



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (College)

INSTITUTION: IMechE Engineering Training Solutions

ADDRESS: Engineering Training Centre
4 Europa View
Sheffield Business Park
Sheffield
S9 1XH

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Chris Kirby

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF VISIT: 23 April 2018

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 19 July 2018

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

IMechE Engineering Training Solutions (ETS/the Institution) was founded in 1985, as Ruane Technical Services Limited (Ltd). In 1998 it changed its name to Argyll-Ruane Ltd (ARL). ARL was acquired by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) in 2012 and the name changed to IMechE Engineering Training Solutions (ETS) in June 2016. IMechE ETS is owned and operated by Professional Engineering Products Ltd, which is a private limited company. ETS has its own General Manager and staffing structure.

Since the last inspection, a new General Manager has been appointed to replace the previous Managing Director. In addition, a new team of four senior managers have replaced the previous team of two managers who were responsible for quality and training.

The General Manager oversees all aspects of the Institution, including the teaching, examinations, administration, finance, marketing, business development, customer services and facilities. The previous training centre in Halesowen closed in February 2016 and the purpose-built facilities in Sheffield now provide the base for the training activities. This includes generous space for teaching in both the theoretical and practical elements of the programmes offered, as well as space for administration, examination, storage and relaxation purposes.

ETS provides training, certification and consultancy services in inspection and non-destructive testing (NDT). The training programmes offered are relevant to a number of key industries including onshore and offshore oil and gas, nuclear and renewable energy, aerospace, marine, defence and manufacturing. In addition, ETS holds Authorised Qualifying Body status with the British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing (BINDT).

The Institution of Mechanical Engineer's vision is to improve the world, through engineering, by inspiring the next generation and developing professional engineers and ETS's activities support this vision. In addition, ETS aims to increase student numbers, following a reduction in enrolments as a result of the recent slump in the oil and gas industry.

2. Brief description of the current provision

ETS offers training in all the major NDT and inspection methods, from Level 1 to Level 3. This includes programmes in ultrasonic testing, ultrasonic phased array, radiographic testing, magnetic particle testing, eddy current testing, penetrant testing and visual testing.

Over 65 programmes are currently offered. These are divided into programmes which are scheduled for delivery between two and ten times during the year and programmes which are available as and when required. The duration of the programmes vary between one and 15 days in length, although the vast majority are between two and five days. The NDT/Inspection Training programme incorporates several different training programmes in one course. This course is delivered over a 26-week period.

During the inspection, there were five programmes being delivered to 17 male students, all of whom are over the age of 18. The programmes are Ultrasonic Phased Array Level 2, Radiographic Testing of Welds (Theory), Ultrasonic Testing Level 2, Magnetic Particle Testing Level 2 and Eddy Current (Welds) Level 1.

Student recruitment is aimed principally at professionals working for companies in various relevant key industries. Students are also able to enrol in a private capacity. Generally, the vast majority of the students are male. Those students from overseas are predominantly from Malaysia where ETS currently focuses its international recruitment. During 2017, ETS trained 1127 students and provided examinations for over 600 students in the United Kingdom. All students are over the age of 18.

Programme delivery is either through formal lectures using interactive white boards, slides, laptops, text books and study guides or practical sessions using the testing equipment and associated resources. Some preliminary online training courses are now available and more of these will be made available in the future.

3. Inspection visit process

The inspection was conducted by one inspector over half a day. Meetings were held with the General Manager, Sales and Customer Services Manager, Training Manager, Chief Examiner and Quality Manager. The inspector also held meetings with two international students and two non-management staff members. Relevant documentation, including relating to the previous action points and recommendations, was made available for scrutiny. Full co-operation from ETS staff was offered during the inspection process.

4. Inspection history

Full Accreditation: 10 February & 2 March 2009

Interim: 18-19 March 2010

Re-accreditation: 26-27 March 2013

Interim: 14 April 2015

Supplementary: 16 December 2015

Re-accreditation: 7-8 March 2017

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

In order to provide better customer service and increased profitability, IMechE decided that more knowledgeable staff were required and that the workload should be better balanced amongst a greater number of managers. The Managing Director of ETS was replaced by a General Manager in February 2018. The two senior managers, who were responsible for quality and training during the last inspection, have now been replaced by four senior managers. These are the Sales and Customer Services Manager, Chief Examiner, Quality Manager and Training Manager. Some of these positions had only been filled shortly before this inspection.

2. Response to actions points in last report

6.1 ETS must publish a clear policy on student attendance and punctuality so the requirements are clear to all staff and students.

A clear and effective attendance policy has now been implemented. Students are e-mailed directly with an agreement which states that full attendance is required in order to meet BINDT course requirements. The induction programme also states that full attendance for the duration of the course is mandatory.

6.2 A register must be taken at each session so that attendance is systematically documented and the records are complete.

All students and visitors now have to sign in and out at reception on a paper based register. This information is collated weekly and transferred to a digital format and then saved on the management data system for archiving.

18.3 19.2 The Institution must review and document the contents of the induction programme to ensure it is suitably comprehensive. In addition, the delivery of the induction must be monitored closely to ensure that all students fully benefit from the programme.

An induction programme has now been developed and is delivered to all students at the start of their course. This includes suitably comprehensive information on safety, communication, attendance, training format and required documentation. It also includes a location map, first aid, fire safety, general complaints and anti-discrimination information.

In addition, an overseas student information booklet has been produced which is available on the Learning Management System (LMS). This provides relevant information from the induction programme and additional information for international students about ETS, BINDT, United Kingdom (UK) law, the ETS team, religious faiths and emergency contacts. This enables international students to fully benefit from their training. It is only available to the students once they have started their course.

