

Commercial in Confidence



Assessment Report

For

Q TRAINING

On behalf of



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1. Key Information

Assessment Type	REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	MET THE STANDARD
Assessor's Name	CHRISTINE M SMART
Visit Date	14 th , 15 th and 17 th November 2011
Organisations Reference Number	11358
Assessment Reference Number	11/1761

2. Organisation – Information, Introduction and Overview

This Accreditation Review has been carried out in accordance with the guidelines provided and it was found that Q Training continues to meet the **matrix** Standard.

Q Training is a private training provider based in Rackheath, Norfolk. During the Review, a reminder about Q Training being the sister company of CTS Training through which they provide some training was given. However, for the purpose of the Review and its ongoing Accreditation, it should be noted that it is only Q Training that is Accredited to the **matrix** Standard.

The 'Q' of Q Training stands for Quality. It is proud of its achievements in this respect having attained the Training Quality Standard and having Endorsed status with the National Care Skills Academy. During the 2008 Assessment, it was found that the company were proud of the service it provided not only to learners but also to employers. Evidence was gathered during the Review that illustrated that the company remains committed to providing support to employers in both sectors so that they might have a:

“...high quality workforce.”

At its previous review under the 2005 **matrix** Standard, Q Training was providing learning and development in Care primarily in the Eastern Region. It has now extended its provision to provide learning and development in Hospitality also. As a consequence, national qualifications for both sectors are delivered across Britain.

There are a number of areas of strength and good practice. This reflects upon the importance of the service as a measure of the quality it is providing to its learners and employers. The recommendations that Q Training might like to consider are set out in the final section of the Report under 'Areas for Continuous Improvement'.

The Report will show how Q Training has ensured that the development of its staff continues to be used to the benefit of the learners and employers in a manner consistent with the **matrix** Standard. It shows how they continue to review and improve their practices.

There is a clear commitment by the staff to provide a quality service to their learners and employers.

In the ensuing pages, evidence will be found that demonstrates that quality improvement remains at the heart of the service. The development of the service over the last three years is a positive result of this.

3. Added Value

During the planning of the Review, it was established that further objectives would be:

- to explore and discuss the tracking of leavers; and
- the measurement of soft outcomes

It was found that the first of the two bulleted points was a particular challenge. Q Training undertakes extensive learning and development for 'Visa Learners'. These are people from Romania, Latvia, Hungary and other countries who require a Visa to remain in the country. As a consequence, they focus mainly in the hospitality sector to gain a relevant NVQ. Once the first Visa is obtained, the learners then seek to gain employment in their own specific area of competence. The subsequent tracking of these learners is difficult because the majority who complete learning and move on do not keep in contact with their Assessor or Q Training. Some also return to their country of origin. Regrettably, despite lengthy discussions, a solution about how the tracking of such leavers was not resolved.

In terms of the second objective, the measurement of soft outcomes was a little more successful in terms of areas that Q Training might wish to investigate further. Of a particular challenge are the monitoring and evaluation of objectives relating to confidence and self-esteem. Many of the health and social care learners speak about returning to learning many years after they have left school. Others speak of low confidence and self-esteem due to disparaging remarks made to them when they were at school.

A reasonable amount of information can be found on the Internet if using a search engine to find 'soft outcomes'. The majority of the research appears to have been based upon papers written in relation to European Social Fund projects. Some organisations have found that the use of the YETI wheel can form a sound basis upon which to take measurements relating to confidence and self-esteem. They can be updated at chosen intervals and distance travelled measured. In addition, City College, Norwich has developed SOUL which stands for 'Soft Outcomes Universal Learning'. These are areas that Q Training might wish to explore further.

During the Review, the steps being taken by Q Training to develop the collection of data to provide information in respect of destination was witnessed. This might help to resolve some of the issues relating to the tracking of leavers.

It will be of interest to witness the steps taken in respect of the soft outcomes when the organisation is Reviewed again in 2014.

