

**Habia[®]
Skills
Academy**



Centre Name Grafton International

Area of Expertise

Advanced Nail Techniques

“Grafton International consistently offers training that reflects the latest developments in the industry and also tailor-make courses to suit colleges and individuals. They provide a cutting edge experience to all students, salons and visitors to their premises. ”

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Summary

Background

Grafton International was established in 1985, as a relatively small concern but soon grew into a substantial family run business, occupying a 30,000 sq ft building in Tamworth and employing around 70 members of staff. Grafton International has established a well-respected and professional reputation within the Nail Industry and is highly regarded for its educational programmes.

Findings

Grafton International provides technical training courses, ranging from beginners' courses, right the way through to courses delivering advanced techniques to qualified nail professionals. The company has an excellent reputation within the industry; delivering the technical skills that the nail industry needs; meeting, and very often exceeding, the nail industry National Occupational Standards.

Conclusions

Grafton International has been recognised as having an extremely strong and dedicated team of specialised educators who use inspirational training methods and provide superb follow-on care and support. The Industry Assessor commented that the training school was a beautiful building; purpose built, with modern equipment and all materials available. Grafton International also has locations nationwide where they run training courses, and even offer bespoke courses within customers' own salons, called 'In-Salon Training.'

Grafton International prides itself in offering a first-rate service to all their customers, no matter how big or small. This was witnessed and commented upon by the Industry Assessor; "Grafton International consistently offers training that reflects the latest developments in the industry and also tailor-make courses to suit colleges and individuals."

Introduction

Habia Skills Academy

The Habia Skills Academy (HSA) for the Hair and Beauty Sector acts a catalyst to address the sector's needs. HSA is an innovative provision, providing products and services that can be cascaded by collaboration with a network of excellent learning providers and other partners to reach the whole industry.

HSA priorities are to:

- raise the quality of the learning experience
- raise the aspirations of students by raising the skills of educators, ensuring educators can perform skills and have the know-how to teach skills at an inspirational and credible level
- raise employer expectations of the learning experience and students' capabilities
- raise respect and recognition for the sector in the eyes of Government and society in general.

In *specific* terms the HSA will do this by:

- identifying and signposting this excellent provision and providing e-learning solutions through an **online academy and website**
- creating a **network of Centres of Expertise** assessed and badged as providing high quality training and meeting industry needs
- driving and delivering **professional development for educators**, who will then cascade it within their centres so that employers and students can access the skills needed to meet client demand.

Centre of Expertise

The aim of the Centre of Expertise recognition is to encourage all learning providers to deliver excellent learning and be recognised for this. Learning providers will become part of the HSA by working towards and achieving the HSA Centre of Expertise criteria. Underpinning all will be the requirements to possess, develop and maintain high quality staff, excellent technical skills, facilities and delivery and content of training programmes. They will be promoted through the HSA on-line academy and website. The need for an industry led approach has been strengthened by changes in the education inspection regimes to whole college/provider light touch assessments which do not focus or report on individual departments such as hair and beauty.

Background / Course Overview

The Industry Assessor Visit took place on 3rd September 2013 at Grafton International premises in Tamworth, Staffordshire, during a normal day of training and operation of the business, therefore all evidence and observations witnessed by the Industry Assessor was deemed to be naturally occurring.

Grafton International provides a wide array of technical training courses, ranging from beginners' courses, right the way through to courses delivering the most up-to-date advanced techniques to qualified nail professionals. The company has had great success in developing and maintaining an excellent reputation for specialised delivery of advanced nail technique courses.

Grafton International values each member of staff and sees them as an integral part of their business; recognising the need for continual professional development and investment in their development within the company. The training team has been assembled from educators who are still thoroughly immersed in the nail industry; many of whom own their own businesses or are still working within the industry as a commercial interest. This gives them the ability to impart their up-to-date and extensive knowledge and experience to their students.

Programme Details

As Grafton International is a distributor and training provider of products sourced from around the world, they have a duty of care towards their suppliers to ensure that they provide the best possible training in each of the brands that they distribute.

From their extensive provision of Industry specific short courses, the following relevant programme details were taken from the Grafton International Education Prospectus, accessed August 2013.

