some strengths, but where there are important areas for development. In general, an evaluation of weak may be arrived at in a number of circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important areas for development 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 centre. Where a grading of weak is given, it will lead to follow-up activity from SDS compliance managers.
- An evaluation of unsatisfactory applies when there are major areas for development in provision requiring immediate remedial action. Apprentices' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for provision 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 centre. Where a grading of weak is given, it will lead to a follow-up review by staff from SDS and Education Scotland within a year.

Appendix 3 – Abbreviations

BEMIS	Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic.
FICA	Final Integrated Competency Assessment.
MA	Modern Apprenticeship.
ICT	Information and Communications Technology.
SDS	Skills Development Scotland.
SECTT	Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust.
SJIB	Scottish Joint Industry Board.
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority.

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