

Provision: Viewpoint

Highlands and Islands Enterprise
assessment of current provision
workshop outcomes



Sector Involvement in Training

This is a 'work in progress' document. The views listed throughout these pages were suggested by delegates at the ACP meeting in Inverness and will contribute to the Sector Skills Agreement for the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area. The recommendation numbers relate to the full report.

Use of training providers

Areas such as manufacturer training do not add to the formal qualification base of the sector. If formal mechanisms can be developed to recognise this kind of valuable training, skills development of this type can officially contribute to the sector's skills base.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Develop credit-accumulation transfer and quality assurance with manufacturers and private providers.

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP SESSION:

Delegates chose 3 skills issues in each section to discuss in workshop sessions under the headings: Why important?, Action needed, Benefits to the sector, Barriers and Bridges to achieving the skills issue

- This skills issue is important because it would be recognised by employers, it would accredit specialist skills and raise the skills profile
- The sector needs to identify which courses need accreditation, decide who would accredit courses, how they would link to professional bodies and analyse of what other sectors are doing
- The benefits to the sector if we get this skills issue right would include improved continuing professional development and employment opportunities
- Barriers to achieving this skills issue might include employer endorsement and deciding who would accredit and police the provision
- Overcoming the barriers might include increasing awareness of the types of accreditation, for example, how they matched the levels of our existing qualifications as set out in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Encourage individuals to want to progress to higher level qualifications by giving credit for ad-hoc training
- Often National Occupational Standards (NOS) training does not cover all the skills required by employers
- Consider add-on enhancements to Scottish Vocational Qualifications
- Ad hoc training should be credited but also audited to ensure standards are met!
- Ad hoc training has a place but the training has to be accredited by a recognised awarding body to attract government funding
- Recognise equivalency

Employer willingness to pay for training

40% of businesses would be willing to pay more for their upskilling if it is shown to improve skills and productivity. However for MA training the sector will need some convincing to fund more than they currently do.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Ensure that the quality of training the sector receives maintains the willingness of the sector to invest in it.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Remote area funding should be considered in more depth for the highlands area
- The actual cost of employers' training should be better understood
- Employers train for industry as well as their own needs
- Much more promotion of the industry

Employer spend on apprentice training

Considerable amounts of money (in this case via an employee's time) is spent on in-house mentoring throughout the course of the training programme. There are many hidden costs associated with training staff and employers are already making a significant contribution.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Develop cost models which will evaluate the full employer contribution to training an apprentice, and use these to negotiate/achieve a sensible balance between employer and government training contributions

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- There are a lot of hidden costs in providing training, not just financial, and there should be government recognition of this to support employers
- Present the business case to promote employer investment in apprentices
- How many apprentices stay with their initial employer?

Views on content of provision

Qualification content in particular is seen as being in some cases out of date or not suitable enough for the needs of the sector.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Work with awarding bodies to update existing qualifications in line with the sector's requirements. This also includes the development of new content such as environmental technologies

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP SESSION:

- The group identified this issue as important because it would provide the skills for new technologies and give a flexible qualified workforce but acknowledged the need to maintain older technologies
- The sector needed greater collaboration with manufacturers, industry and awarding bodies, additional funding and providing affordable training
- The benefits to the sector if we get this issue right might include a workforce with specialist skills, enhanced employment opportunities with the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area viewed as leaders in the field

The provision itself

- Barriers to achieving this goal might include resistance to change in some partners, limited resources and the low wages on offer
- The sector needed to form partnerships with manufacturers to supply equipment and assist with training, Scottish Funding Council to invest in colleges to provide a centre of excellence in the Highlands

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Ensure that training is kept up to date with advances in technologies
- Flexibility in delivery
- Use or contract employers/manufacturers to deliver short specialized courses at the colleges once or twice a year where there is not enough demand for 'full-time' courses
- The sector needs an early warning mechanism to identify next year's (and beyond) skills requirements

Views on quality of provision

There is a high satisfaction rate among employers about the courses provided by both FE colleges and private training providers. However, employers are more satisfied with private training providers than with FE colleges.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Work with partners, stakeholders and providers to ensure that the quality of provision remains high

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP SESSION:

