

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd

A report by HM Inspectors

23/01/2024

CEO/Principal	Coralina Smith
External review date	20, 21 and 22 November 2023
Provider type	Independent Training Provider
Main subcontractors	West College Scotland
Lead HMI	Ian Beach
Apprentice numbers (in each year of training)	62
Subject frameworks and levels	Engineering SCQF Level 6

1. Background

External reviews of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) 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, learners 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. An accompanying short report will be published on Education Scotland's website.

2. The provider and its context

Babcock is an international defence company providing a range of products and service solutions for their customers' defence capabilities and critical assets. Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd provide specialist engineering support services, including the management of critical infrastructure and nuclear facilities for His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde. These engineering services maintain the safety and efficiency of the naval base operations, through asset management, fleet engineering, berthing and radioactive waste processing. Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd recruit around fifteen apprentices each year for future employment in engineering support services.

Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd sub-contracts the off-the-job training of apprentices, for the theory elements of the MA Engineering programme at SCQF Level 6, to West College Scotland.

3. Outcome of external review

The grades for each of the three elements are:

Leadership and Quality Culture	Very good – Major strengths
Service Delivery	Very good – Major strengths
Safeguarding and meeting the needs of apprentices	Very good – Major strengths

4. Summary of review findings

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

4.1 Leadership and Quality Culture

4.1.1 Securing improvement of quality and impact of training.

Areas of positive progress

- Senior managers meet with apprentices regularly to discuss progress with their training and update them on MA programme developments. Managers engage with apprentices through a variety of approaches including business briefs, frequently asked questions, breakfast brunches and ‘meet the leaders’ sessions during induction. Apprentices appreciate the range of opportunities to engage in formal and informal discussions with the Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd. leadership team.
- Managers hold monthly focus group meetings with apprentices to gather feedback about their MA programme experience. Where concerns are raised, managers respond quickly to implement solutions. For example, the previously successful outward-bound programme has been re-introduced as a result of apprentice feedback. Managers share progress updates on improvement actions being taken, through a variety of approaches such as ‘You Said We Did’, individual and group meeting minutes, emails, and briefing updates.
- Senior managers recognise the need for apprentices to develop a wider set of skills to help them thrive within their learning and work activities. In response, they have introduced a bespoke programme for second year apprentices that supports them to develop and improve their resilience, independence, and self-management skills.
- Managers and college staff evaluate the delivery of the MA programme regularly to plan for improvement. They collaborate well together and share information effectively. This productive approach helps improve the quality of training for all apprentices.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.2 Service Delivery

4.2.1 Delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- All apprentices attend college for off-the-job training in the first year of their apprenticeship programme. This approach works well and provides apprentices with the engineering knowledge and understanding required to support their deployment when working on site.
- Managers gather feedback from apprentices regularly about how their college experience impacts on their on-the-job activities. Managers use this feedback effectively to update and improve the content of the MA programme.
- All teaching staff deliver well-planned lessons and workshop activities, using good quality facilities and resources. Clear schemes of work help learners plan their learning activities and monitor their progress effectively.
- Teaching staff plan their learning activities well. They provide apprentices with a variety of teaching approaches and meets the learning needs of individual apprentices effectively. More capable apprentices are provided with higher-level tasks and extension materials to ensure they make best use of their time at college.
- In their workplace, apprentices operate in a range of working environments, making good use of high-quality equipment. They are supervised closely and are supported well during their training by a more experienced colleague known as a Master Apprentice.
- All apprentices report that the supervision and support arrangements from experienced staff on site, helps them to complete their work activities in good time to achieve their apprenticeship qualification.
- Managers and staff have positive working relationships with all apprentices. Apprentices benefit from opportunities to talk openly to staff about the progress they are making and are confident that they receive all the support they require to succeed on their programme.

Area for development

- A few apprentices experience delays in receiving feedback on submitted assessments when, for operational reasons, their allocated assessors are replaced.

4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training.

Areas of positive progress

- Managers are pro-active in supporting and promoting careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They engage frequently in STEM West events, work with local schools, and liaise extensively with SDS and the Developing the Young Workforce programme to generate an interest in wider STEM careers. Apprentices attend school careers events to talk about their experience and promote the value of apprenticeships more widely.
- Managers recognise the need for apprentice recruitment to be more inclusive. They have collaborated with the college and other partners to introduce a pre-apprenticeship

programme. This programme requires attendance at college and is targeted at school pupils from disadvantaged areas. Pupils who complete the programme and demonstrate the required abilities, commitment, and positive attitude are offered an apprenticeship with Babcock Marine (Clyde) Ltd.

