

The dawn of a new era for building services engineering skills

Sector Skills Agreement Scotland summary of action

Facilitated by
Summit SKILLS
The Sector Skills Council
for Building Services Engineering

HORIZON

the sector skills agreement
for building services engineering

April 2008 heralds a fresh approach to addressing the sector's skills issues. After months of careful consultation and planning, the Sector Skills Agreement for the building services engineering in Scotland has come to fruition.

What is a Sector Skills Agreement?

Building services engineering permeates the whole of society and every industry in the United Kingdom and plays a major role in sustainable development and energy efficiency. Without the activities of this sector, the whole UK economy would cease to function. Therefore it's vital we have a clear strategy to ensure the sector has the skilled people it needs. This is where the Sector Skills Agreement comes in.

The purpose of a Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) is to understand the skills issues facing employers and work with them and stakeholders to develop solutions which will lead to significant skills improvement and longer term productivity benefits for the sector.

In simple terms, it is a deal between employers, training providers and government. Employers lay out their workforce and skills requirements now and in the future. In return, the government and providers agree to fund and deliver training tailored to this need, within government policy, providing employers are also willing to make a commitment

What does OUR Sector Skills Agreement involve?

The SSA for building services engineering is based around five 'skills priorities' which were developed following detailed consultation around the UK:

- **Image and competence:** promoting a positive image of the sector
- **Communication and Information:** creating a knowledge centre for all sector skills development needs
- **Training Provision:** ensuring pro-active, highly quality and relevant training
- **Funding:** flexibility in funding to meet fast-changing needs
- **Management & Leadership:** supporting the sector to plan and develop profitable and competitive businesses

In this document we present a summary of each of the five skills priorities and the planned 'sector programme' activity that we will undertake, in conjunction with partners, to generate positive and beneficial change for the sector's skills landscape.

How did we get to this stage?

The whole SSA development has been a five stage process. The strength of SummitSkills' work has been its 'bottom-up' approach – from the very start we consulted throughout Scotland with employers and stakeholders, ensuring the documents produced at each milestone were a true reflection of the sector's needs in the nation.

- **Stage 1:** the sector's skills needs over the short, medium and long term future were assessed
- **Stage 2:** current sector training provision was analysed in terms of range, nature and employer relevance
- **Stage 3:** supply and demand were compared and gaps identified. A draft 'action plan' was drawn up with suggested solutions to address these gaps.
- **Stage 4:** SummitSkills liaised with employers, industry partners, providers and funders to gain commitment on the action plans to agree what can and will be achieved.

Now at stage five, the final Sector Skills Agreement presents the outcome of these negotiations: action plans that demonstrate the commitment gained from employers, stakeholders and partners, to create a Sector Skills Agreement that is recognised and supported by all.

A joint effort...now and in the future

SummitSkills is grateful for the extensive time and resource contributions made by Scottish employers and stakeholders to the various stages of the SSA development. This has been fundamental in developing workable solutions of direct relevance to the sector. We also value their ongoing support, energy and commitment to continue the good work and make a significant difference for the sector in years to come.

This is just the start of the journey...

The project does not finish here, this is simply 'the end of the beginning'. Now we begin a period of implementation and review. The Sector Skills Agreement activities have effectively become SummitSkills' ongoing business plan where we work with partners to deliver what the sector's employers are seeking.

This will be achieved through an SSA Scotland implementation group which has the accountability and responsibility to ensure the delivery of the SSA solutions in the nation. The group will meet on a quarterly basis to review and monitor progress of the SSA.

Employer engagement is crucial

For the Sector Skills Agreement to have the maximum positive impact across the whole sector, it's important that businesses of all sizes get involved. Our dedicated Scotland operations manager can show you how you might be able to take part and importantly benefit from the projects.

Find out more

To find out more about the Sector Skills Agreement for building services engineering or to get involved in its projects please contact SummitSkills on 0131 445 9225 or visit www.horizon-ssa.org.uk

Skills Priority 1: Professional Image and Competence

Promoting a positive image of the sector and develop a skilled and sustainable workforce