- This skills issue was viewed as important by the group because employers would continue to use the services with confidence leading to a skilled workforce for the future of the industry, quality products for the client and squeeze out the cowboys
- The sector needed to make the case for the real and total cost of training, promote the opportunities and training within the sector, and sustain quality
- The benefits to the sector if this issue is addressed might include the maintaining of quality, employers competing with confidence for contracts in the Highlands & Islands and elsewhere
- The group recognised the problem of distances in reaching provision – the area needs mobile units – ad hoc providers are very mobile but there is no accreditation for them. There is also a lack of both communication and investment in training resources
- Overcoming the barriers might include improved collaboration, better communication and more partnership working

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Consult with employers during the design of provision – make it demand led
- Much more can be achieved in working together than by individual actions – less duplication of effort

Defining a 'new' superclass for the building services engineering sector

At present, building services engineering curriculum is spread across Construction and Engineering fields within the SFC database. There is also a need to unify course titles for identical courses across different providers to further reduce confusion.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Work with the Scottish Funding Council to incorporate a proposed new superclass for building services engineering provision into the SFC database to provide a single point of analysis, and the use of standardised course titles.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Streamline course titles through sector skills councils to ensure consistent approach
- A 'superclass' for building services engineering might help the sector to get better respect from funding authorities

Mapping of non-economically valuable skills (NEVS) training provision for Scotland

A certain amount of current training provision spend in H&I Enterprise is leading to non-economically valuable skills and is therefore not relevant to the sector. This could potentially affect the quality of work and business stability in the Scottish building services engineering sector.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Facilitate a dialogue with partners, stakeholders and providers to determine a way forward for the NEVS provision, with a view to reducing the existing numbers and preventing further increase in the development of NEVS courses.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- We must not allow the funding of NEVS to get worse (e.g. if traditional recruitment patterns dip and there is spare capacity in colleges)
- Increase provision of 'pre apprentice' type courses and encourage employers via managing agents to offer candidates work placements

Profile of learners

Access to the sector is still dominated by white males. Despite various initiatives and mechanisms being introduced to encourage under-represented groups to join the sector, there seems to have been little impact.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to increase the engagement of women and ethnic minorities within the industry by facilitating innovative progression pathways into the sector.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- To attract high quality applicants raise profile of industry and opportunities to schools at early age before subject choices are made
- Raise teacher awareness

Mode of delivery and age of participants in sector courses

Curriculum for the building services engineering sector within Highlands and Islands Enterprise area is dominated by part-time day-release apprenticeship training to deliver the off the job element. Local Enterprise Company returns for the area show that the vast majority of apprentices are under 25.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Work with partners, stakeholders and providers to develop sustainable entry and progression routes into the sector, particularly for adult entrants over 20 years of age.

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP:

- This skills issue is important because of the ageing workforce, the majority of entrants coming from schools, the lack of female entrants and the small rural communities
- The group agreed that action would include greater awareness in schools, industry knowledge and pre apprentice training/early careers/employer-led
- Benefits for the sector in achieving this skills issue might include a larger and better qualified workforce, more entrants and an enhanced industry profile
- The group agreed that barriers included funding and red tape, restricted training, wasted effort, the perception of the industry as ageist and male dominated and not enough applications from over-25s
- Greater communication was needed in the sector between careers bodies, colleges, higher education, employers and Highlands & Islands construction careers group

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Encourage rural plumbing businesses to offer training places – extra incentives for those businesses when trainees complete
- Provide adequate funding for adult trainees to make this route more attractive to employers
- Investment
- Consultation or working groups of employers, colleges, managing agents and awarding bodies

Higher education

There are a low number of higher education establishments offering building services engineering courses. This poses a problem for individuals who need to gain a professional qualifications alongside their work.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Continue to work with stakeholders in Further and Higher Education to seek to develop and maintain a network of providers offering degree and sub degree courses across Scotland

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Get it right from grass roots then HE will follow
- More collaboration between HE and all sector skills agencies
- Investment

Expenditure on provision

Data for the Highlands and Islands indicates that the majority of funding is on SVQ3 outcomes. Where expenditure is taking

place on courses not leading to a recognised qualification, this may indicate the presence of NEVS courses. This funding could be redistributed to much needed training provision elsewhere in the sector such as environmental technologies and business management.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Work with partners, stakeholders and providers to seek a more effective use of the qualification structure and bring more non-NEVS programmes into recognised qualifications frameworks where possible

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP:

