

Fashion-Enter Ltd - FTA



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Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Kathy Leahy
Visit Date	25/03/2021
Client ID	C23257
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Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	14/03/2022
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	14/03/2023
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	14/03/2024

Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Fashion Enter is a not-for-profit social enterprise organisation that was established to support people wishing to gain access to occupations within the fashion manufacturing industry providing qualifications and support from entry to the industry qualifications to advanced skills, with support to set up or develop businesses through to an outlet to sell finished garments. The Fashion Technology Academy (FTA), which provides Adult Education Budget programmes and apprenticeships, is a training facility for the development of skills for the fashion manufacturing sector and includes training programmes covering stitching, pattern making/cutting and garment technology. The training aspect of the business works closely with the production side enabling learners to gain practical industry experience.

Since the last assessment, there has been some exciting developments in the group which has seen the opening of the Tailoring Academy which is working with local government agencies with support of the sector to develop higher level skills. N17 Creative Callings supports business start-up and acts as a business incubator within specific London boroughs and Affordable Workspaces is a project opening in Islington. A new factory has been established in Wales with the aim to open a new FTA there, along with the plans to open an FTA in Leicester. New technology has been introduced to provide access to the latest machinery, software and techniques.

The organisation has also established an Advisory Board and they have attracted people from high profile organisations from the fashion sector along with business in the finance and property sectors. This is helping to provide both scrutiny, insight and support for the business as it continues to develop. The Advisory Board are to shortly confirm the next Business Plan, but the current plan sets out the key aims:

- *To lead and manage high quality learning*
- *To increase the number of learners achieving and gaining qualifications*
- *To meet the needs of individuals, communities and employers to support effective pathways to employment*
- *To increase participation and create opportunities for people to be in education and training, as well as to further develop training opportunities for staff in the industry*
- *To link all programmes offered in order to provide a comprehensive journey from basic skills to employment for all*

Although these aims were set some four years ago, they remain relevant to the approach and ethos. Ethos and ethical approaches are very important to the organisation and providing the guiding principles to which they work. With the developments noted above, it is clear to see that opportunities for progression are being enhanced through the various developments made or planned.

“It’s an important partnership for us to bring through the next generation” (partner)

The Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) policy confirms that IAG is available from enquiring through to support for past students. Initial enquiries, which may be from referrals or through the online enquiry form, are reviewed with an exploration of the potential learners’ needs and any funding eligibility. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, enquirers have been provided a ‘screening’ form to capture some basic information which enables initial discussions to explore the aspirations of enquirers and the suitability of courses available. An Induction session allows for a further exploration of aims and aspirations and providing information on expectations, course content, policies etc. Tutors hold ‘vocational interviews’ to confirm the course and level is relevant to the learning, for example there

may be a discussion to consider whether it is stitching or pattern cutting is appropriate, or Level 1 or Level 2. Programmes are available from Level 1 to Level 5, with staff and learners explaining that the options available at each stage are discussed, not only in terms of qualifications with the organisation but also opportunities elsewhere for further training/learning or employment/self-employment.

Apprenticeships are delivered to both levy and non-levy employers, along with apprentices being employed within their own group structure. Apprentices are also supported from initial enquiry through to employment, with regular reviews of progress taking place.

“They are interested in your future; they want you to be great not just basic” (learner)

The links with industry are a key feature of the organisation and this further supports learners in gaining greater insight to job roles and employment opportunities. A ‘Next Steps’ session has recently been developed to help learners consider their future pathway and the regular speakers from industry also provide a broader understanding of the sector.

“We aim for our learners to be completely rounded by the time they leave” (staff)

“We try to get them job ready.... They find themselves; they grow.... They know what they want to do” (staff)

IAG is recognised as a clear contributor to the overall success and progression of learners. Plans indicate an overall aim of 85% achievement, with the latest data showing 91.66% apprenticeship and 99.04% short course achievement. It was noted that 66.6% of apprentices gain employment at the end of their programme and 30% of AEB learners. The high level of achievement and progression was attributed to the commitment to support learners, the approach of staff and the ongoing review and monitoring of progress to support any barriers to progression and achievement.

“We only do what we feel is the right thing to do and we have a commitment to be the best we can, for us and the learners” (staff)

Although staff recognise the importance of achieving qualification outcomes, as this demonstrates that the learner is on the right programme for them and therefore the initial advice and guidance has set them on the right journey, the IAG aims to provide a wide range of support. The IAG policy describes a number of different ways in which IAG supports learners:

- Increase aspiration and motivation
- Develop self confidence
- Enable informed choices for learning and career options
- Enable progression within current learning but also encourage lifelong learning
- Address any barriers to learning

Staff report on the progress of learners at the weekly meetings and each member of staff could describe the progress of their learners. The experience of working in the sector enables staff to provide in-depth IAG on the roles and opportunities within the sector, both employed and self-employed/own business routes.

“Every conversation I have with [name] makes me believe more in my work, [name] has been inspiring me” (learner)

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 organisation has strong industry connections, along with staff having considerable experience of the sectors related to the qualifications studied. This depth of knowledge of current employment, working practices and opportunities provides a high level of insight for learners into the working environment - 'making it real'. (2.2)
- Learners value the high level of support provided to them, from initial discussions, through their programme and beyond. They spoke about how the support was beyond their expectations and helped them move towards their goals. (3.3, 3.4)
- The ethos of the social enterprise runs through the organisation, with many examples of the ethical, morale and sustainability aspects embedded within the provision demonstrating a commitment to individuals and the society in which they live and work. (1.2)

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.

- Staff spoke about the learners undertaking AEB programmes and that for many building their confidence and self-esteem were key features of the programme. Some organisations use distance travelled tools to help learners identify the progress they have made and celebrate their successes. (4.2)
- In apprenticeship provision the role of the workplace mentor is a key person in supporting the trainee in their learning journey. Some organisations have provided 'mentor training' to ensure the mentor, who is often not the manager who has engaged with the training provider, to understand their role and the requirements placed on the trainee. (4.8)
- Staff spoke consistently about supporting people to 'do their best'. Some providers have supported staff to gain coaching skills to help learners achieve their 'personal best'. This may provide personal development for staff and fit with the supportive nature of the organisation. (2.4)
- The organisation recognises the importance of supporting learners with their wider health and wellbeing and are developing resources and signposting routes for this. They may wish to consider enabling some staff to undertake Mental Health First Aid training to support learners and also act as a support for other staff. (2.4)
- The organisation is going through some significant change, with additional services and programmes. This, along with the challenging year that has been faced by everyone, there may be an opportunity as a staff team to 'take stock' and reflect upon changes and acknowledge the challenges faced to ensure everyone is in a place to take things forward. (4.8)

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.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent Lockdowns, the assessment was conducted remotely using MS Teams. Documentary evidence was provided in a password protected Zip file.

Staff	Interviews with 5 staff
Learners	Interviews with 6 learners
Partners	Interviews with 2 partners
Documentary evidence	Business Plan, Business Continuity Plan, Website, Self-Assessment Report, Quality Improvement Plan, IAG Policy, Tracking Information, Feedback, Website, Ofsted Report

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.