

# Quality Assurance

## Assessment 2023-24

Provider Name: Seetec Outsource Training and Skills

Visit Dates: Monday 31 July – Thursday 3 August 2023

# Contents

Executive Summary, Provider Grades and Overall Conclusion ..... 3

Provider Description..... 4

Visit Approach and Team Details ..... 5

Service Delivery ..... 6

    Effective practice – this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider ..... 7

Leadership and Quality Culture..... 9

    Effective practice– this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider ..... 10

Outcomes and Impacts (Results) ..... 10

Appendix 1 - Quality Standard Grade Definitions ..... 12

    Quantifying Statements and Proportions ..... 13

## Executive Summary, Provider Grades and Overall Conclusion

This visit was based upon Skills Development Scotland's formal review process which is set out in our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework<sup>1</sup> document. This report identifies the main findings of the review team from their visit. It sets out areas for improvement which the provider should place within its Quality Action Plan.

### Introduction

The number of achievements as a proportion of all leavers for Modern Apprenticeships was 72.7% in 2022/23, 0.9pp higher than 2021/22. The achievement rate gradually declined from 2016/17 to 2021/22, following a similar trend reported in Further Education performance figures, but is starting to show signs of recovery post-pandemic.

This report, and in particular the areas for improvement identified, need to be considered in this context, and we acknowledge that many of the circumstances which may have impacted the providers ability to effectively deliver training were out with their control.

We have reviewed key performance indicators in line with the provider's particular portfolio of provision and caveated statements regarding outcomes in relation to the effects of the pandemic.

The report has been graded giving proportionate consideration to how the provider has adapted to the particular circumstances that have affected them to deliver their work-based learning provision.

Standard	Quality Standard Grade
Service Delivery	Excellent
Leadership and Quality Culture	Excellent
Outcomes and Impact	Very Good

N.B. –

- The definitions for the grades awarded in relation to the Quality Standards, and a table detailing the quantifying statements / proportions used throughout the report are detailed in [Appendix 1](#)

<sup>1</sup> [SDS Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework 2023-24](#)

Seetec Outsource Training and Skills Ltd is a well-regarded training provider, demonstrating many strengths and effective practice in the delivery of their SDS funded provision.

Overall, apprentices have a positive learning experience from commencement of the programme to completion. A robust approach to initial assessment is in place to understand the needs of the learner and induction onto the programme is thorough and detailed, setting apprentices up to succeed with clear understanding of expectations and requirements. Visit plans work well in setting out clear direction and timescales for the completion of framework units, and apprentice progress reviews are valued in understanding progress toward completion and receiving feedback on their learning journey.

An individualised approach to learning and assessment is delivered by the Apprentice Development Coach (ADC), considering additional support needs, learning style, work patterns and personal circumstance. Learning is fun and engaging, and both apprentices and employers interviewed expressed high satisfaction in the service they received, notably commenting on the flexible and adaptable approach taken. Alternative assessment methods, such as professional discussion and scribing, and increasing the frequency of engagement and one-to-one support, are examples of tailoring learning to meet the needs of the learner.

The ADC has a strong relationship and rapport with both apprentices and the employer. There is a three-way partnership approach in place to deliver the best experience for all parties, meaning there is a cohesive and joined-up approach to service delivery, continuously reflecting on where improvements can be made. The employer and ADC work together to overcome barriers to learner progress. Communication to both the employer and apprentices is effective, ensuring clarity on roles, programme requirements and progress. The employer most values face-to-face delivery of the programme, as they feel the impact of learning holds more weight in this approach.

The provider values the voice of both their employers and apprentices well and seek out change to improve service delivery. There are various approaches in place, underpinned by the provider's Quality Assurance Framework, that demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement, and the provider has an effective, formalised process in place to gather feedback from stakeholders. Over the last three years, satisfaction levels have increased and maintained at a high level. There is an understanding of the ecosystem the provider operates within and the opportunities and challenges in the sector, which is fully reflected in their work-based learning strategy.

SDS funded provision is represented well in almost all equality groups across the provider's MA programme. However, it is recognised that their achievement rate has declined over a three-year period.

