

Moving closer...

**Identifying skills gaps and
developing solutions: UK-wide**

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

HORIZON

the sector skills agreement
for building services engineering

The Sector Skills Agreement for building services engineering will be the first overarching, coherent and all-encompassing strategy to address the sector's future skills needs. It will be a strategy that all parties commit to and implement in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

In creating this Sector Skills Agreement, SummitSkills aims to use authoritative research and extensive consultation to identify skills related issues facing the sector and produce workable solutions to provide employers with the skills they need to develop their business, both now and in the future.

Taking the findings, recommendations and feedback from stages one and two SummitSkills has been able to map out the main issues affecting the sector and link this to the suggestions that have generated from the consultation so far. A clear series of priorities have emerged, and under those a number of programmes that could be developed to support and address these priorities.

For each of the five skills priorities that have been generated we have a vision for what can and will be achieved if the SSA is successful:

Skills Priority	Vision
Professional Image & Competence	A positive image of the sector is promoted to attract and develop a skilled and sustainable workforce
Communication & Information	A one-stop knowledge centre for all building services engineering skills development needs
Training Provision	Pro-active, timely high quality training provision that meets the sector's fast-changing priorities
Funding	Flexible funding to support the skills needed to develop business and workforce
Management & Leadership	Ensuring the sector has the skills it needs to plan and develop profitable and competitive businesses

In this document we map out those priorities and explain the programmes, which form the basis of our Sector Skills Agreement. For each priority, SummitSkills has created a table that details the sector programmes (presented here as draft solutions), along with partner involvement, timescales and the positive impact that activity will make if it is successful.

For more information on the skills priorities and sector programmes please see our full Stage 3 report for each nation or region.

Skills Priority 1: Professional Image and Competence

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

The issue		Proposed solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness and misperception 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 many 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspirational sector image: Improve careers guidance and active marketing to establish work in the building services engineering 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 building services engineering 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. One well policed competency card: Benchmark existing skill card schemes for the sector and harmonise into a new skill card which is well publicised. 	
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners*	Impact/outcome if successful
<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>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: 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>Learn direct advice line: provide clear advice and guidance to all enquirers</p> <p>Unite Trade Union: part of the negotiation of one competency card.</p>	<p>Draft timescales</p> <p>Yr 1: careers materials developed; diversity and recruitment patterns researched; Sector marketing programme implemented; Sector Ambassadors developed; Flexible upskilling developed; National Training Awards delivered; Migrant worker equivalence qualification framework produced; existing competency cards benchmarked.</p> <p>Yr 2: flexible upskilling methods implemented; high achiever ambassador programme developed; student & parent initiative implemented; criteria for new harmonised competency card developed; recognised entry and progression pathways promoted; Skills competitions UK and World Skills supported.</p> <p>Yr 3: one competency card implemented for the sector; including marketing campaign and policing mechanism; UK World Skills and UK skills competitions supported.</p>

*specific nations/regions partners are considered in more detail in the nations/regions action plans found in Section 9 of the full Stage 3 reports

Skills Priority 2: Communication and Information

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

The issue	Proposed 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 significant number of sector courses and qualifications that are surplus to 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 funding bodies to remove out of date curriculum from the and develop clarity with providers on authorised progression pathways and availability of public funding. 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.
Proposed action for employers	Proposed 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>Funding bodies: work with SummitSkills to develop clarity in the sector provision available.</p> <p>Government: consider the apprenticeship cost benefit models developed to achieve a funding balance for employers.</p> <p>National/regional skills bodies/development agencies: work with the Knowledge centre to refine the sector LMI at regional level.</p> <p>HE / HEFCE: share research data on the sector with the knowledge hub.</p> <p>FE: 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>Unite the Union: help to promote the proof that training pays.</p>
Proposed action for employers	Impact/outcome if successful
<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>	<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, and to fund it to increasing levels.
Proposed action for employers	Draft timescales
<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>Yr 1: national data set for approved qualifications refined; learning databases tidied; course database developed and publicised; Employer/student /provider meetings; 'training pays' case studies developed and publicised; apprenticeship models developed; Business Solutions portal expanded; sector LMI projects implemented.</p> <p>Yr 2: LMI communications plan implemented; Government lobbied for funding balance using apprenticeship model; skills gap matrices for the sector developed; SummitSkills knowledge hub developed.</p> <p>Yr 3: knowledge hub launched linked with observatories and sector; Proactive skills gap planning implemented; E-learning material sourced available through knowledge hub.</p>

