

Nova Training



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Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Chris James
Visit Date	04/04/2022 – 07/04/2022 (3.5 days)
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Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	14/04/2023
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	14/04/2024
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	14/04/2025

Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Nova Training (Nova or ‘the organisation’) is a private training provider based in the West Midlands delivering Study Programme and Traineeships (for 16-19 including High Needs). Delivery is through a network of training centres throughout the West Midlands and East of England; a significant number of which are in areas of high deprivation. Study Programme is an individualised programme based on the young persons’ starting point and any prior attainment. An 8-week rolling curriculum provides learning opportunities in maths, English, ICT, Employability, as well as work experience and vocational workshops in motor vehicle repair and construction. There is also a great emphasis on personal development and behaviours & attitudes which mirror the expectations in the workplace. Traineeships include a Level 2 Award in Employability, maths, and English with an increased level of work experience. Nova also delivers a wide range of Apprenticeships in for instance vehicle repair, business administration, customer service, retail, warehousing, management, and team leading. During 2020/21 the organisation delivered to over 1800 Study Programme learners of which over 200 were High Needs. Around 1200 learners were on Apprenticeship programmes.

Nova is a family-led business with a ‘learner first’ ethos which is set out further within its values; *Respect, Honesty, Trust, Openness, Equality of Opportunity for all*. These values govern how the organisation operates and are a key consideration within staff performance conversations.

Information, advice, and guidance (referred to as IAG or ‘the service’) is described as “*fundamental*” in ensuring learners are on the right programme of learning; stay on-programme; progress in their learning goals/careers; and have enough information to make informed choices. An IAG Statement & Policy sets out the aims of the service, *‘Nova Training aims to deliver a high standard of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) to ensure that all our learners and any prospective learners can make a realistic and well informed choice about their next steps in education, employment, or training’*. IAG is delivered through a range of provision covering:

- Education opportunities and routes
- Career planning
- CV preparation
- Job application preparation, along with interview tips and techniques
- Employment opportunities
- Free and impartial information on College courses and other progression opportunities
- Impartial information on support available through Nova and/or external agencies

Support is available during all stages of the learner journey starting with initial contact with the centre; during the recruitment stage; programme induction, and on-programme via progress reviews.

IAG is delivered by Recruitment Officers; Induction & Progression Officers; Tutors and Apprenticeship Coaches – many of whom have an IAG Level 4 qualification or are working towards. This commitment to having staff with IAG qualifications has the benefit of ensuring they are not only competent to deliver effective IAG, but also confident in their abilities. Whilst staff are well qualified, they know their limitations and described effective signposting/referrals processes where they believed learners would be better served by an external party.

The effectiveness of the service is defined through a number of KPI's specific to each area of delivery, for instance: KPI 2 - 67% of learners to complete their apprenticeship with 60% completing timely; KPI 4 - 80% attendance average. The service also has a number of Quality and Satisfaction Indicators (QSI), for instance: Overall learner satisfaction at 90% good or better across induction, mid-programme, and end of programme; overall employer satisfaction at 90% good or better; overall parent/carer satisfaction at 90% good or better and overall partner satisfaction at 90% good or better.

Not surprisingly, the pandemic had a significant impact on qualification outcomes during 2019/20 and 2020/21, with the team putting a lot of emphasis on engaging with learners as well as getting them (and staff) online via MS Teams. Study Programme learners remained relatively well engaged and for some it was actually easier to use the new software than to visit the centres. This resulted in attendance for 2020/21 at 87% compared to 72% in 2019/20. Apprenticeship achievement and timely completion has clearly been a challenge and the team have worked tirelessly to support these learners which has resulted in completion and timely completion expected to be on or around the target this year.

Multiple channels such as surveys and forums provide valuable data on satisfaction from employers, parents, and learners. Feedback from learners is also gathered at key stages of the service (induction, mid-point, and exit). Recent surveys show the following results: 96% of parents felt the support met the needs of their child; 90% of employers felt their apprentice was acquiring the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need for their chosen next steps; 100% of apprentices said their induction had been delivered in a way that helps them to build on their existing knowledge; 97% of apprentices said the information they were given when signing up to the learning programme was good, and 100% of apprentices said they were well informed about the career choices available to them, and understood what they need to do to succeed in their chosen career.