The issue		Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness and mis-perception of the sector deter many suitable people from considering building services engineering careers. Underrepresented groups have either no understanding or a negative perception of the sector: There are people in the sector with a range of experience but are part-qualified or have no qualifications or recognition of competence. Customers do not have an understanding of competence when awarding work to contractors. There are a variety of competence cards which are causing confusion across the sector: Many cards are not actively policed. 	<p>Action for employers</p> <p>Employers to act as ambassadors and role models for the sector with schools.</p> <p>Stakeholder trade associations, including employer members, to market the sector and promote careers information.</p> <p>Action for partners</p> <p>Careers & Diversity Interest Group develop and steer career strategies and diversity research.</p> <p>Training providers: train and prepare new entrants effectively for the sector.</p> <p>Career advisors and organisations to provide up to date information advice and guidance on the opportunities in the sector.</p> <p>Schools motivate interest in the sector and vocational qualifications.</p> <p>Learndirect scotland advice line provides clear advice and guidance to all enquirers.</p> <p>Trade Union: part of the exploration with JIBs and employers to develop common message of competence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspirational sector image: Improve careers guidance and active marketing to establish work in the BSE sector as an aspirational career choice for high achievers. Fresh approaches to diversity: Transform the attitudes of students and parents towards vocational and professional careers in the BSE sector. Ensuring everyone in the sector is competent: Implement ways to recognise achievement in terms of qualifications, standards and training which is fit for purpose and meets employer needs. Public recognition of competence: Develop a competence assurance framework against which people can be assessed and registered. A common understanding of competence across the sector which is easy to understand and communicate. Competence card recognition: Benchmark existing skill card schemes for the sector and see if there is scope to develop a common message that meets sector needs, and will raise public awareness of competency in the BSE sector.
<p>Action for employers</p> <p>Employers to act as ambassadors and role models for the sector with schools.</p> <p>Stakeholder trade associations, including employer members, to market the sector and promote careers information.</p> <p>Action for partners</p> <p>Careers & Diversity Interest Group develop and steer career strategies and diversity research.</p> <p>Training providers: train and prepare new entrants effectively for the sector.</p> <p>Career advisors and organisations to provide up to date information advice and guidance on the opportunities in the sector.</p> <p>Schools motivate interest in the sector and vocational qualifications.</p> <p>Learndirect scotland advice line provides clear advice and guidance to all enquirers.</p> <p>Trade Union: part of the exploration with JIBs and employers to develop common message of competence.</p>	<p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers routes that are clearly understood by people from all groups and backgrounds to position the sector as the occupation of choice. Flexible methods are established to create a fully competent and qualified workforce which is recognised both internally and externally, to raise the image of the sector and its employees. A common message of competency that is understood by people both inside and outside of the sector. <p>Short term activity for Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote online careers map. Provide up to date LMI and use sector profiles. Partnership and liaison with Careers Scotland on joint working. Promote careers DVD. Develop employer ambassadors linked to Determined to Succeed. Develop sector Skills for Work courses. Involvement in skills competitions. Conduct further research into minority groups. Discuss female funding with appropriate funding body. Partnership working to address diversity issues. Developing and implementing industry bespoke schemes which can credit people's prior experience and learning. 	

Skills Priority 2: Communication and Information

Create a one stop knowledge centre for all building services engineering skills development needs

The issue	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on skills development is scattered amongst a variety of sources and is difficult to access, resulting in confusion and skills gaps. Sector LMI is not regularly available. There are a number of sector courses and qualifications that do not meet employer requirements. There is also confusion over training availability and access to public funding. Employers in the sector make a significant contribution to the training and development of staff, especially in supporting and mentoring apprentices, but this contribution is not understood or recognised by Government. The sector needs convincing about the business benefits of training and persuaded to train more than they currently do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SummitSkills knowledge centre: develop and communicate a one stop knowledge centre for sector skills matters. Implement annual LMI surveys and wider research and share business insights to improve competitiveness. Provision clarity: work with the SFC to set up a dedicated Superclass for BSE provision, and develop clarity with providers on authorised progression pathways and course titles. Develop and publicise a course database for upskilling the sector. Apprenticeship cost benefit analysis: develop and refine models that review all the costs, including employer contributions, of apprenticeship training. Proof that training pays: develop and communicate employer case studies to show the benefit of training, clearly defining the contribution that training makes to increased productivity and profitability.
Action for employers	Action for partners
<p>Employers provide data on apprenticeship costs to help refine cost models and case studies to show training pays.</p> <p>Stakeholder trade associations contribute data to the knowledge centre and help to publicise its availability and value, and proof that training pays.</p>	<p>SQA and other relevant nations funding bodies work with SummitSkills to develop clarity in the sector provision available.</p> <p>Scottish Government to consider the apprenticeship cost benefit models developed to achieve a funding balance for employers.</p> <p>HE/SFC will share research data on the sector with the knowledge hub.</p> <p>FE will work with SummitSkills to provide clarity in the provision offered through authorised progression routes.</p> <p>Various LMI sources work to develop up to date information on the sector.</p> <p>Regional observatories share information and work with the knowledge hub on sector issues.</p> <p>Trade Union help to promote the proof that training pays.</p>
Impact	Short term activity for Scotland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A business focussed national hub for skills-related knowledge, development and support, providing authoritative insight and market intelligence on sector competitiveness and skills matters. Employers have a clear understanding of provision and how it fits with their business and employee needs. A robust model that assesses the total costs of apprenticeship training and helps to achieve a sensible balance between employer and government training contributions. Employers value and commit to training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide up-to-date sector LMI. Launch and promote Solutions 4 Business website. Promote HIE Learning Works. Work with SFC to develop new 'superclass'. Agree use of common course titles. Work to reduce NEVS provision and redirect funding. Links with learndirect scotland to promote learning opportunities and services. Develop apprenticeship cost models with sector and use in discussions to achieve sensible balance between employer and government training contributions. Promote workplace learning DVD.