**Provider Description**

Seetec Outsource Training and Skills is a private limited company incorporated in July 2019. Working with only one employer at the time of quality assurance review, they deliver the Modern Apprenticeship in Customer Service at SCQF Level 6. The provider also delivers apprenticeship training in other parts of the UK and Ireland.

Seetec Outsource Training and Skills' SDS funded provision consists of nine staff members. Six staff members are involved in operations, including the Executive Director of Training and Skills, who is overall responsible for MA provision, Head of Professional Services Operations, National Training Manager, one Apprentice Development Coach (ADC) and two supporting ADCs, all of whom are SVQ assessors. The Quality Lead – Assurance heads the quality arm of MA delivery, consisting of one Sector Specialist and one Internal Quality Assurer (IQA), who is a qualified internal verifier.

During the height of the pandemic, the provider remained operational and continued to engage with employers and apprentices, although it is recognised that the move from face-to-face to remote delivery in the short-term had an adverse impact on service delivery. Face-to-face delivery has now resumed.

There were 20 apprentices in training as at 28 April 2023 undertaking the following frameworks:

<b>MA Framework</b>	<b>Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level</b>	<b>Awarding Body</b>	<b>Nos in Training as at 28 April 2023</b>
<b>Customer Service</b>	<b>SCQF Level 6</b>	<b>Scottish Qualifications Authority</b>	<b>20</b>

All core skills are certificated separately. Naturally occurring evidence is gathered through apprentices' experience in the work-setting and assignments, which are contextualised to their job role. Evidence produced by apprentices is regularly sampled to aid the provider's internal verification arrangements and ensure consistent assessment standards.

### **Visit Approach and Team Details**

This is the first formal quality assurance review that has been undertaken by SDS of the Seetec Outsource Training and Skills MA delivery. However, it should be noted that the provider had resumed responsibility for Outsource Vocational Learning's MA provision, which was reviewed in November 2017, as a result of the merger of the two organisations. The provider submitted a self-assessment in May 2023 and evidence has been considered in relation to this. The assessment team also considered additional evidence presented by the provider during the visit.

The visit team had three members, one Quality Assessor and two Associate Assessors. The review was conducted virtually through MS Teams. Evidence in support of the review was provided in advance by way of electronic folder, along with additional evidence given at the time of the visit.

Interviews were conducted with five staff members of Seetec Outsource Training and Skills, consisting of Head of Professional Services Operations, National Training Manager, The Quality Lead – Assurance, an IQA and an ADC. Interviews were completed with seven apprentices at different stages of learning and age-groups, and four employer representatives. Additionally, an observation of an apprentice progress review was undertaken. The assessment team considered apprentice sampling that had been completed by the Skills Investment Adviser in the previous six months.

### **Strengths – These are the things that are working well for the provider**

- Seetec Outsource Training and Skills has effective approaches in place to assess the suitability of learners for the MA and demonstrate they have good prospects of success in completing and achieving the qualification. Previous learning and qualifications, motivation for applying for the apprenticeship and expectation of skill development are understood by the provider. Diagnostic testing associated with core skills is deployed, identifying potential knowledge gaps and skill strengths and weaknesses. Additional assessments are completed, producing a Neurodiversity Report which provides an indication of apprentices' learning styles and potential additional support needs. These arrangements enable the provider to plan for individual needs and put in place the support required for apprentices to be given the best opportunity to progress through the qualification.
- The provider undertakes an effective approach to learning and assessment planning. An individual learning plan is developed based on the outputs of the apprentice's initial assessment and is updated following each progress review. Visit plans are developed, setting clear goals, expectations and deadlines to support apprentice progress. The ADC has presence in the workplace each week and meets with apprentices every three weeks to review progress. In many instances, interactive workshops are delivered to apprentice cohorts, and all apprentices interviewed expressed that this is a fun and engaging way to learn. Workshops, observations and visits are planned and communicated in advance in line with the needs of the employer and apprentice, considering factors like work patterns and personal circumstances. This ensures that unit requirements are clear, apprentices are well-prepared for assessment, and planning is flexible around the needs of the apprentice.
- The provider considers the specific needs of equality groups well and makes reasonable adjustments where required. An individualised and flexible approach to planning for learning and assessment is adopted, ensuring that apprentices learn at their own pace and are not left behind. Additional support needs are identified as part of initial assessment and resources available are reinforced throughout the learning journey. All apprentices interviewed were aware of the assistance available to them. A dedicated internal team take the lead, in collaboration with the ADC, to put in place the support required. Alternative assessment methods, such as scribing and professional discussion, and increasing the frequency of engagement between the ADC and apprentice, including one-to-one weekly support, were some of the examples of reasonable adjustments provided as part of this review. Mental Health First Aiders are in place within Seetec Outsource Training and Skills and the employer has Occupational Health Advisers, and apprentices can use these resources where required. As a result, apprentices feel confident their needs are accommodated and they progress well, regardless of learning style or additional needs.
- Effective approaches are in place with the employer to build strong, inclusive, and collaborative partnerships. Promoting a three-way relationship between the employer, assessor and apprentice, the employer is involved at the key stages of the learner's journey, including initial assessment and progress reviews. Regular