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Skills Priority 3: Training Provision

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

The issue	Proposed 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: A significant amount of funding is directed at standalone technical certificates* and non-economically valuable skills, which only offer a theory based qualifications and which are not suitable entry routes into the sector: The number of people receiving this training outstrips any sector requirement at least five fold. There very few HE establishments offering sector courses which are also spread unevenly around the UK, with some regions with no provision at all. Employers have a general dissatisfaction with the quality of service and teaching provided by FE: The take up of quality marks by providers across the sector is varied. NOS and qualification content is out of date in relation to renewables and environmental technologies. This means that the skills of the sector are lagging behind the market requirements to be able to design, install and maintain new technologies. <p><i>* standalone technical certificates do not apply in Scotland</i></p>	<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 real world, including foundation degrees, 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.
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners*
<p>Employers: contribute to the development of up to date NOS and a process for accrediting training</p> <p>Trade associations: work with SummitSkills to support development and implementation of NOS and qualifications, including HE</p> <p>Manufacturers: contribute to develop an accreditation process for the sector</p>	<p>Funding bodies: work with SummitSkills to remove funding for standalone technical certificates and introduce sustainable entry routes. Work in partnership with providers to ensure sector approved qualifications and courses are funded</p> <p>FE: actively remove standalone technical certificate provision will ensure their provision reflects the latest NOS delivered in a quality and professional way</p> <p>HE/ HEFCE/Professional Bodies: work with SummitSkills to develop sustainable HE network of degree and sub-degree courses for the sector</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>QCA/SQA: work to accredit qualifications for the sector</p> <p>Third party certification bodies: work to develop an accreditation process</p> <p>Government: help to ensure appropriate inspection regimes maintain quality provision for the sector</p>
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners*
<p>Employers: contribute to the development of up to date NOS and a process for accrediting training</p> <p>Trade associations: work with SummitSkills to support development and implementation of NOS and qualifications, including HE</p> <p>Manufacturers: contribute to develop an accreditation process for the sector</p>	<p>Funding bodies: work with SummitSkills to remove funding for standalone technical certificates and introduce sustainable entry routes. Work in partnership with providers to ensure sector approved qualifications and courses are funded</p> <p>FE: actively remove standalone technical certificate provision will ensure their provision reflects the latest NOS delivered in a quality and professional way</p> <p>HE/ HEFCE/Professional Bodies: work with SummitSkills to develop sustainable HE network of degree and sub-degree courses for the sector</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>QCA/SQA: work to accredit qualifications for the sector</p> <p>Third party certification bodies: work to develop an accreditation process</p> <p>Government: help to ensure appropriate inspection regimes maintain quality provision for the sector</p>
Impact/outcome if successful	Draft timescales
<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. 	<p>Yr 1: L1/2 entry routes developed NOS review completed; renewable technologies NOS completed; SQS started; sector-specific criteria developed for quality standard; professional body forum established; more employers involved in HE</p> <p>Yr 2: New entry routes implemented; SQS continued; LSC standard implemented; fast track accreditation process developed; variety of HE delivery modes developed; Proactive new skills planning for sector undertaken</p> <p>Yr 3: SQS completed; credit accumulation process completed; early adopters of accredited training promoted; CPD passport scheme developed; UK HE network completed</p>

