

process

The newsletter for the Process Industries Skills Academy



Green light for
biotechnology
and composites

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Welcome to the latest edition of the Academy's Process newsletter.

FIRSTLY, I am absolutely delighted to have been invited to write the foreword for this latest issue of the Process newsletter, and to be given the opportunity to get back on some of my long-held industrial hobby horses.

In my considered view, the biggest challenge facing the process industries over the next decade will undoubtedly be the pressing need for it to undergo a fundamental transformation.

On page 4 we take a look at the emerging biotechnology market, fresh skill sets and the new knowledge and expertise that will need to be created and thoroughly mastered in order to develop and run new processes, and hence new businesses.

These businesses will be vital to the UK economy and will help to rebalance the gap that has developed over recent years between the manufacturing and financial services sectors.

Equally importantly, these new businesses can - and should be - low carbon-based and hence sustainable businesses in the truest sense of the word.

Consequently, we need to ensure in the future that we develop essential skills and training not just for today but also in readiness for tomorrow.

All companies of all sizes need to recognise the importance of these changes and be prepared to make an effective and worthwhile contribution towards the training and development of our next generation of process industry workers.

This aspiration is particularly critical at the present time because, despite one of the most difficult recessions in living memory, many businesses are nevertheless continuing to do reasonably - and some would say remarkably - well.

It follows, therefore, that we will continue to need skilled people to run and maintain our existing assets - let alone the ones we develop in years to come.

However, some of the long-established guiding principles of our industry - such as building an excellent reputation and maintaining our 'Licence to Operate' - remain as paramount as ever.

Also, we must continue to run our plants safely and reliably in order to earn the chance for future growth and investment - so it is vital that we continue to encourage people of all ages to engage in lifelong learning and development.

And that's why it's so important that people who work in this great processing industry of ours - managers and staff alike - seek the recognition for the skills they develop that will be available under the auspices of Cogent and the Skills Academy.

Ultimately, this will help improve the attractiveness of the process industries to people seeking a satisfying and rewarding career, which can only be to the benefit and prosperity of all concerned.

In conclusion, I am greatly encouraged in the light of what I have written here that this latest issue of the Process newsletter focuses enthusiastically on two crucially important future areas for our industry 'Corporate and Business Partnerships' and the welcome addition of two new sectors to the Skills Academy's footprint - Industrial Biotechnology and Advanced Composites.

Perhaps this is strong evidence that the transformation I referred to at the beginning of this article is already underway...let's all hope so with a real passion!



Paul Booth
President of SABIC UK
Petrochemicals and Deputy
Chairman of the Academy



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Our people... Iain Taylor

BORN in Norfolk, Iain's strong interest in science led him to study for a degree in physiology and biochemistry, followed by a PhD in microbiology. He joined ICI's early biotechnology team and was involved in a number of biotech projects, including the development of Quorn. After a short spell in a production management position his career developed in HR, initially with ICI but ending up in Basel, Switzerland, with Novartis.

Iain also managed his own successful consultancy business for several years, numbering various blue chip process industry companies in the UK and Europe among his clients.

When he's not at work Iain likes to devote himself to polishing his golf handicap. Now playing off 13 he was once down to 10 and still has ambitions of playing single figures golf. As a schoolboy he worked as assistant to a golf pro at Hunstanton Golf Club, sparking a lifelong passion for the game. He is also keen on keeping fit and walking, and is currently in training for the 57-mile Cumbrian way which he will walk for charity in June - work colleague sponsors please take note!

Although still looking after the Yorkshire and Humber patch, Iain is spearheading the Academy's move to establish a presence serving employers in the East of England, and he and his partner Sandra recently bought a house in the region.



Academy to boost composites and biotechnology skills

THE recent announcement that the Academy's footprint will be extended to cover biotechnology and composites is good news for employers looking to create world class workforces in these emerging and fast-growing sectors.

Former business secretary Peter Mandelson's speech on the 'New Industry, New Jobs' industrial strategy in March gave the green light to create two new hubs for biotechnology and composites.

