



# FETAC Monitoring Report

Date of Completion

27<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## Contents

1. Details of Provider
2. Education and Training Centre
3. Type of Visit
4. Monitoring Visit Plan
5. Selected Sample
6. Evidence Reviewed
7. Assessment of Providers Quality Assurance System
8. Good Practice Identified
9. Areas for Improvement Identified
10. Conclusions and Outcomes
11. Provider Feedback

# Monitoring Report

## 1. DETAILS OF THE PROVIDER

**Name of Provider** First Polymer Training Skillnet

**Address**

7 Centre Court  
Blyry Business and Commercial Park  
Athlone  
Co. Westmeath

**Email Address** [info@firstpolymer.com](mailto:info@firstpolymer.com)

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**Type of Provider**

First Polymer Training Skillnet is an IBEC owned network promoted by the trade association 'Plastics Ireland'. It was established in 1999. It provides most of its training at its own premises in Athlone. When this is full other training takes place at member company premises or hotel venues. Learners attending First Polymer are all adults employed in member companies.

The organisation has been registered with FETAC since 2000. It offers 3 major FETAC award programmes and 19 minor award programmes in injection moulding. It also offers 4 minor award programmes in management training related modules.

First Polymer Training is not subject to Section 43 of the Qualification Act 1999. It does not offer programmes of three months duration or more.

**Forms of Programme Delivery** Training centre, conference centre and in-company training.

## 2. EDUCATION and TRAINING CENTRES

Location	Number of Tutors Trainers Teachers	Number of Learners Achieved in 2008	Main FETAC Programmes Offered
7 Centre Court Blyry Business & Commercial Park Athlone Co. Westmeath  (Also training in hotel conferences etc)	One main dedicated full time trainer and a panel of 12 p/t specialist trainers.	69 (C20242)	L5 Injection Moulding Mould Setting C20242
		26 (C20243)	L5 Injection Moulding Process Optimisation C20243
		18 (C20238)	L5 Plastic Materials and Processing C20238
		14 (C20247)	L5 Injection Moulding using SPC C20247

## 3. TYPE OF VISIT UNDERTAKEN

Initial ✓

## 4. MONITORING VISIT PLAN

<b>Visit Date</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2009	
<b>Procedures Monitored</b>	B1: ✓ B2: ✓ B3: ✓ B4: ✓ B5: ✓	B6: ✓ B7: ✓ B8: ✓ B9: ✓
<b>Monitor</b>	▪ FM03	

## 5. AGREED SAMPLE

### Notes re identification of sample:

- The monitoring focused on the three main Level 5 FETAC award programmes which had been the subject of recent 'Self-Evaluation' processes - Mould Setting (C20242), Process Optimisation (C20243) and Moulding Using SPC (C20247).
- Evidence of implementation of all B1 - B9 policy and procedures was considered with a focus on B6 assessment and B9 Self Evaluation.
- As well as interviewing the FETAC Co-ordinator and Centre Manager/Main Trainer the monitor also interviewed 3 sub-contracted trainers and 9 learners on the Mould Setting C20242 programme. The most recent certification date was Jan '09 (48 candidate entries), and learner evidence including IV and EA supporting documentation was analysed.

Centres Visited	Meetings Held				Programmes Sampled
	Staff inc. Management		Learners		
	Total	Sample	Total	Sample	
7 Centre Court Blyry Business & Commercial Park Athlone Co. Westmeath	4	3	9	9	Mould Setting C20242

## 6. EVIDENCE REVIEWED

### Review Of Records

First Polymer Training Skillnet Learner Handbook  
 First Polymer Training Skillnet Quality Assurance Manual Version 2 Dec 2006  
 All Course Outline Documents  
 First Polymer Jan - June 09 Training Schedules  
 FETAC award programmes teaching materials and course hand-outs  
 Checklists for appeal of marks forms  
 Results Approval Panel report forms  
 First Polymer Training newsletter spring 2009  
 Completed Internal Verification forms  
 Completed External Authentication Report (10/01/09)  
 Candidate entry forms  
 First Polymer Publicity leaflets /  
 Learner Attendance Records  
 First Polymer Programme Evaluation Report 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 09 (Covering Jan 08 - Dec 08)  
 First Polymer Learner Evaluations  
 Health & Safety Documents

### Observation of Facilities and Resources

First Polymer provides training at its own premises in Athlone. It has a large injection moulding 'Process Hall' facility of 3,800 sq ft. Within the building there are two offices, one large training room suitable for up to 14 learners at a time and small canteen facilities, wheelchair accessible toilets etc. A large training room is used as an injection moulding training facility.

First Polymer has a very full range of high specification modern industry standard injection moulding equipment including robotic equipment. This machinery is primarily used for training purposes.

There is a dedicated web-site at [www.firstpolymer.com](http://www.firstpolymer.com).