- This skills issue is important because the sector requires more flexible delivery of courses, money is being misspent – it is not just a matter of deployment
- Action required might include redistribution of NEVS and more discussion between private and public sector
- The group agreed that benefits for the sector would include the high standard and quality of the workforce delivering a quality product and improved employment opportunities
- The sector barriers were a lack of information sharing and limitations on funding
- A bridge to achieve this skills issue included more collaborative partnerships to work towards a solution

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Cut red tape for funding
- Redirect funding to assist employers in training staff to meet EU directives e.g. RAC industry – mandatory training, FGAS regulations
- Pilot the introduction of renewable energy modules with 3-year apprentices – extra funding may be available from HIE
- Look at diversity of cost in delivery of key sector programmes and distribute funding accordingly

Provider quality marks and awards

Whilst there is some take-up of quality marks in the area, there is still scope for more providers to achieve quality marks. Essentially if more providers achieve these standards then it should raise the overall quality baseline of the sector's provision.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Work with providers to increase the achievement of quality marks.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Be wary of creating too many different quality systems/marks as this only creates confusion
- Holders of quality marks need to be regularly audited

Renewable Technologies

National Occupational Standards for current and emerging environmental technologies are being developed, including defining competency based approach with employers and stakeholders. SummitSkills will support the implementation of NOS by ensuring a competence based approach is embedded with employers and stakeholders

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to ensure the required skills can be developed to support the continual development of these emerging technologies.

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP:

- This skills issue is important to the sector because the Highlands and Islands will have a large demand for renewable energy sources. Building standards are bringing this issue to the fore.
- The group agreed that action included defining renewable energy systems within our sector and developing relevant training provision
- The benefits to the sector include becoming market leaders, greater business opportunities and employment and opportunities in overseas markets
- Barriers to tackling this skills issue include the need for adequate resources for identification, development and delivery
- The group agreed that the sector could overcome these barriers might include greater resources within the area and

- Local Authority involvement
- Build a micro-renewables centre of excellence in the highlands, possibly Inverness?

OTHER VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Clarify what is in the renewables sector
- Keep it simple and do it now
- Make funding available to create facilities
- Develop knowledge of renewable technologies to allow standards to be developed
- Develop Scottish qualifications that are needed by employers. Do nothing else!
- Small bites – modular elements needed

Hurdles and Bridges

These 'hurdles' and 'bridges' to achieving great future provision were suggested by meeting delegates.

Hurdles	Bridges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources ● Communication ● Geography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaboration ● IT solutions ● Add-ons beyond S/NVQ3, e.g. heat pump bolt on

Great Future Provision...

Delegates were asked what three words they would use to sum up great future provision.

Available	Flexible	Innovative
Employer-led-	Training-	Provision
Affordable	Widening-	Participation
Rural-	Employer-	Involvement
Education	Training	Qualification
Relevant	Quality	Forward-looking
Flexible	Meaningful	Current
Quality	Training	Affordable
Experienced	Delivery	
Deliverability for Employers and Candidates		
Employer-led	Responsive	Involvement
Availability	Value	Accessibility

These 'practical' and 'challenging' ideas are also the views and suggestions of the meeting delegate.

The most PRACTICAL idea worth doing

- Highlight costs in financial/time terms – SummitSkills findings to be used to negotiate adequate contributions from Government
- Improve communication
- Collaborating more – FE/sector skills/employer/employees/training providers/HE and HIE
- Collaborative thinking and developing partnerships
- Get manufacturers/employers training recognised and in harmony with colleges
- Bolt-on qualifications
- Listen to employers needs
- Visit the use of more IT solutions to allow more flexible delivery approaches to courses and training
- Accrediting appropriate ad hoc training
- Provision of HIE funding to assist fourth year plumbing and electrical apprentices undertaking renewable energy modules

The most CHALLENGING idea worth doing

- Collaboration and how can learning be more flexible?
- Fast track system – for training need to course and qualification
- Becoming employer led!
- Resources and funding – increasing
- Develop short and add on courses above SVQ3 level
- Ad hoc training accreditation
- Improve communications and collaboration between all parties – employers, training providers, funding bodies, SummitSkills
- Resources – all partners to visit funding to meet the more expensive demands to deliver training in the Highlands and Islands area
- Identifying additional funding
- HIE to consider well thought out case for benefits of providing additional funding for building services trades but especially electrical.

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