Course Description example

ibd Elite

Get to the top of the industry with the ibd Elite programme. Once you have completed your training with ibd and you've been working in a salon or as a mobile tech, this is the final step to perfecting your skills and becoming the ultimate tech. These specialist courses are delivered by the industry's finest; ibd's Elite Educators, so you can expect nothing other than exceptional education and inspiration.

To access this course you must have 2-3 years experience working as a nail technician and be confident in all aspects of application and technique.

Choose your specialism from the following and become the ultimate tech in Acrylic, Gel, Design or French XTreme.

Choose from the following courses:

- ibd Gel Master Technician
- ibd Acrylic Master Technician
- ibd Master Design
- ibd Master French XTreme

What's included?

- Ibd Elite certificate

How long will it take?

- One full day, 10am – 4pm

Results and Findings

Standard 1: Technical skills

1.1 Does the centre deliver technical skills that meet industry standards?

Grafton International provides technical training courses, ranging from beginners' courses, right the way through to courses delivering advanced techniques to qualified nail professionals. The company has an excellent reputation within the industry; delivering the technical skills that the nail industry needs; meeting, and very often exceeding, the nail industry National Occupational Standards. The follow-on support and care that the company provides its graduates is exceptional; an area that the Industry Assessor commented upon; "Grafton International offers continuous support to students, salons, colleges and wholesalers; providing technical advice and extra handouts etc. Whatever support is needed; it is provided."

1.2 Does the centre work with industry to maintain current technical skills?

Grafton International continues to develop and reinforce strong and effective relationships with a range of international partners, through their import and distribution of their specialist products.

They work closely with Habia and Awarding Bodies to ensure technical skills meet industry standards and developments within the industry.

1.3 Does the centre continually update delivery to reflect latest industry developments?

Grafton International is at the forefront of advanced nail techniques and products. They remain on top of all legislative issues and use feedback from students, colleges and industry as a way of monitoring and predicting changes in delivery needs.

The Industry Assessor was very impressed with Grafton International's ability to keep up-to-date with industry trends, commenting "They provide a fantastic hints and tips booklet to help students once they complete their training. Grafton International consistently offers training to reflect the latest developments in the industry and also tailor-make courses to suit colleges and individuals."

Standard 2: Quality of Staff

2.1 Can the centre prove they have the right staff in position to deliver training?

Grafton International provided a full suite of staff CVs as part of their application process. These demonstrated that the educators are still thoroughly immersed in the nail industry; many owning their own business, or still working within the industry as a commercial interest; competing in National competitions; undergoing regular CPD and professional training; and working within the fashion industry on photo shoots and fashion and beauty articles. The Industry Assessor was able to verify this herself, on the day of the visit, as a file is held for each Educator, detailing their CVs, Insurance, Certificates, CPD events and their annual re-certification evidence for all product brands.

2.2. Does the centre have appropriately experienced named staff who work together to maintain excellent current skills?

Grafton International provided a table of all 16 Educators, their training locations and the brands in which they perform training, as part of their application process. This provided the evidence required and it was reinforced through the evidence of regular team meetings and communication, along with a thorough record of all staff training; witnessed on the day of the visit by the Industry Assessor.

2.3. Does all the centre staff update their technical skills on an annual basis (Continual Professional Development (CPD))?

Grafton International holds a central record for each Educator, detailing their CVs, Insurance, Certificates, CPD events and their annual re-certification for all product brands. The Company Handbook explains the positive support that they provide for staff to engage in, and achieve, CPD on a regular basis. There is also the compulsory requirement for Educators to attend an annual re-certification for the brands in which they are delivering training.

Standard 3: Qualifications and/or Training Programme Content

3.1 Does the centre have evidence of high quality delivery over a two year period?

Grafton International is a private training company delivering industry recognised training courses and courses for CPD, hence there is not a comparable set of National Benchmark data that can be used. The Centre reports that 98% of students pass their courses.

In comparing the data provided, the company has succeeded in having growing numbers of students and certificates over the two year period. There seemed to be a drop in numbers for the months of February, March and April during 2012, in comparison to the same months in 2011; however, 2013 has surpassed the same three months in both 2011 and 2012.