## 7. Assessment of First Polymer Quality Assurance System

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation	
	Good Practice	Area for Improvement
<p><b>7.1 Effective <u>Implementation</u> of Quality Assurance Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the provider implementing the quality assurance procedures as agreed (including consistently implementing the procedures in the centres of a multi-centre provider)?</li> </ul>	✓	
<p><b>7.2 Effective <u>Monitoring</u> of Quality Assurance Procedures, and evaluation of effectiveness of the procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the provider systematically monitor its progress towards achieving an appropriate range of quality goals and in particular further improving and maintaining the quality of its education and training provision?</li> <li>Is corrective action taken to remedy deficiencies identified by implementation of the quality assurance procedures?</li> <li>Is the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures evaluated?</li> </ul>	✓  ✓  ✓	
<p><b>7.3. Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the quality assurance procedures as implemented effective in maintaining and improving the quality of programme design and delivery?</li> </ul>	✓	✓

<b>8. Good Practice Identified</b>	
<b>Policy Area</b>	<b>Good Practice</b>
	<b>Summary Statements of Key Elements of Good Practice Identified in this Policy Area</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All First Polymer training publications explain clearly what a FETAC certificate is, explain about component and major awards and have good diagrams to explain award content.</li> <li>▪ Stakeholder and other targeted companies are sent a professional six month First Polymer training calendar showing month by month training schedules.</li> <li>▪ Comprehensive QA documentation available with knowledge of procedures by staff.</li> <li>▪ Very good communication within Irish plastics industry.</li> <li>▪ Staff meetings with QA as agenda item.</li> <li>▪ Unique course management training system which generates 'text' reminders and updated information to all learners.</li> </ul>
<b>Equality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All trainers sign up to good equal opportunities practice.</li> <li>▪ Procedures focus on combating any forms of discrimination.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Recruitment and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High levels of staff development, much of it tailored towards improving First Polymer's training portfolio. Following staff development new e-learning modules have been developed and are now available to network members.</li> <li>▪ Main full time trainer in Athlone has many years as an injection moulding engineer, with international experience and held roles in management of quality assurance of training effectiveness.</li> <li>▪ First Polymer trainers selected through industry referrals from industry specific steering group. Evidence of trainers changed to maintain high standards.</li> <li>▪ Trainers currently work as maintenance/service contractors for Irish plastics processors and have good up-to date knowledge.</li> <li>▪ Learner feedback indicates high levels of trainer satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<b>Access, Transfer and Progression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good assistance given to assist learners who need to stay overnight in B &amp; B/Hotels to help accommodate a range of learners with diverse needs.</li> <li>▪ All courses modular with each course building on the skills learned in the previous course. Evidence exists in learner folders of re-enforcement of learning at beginning of sessions.</li> <li>▪ Individual support given to learners to aid course completion.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very strong promotion of National qualifications framework and FETAC certification.</li> <li>▪ Over 2,000 employees in the Irish Plastics Industry have now attended First Polymer's technical training courses.</li> <li>▪ Progression pathway developed up to Level 7 B. Eng in Polymer Manufacturing with 'School of Engineering' in Sligo IT. Credit exemptions for attendance on FETAC First Polymer courses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Programme Development, Delivery and Review</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All courses are specifically designed with a 70% practical element to allow learners to transfer learning into skills at work.</li> <li>▪ All course leaflets specify very clearly detailed course content, methodology of training, course timetables, cost and venue as well as who is most likely to benefit from the course.</li> <li>▪ First Polymer seek to achieve the highest standards in health, safety and the environment and they are proactive to ensure learners comply. Delegates have to provide their own safety shoes and all other safety clothing is provided.</li> <li>▪ Meticulous attention to detail when giving learners advance details about course content, joining instructions, timetables etc.</li> <li>▪ Analogies are used to allow participants to visualise the process under discussion. Intensive practical sessions and Q &amp; A sessions ensure participants are challenged during the course.</li> <li>▪ Excellent Good quality printed handbooks given to all learners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The First Polymer courses leading to FETAC awards are all competency based with extensive practical training included. Assessment plans are in place for each module with criteria very well documented to ease learner understanding.</li> <li>▪ All learner pre-course information sets out full assessment criteria and expands to indicate how exams are conducted.</li> <li>▪ Strict adherence to procedures which ensures credibility of assessment results.</li> <li>▪ Established exam processes followed. Part-time administrator contributing to exam checking displays very good IV knowledge.</li> <li>▪ Rigorous checking of assessment. Internal verification procedures followed with full 100% sampling.</li> <li>▪ Adherence to new assessment procedures has occurred.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Protection for Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First Polymer is not subject to Section 43 of the Qualifications Act 1999 as it does not offer programmes of 3 months duration or more.</li> <li>▪ Although not subject to it, First Polymer has a clear statement on its web-site which explains about B7 policy <i>"to ensure a system is in place to protect learners in the event of a programme ceasing unexpectedly"</i>.</li> </ul>