- Managers reflect well on the experience of apprentices and have commissioned a Healthy Minds programme of activities. This programme aims to develop apprentices' personal attributes, including the promotion of independence and self-confidence. Apprentices confirm this programme is helpful to support their mental health.
- Managers plan the apprentice experience to ensure a three-month rotation of work areas. This approach provides apprentices with an understanding of a range of engineering functions, tasks, and activities. This wider engineering experience helps apprentices make informed decisions about their preferred area of specialism.
- Teaching staff use established self-evaluation arrangements well to identify progress made and any areas for development or enhancement. This approach includes good use of feedback received from apprentices to improve their college experience.

Area for development

- Managers have not yet evaluated the **Healthy Minds** programme in order to assess its impact on the apprentice experience or refine its outcomes.

4.3 Safeguarding and Meeting the needs of apprentices.

4.3.1 Achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery.

Areas of positive progress

- Managers plan and deliver effective induction arrangements with college staff, and these provide clear explanations to apprentices about what the MA programme involves. They highlight the range of support services available to help apprentices succeed on their programme. Where an additional support need is identified, for example, dyslexia, targeted support services are put in place promptly.
- Apprentices are guaranteed full-time employment, on a permanent contract, upon successful completion of their apprenticeship programme. Almost all apprentices succeed and attain permanent staff status.
- Managers use awards ceremonies well to recognise and acknowledge individual achievement. High profile internal events celebrate and recognise success. External awards help motivate apprentices through recognition of progress made and their collective achievements. A few apprentices have been placed highly in the recent Scottish Engineering Apprenticeship of the year award.

Areas for development

- None identified.

4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance

Areas of positive progress

- Managers demonstrate a strong health and safety ethos and give this a high priority. They reinforce appropriate health and safety workplace practices and ensure these are complied with by all apprentices. Apprentices are clear about their responsibilities and understand fully their role in adherence to health and safety policies and procedures.
- Managers have a strong commitment to apprentice wellbeing, with robust arrangements in place. A full-time mental health practitioner is available on-site and is pro-active in offering support and responding to concerns. There are several trained Mental Health First Aiders, and these individuals are known to apprentices. Managers work collaboratively with the trade union convenor to promote apprentice support arrangements.
- Managers are aware that apprentices do not routinely disclose their personal circumstances or additional support needs at the point of application. To ensure any additional needs are accommodated quickly, managers are proactive in ensuring early identification as soon as apprentices are offered a place. Recently, this has ensured that around 11% of the current cohort who have not previously declared a disability, are now benefitting from appropriate support arrangements.
- Assessors and verifiers use robust moderation arrangements effectively to ensure compliance with awarding body requirements. Candidate sampling arrangements are appropriate and are risk-based.
- Assessors and verifiers benefit from regular and helpful professional learning opportunities and share good practice approaches routinely during quarterly team meetings. This helps ensure their skills and knowledge is current and updated and enhances their approaches to supporting apprentice progression.

Areas for development

- Managers have not yet developed clear targets for the recruitment of apprentices with protected characteristics. The number of apprentices currently recruited to the MA programme with protected characteristics does not reflect the profile of the local community.

4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- Babcock Marine (Clyde) Limited has a high successful completer/leaver ratio and this has been maintained over a sustained period. Apprentice achievement rates are well above the SDS target of 75%, and significantly higher than the Engineering framework sector performance rate of 69%.
- Almost all apprentices complete their MA qualification and remain in full-time employment with Babcock. Almost all apprentices achieve their qualification within the designated timeframe, and around half of each cohort attain their qualification earlier than the expected completion date.
- Managers consult regularly with college staff and assessors to monitor apprentice progress. They make good use of a Red/Amber/Green rating system and associated tracking

information to ensure apprentices who need support, or prompting regarding their progress, are identified and action is taken quickly. This process is helpful in ensuring opportunities for a range of engineering tasks and experiences are made available to all apprentices to support their progression.

- Managers deliver four-week review meetings and pastoral guidance sessions in addition to the 12-week reviews held with assessors. These regular contact arrangements are helpful in monitoring apprentice progress towards milestone achievements and help inform pastoral support needs.

Areas for development

- None identified.

6. Main points for action

The following main points for action are required:

- None identified.

7. Examples of highly effective practice

- None identified.

8. What happens next?

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

Ian P Beach
HM Inspector

Explanation of terms of quantity

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.