dialogue between assessors and employers take place to update employers on progress and make them aware of learning barriers that may occur, and these are collaboratively addressed. At a strategic level, the provider will engage with the employer to understand their experience, as well as current and evolving future needs. This demonstrates that the provider recognises the importance of the voice of the employer in the design and preparation of apprenticeship delivery.

- The provider has a range of resources in place to support apprentices effectively. The use of an e-portfolio to gather and record evidence is easy to use, and beneficial to understand progress. Learners develop a CPD log weekly, where they reflect on their working week, record their main duties and identify their professional development. This can be used to identify evidence holistically against framework units. Workshops are delivered in a dedicated area in the work setting, and this mode of learning delivery is recognised as both fun and engaging by the apprentice. Protected time is provided to learners each week to progress through the qualification, and mentors are in place as a support mechanism. The ADC is in the workplace each week, scheduling one-to-one meetings every three weeks with learners. These resources have a positive impact on apprentices' learning experiences and helps them progress through their qualification.
- Progress reviews take place every three months and are effective in supporting apprentices to set goals and monitor progress against the completion of their qualification. Progress reviews focus on goal setting; progress on achievement; feedback; and additional support needs. Typically, line managers are present at progress review meetings, but when they are not, there is always an opportunity to provide comments and feedback as part of the Apprentice Progress Review paperwork, which is directly communicated to the learner. Apprentices, therefore, feel supported by both their assessor and employer to progress through their qualification.

### **Effective practice – this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider**

#### **Induction**

The introduction to the MA programme is integrated seamlessly into the employer's induction and training for new employees, setting the first impression of the programme as an important aspect of their job role. The provider and employer worked collaboratively over recent years to review and improve induction arrangements, aiming to give apprentices the best possible start to their learning journey. This is demonstrated well through apprentice feedback, maintaining high levels of satisfaction on the introduction to the programme in recent years.

Apprentices receive a thorough and detailed induction onto the MA programme on the second day of their employer induction, ensuring that all key information on requirements and structure of qualification, key roles and contacts, and expectations are understood. A PowerPoint presentation is delivered, and apprentices are given their Learner Handbook, which includes the provider's policies such as safeguarding and useful resources to support vulnerable learners.

As a result, apprentices have a clear understanding on what to expect from the outset of their learning journey and the support available to them.

### **Transferrable Skills**

The provider has designed and prepared to deliver transferable skills well, most notably core skills and career management skills. While all core skills are certificated separately, the provider has effectively embedded assignments of core skills throughout the learning journey, contextualised to the apprentice's job role, and the use of natural occurring evidence where possible. All apprentices interviewed had a great understanding of core skills, and their progress in achieving them.

Career Management Skills are also a primary focus throughout the learning journey. Apprentices undertake a self-assessment of their skills at each progress review, where they identify development opportunities and improvement over time. Half-way through the programme, apprentices are encouraged to start thinking about the next steps of their career, and these discussions are increased three months later. Shadowing opportunities are identified to support apprentices' career ambitions and, as part of this review, examples were given on the support provided to learners by the ADC in completing job applications.

There is clear evidence that suggests Seetec Outsource Training and Skills clearly add value and contribute to the career progression and personal development of apprentices.

