

DRAFT

Sector Skills Agreement Stage 3: summary solutions

**for the building services engineering
sector in Northern Ireland**

December 2007

SummitSkills

Northern Ireland Sector Skills Agreement

Stage 3 – proposed activity

Overview

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.

Taking the findings, recommendations and feedback from stages one and two SummitSkills was able to map out the main issues affecting the sector and link this to the suggestions that had generated from the consultation so far. A clear series of priorities 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 the tables to follow SummitSkills takes these priorities and presents Northern Ireland action plans for consideration. Under each of the five skills priorities we have detailed the employer need, how it links with existing stakeholder policy, the actions that need to be taken against each sector programme, which stakeholders are primarily involved, potential employer engagement and a target date for the activity.

Stakeholder involvement

The involvement and commitment of SummitSkills' stakeholders will be crucial in delivering a successful Sector Skills Agreement for the Northern Ireland building services engineering sector.

Within the context of this Sector Skills Agreement we have identified the role of a stakeholder within the process to engage openly with partners on common issues affecting the sector and work collaboratively to develop tailored, workable and meaningful solutions to local issues within the wider UK skills agenda.

At this stage we expect the Department of Employment and Learning to agree a general direction of travel and agree our key priorities and programmes. Following a period of negotiation this will develop into firm commitment and an implementation strategy for each of the specific skills priorities, to create a final SSA document that will be delivered.

Other partners will sign up in different ways depending on the programme, their level of involvement and what is required from them. SummitSkills hopes to secure partnership agreements with the following stakeholders to confirm that we can work on and develop the proposals contained with this document:

- Department for Employment and Learning
 - Sectoral Development Branch
 - Training Programmes Branch
- Careers Service NI
- Sector Industry Recognised Training Bodies
 - Electrical Training Trust
 - Plumbing and Mechanical Services Training Ltd
 - CITBNI
- Industry Trade Associations
 - Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers Federation
 - Northern Ireland Master Plumbers Association
 - Heating and Ventilation Contractors' Association
 - Electrical Contractors' Association
- Educational Training Inspectorate
- QCA NI
- CCEA
- LSDA NI
- Action Renewables
- ANIC
- Unite the Union
- Management & Leadership Network

Next steps

SummitSkills will now be meeting with stakeholders in Northern Ireland to discuss the proposed action plans and consider what can and will be both committed to and achieved.

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 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 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 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. 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	Year 1 activity for Northern Ireland
<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 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>Trade Union: part of the negotiation of one competency card.</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 mandatory, fully registered and qualified workforce which is recognised both internally and externally, to raise the image of the sector and its employees. One skill card which recognises competency across the sector which is valued by the workforce and understood by customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding for a sector specific careers adviser Promote interactive careers ma Dissemination and promotion of careers guidance and information Promote careers DVD Promote APL schemes Develop SQS Support Action Renewables and REIA in developing self-regulation scheme

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 the DEL to remove out of date curriculum from the Learning Aims Database 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	Impact/outcome if successful	Year 1 activity for Northern Ireland
<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>DEL QCA and other relevant nations funding bodies work with SummitSkills to develop clarity in the sector provision available.</p> <p>DIUS: consider the apprenticeship cost benefit models developed to achieve a funding balance for employers.</p> <p>DEL: 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>	<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feed NI LMI into central knowledge hub Apply for additional funding to conduct annual research Developing SQS Develop and promote cost models including liaison with DEL Promote benefits of training inc work with MLN Case studies to support and encourage new entrants and existing employees

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. 		<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 employer action	Proposed action for partners	Impact/outcome if successful	Year 1 activity for Northern Ireland
<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>DEL: work with SummitSkills to remove funding for standalone technical certificates and introduce sustainable entry routes</p> <p>Funding bodies: work in partnership with providers to ensure sector approved qualifications and courses are funded</p> <p>FE: actively remove standalone technical certificate provision and 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: work to accredit qualifications for the sector</p> <p>Third party certification bodies: work to develop an accreditation process</p> <p>DIUS: help to ensure appropriate inspection regimes maintain quality provision for the sector</p>	<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing NOS including gathering employer feedback through workshops and adding renewable technology Create a BSE training forum Revise assessment strategy based on revised NOS Develop cross-sector job ready framework Develop SQS Establish HE links and HE employer forum Ensure new college structure meets employer needs with ANIC Improve training provision quality and administration Produce LMI report on renewables requirements Work with REIA to develop qualifications, Continue work with manufacturers interest group

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 	
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners	Impact/outcome if successful	Year 1 activity for Northern Ireland
<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>DEL: work with SummitSkills to redeploy NEVS funding with providers whilst maintaining the overall funding for the sector</p> <p>DEL: 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>DEL: help to ensure the total funding available for the sector is maintained</p> <p>Unite the Union: lobby for flexible funding opportunities for the sector</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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting ongoing funding through DEL revised priority areas Working with regional WDFs to determine levels of provision required Develop cross-sector job-ready framework Developing SQS Identify curriculum spend and appropriateness of curriculum and seek effective uses of funding Apply to the DEL for additional funding to undertake this activity Develop sustainable entry and progression routes

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"> Progression 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. 	
Proposed action for employers	Proposed action for partners	Impact/outcome if successful	Year 1 activity for Northern Ireland
<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>DEL: help to develop an action learning programme for leaders in the sector.</p> <p>DEL: provide funding for management and leadership training for the sector.</p> <p>Business solutions: develop the business leader development initiative.</p> <p>MLN: promote to employers the benefits of management and leadership training.</p> <p>DBERR: help to develop leadership skills for innovation for the sector.</p> <p>Unite the Union: promote the benefits of management and leadership training.</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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting business solutions leader development initiative Promote action learning for leaders Develop and promote solutions for business website Promote inspirational leadership programme