The Skills for Growth strategy announced in October 2009 invited bids for new National Skills Academies, as part of a national strategy for economic growth and individual prosperity, and marking a radical shift in some of the priorities of our skills system. The extension bid to include the new sectors, which was created in partnership with Cogent and with the support of a range of employers, is the first of its kind.

The extension is a natural evolution of the Academy's current role, fitting perfectly with its current remit. It is also a strategically important platform for the development of emerging technologies in the chemical, polymer and pharmaceutical manufacturing sectors.

Phil Jones, the Academy's CEO, welcomed the announcement: "Biotechnology is one of the most demanding and rapidly growing fields in science. The growth in both research and product development activities in biotechnology requires highly trained personnel in order to deliver solutions to the agricultural industry and the health sector. This in turn will help to benefit society and drive forward the economy."

"We were also extremely pleased to hear Former Business Minister Ian Lucas announce the proposed site for the National Composites Centre in Bristol. This is another key milestone in the development of a low-carbon economy and the Academy will now help to tackle key strategic challenges currently being faced by the aerospace and power generation industries through the development of the composite hub."

"The biorefinery operations already well underway in Yorkshire and in operation on Teesside will convert various sources of biomass into a range of products and chemicals previously obtained from non-renewable sources, which will have applications in the pharmaceuticals, healthcare and personal care sectors, to name just a few."

"There are biotech projects springing up all over the UK, and we must make sure that we have the right skills in place to maintain this lead over the rest of the world."

Cogent's CEO Joanna Woolf, added: "We are looking forward to continuing our working relationship with the Skills Funding Agency, to develop our business plans and ultimately deliver training solutions tailored to employers needs and tackling long-term challenges faced by the sector's workforce."

"The announcement is great news for employers in some of the UK's most innovative industries and is a testament to the value they place on the work of Cogent and the Academy. We would like to thank all the industrialists, trade bodies and stakeholders who have been so supportive in helping us develop the bid and extend our capacity to provide skills solutions for composites and biotechnology employers."



Emerging Technologies - the facts

Emerging technologies such as industrial biotechnology, composites and plastics electronics are technical innovations in which the UK is well placed to become a world leader.

Industrial Biotechnology (IB)

IB has applications in bio fuels production, oils from algae, detergent enzymes and organic effluent treatment.

Plastic electronics brings flexibility and energy efficiency and weight savings to existing electronics products and has potential applications in lighting and information displays.

In a recent Chemical Innovation Knowledge Transfer Network survey on sector awareness of IB, it revealed that early users of IB are renewable energies, (biofuels, fermentation and effluent treatment). The survey also showed that 33% were already using IB with 13% considering its use.

The main areas for the application for IB in the near future were:

- Chemicals manufacture
- Polymer manufacture
- Bio fuels manufacture
- Algae oil production
- Anaerobic digestion
- Enzyme production, (detergents)
- Bioremediation
- Fermentation processes
- Oil extraction (food and cosmetics)

The main barriers to the uptake of IB were quoted as:

- Lack of awareness, knowledge, technology transfer, expertise and experience. In addition high risk and investment costs.
- Current skills

The adoption of industrial biotechnology into the chemical manufacturing environment will lead to an increase in skills related to the technology as businesses seek to make greater use of IB to replace existing chemistry based products and develop new bio based ones.

The focus will be on higher level skills such as PhDs and MScs with a specialism in industrial biotechnology.

Cogent's own Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) research from 2007 highlighted in particular the age profile and skills shortages and gaps in the large technical workforce of process operators, technicians and skilled trades that account for over 70% of the workforce. It showed in particular a lack of skills and knowledge required for process improvements and clearly pointed to a requirement for more technical apprentices.

Composites

Composite materials have applications in satellite construction, wind turbines, aircraft and automotive construction and civil engineering projects.

Composite materials bring structural strength and weight reduction - two qualities that will be much in demand to meet energy conservation and low carbon targets. The UK's reputation for engineering and design gives us the potential to become a global leader in composites.

Composites are mixtures of two or more discrete materials which are combined to form a material with superior physical properties. Advanced composites including polymer matrix composites, metal-matrix composites and fibre reinforced polymers offer numerous applications.