Skills Priority 3: Training Provision

Pro-active, timely, high quality public funded provision for all training and fast-changing sector priorities

The issue	Solution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some qualification content is seen as out of date or not suitable for sector needs. New content needs to be developed to meet the changing needs of the sector: Non qualification based training is not currently monitored or formally recognised across the sector: There are very few HE establishments offering sector courses which are recognised by the BSE professional bodies; these are also spread unevenly around the UK, with some regions having no provision at all. Employers in Scotland are generally very satisfied with the quality of service and teaching provided by FE colleges and private training providers. NOS and qualification content needs to be developed for renewables and environmental technologies. Until this is done the skills of the sector are lagging behind the market requirements to be able to design, install and maintain new technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant training reflecting NOS at all levels: develop a process to regularly maintain and update qualifications to reflect the real world requirements of employers. Accredited training mapped to NOS: develop credit accumulation transfer and ensure manufacturer and non -qualification-based training is mapped to NOS. Sustainable entry routes: authorised entry and progression routes into the sector are defined, implemented and promoted for a specific number of people and directly linked to the skill needs of the sector. Wider and sustainable HE provision: develop a UK-wide sustainable network of HE provision which is relevant to the needs of employers, to help bridge the gap between sector operatives and professionals. Quality assured training provision including quality marks: work with partners to improve the quality of teaching and administration and increase achievement of quality standards. Existing inspection regimes reviewed for the sector and support provided to improve them. SummitSkills to decide if it develops its own quality mark scheme for the sector. Renewables & Environmental Technologies: develop and implement national occupational standards for current and emerging environmental technologies to embrace craft and professional occupations. Ensure environmental technologies are fully integrated within other activities such as the careers strategy and apprenticeship training frameworks. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers: contribute to the development of up to date NOS and a process for accrediting training. Trade associations: work with SummitSkills to support development and implementation of NOS and qualifications, including HE. Manufacturers: contribute to develop an accreditation process for the sector. 	<h3>Action for partners</h3> <p>SQA: work in partnership with providers to ensure sector approved qualifications and courses are developed.</p> <p>FE: to ensure their provision reflects the latest NOS delivered in a quality and professional way.</p> <p>HE//Professional Bodies: work with SummitSkills to develop sustainable HE network of degree and sub-degree courses.</p> <p>Nations standards bodies: ensure the latest sector NOS are reflected in the qualifications.</p> <p>Awarding Bodies: develop qualifications reflecting the latest NOS.</p> <p>SQA: work to accredit qualifications.</p> <p>Third party certification bodies: work to develop an accreditation process for the sector.</p> <p>Scottish Government: help to ensure appropriate inspection regimes maintain quality provision.</p>	<h3>Impact</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sector qualification strategy which meets the needs of the sector and is updated in a timely fashion. A credit accumulation transfer mechanism to monitor and recognise employer, manufacturer and non qualification based courses. Recognised entry and progression routes to maximise recruitment and retention of a diverse range of applicants, minimising potential for partly trained practitioners and linking requirements to LMI. A sustainable network of degree and sub degree courses across the UK. Employers have confidence that all providers deliver quality training with good communication links between provider, trainee and employer. Updated and maintained NOS and qualifications that reflect renewables and environmental technology skills needs.
	<h3>Short term activity for Scotland</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work on renewable energy working group. Contribute to SFC HE energy forum. Work with partners to ensure sufficient microgeneration provision across Scotland. Work with SBSA on integration of renewable energy in buildings. Implementing environmental strategy. Continue NOS review and update qualifications once complete. Include renewables in NOS and develop new units to support renewables Ensure all provision links back to NOS. Consider Get Ready for Work programme and links into sector. Partnership work with Jobcentre Plus, Local Employment Partnerships, Highlands Employer Coalition, Enterprise Companies. Develop appropriate Skills for Work courses. Work to reduce bottlenecks in provision Develop SQS. Develop and accredit new units to support renewables; consider adding into appropriate MA frameworks. 	