4. Areas Not Yet Meeting the Standard

There were not any areas that did not yet meet the **matrix** Standard.

5. Areas of Particular Strength

Prior to examining the analysis upon which the decision to continue the Accreditation of Q Training to the **matrix** Standard has been made, there are a number of strengths of note that should be acknowledged. They build on those identified in 2008:

- The clarity of the leadership and direction, which has enabled the sustainable development of a sound approach to the service since the Review in April 2008. The commitment by Staff has enabled Q Training to extend its support to those who require its service. (1.2)
- Customers and partners continue to be consistently positive about the service provided by Q Training. Few areas for improvement were offered by customers within the context of an appreciation of current resource other than a wish for the organisation to continue to raise public awareness of its existence. (4.5)

Areas for Continuous Improvement

There are a number of areas for potential development that Q Training might like to consider. The numbers and letters in brackets refer to the relevant elements and criteria of the **matrix** Standard. They were:

- Whilst the service has clearly defined, measurable aims and objectives that link to its strategic aims, consideration might be given to drawing this together in one document with sections relating to:
 - Q Training;
 - Learners; and Employers - This may also include the soft client outcomes relating to confidence and self-esteem. (1.1, 3.1, 4.2)
- Work has already commenced upon the further development of client outcomes and the evidence gathered at the Review supported this. It is suggested that Q Training might wish to link the work explored in the previous section on 'Added Value' together with this particular criteria of the Standard. (1.5)
- Through the potential review of its approach to its service, Q Training may wish to ensure that it focuses upon the service when obtaining feedback from learners and employers. This may then provide a clearer balance between defining training requirements and service requirements. (1.7)
- Q Training might wish to review the paperwork provided in the Learner and Employer packs with a view to removing the perceived jargon. This might be through a learner and employer forum. (2.2)
- The induction process that is in place for staff is comprehensive. However, Q Training might wish to review the aspect relating to the service following the changes relating to the **matrix** Standard. (2.5)

6. Methodology

A range of methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard:

- An opening session was undertaken with the Quality Assurance Director. This provided the opportunity to set the scene and paint the picture for the Assessment of the Service. It also led to the discussion about the ongoing objective for the Review and the distance travelled since 2008.
- A face-to-face interview was undertaken with the Business Director of Q Training. This enabled the further exploration of the strategic intentions of the company.
- The base for the Review was at the Norfolk premises in Rackheath.
- The Assessor interviewed thirteen learners over the telephone in respect of the service. This included one whilst on site at Laurel Lodge in Norwich
- Visits were made on the last day of the Review to:
 - Laurel Lodge, Norwich where the Home Manager and a Learner were interviewed
 - Letheringsett Hall, Letheringsett where the Home Manager and two Learners were interviewed
 - Abbeville Nursing Home, Great Yarmouth where the Deputy Home Manager and two Learners were interviewed
- Sixteen members of staff who delivered the service were interviewed. Twelve were interviewed over the telephone. The remainder were on a face-to-face basis in Rackheath, Laurel Lodge and the Abbeville Nursing Home.
- During the Assessment, the opportunity was taken to discuss by telephone partnership arrangements with:
 - The MYMAR Consortium manager
 - The CEO of the NSCS Consortium
 - The Next Step Manager
- The Assessor was provided with a variety of documentary evidence during the Assessment. While reinforcing the fact that the **matrix** Assessment is not reliant upon paper-based systems, the contents afforded the opportunity to examine policy and practice documents.
- The Quality Assurance Director attended the final feedback session at Rackheath.