### **Quality Assurance of Practice Leading to Improvement and Enhancement of Services**

Sound approaches are in place to review service delivery to inform improvement and enhancements to meet the needs of both employers and apprentices. Underpinned by their internal Quality Assurance Framework, Seetec Outsource Training and Skills has a dedicated team that oversees quality arrangements across their MA programme. These arrangements include comprehensive reviews of their delivery of the MA programme, inclusive of key players in the delivery and full consideration of stakeholder feedback. An Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is assigned to each ADC, carrying out quality audits in line with internal verification requirements, where a report is produced to record findings and constructive feedback is provided to the ADC. In the case of this review, the IQA and ADC have a strong, productive relationship, where they regularly catch up to discuss apprentice progress and barriers and explore improvement to delivery. For example, the contextualisation of the assessment of one of the core skills was developed out of this relationship.

Standardisation meetings currently take place every three months with the intention to deliver bite-sized standardisation meetings every six weeks in the near future. These meetings are scheduled in advance, and participants are empowered to inform the agenda and present as part of the session.

These arrangements enable staff to increase consistency across their provision, address challenges and identify ways to improve.

### **Strengths - These are the things that are working well for the provider**

- Seetec Outsource Training and Skills has appropriate approaches in place to influence and support diverse recruitment. The provider understands and is aware of the key policies and priorities around diverse recruitment associated with MA programmes and actively promotes this to the employer. Whilst the provider is not involved directly in recruitment, they undertake an influencing role, and have supported the employer in initiatives of promoting MA opportunities in customer service to males and in management to females in recent years. The ADC also delivers information sessions to potential candidates at open recruitment days and career fairs. These approaches demonstrate a commitment to promote inclusive recruitment practices.
- Strong approaches are adopted to understand the ecosystem and the opportunities and challenges within the sector. With a work based learning strategy in place, the provider is aware of national and local policies, and understands priorities of MA programmes within the context of the skills landscape. This understanding is developed through the knowledge of their staff, labour market information and industry reports, SDS resources, and utilising their networks, including employers, to understand their current and evolving needs. This intelligence feeds into business planning, ensuring the provider considers the changing needs of their customers, the market and the trends that affect them.
- Arrangements are in place to manage staff effectively to deliver the MA programme. Through an induction process for new staff, the introduction of key policies and information on the MA programme, and dedicated time with experienced staff, there are processes in place to ensure the understanding of the requirements of SDS contract delivery. Appraisals are in place with ADCs to reflect on contribution toward their professional and personal goals and identify training needs. Workload is managed through an internal tracker and monitored regularly. All necessary information is shared at team meetings, and staff feel empowered to suggest improvements on delivery, raise issues or ask for support in this team setting. Overall, there are robust approaches in place to support staff to deliver the requirements of the programme and meet the needs of apprentices and employers.
- The provider demonstrates a positive approach to seeking innovation within its provision. Firstly, they listen to the voice of both their employers and apprentices well and seek out change to improve service delivery. Most recently, improvements were made to the induction process, where they worked collaboratively with the employer to make enhancements. There are various approaches in place, underpinned by the provider's Quality Assurance Framework, that demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. The provider also attends community of practice events, such as those associated with SDS and Scottish Training Federation, which is an opportunity to learn from their peers. Invested in digital technology, such as their e-portfolio, is also clear. Overall, the provider utilises their intelligence and networks to improve their provision.

## Areas for Improvement or Development

- Whilst Seetec Outsource and Skills demonstrate strengths in their commitment to continuous improvement, it is recognised by the provider that there is a missed opportunity to develop a more structured approach to engaging with key stakeholders in the process of completing their annual SDS self-assessment. This would allow them to gain a wider range of opinions and perspectives and strengthen their evaluation against the SDS Quality Assurance and Improvement framework.

### Effective practice– this is an area that we believe is working well for the provider

#### Staff Development

The arrangements for staff development are effective, empowering staff to identify learning opportunities. Linking in with the delivery of the MA programme, there is internal learning on embedding core skills, and giving effective feedback and coaching. The provider's online learning platform, Success Factor, offers mandatory learning modules on topics like health and safety and safeguarding, and staff can choose to undertake optional modules, like those associated with increasing ICT literacy, and time is ring-fenced for them to complete this. All learning is recorded on a detailed CPD log.