Skills Priority 4: Funding

Flexibility in funding to meet fast-changing skills needs to develop business and workforce

The issue	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult for public funders of training to ensure it is aligned to employer needs. There are also special requirements across the sector for funding to support areas which are outside of the norm e.g. mature adults. A considerable amount of current publicly funded training provision leads to non-economically valuable skills (NEVS) and therefore is not relevant to the sector. There is also a need for new training provision to be funded to meet the changing needs of the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influencing flexibility of funding: develop employer-centric brokerage for sector skills development, supported by flexible demand-led funding. Redeployment of NEVS funding: work with regional and national partners to seek a more effective use of public funding to meet the changing needs of the sector, to increase productivity and skills levels of the workforce.
Action for employers	Impact
<p>Employers: promote and support authorised entry and progression routes with their providers.</p> <p>Trade associations: promote and support authorised entry and progression routes with their employers and help to deliver up to date upskilling provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public funding for training delivers maximum benefit to businesses and individuals. All public funding available is used to support training that is recognised by the sector and demanded by employers. Non-economically valuable skills training is reduced/stopped.
Action for partners	Short term activity for Scotland
<p>Summit/Skills: work with partners to review and reduce NEVS funding.</p> <p>FE providers: actively reduce any NEVS provision and replace it with new provision demanded by the sector.</p> <p>Scottish Government: help to ensure the total funding available for the sector is maintained</p> <p>Trade Unions: to lobby for flexible funding opportunities for the sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings to discuss equitable apprenticeship funding. Support training organisations in seeking adequate allocation of apprenticeship funding. Secure funding contribution for upskilling. Discuss funding contribution toward management training. Seek mainstream funding to encourage female recruitment. Seek funding to develop upskilling units. Ensure funding for renewables training is only available for industry approved and accredited training. Lobby for funded ESOL training for migrant workers. Raise awareness of ILAs.

Skills Priority 5: Management and Leadership

Ensuring the sector has the skills it needs to plan and develop profitable and competitive business

The issue		Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a skill gap between craft and first line supervisory levels which is currently not being addressed. People on the tools are being placed in supervisory positions without relevant training to maximise effectiveness and productivity. • The sector is very reactive to new opportunities. Generally SMEs and micro-businesses do not actively manage their business to take external drivers into account. As a result the productivity of the sector is low. • There is a general lack of the use of business skills across the sector to formally benchmark the effectiveness of businesses and improve competitiveness. The sector uses informal benchmarking rather than formal methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional and development of first line and middle managers: develop and promote continual professional development opportunities for craft operatives to technician and first line management. Pilot initiatives in business and management skills and encourage employer take-up. • Developing enterprise skills for SMEs and micros: develop and promote various tools to prepare current and future managers of SMEs and micros in the sector with the skills to thrive in a competitive market. Develop and use pilots to encourage wider employer take-up. Develop enterprise national occupational standards relevant for the sector. • Developing skills to increase competitiveness of the sector: develop benchmarking and strategic planning training to help businesses realise the benefits of management and leadership training and increase competitiveness and productivity. Pilot programmes, document and promote benefits achieved. 	<p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved succession planning in SMEs with increased use of supervisory training for first line managers leading to greater effectiveness and sector productivity. • People equipped with increasingly sophisticated business skills to increase competitiveness and proactively develop new business opportunities. • The UK BSE sector is proactive in the exploitation of innovation, service and business competitiveness. <p>Action for partners</p> <p>Scottish Enterprise, H&I Enterprise: help to develop an action learning programme for leaders in the sector:</p> <p>Scottish Government: provide funding for management and leadership training for the sector:</p> <p>Business solutions: develop the business leader development initiative.</p> <p>SFEDI: promote to employers the benefits of management and leadership training.</p> <p>Trade Unions to promote the benefits of management and leadership training.</p> <p>Action for employers</p> <p>Large employers: pilot the first line manager training on key sites regionally.</p> <p>Employers: recognise and understand the benefits of management training and be more prepared to train their staff and then promote the benefits.</p> <p>Trade associations: provide training courses and guidance to their employers to encourage management and leadership development.</p> <p>Short term activity for Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Solutions4Business website. • Utilise Construction Management Development funding to obtain qualifications. • Encourage employers to utilise the qualification in team leading.

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