7. Findings Against the matrix Standard

1. Leadership and Management

The way in which the organisation is lead and managed to develop an effective service

There are a variety of source documents that staff were able to refer to that described the service and how it linked to the Business Plan that runs until August 2012. They included the 'Hospitality Sector Strategy' and the 'Care Sector Strategy.' The measurable aims related to supporting employers in investing in its workforce to provide high quality services to their customers. They reflected the support to learners to achieve qualifications relevant to their work role through which they might progress. Of particular importance was the focus upon fostering a culture of lifelong learning and reflective practice in the workplace so that learning needs from a variety of skills and management strategies are considered and addressed. Staff also spoke about the Customer Charter as an additional source of service description.

Q Training might like to consider how it may draw together the various sources of information that contain descriptions of the aims and objectives of the service. Consideration might be given to drawing this together in one document with sections relating to staff, learners and employers. The basis of the **matrix** Standard may help in the streamlining of this information.

It was found that the organisation had been through some difficult times in relation to the development of the service. The expansion into the hospitality sector and the work with Visa Learners was particularly demanding due, in part, to its delivery across Britain. The leadership and direction displayed during the implementation of those changes illustrated how Q Training led its teams to encompass the needs of the staff supporting learners and employers in those sectors.

Information was provided about the importance of promoting equality and diversity. Assessors explained how this was integrated during the induction of learners and relevant policies included in the Learner's Portfolio. Learners confirmed how this had been addressed and also spoke of their confidence in the company to keep their personal information safe. Impartiality is given appropriate consideration throughout Q Training. Learners and employers were referred or signposted within the company and also to external training providers with whom Q Training had confidence. A clear description of how this had been achieved was provided by the CEO of NSCS during the telephone interview.

Because of the type of client base that the organisation works with, it has been of great importance to keep up-to-date with a variety of existing and new legislation. Of particular mention was Safeguarding in relation to vulnerable adults, the 2010 changes in diversity and the requirements of Health and Safety regulations. This is achieved through attendance at relevant training events, through professional development contact and at the regular team meetings.

Over the years, Q Training has defined with clients the outcomes that they would wish to achieve following a course of learning and development. Learners described these as being able to do the job well, to promotion and to further career development through more learning. Some spoke of their intentions to go to university to complete Higher Education qualifications. As mentioned in the section on 'Added Value' the opportunity to establish how the soft outcomes might be delineated, measured and evaluated may help to illustrate distance travelled in future.

The majority of learners said that they had heard about the organisation through their employer. Employers spoke about their long standing commitment to Q Training and some of them resolve not to use any other training organisation. In addition, the company is promoted through the MYMAR Consortium and through NSCS. The company's mission statement known to most staff members describes how Q Training:

“...aims to provide a high quality service which promotes the confidence and security of all participants through a positive learning experience... and promote a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement.”

Staff were able to provide sound examples of how they were able to influence the design and development of the service. Mention was made of whole staff and team specific meetings as well as the opportunity for one-to-one contact with Directors. They were particularly pleased that ideas were always listened to and they were often provided with the opportunity to pilot changes to measure the potential impact. Examples were given about how learners said that there was too much information to take in at the induction stage. As a consequence, staff had reviewed the process and now stage its introduction. Overall, there were very few suggestions about how the service might be developed further because of the overarching satisfaction felt by the learners and employers spoken to during the Review. As Q Training may be reviewing of its approach to its service, it might wish to ensure that it focuses upon the service when obtaining feedback from learners and employers. This may then provide a clearer balance between defining training requirements and service requirements.

During the Review, the opportunity to speak with representatives of MYMAR and NSCS provided a picture of how these partnerships were of benefit to all involved. Of particular importance was the emphasis upon the quality of service that could be provided to learners and employers together with the ability to cross refer clients as appropriate. Examples were provided about how the service provided by Q Training was referred to as a preferred provider of learning and development in a field in which they were considered to have a sound reputation. This included local colleges and organisations within MYMAR and NSCS. Regular meetings ensure that the effectiveness of the partnerships are reviewed and meet the aims and objectives of their existence.