3.2 Does the purpose of each programme clearly relate to clients, students and industry needs?

Grafton International provides technical training courses, ranging from beginners' courses, right the way through to courses delivering advanced techniques to qualified nail professionals. They have an extensive provision of Industry specific short courses, as detailed in their Prospectus. These courses can be tailor-made to suit a group, individuals or a college.

3.3 Are the programmes regularly reviewed and updated?

The Educators at Grafton International undergo regular lesson observations and feedback by their National Education Manager, so that education standards and quality remain high on their programmes.

There is also an annual re-certification requirement, undertaken by 'American International Industries' who are the manufacturers of the products used. This is an intensive five day programme, culminating in a practical and written test for each of the Educators.

It was raised that the training programmes undertaken by Grafton International were heavily reliant on the manufacturer's training and promotional literature; some of which are based in the United States. However, the National Education Manager, Laura Maddock, reviews, monitors and updates the delivery and training materials to make them appeal to the UK audience.

Grafton International also uses feedback comments from students and participates in professional exhibitions, as a way of monitoring and predicting changes in delivery needs.

Standard 4: Facilities, Equipment and Resources

4.1 Do the premises, facilities, equipment and materials provided meet the requirements of the training programmes?

Grafton International also provides training in-house and at other dedicated training sites; all of which undergo checks by the National Education Manager, Laura Maddock, with risk assessments completed by the Educators.

The training area at Tamworth is purpose built and all nail stations have modern nail desks with extractor fans fitted. All equipment is modern and fit for purpose. The Industry Assessor was very impressed, and commented “Beautiful building; purpose built and modern. All equipment and materials are new and PAT tested. Grafton International provides a cutting edge experience to all students, salons and visitors to their premises.”

Standard 5: Delivery of Training

5.1 Does the centre deliver training that meets the standards set by industry?

Grafton International has an excellent reputation within the industry; delivering the technical skills that the nail industry needs and meeting, and often exceeding, the nail National Occupational Standards. Their training manuals are extremely thorough and professional, demonstrating the company's appetite for staying at the forefront of current technology and emerging trends.

5.2 Is the training both appropriate and inspirational for students?

Telephone interviews with a selection of former students were conducted, prior to the Industry Assessor's visit. Then the Industry Assessor, herself, was able to examine student feedback comments and talk to present students, on the day. These actions all confirmed positive student feedback. Students are always encouraged to attend further training to develop their skills. Work experience is offered to the students and, post certification, the Educator's details are provided so that they can contact them for additional support. The brands that Grafton International distributes and offers training upon are innovative.

The Industry Assessor observed that the Educators were very experienced and that inspirational training is offered. The follow-on support and care that the company provides its graduates is exceptional; an area that the Industry Assessor commented upon; "Grafton International offers continuous support to students, salons, colleges and wholesalers; providing technical advice and extra handouts etc. Whatever support is needed; it is provided."

5.3 Is there sufficient training space and staffing levels available to support students?

The training area is purpose built, with all modern equipment and resources. Staffing ratio is 1 to 10 students; any more students than that and another Educator is brought into the training. The session observed by the Industry Assessor had a ratio of 1 Educator to 4 students.

5.4 What sets the centre aside from other organisations?

There are many examples of good practice, featured throughout this report, and witnessed by the Industry Assessor. Student welfare and on-going support are at the very heart of this company. Student feedback, continuing growth of business, opportunities for CPD, innovative brands and the integration and support from their suppliers and manufacturers all point to the conclusion that their training is inspirational and sets them aside from other organisations. Grafton International has fantastic connections within the nail industry, and the associated industries of Spa, fashion, magazines and the media.

5.5 How does the centre ensure a student is at the relevant level on the completion of the programme?

The students are assessed whilst on the course, and copies of the Student Assessment and Student Development Plan were provided as evidence within the application process. It was also explained that if a student does not pass the written paper first time, oral questions are asked to bring the student up to the required standard. If they still fail to reach that standard, they are offered support and a re-test, with this process taking up to six weeks.

5.6 Do students have the opportunity to discuss and formulate their starting points, possible goals and relate these to learning opportunities which are acted upon?