Managers were able to describe the working practices which have resulted in the achievement of KPIs and QSIs. Apprentice Coaches meet with the apprentice monthly, with 3-way meetings which include the employer being well attended. A large proportion of employers are well engaged in the review process with their apprentice, and for those apprentices who are behind in their programme, additional support is discussed and has been put in place to help them get back on-track. Reviews are used to encourage learners to consider how their learning has, is, and will benefit them in the future, resulting in a more considered approach to their learning. EPA¹ is discussed very early in the programme with mock interviews providing apprentices with an insight into what to expect. One apprentice commented on how their confidence has increased as a result of this. *"I'm not worried about the assessment X has briefed me really well."* Learners on Study Programme participate in classroom-based provision delivered by staff who are experienced in supporting young people with multiple barriers. Learners can attend 'tasters' in for instance construction with opportunities to take part in other vocational areas at centres across the regions. Pastoral support for all learners is good and enables them to make progress and address any perceived or actual barriers to their learning.

Outcomes for learners are defined by them and included within their ILP². Although these outcomes are as individual as the learner, there are some common themes such as increased confidence; being more independent and understanding what to expect from their learning programme. Many of the team described these outcomes as, *"Being the best version of themselves."* Achievement against outcomes is logged on the learners' reviews and often discussed with the learner to help them consider their achievements – resulting in increased self-esteem.

¹ End-Point Assessment

² Individual Learning Plan

During the assessment learners gave numerous examples of the impact the service has had on them over and above learning outcomes. *“I’ve travelled on my own recently,” “I was in such a bad place when I first came and now, I’ve got my maths and English and I’ve got an interview at New Look next week.”* Staff also described the difference they see in learners with examples including a learner moving into supported accommodation, another joining-in during group learning sessions as well as learners making friends with others. Staff are patient and creative when it comes to providing support to learners, *“I teach maths which is all about problem solving so if a learner has difficulties, then we find a way of solving the problem.”*

There is a strong emphasis upon continuous improvement which has resulted in a number of improvements to the service. Apprentice Coaches are clearer about the EPA process and the most effective ways to progress learners month-on-month. There are more effective links between the study programme and work-based learning teams which is supporting the learner’s progression into apprenticeship placements. Employer forums are not only an opportunity to hear first hand about their experiences, but also providing insights into improvements to the relationship. A text service has been put in place to contact ‘early leavers’ to try and re-engage them or provide additional support. There are plans to extend the qualifications offer to include LEAN which may provide additional progression options.

Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- The sharing of information is effective and the vast majority of those interviewed described open and transparent communication as 'the norm.' Examples included the Learner Recruitment team using short, twice-weekly meeting/briefings to update each other and share their experiences through 'peer support;' the monthly all company meetings, as well as the monthly case conferencing meetings. These channels have resulted in a number of improvements including a visual log of who is in the business and available to support learners, as well as a 'crib sheet' of useful questions to use during learner interviews. (1.2)
- The organisation has multiple channels for gaining feedback such as surveys from parents, learners, and employers, as well as learner and employer forums. Feedback is also gained at key stages of the service (induction, mid-point, and exit) which provides valuable insights into the entire learner journey, allowing changes to be made easily. (4.3)
- The importance of IAG is recognised and acknowledged amongst the team and many gave examples of how this supports the achievement of wider organisational objectives (retention etc.). This commitment to the service is also demonstrated through the large number of people who have or are working towards an IAG Level 4 qualification. This provides them with not only the necessary skills to deliver the service but also the confidence to deliver effective support. (4.1, 2.4)
- The passion and enthusiasm of staff in supporting learners is without doubt. This, along with the breadth of support available - and provided to learners, demonstrates the 'learner-led' ethos that the organisation strives to achieve, as outlined in its Vision. (1.2, 3.1)