2. Resources

The assets invested and applied in providing an effective service

The resources for staff, learners and employers are delivered effectively. Examples provided related to the use of technology by staff in relation to e-portfolios, its Web site and the use in one instance of Dragon software. Some learners also spoke of the potential benefits of the e-portfolio as they always prepared their work on a computer. Learners and employers spoke of the ease of access to Assessors through their provision of a mobile telephone number and an e-mail address. Employers mentioned how beneficial it was that Assessors would meet with learners at appropriate times during their night shift rather than expect them to meet up during the daytime.

Staff, learners and employers spoke about the information that had been provided for them about the service. Many of the documents had been reviewed recently and evidence was provided about how these had been consulted upon. Some learners and employers mentioned the amount of perceived 'jargon' in the Learner and Employer packs. Q Training acknowledged at the feedback session about the potential to review this and to include employers and learners possible in a 'forum' style of consultation. All staff contribute to ensuring that information is accurate and up to date. Overall, the co-ordination is undertaken at Director level.

Quality, as mentioned earlier in this Report is extremely important to Q Training. It describes quality as:

- **Qualifications**
- **Understandable**
- **Accessible**
- **Local**
- **Individual**
- **Targeted for**
- **Your Business**

The quality strategies further illustrate the importance of quality as it relates to the service. Staff described how they support clients to achieve their objectives and regularly undertake impact assessments to measure the distance travelled. Evidence was provided about how steps had been taken by one staff member to learn a few words of Romanian and to learn something of the country so that they could build a better relationship with their learners.

Extensive examples of qualifications relevant to the staff roles in Q Training were described. They included teaching qualifications such as: PTLLS; Assessor and Internal Verifier Awards; Health and Safety Training including NEBOSH; and certificates in information, advice and guidance.

The induction process that is in place for staff is comprehensive. However, Q Training might wish to review the aspect relating to the service following the changes relating to the **matrix** Standard. This will enable the company to provide a focus upon how the Standard has changed within the Revised version and enable all staff to appreciate those differences. It may also be viable for Q Training to consider a mini session prior to a Team Meeting to ensure that all are aware of those changes.

3. Service Delivery

The way in which the service is delivered effectively

Learners spoke about how they had come to do their particular qualifications. Some spoke about it as providing them with the satisfaction that they were doing a quality job and others of how it might enable them to gain promotion and explore further the opportunities for career development. Staff were clear that the training qualification was the output element of the learner journey with the outcome being focused upon the achievement of the individual objective. Learners were complimentary about the support provided to them by the staff at Q Training and provided sound examples. They said:

“When you realise just how much more work there is at Level 3 than 2, it is heartening that (name) was able to help put it into perspective or else I would have given up. They made it clear to me from the outset that they were there to support me through my learning journey and they certainly have done just that.”

Mention has been made under the section on ‘Added Value’ in relation to ensuring that clients understand the possible outcomes relating to confidence and self-esteem. The opportunity to illustrate how this might be measured may add benefit to the learner experience when they can see the progression they have made in those instances.

Staff related to the aims and objectives of the service as mentioned in the section of this Report on Leadership and Management to enable learners to deliver a quality service to their clients whether this was in the care or the hospitality sector. Employers also spoke of the benefits of how the relevant qualifications achieved by their staff benefitted the clients.

Of particular note was the support to a learner with Downs Syndrome, the development of learning and development relating to dementia and the completion of qualifications leading to the provision of a ‘yellow’ card so that the learner might obtain a ‘blue’ card and consequently seek the work that they prefer.

Staff provided a variety of information about how they ensured impartiality. For example, the Assessor undertraining the Next Step information, advice and guidance interview was not the same as the Assessor provided the support through learning and development. In addition, where it was clear that the potential learner would benefit from being placed in a College to complete their qualification, signposting and referral was instigated.

Employers and learners spoke of the benefits of the Assessor helping and advising upon the various options that could be pursued in relation to the NVQs. The mention of the use of technology earlier in this Report provides another sound example. The ongoing development of the Web site provided an additional example of how the company intends to extend its range of support to staff and learners over the coming months.