A recognised manicure qualification is a course pre-requisite, therefore maintaining a high standard and recognising prior achievement. As the courses offered are between one to four days' training, it is a short term goal that is required. Each Educator starts each training session by asking students what they hope to achieve within the training session. Their individual responses are noted on a flipchart and are returned to at the end of the course to check if their needs have been met.

5.7 Do more than 85% of those who complete the programme/course also achieve the target qualification or course?

With the courses offered being between one to four days' in duration, it is likely that attendance and retention will be 100%. Grafton International reported that the success rate of their courses is 98%.

5.8 Do more than 85% of apprentices who complete the course also complete all the outcomes of the apprenticeship framework, and are awarded the apprenticeship completion certificate?

This point is not relevant to this particular application or report.

5.9 Is there evidence to support the achievement of an 85% overall positive response from a random sample of students and/or employers that they are satisfied with the teaching service they have received?

Evidence provided from telephone interviews, student feedback sheets provided as part of the application process, and those sampled by the Industry Assessor, showed that over 90% of respondents were either satisfied or highly satisfied with their particular course.

Standard 6: Organisation

6.1 Are the roles and responsibilities of the delivery team, across all assessment sites, clearly allocated and understood?

Grafton International provided a detailed table of all 16 Educators, their training locations and the brands in which they perform training, as part of the application process. Many of the Educators have been working for the company for over 10 years, providing stability and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

6.2 Are communication methods effective?

The Industry Assessor was satisfied that communication methods used within the organisation were effective. As part of the application process, Grafton International provided evidence of internal email communication and of an internal monthly e-magazine. Each Educator is contacted via phone on a daily basis and has a review call every Friday. Legislation relating to health and safety, COSHH and MSDS is all covered in regular team meetings.

6.3 Has Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities been effectively embedded?

Legislation relating to health and safety, COSHH and MSDS is all covered in regular team meetings. The Student Assessment and Student Development Plans, provided as part of the application process, demonstrate compliance of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination considerations, together with confidentiality considerations. The Industry Assessor confirmed that these policies were effectively embedded within the organisation.

6.4 Is there an established complaints policy available to student and customers?

There is opportunity for students to appeal before they sign in agreement to the assessment decision made, on the Student Assessment and Student Development Plans, provided as part of the application process. The Industry Assessor witnessed all other documents as part of their visit.

6.5 Have all requests been complied with for access to premises, records, information, students and staff for the purpose of external monitoring by a HSA assessor?

The Industry Assessor was able to confirm that all information, access to learners, access to staff records, training programmes and policies and procedures were made available on the day of the visit. Details of students with which to undertake telephone interviews were also made available. All submitted evidence, as part of the application process, was corroborated by the Industry Assessor, who commented; "I have had access to absolutely everything I have asked for and had a tour of the premises. Grafton International's staff have been very welcoming and helpful; an extremely professional team."

6.6 Is there a named contact with responsibility for reviewing compliance with HSA criteria and notifying HSA of any relevant changes?

Yes; Laura Maddock.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The provision of Advanced Nail Techniques, which encompasses a vast array of intricate and professional techniques, branded products and bespoke professional courses, has been recognised as an area of Expertise; therefore Grafton International has been approved as a Centre of Expertise. Grafton International is to be commended on their extremely strong and dedicated team of specialised educators who use inspirational training methods and provide superb follow-on care and support. Grafton International is quite correct in priding itself in offering a first-rate service to all their customers, no matter how big or small. This was witnessed and commented upon by the Industry Assessor; “Grafton International consistently offers training that reflects the latest developments in the industry and also tailor-make courses to suit colleges and individuals.”

Recommendations

Grafton International must now continue with their admirable practices and beliefs that the provision of excellent tuition, student welfare and on-going support are at the very heart of their company. Their present provision of opportunities for CPD, innovative brands and the integration and support from their suppliers and manufacturers must continue so that their inspirational training continues to set them aside from other organisations. Their excellent connections within the nail industry and the associated industries of Spa, fashion, magazines and the media must also continue to be nurtured.

Grafton International will receive their next moderation visit in **October 2015 to ensure that they continue to meet the Centre of Expertise standards and criteria.**