Areas for Development

Areas for development are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g., where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and areas for development. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice, and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- The IAG Statement & Policy clearly sets out the aims of the service. Whilst this more than satisfies the current version of the **matrix** Standard, the revised version may require any policy to be more explicit in a number of areas such as key partnerships or limitations to the service, and how the service will be monitored/quality assured. As the current policy comes up for review in July 2022, it may be beneficial to include these areas to ensure the policy considers these changes. It may also be useful to include the policy on the organisation's website to ensure all those eligible for the service know what to expect. It may also be beneficial to consider aligning this document to the CDI³ Code of Ethics which could provide an increased level of scrutiny when carrying out performance discussions with staff, as well as demonstrating to others the quality of provision through any Due Diligence activity. The code can be accessed [Here](#) (1.3)
- As identified in the Strengths, the organisation is committed to ensuring staff have the necessary qualifications to carry out their IAG role, with many having IAG Level 4. To further strengthen the service, it may be beneficial to consider developing an IAG Succession Plan and providing key staff with the Level 6 qualification. This could ensure those new to their IAG role have an 'IAG Champion' to support them as well as ensuring the sustainability of the service. (2.4)
- Staff working with Study Programme learners are all highly competent in supporting young people with differing needs. To further enhance the employability support, it may be beneficial to consider the work the IEP⁴ does with employability practitioners through its membership programme such as its regular LiveLearnLunch webinars and qualifications relevant to the sector. More information can be accessed [Here](#) (2.4)
- ILPs capture learners outcomes over and above qualifications (mainly soft skills) and whilst staff are able to articulate what each learner has achieved individually, there is limited information which captures this on a more extensive scope, for instance by cohort, centre, or region. It may be beneficial to consider if e-compliance (or similar) has the capability of logging the key aims of learners (for instance confidence), then tracking and reporting them. This could be useful when considering achievements as well as areas for further development, as well as providing valuable outcomes/impact data to stakeholders. (4.2)

³ Career Development Institute

⁴ Institute of Employability Professionals

- The calibre of staff employed within Nova suggests that the recruitment & selection process is effective in attracting, securing, and retaining talented people. For many the process includes elements such as Micro-Teach which assesses the candidate's competence in delivering teaching & learning sessions. It may be beneficial to introduce something along the lines of Micro-IAG for individuals who are either involved in the very early stages of the service (such as recruitment and initial enquiries) as well as those offering more career-related IAG to further enhance the recruitment & selection process. (2.3)
- The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy is comprehensive and meets the requirements of the current version of the **matrix** Standard. In order to bring it up to date; and in line with the revised version of the Standard, Nova could consider the subtle shift from Equality to Equity (which in practice Nova does well) within the terminology of the policy during its planned review in July 2022. (1.3)

The annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow the organisation to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make in order to support individuals. These may include the Areas for Development above. <https://matrixstandard.com/assessment-journey/continuous-improvement-checks/>

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process. In line with current policy guidance, the assessment was conducted remotely.

- Planning discussions with the Quality & Curriculum Manager
- Telephone interviews with 1 partner, 12 members of staff, 5 learners (apprentices and study programme)
- Video call interviews with 1 partner, 28 members of staff, 4 learners (apprentices and study programme)
- Review of relevant documentation including Strategic Business Development Plan, Stakeholder Feedback Strategy, learner handbooks, IAG Statement & Policy, Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy, SAR⁵ & QIP⁶, survey results, case studies Company Induction presentation
- Review of the organisation's website

⁵ Self-Assessment Report

⁶ Quality Improvement Plan

Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
5. Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the **matrix** Standard at least 3 months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment, and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 3 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.
6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: matrixStandard@growthco.uk.
7. Inform The Growth Company immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
8. Inform The Growth Company of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Company and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
10. Only use the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines. For example, if a certain department is successfully **matrix** accredited, the Quality Mark can only be used on that department's letterhead or on that department's page on their internet homepage.
11. Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for accreditation review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by The Growth Company and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
12. Be aware that The Growth Company reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.