Seeking out learning opportunities across the business, the ADC provided an example of shadowing another colleague involved in delivering workshops as part of provision in England, and learning from this experience was incorporated into the delivery in Scotland. Staff are aware of the resources available on the SDS Work Based Learning Hub, completing training on metaskills and those delivered by Mesma, a partner of SDS.

External training was also attended to understand how to better support apprentices with barriers to learning, with specific reference to autism.

This demonstrates that staff are committed to develop their understanding to support the needs of all apprentices and employers.

### Outcomes and Impacts (Results<sup>2</sup>)

#### Strengths - These are the results that are good for the provider

- The gender balance on the programme over the last three years has been broadly static at approximately 60% of males and 40% of females. The provider's apprentices were predominantly in the Customer Service framework, and their male participation rate was well above the national average for this particular framework.
- The participation rate of individuals from a BME background has increased over a three-year period and was above the national average in each of the last two years.

<sup>2</sup> The national performance data used for comparison / benchmarking is contained within the 2022-23 Modern Apprenticeship Supplementary Tables (Q4) which can be accessed from the SDS corporate website [here](#)

- The participation rate from individuals with a self-declared impairment, health condition or learning disability has steadily increased over the last three years and was above the national average.
- SQA External Verification Reports consistently demonstrate high confidence in maintaining SQA standards over the last three years.
- The provider has an effective, formalised process in place to gather feedback from both apprentices and employers. Feedback is gathered at three different stages of the learning journey from apprentices, and results are regularly monitored, analysed and shared. Over the last three years, satisfaction levels have increased and maintained at a high level. This means that the provider has arrangements in place to understand the views of their stakeholders, and they can demonstrate improvements year-on-year on their service delivery.

### **Areas for Improvement or Development**

- The provider's achievement rate has declined over a three-year period from 2020-21 to 2022-23 and they have not met the SDS target (75%) in the last two contracting years. However, it is recognised that for the single employer that the provider works with, many of the early leavers encountered were a result of the disruption caused through the pandemic.
- Despite being above the national average in 2020-21, there have been no individuals from a care experienced background participating in the programme in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- In the last SDS Compliance Review in November 2022, Seetec Outsource Training and Skills received an Amber RAG Status, and therefore, there is an opportunity to improve this at the next review.

## Appendix 1 - Quality Standard Grade Definitions

### SERVICE DELIVERY

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to the operational planning and delivery of apprenticeships which are of a very high quality. There is an outstanding standard of training which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating across the provider network. Apprenticeship planning and delivery is clearly adapted and tailored to meet the needs of every individual apprentice, including those from under-represented groups. All apprentices and employers are involved in the planning and delivery and all apprentices have ownership of their learner journey, optimising their chances of success and providing them with future-proofed vocational and transferable skills. The provider demonstrates they have effective/innovative approaches for meeting individuals' goals and monitoring and reviewing their progress that go beyond SDS 'compliance' requirements. It implies that the service offer is deemed to be sustainable and that the provider will continually seek ways in which to enhance their delivery.

### LEADERSHIP & QUALITY CULTURE

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to the leadership and quality culture of the provider resulting in planning and delivery of apprenticeships which are of a very high quality. There is a sustainable culture of continuous improvement, embracing equality and diversity and the management and development of WBL related staff to ensure that training provided is optimal for all apprentices and their employers. The provider is innovative, works with appropriate partners to optimise their service, and thinks strategically about the future of their WBL provision. There are examples of very best practice, worthy of disseminating across the provider network.

### OUTCOMES & IMPACT

An evaluation of **very good** applies to the recent past results of the provider which reflect high satisfaction with their apprenticeship provision by apprentices, employers and other relevant stakeholders. This includes how well the provider considers their impact on individuals from under-represented groups. The provider has a systematic approach to gathering relevant quantitative and qualitative data and analysing it. There are very good rates of apprenticeship achievement in almost all of the framework areas delivered and across different pertinent equality groups which are reflective (i.e. there is a causal relationship) of the service offer and leadership provided. There may be examples of individual success of the provider's apprentices.

## Quantifying Statements and Proportions

Description of numbers and proportions	%
All	100%
Almost all	91 – 99%
Most	75 – 90%
Majority	50 – 74%
Minority / less than half	16 – 49%
Few	Up to 15%