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Skills Priority 4: Funding

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

The issue	Proposed 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 	<p>Impact/outcome if successful</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. All non-economically valuable skills training is stopped. <p>Draft timescales</p> <p>Yr 1: Alternative uses for NEVS funding mapped; NEVS redeployment started; social agenda items identified for funding; common strategy for ESF opportunities developed; brokers working with managing agents modelled; adult retention initiatives developed</p> <p>Yr 2: NEVS redeployment continued; funding opportunities outside academic year developed; fast track process approved for skills gap funding</p> <p>Yr 3: NEVS redeployment completed; further NEVS prevented</p>
<p>Proposed action for employers</p> <p>Employers: promote and support authorised entry and progression routes with their providers and help to deliver up to date provision</p> <p>Trade associations: promote and support authorised entry and progression routes with their employers and help to deliver up to date provision</p>	<p>Proposed action for partners*</p> <p>Funding bodies: work with Summits/Skills to redeploy NEVS funding with providers whilst maintaining the overall funding for the sector</p> <p>Funding bodies: work with providers to review and reduce all NEVS funding</p> <p>FE providers: actively reduce any NEVS provision and replace it with new provision demanded by the sector</p> <p>Unite the Union: lobby for flexible funding opportunities for the sector</p>	

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Skills Priority 5: Management and Leadership

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

The issue	Proposed 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 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. 	
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners*	Impact/outcome if successful
<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>Skills/enterprise bodies: help to develop an action learning programme for leaders in the sector.</p> <p>Funding bodies/development agencies: 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>Government: help to develop leadership skills for innovation for the sector.</p> <p>Unite the Union: promote the benefits of management and leadership training.</p>	<p>Draft timescales</p> <p>Yr 1: pilot programme for first line managers mapped; benefits of KPI and benchmarking promoted; Solutions for Business website promoted; business benefits for manager/leader training developed and promoted; business planning made easy' developed.</p> <p>Yr 2: Programme of employers using KPIs and benchmarking reviewed; case studies of first line manager programmes developed and promoted; develop pilot enterprise skills programme developed; wider strategic skills programme developed.</p> <p>Yr 3: Implement enterprise skills programme in sector implemented, case studies developed and promoted; wider strategic skills programme in sector piloted, case studies developed and promoted; best practice business planning demystified.</p>

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Underpinning programmes: enabling activity

Positioned across all of the priorities and programmes listed inside are two areas that are a fundamental part of any activity carried out under the Sector Skills Agreement. Rather than allocate these under one particular priority or programme, it is important that the forming of partnerships and exerting influence on government weave through most if not all of the programmes planned for the sector to act as enablers to support the various projects being undertaken.

Partnerships

Setting up networks to foster a partnership culture is vital and was often raised at the events around the country. There was much enthusiasm for all parties within the sector working together generally, but a specific requirement for coordinated effort to bring people closer together.

SummitSkills will be setting up various partnership networks as part of the Sector Skills Agreement and also encouraging other parties to do the same. Employers, providers, manufacturers, government and stakeholders working together: partnership of this kind is the source of a more proactive sector and will enable members to share knowledge and best practice and instill a sense of society into the sector.

Government influence

Ensuring that the sector liaises closely with government will be central to the whole Sector Skills Agreement process. All areas of the SSA will involve helping the various UK governments and their agencies to understand the building services engineering sector and its employer needs. For each skills priority the Government will have a central role, either through learning from the sector and recognising its activity, or directing funding to ensure a structure is in place to support skills development.

What happens next?

The proposed solutions and actions for each party will now be tested out with employers and stakeholders to gauge their opinion and response. By the end of this stage there will be general agreement on where the sector is now in terms of skills needs and skills supply, what needs to happen to deliver the skills needed for the future, and who needs to do what to achieve that.

The consultation process will comprise one to one and group negotiations with stakeholders and wider discussions directly with employers and also through trade associations and professional bodies to share action plans, negotiate and agree on exactly what can and will be achieved.

In addition, regional SSA implementation teams will be established which will consist of key local stakeholders as well as influential sector employers in the region who will take responsibility for progressing the action at local level.

This process of discussion, assessment and ultimately endorsement will pave the way for a final agreement at stage 5 which contains solid mechanisms to create a sector that has the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.

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