Evidence was provided by learners about the benefits of the signposting to resources that aided their development that were on Q Training’s Web site. They described this as the opportunity to further investigate or to clarify their learning in various aspects of their role which enhanced the quality of the service they could provide.

4. Continuous Quality Improvement

The way in which the service provided is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis

Q Training has a sound process for planning, carrying out and reviewing their service. The planning of the service for the future is undertaken in team meetings and includes the feedback from employers and learners. Evidence is seen in the learner's workplace about the positive impact that the learning has in dealing with clients. In addition, staff see how people progress and quoted many instances of how they had worked with learners and followed their career pathways into management positions. Examples of the aims and objectives related to development of a CV as part of the journey to obtaining work through to career advancement. There were many compliments paid regarding the assistance provided in helping learners to gain the English equivalent of individual qualifications. This provided direction for the learner in terms of the areas of study required which in turn lead them to their intended outcome. Staff were able to illustrate outcomes through the provision of timetable charts provided at team meetings and the subsequent discussions.

The development of the Care Skills Academy has enabled the provision of support to employers and learners in the care sector and is a prime example of the importance of improving outcomes. In the hospitality sector it is known that the client base is likely to change over the next year or so when the focus could change to learners from Turkey and Albania.

Senior staff have regular discourse with managers in the care and hospitality sectors to enable them to ascertain the benefits of the service provision. Managers from the care sector were particularly keen to mention how it improved the quality of care. They were pleased to see how staff progressed and mentioned how the career pathways of some learners had been followed with pride.

Feedback from learners has been mentioned earlier in this report. It was noted that employers were less keen to provide written feedback and said that they often had little time to respond to telephone surveys. This has presented an ongoing challenge to Q Training to ascertain how to gain feedback from this aspect of their business. Employer's most recent feedback had been to leave them alone. As a consequent, staff now seek feedback during their regular meetings with managers when they visit the learners.

Few complaints have been received by the organisation and those that have been received have been addressed locally. Learners and employers knew who they would speak to with a compliment or complaint and also referred to the information provided in the Learner Portfolio and at induction. All feedback is discussed at staff meetings and mini training sessions often precede these meetings where it is clear that additional support might be required, for example in the case of dementia and certain health and safety aspects in the hospitality industry.

Staff performance is regularly reviewed. This is based upon individual objectives relating to workload and also to performance enhancement through learning and development. Staff said that it was virtually unheard of for Q Training to refuse attendance at a training course or conference if it could be shown how relevant and beneficial it would be to the aims and objectives of the organisation. Mention has been made earlier of how staff receive feedback on their performance through annual review, one-to-one contact and through staff and team meetings.

Technology has been mentioned earlier in this Report. An additional objective for the future will be to add a section on employability to the Web site.

Improvements to the service are reflected in the Self-Assessment Report and the Quality Improvement Plan. Both of these are contributed to by all staff.

For the future, Q Training would also like to increase its Apprenticeship provision and examine how it might streamline various aspects of the learning and development to enhance the learner experience.

8. Conclusion

In the preceding Report, it can be seen how the journey for Q Training has developed since October 2008. It is notable that all of the suggestions for development from that time have been addressed.

There is now an opportunity for the company to review its service based on the **matrix** Standard and the context of this Report. Whilst the service is fundamentally sound, it is recommended that time is given to considering the key changes to the Standard and its impact upon the company as soon as possible.

Throughout the foregoing Report, the importance to the staff of delivering a high quality service has been evidenced. The **matrix** Standard continues to be used effectively and it is hoped that the foregoing Report illustrates the extent to which this has been achieved.

It is hoped that Q Training will again take forward the areas suggested for potential development which might benefit the ongoing development of its service and assist in its ongoing Accreditation to the **matrix** Standard. Sound outcomes have led to positive improvements for many learners and employers and are indicative of the quality of service provision.