20.2 The complaints procedure must be issued to all students at the start of their programme.

An appropriate complaints procedure for students has now been developed and is issued to all students. The procedure is e-mailed directly to students seven days prior to commencement of the course and is also available for students to access on the LMS system.

20.3 All students must be advised of the BAC complaints procedure.

The BAC complaints procedure is also included with the Institution's complaints procedure and is e-mailed directly to students seven days prior to commencement of the course and is also available for students to access on the LMS system.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The institution should ensure that all job descriptions and appraisal forms are signed and dated as required.

Paper copies of signed job descriptions and appraisals are maintained. Electronic copies are also archived on the computer network.

All staff should be made fully aware of the complaints policy and other policies affecting their employment. This should include ensuring that confidential information is always stored securely.

A staff complaints policy is in place and the staff are aware of how to access this information on their internal systems. Staff have recently undergone General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training and are putting additional systems in place to ensure compliance with the new data protection laws.

The institution should ensure it is fully aware of all the information and materials provided by the agent to potential students.

The Institution does not currently make use of agents.

Results from the initial assessment should be used, more fully, to inform training staff in the UK of the ability of each student. The assessment should also allow for the identification of any particular learning needs and learning styles of each student. This information should also be made available to training staff in the UK and used in the planning of each programme.

This recommendation was made on the basis of an initial assessment, which was carried out locally by one client company in Malaysia who sent employees on ETS's courses. Where relevant, ETS enrolls students under the terms set by the awarding body. In addition, prospective students complete an application form which includes a special circumstances section, where details of any learning difficulties are declared. If any needs are declared, the training staff are made aware that the learner may need additional support. No other initial assessments are carried out.

ETS should continue to explore ways to identify and share good practice in terms of training techniques and activities used in the classroom.

Shadowing of training takes place and examples of good practice are shared in operations meetings, which are held fortnightly. All new training staff have mandatory training which includes shadowing, observations and supervised training until the management are satisfied that they are fit to teach. Feedback forms from students are analysed on a monthly basis and are used to inform future training needs.

The institution should consider developing an online portal to share resources with students.

An online Learning Management System (LMS) has been developed, which can be accessed by students once their training has started. Some of the course documentation, policies and generic forms are available online for students to access. The majority of resources available are training related workbooks.

The institution should identify policies relating to discrimination, abusive behaviour and ensure they are communicated to the students clearly in the Student Handbook.

The student handbook now features a relevant but brief policy on discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The provision of information to students, regarding events and other leisure activities, should be developed to provide information on a wider range of educational, cultural, sporting, religious, recreational and other activities on both the website and in the premises.

A section on religious information is now included in the overseas student information booklet. No further information, local guides or links are provided about the city of Sheffield and the surrounding area, nearby activities, events or local entertainment.

A formal social programme for international students of local and, where possible, national activities should be introduced as soon as possible, particularly for the benefit of international students, who train for six months.

No additional social activities or trips have been organised for students.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The management structure is clearly defined and an updated organisational chart is available				
The General Manager and the other senior managers are suitably qualified for their respective positions.				
Effective communication takes place through regular staff and operational meetings, which are recorded.				
Feedback is now gained from students after every course and reviewed regularly.				
The new management team has developed new policies and documentation in response to the outcomes of the last inspection. Managers have a focus on improving and adding to the current policies and guidance for students.				

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
Training staff are suitably qualified and regularly attend external training courses.				
The staff feel supported and are offered professional development opportunities.				
No lesson plans are produced. The trainers use workbooks as a guide but this does not consider content, rooms, resources and needs of the learner.				

Students interviewed said that they were very happy with the support and training offered by ETS.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The international students say they are well supported by ETS and have emergency contact details for the managers. Religious issues are discussed at induction and a prayer room is available on the premises. Feedback forms are provided to all students after they have completed their training.				

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The premises are modern, bright and well maintained. The students have access to a communal rest area with games and snacks available. Notices about health and safety, fire procedures and building plans are all clearly visible in the reception area.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS
The new management team have made significant progress on developing and updating policies and are committed to continuing to improve and develop their systems, documentation and accessibility.
All students now have some form of induction and so are more familiar with the training courses, ETS staff and health and safety procedures.
Staff and students feel that managers are accessible, approachable and are fully supported by ETS and IMechE respectively.
Feedback on the training provided by ETS is very good and students feel they are learning lots of new skills.
The online LMS system is a good system for students to access documentation and resources which is currently being developed further to offer more information.
The premises are clean and safe which makes for a more productive environment for training.

ACTIONS REQUIRED	Priority H/M/L
None	

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT (to be reviewed at the next inspection)
International students, who arrive in the UK before the start of their training programme, should be given access to appropriate information including local guide books and contacts before they arrive in the UK so that they can make the best use of that free time.
The Institution should consider using initial assessments to better inform training staff of the ability of and to identify any particular learning needs of each student.
The LMS should be developed further to ensure that all relevant policies, handbooks and important information is available and communicated to the students through the LMS.
The institution should develop a detailed policy relating to discrimination and abusive behaviour, which includes timescales and actions to be taken. This policy should be made available for students to access.
The provision of information to students, regarding local events and other leisure activities, should be developed to provide information on a wider range of educational, cultural, sporting, recreational and other activities.
A formal social programme, including both local and, where possible, national activities, should be introduced, particularly for the benefit of international students who train for six months.
Trainers should develop a basic lesson plan which considers the lesson content, resources, room setting and the needs of the learners.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
There are no trained fire wardens on site, and no fire training has taken place within the last 12 months. This contravenes guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). During the interim inspection an external fire training company was booked to visit the premises and allow up to 23 members of staff to be trained in one of two fire safety courses taking place on 15 June 2018.	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	