

External review of Modern Apprenticeship delivery by

AVQ Management Ltd

A report by HM Inspectors

04/07/2023

CEO/Principal	Mark Rooney
External review date	31st May 2023
Provider type	Independent Training Provider
Lead HMI	Joe Mulholland
Apprentice numbers	94

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, 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, award 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

AVQ Management are an independent training provider (ITP) and a Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) approved centre.

Established in 2011, initially to deliver Management SVQ's, AVQ Management has grown and evolved into delivering qualifications up to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 11. The two primary qualifications being delivered are Construction: Technical MA Framework at SCQF 7 and Construction Professional MA Framework at SCQF 11.

Apprentices are typically experienced adults who aspire to attain qualifications through completing the apprenticeship, for example, site supervisors or project managers. Apprentices are usually aged from early twenties to mid-forties and are normally very experienced workers who often have no formal management qualifications. The MA provides significant career progression opportunities.

Apprentices who successfully complete their programme continue with their employment and will hold appropriate qualifications to enter middle and senior management roles.

3. Outcomes 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 professional industry bodies to take advantage of professional learning opportunities. This supports them well to stay up to date with industry practice.
- All staff communicate regularly with apprentices to monitor progress and set goals for their learning. This allows apprentices to develop an ownership of their studies and where required, helps to identify additional support needs for individual apprentices.
- Managers and staff meet regularly to reflect on and evaluate their practice and find solutions to issues as they arise. This is captured well through formal self-evaluation arrangements and ensures that action planning for improvement takes place.
- All learners value the flexible approaches adopted by staff. This includes, varying methods of communication, pausing work due to personal circumstances and supporting the collation of evidence when it may not yet be readily available. This allows learners to plan learning around their personal circumstances.
- Quality assurance arrangements are in place to meet awarding body requirements. These arrangements ensure MA programmes meet the required standards.
- Managers use strong relationships established with industry partners to generate a high number of apprentices and develop programmes to meet employer needs.
- Employers provide regular feedback on provision to staff who use it to develop programme delivery effectively.

Area for development

- Apprentice engagement with evaluation surveys is low. This limits the use of formal feedback during self-evaluation.

4.2 Service Delivery - Grade: Very Good

4.2.1 Delivery of training

Areas of positive progress

- Assessors, apprentices, and employers work collaboratively together to ensure they are selecting teaching units that complement specific job roles. This is supported with a comprehensive induction to the MA programme.
- Core skills are fully embedded within programmes allowing all apprentices to achieve them in a contextualised manner.
- Most apprentices engage well in the development of meta skills in their programmes. To enhance skill development, assessments are contextualised are appropriate for the industry need, and are sufficiently challenging.
- Through regular one-to-one meetings held with assessors, apprentices receive accurate progress reports. Almost all reports are shared with employers, whose views and opinions are routinely sought to develop programmes.
- Assessors plan apprentice engagements flexibly to meet personal circumstances, including working around rotas and timings in apprentice workplaces. This allows apprentices to plan learning around work and personal commitments.

Areas for development

- None Identified

4.2.2 Staff reflection on provision to improve training

Areas of positive progress

- There are strong and effective relationships between apprentices and their assessors. All learners comment on the high level of support they receive, and this encourages successful apprenticeship completion.
- All employers are satisfied with the MA programme and describe staff in very positive terms. This underpins the relationships that AVQ staff have with employers and ensures continued recruitment onto the apprenticeship programme.
- Almost all apprentices benefit from the flexibility of their programme which allows contextualisation of apprentices' individual role. Apprentices can clearly evidence when they have built learning and confidence in meeting assessment criteria in a number of ways.
- Career progression is supported well through the signposting of clear progression pathways. Apprentices value this and understand that they can progress from SCQF level 7 through to level 11 to meet their career aspirations.

Area for development

- A few learners comment that they would welcome the use of a digital portfolio to help track progress and support the gathering of evidence. This would also provide opportunities for apprentices to develop their digital skills.

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

- Training provider staff understand the requirements of equality and diversity arrangements well. They signpost these effectively at induction meetings held with apprentices and are proactive in ensuring that they are promoted as part of the programme.
- Managers send regular reports to employers about the progress of their apprentices. This ensures employers have the opportunity to take an active role in developing apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- The AVQ Management apprenticeship programmes meet national economic needs through providing construction employers with a qualified workforce.
- Managers ensure MA programmes are achieving consistently high completion rates on all of their provision. These are averaging around 95% over a three-year period.
- Almost all apprentices complete their MA programme and progress into employment in a construction management position.

Area for development

- Using the latest SDS data, the number of female apprentice enrolments is low compared to both the national average and SDS targets.

4.3.2 Adherence to statutory principles and guidance

Areas of positive progress

- Arrangements are in place to ensure apprentices understand fully, their role in relation to health and safety requirements. These arrangements are highlighted and explained during induction and ensure apprentices work in a safe manner.
- AVQ Management staff are appropriately qualified, are experienced in their roles, and maintain career long professional learning (CLPL) in line with awarding body requirements.
- Assessors participate in monthly standardisation and internal verification activities, and this contributes to effective assessment and verification arrangements. This approach ensures units are appropriate and relevant.

Area for development

- Although apprentice wellbeing support is highlighted during induction, there are no arrangements in place for ongoing monitoring.

4.3.3 Apprentice progress and achievement of individual outcomes

Areas of positive progress

- All employers are positive about their relationships with AVQ Management. They are satisfied with the training provided and the progress their apprentices are making including enhancing their meta-skills, which prepares apprentices well for their chosen careers.
- Assessors attend regular contact meetings, in addition to formal progress reviews held with apprentices. Apprentices take an active role in setting objectives to ensure they are taking ownership for their progress and development. Target setting provides useful opportunities for apprentices to reflect on their progress and to plan effectively for the next steps in their learning.
- All employers acknowledge MA programmes meet their needs well and add value to their business. They comment that apprentices are more committed to their role, than those entering employment through traditional higher qualification routes.

Areas for development

- None identified

5. Main points for action

There are no main points for action.

6. Examples of highly effective practice

There are no examples of highly effective practice.

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 **excellent** applies to training which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of *excellent* represents an outstanding standard of training 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 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 **satisfactory** 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.