<b>Subcontracting/Procuring Programme Delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sub-contracting and monitoring/review arrangements in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Self Evaluation of Programmes and Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Courses have been modified and improved based on learner feedback from evaluations.</li> <li>▪ Level 1, 2 and 3 of the “Kirkpatrick / Phillips” training evaluation modules are completed for all training activities and are evaluated by an external Skillnets evaluator.</li> <li>▪ Controlled tendering process in place with careful selection of external evaluation from 3 applicant organisations.</li> <li>▪ External Skillnets evaluation has compiled evidence which shows First Polymer has met and exceeded its 2008 government agreements for certified training.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary of Good Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A comprehensive course management system underpins all QA with a strong management of central QA systems. There is a most proactive weekly oversight of QA procedures.</li> <li>▪ Continual review of training resources to maximise benefits and skills development of First Polymer learners, with four high specification injection moulding machines available dedicated 100% to training purposes. The admin/management staff have achieved L7 in Polymer Manufacturing.</li> <li>▪ Promotion of major awards with publicity brochures clearly indicating diagrammatic pathways to major award success via modular approach.</li> </ul>

<b>9. Areas for Improvement: Recommendations to Provider</b>		
<b>9.1 Essential Recommendations</b>	<b>The Provider must</b>	<b>By this date</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update B6 'Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners' to include B.6.7.1 and B. 6.7.2. procedures which reflect the good practice currently taking place at First Polymer.</li> </ul>	<b>30/06/09</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an annual review of the 'First Polymer QA Manual' Version 2 Dec 2006. Following this there should be an updated version of the QA Manual with all B1 - B9 procedures referenced. It should include a front-sheet for tracking updates, updated org chart etc. Current good practice taking place should be reflected in the updated QA Manual.</li> </ul>	<b>30/06/09</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure a more rigorous approach to sub-contracting procedures with the introduction of a 'service level agreement' or similar arrangement with all sub-contracted trainers. There should be clear assignment of trainer responsibilities with an indication of training standards to be complied with and sign-up to First Polymer's B1 to B9 QA Manual.</li> </ul>	<b>30/06/09</b>
<b>9.2 Development Recommendations</b>	<b>The Provider should consider:</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B3.3 Training and development of staff: It would be helpful to have systematic updating of analysis of data relating to recruitment and achievement <u>and</u> to have this disseminated to all trainers. Where possible opportunities to encourage learners towards achievement of modules which could build towards major awards should be considered.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B 6.7 Authentication of Assessment: First Polymer should improve rigour of the 'External Authentication' process with a more informed/thorough end product report from the EA.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B5.5 Programme Delivery: Numbers of learners achieving the FETAC Certificate in one module are not as high as could potentially be the case if there was an added focus upon completion of assignments. Delivery at the start of the module could focus upon assignment completion with best practice examples shown at the start. Trainers could also exercise more influence upon learners with strong encouragement of them to send in completed assignments immediately at the end of the course or to a deadline within a week or two after course completion.</li> </ul>	

## 10. FETAC Monitoring: Conclusions and Outcomes

<b>Centre</b>	First Polymer Training Skillnet
<b>Registration No.</b>	Centre No. 409601
<b>Date of Monitoring Visit</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
<b>Type of Monitoring Visit</b>	First
<b>Monitoring Conclusions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QA at First Polymer Training Skillnet is effective in maintaining and improving quality of programmes and services with some recommendations to be implemented and development areas for consideration.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring Outcomes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provider commended on good quality practices as noted in section 8 above.</li> <li>2. Provider required to address the recommendations as specified in the report within agreed timescales. First Polymer to email a progress update to the monitor by 30/06/09.</li> <li>3. Further developmental recommendations should also be considered on a planned basis.</li> <li>4. FETAC monitoring recommended in 2 years.</li> </ol>
<b>Monitor</b>	FM03
<b>Date</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> March 2009

## 11. Provider Feedback

In this section the Provider, having participated in the Monitoring process, is invited to provide Feedback following the completion of the Draft Monitoring Report by FETAC Monitor.

### Feedback and Comments

***We found the whole monitoring process very good. The monitor made the initial contact with us and we organised a mutually suitable date for the visit. We found the visit very useful in not only validating what we are doing right but also highlighting areas for improvement.***

***We thought that the learner group feedback was also very interesting, while very positive it was more frank than the feedback we usually receive and has given us some ideas on how we can further improve the programmes.***

***Having a face to face visit is invaluable in order to have the expertise of a FETAC monitor on hand to answer our questions and get direct feedback on our procedures. We found the monitor to be very professional, thorough and extremely helpful for the duration of the visit and in subsequent follow-ups.***

***Catherine Collins First Polymer Training Skillnet 6/5/09***