Composites find applications in sectors such as: automotive, aerospace, marine, construction, domestic appliances, medical devices and turbines.

The UK polymer industry is major part of the supply chain for the industries above, and employers are often clustered in regions with manufacturing capacity such as the East and West Midlands.

According to BIS estimates, the future value of the UK composites market in construction and automotive sectors is at least £20bn, while the UK market for turbine blades alone could be in excess of £5bn.

Composites is also a fast growing export sector. It is anticipated that growth will come from big user industries such as aerospace and renewable energies where the material's lightness and high mechanical strength can be deployed in aircraft wings and fuselage and wind turbines.

Over 7500 companies operate in the polymer and plastics industry, employing 286,000 people. The industry has an annual turnover of 16.76bn with a GVA of £7.31bn, and within this, composites is the highest value adding part.

Current skills

The occupational distribution of the polymer and plastics workforce shows a mature sector relying on process technology rather than new science.

The current dominant occupations are managers (20%) and process operators (35%) and only 1000 people are employed in R&D capacity. Developing composites industries will require researchers, innovators technologists, designers and highly skilled processing technicians with skills in structural design and modelling, manufacture, assembly, stress engineering, disposal and maintenance, repair and overhaul.

This demands upskilling of the existing workforces both within the polymer industry and manufacturing industries that fabricate and make use of composites and in the supply chain.

There are real concerns that industries will struggle to meet their existing business requirements let alone growth as a result of skills gaps and shortages that could exist in composites.

SMEs will need to commit to training in new vocational skills, and will benefit from getting involved with Cogent and the National Skills Academy Process Industries.



Validated short courses launched

THE first in a series of validated short courses that carry the Academy's stamp of approval - and that of employers - has now been launched for businesses.

The first three sets of approved programmes, validated through the Academy's short course service, are:

From Demag Hamilton (part of the Sumitomo Demag group)

- ERGOTech Introductory Course
- Optimisation of ERGOTech Injection Moulding Machines
- Maintenance of ERGOTech Injection Moulding Machines

Demag Hamilton is one of the leading importers of injection moulding machinery in the U.K. market with a market share of approximately 15%. The ERGOTech machines are generally accepted in the market as being amongst the best in the world. The major markets for the machines are automotive, IT, packaging, electric/electronic, medical and pharmaceutical, building products and leisure. Currently Demag Hamilton is servicing more than 4,000 injection moulding machines in the UK and Ireland.

From Reynolds Training Services of Grimsby:

- General Safety Awareness – Personal protective Equipment (e-Learning)

Reynolds Training Services is delivering skills, knowledge and understanding to industry across the United Kingdom, working mainly within the Bulk Liquid Warehousing and Energy Sectors, and is now expanding its offer to other sectors. RTS has also submitted another programme, in Process Safety and Operational Principles which is currently being assessed.

From Plasweld Ltd:

- Hot Gas and Extrusion (Sheet) Welding
- Electro, Butt, Socket (Fusion) Welding
- Welding of Geomembrane liners

Plasweld offers training in thermoplastic welding either on-site or within its facility at Redcar in the North East. These programmes are subject to a rigorous examination, including independent laboratory based technical assessment of test pieces produced during the course.

How the short courses validation process works:

- Training providers submit their short courses to the Academy for validation
- Academy experts match provider delivery to employer needs, and where available to the requirements of the Cogent Gold Standard
- The results are presented to an employer panel for final approval

The Gold Standard is a national framework for continuous professional development setting out the skills required for world class performance in key job roles in the process industries. It describes and maps the competencies required to do each job across four areas of competence:

- Technical Competence
- Functional & Behavioural
- Business Improvement
- Compliance

All validated courses will appear on the Academy's Skills Passport system, alerting a wide range of employers to their availability.

Benefits to training providers include:

- A clear assessment of where your courses may deliver towards a particular Gold Standard
- Promotion of courses to a wide audience in chemicals, pharmaceuticals, polymers, composites and downstream oil and gas industries, indicating their potential contribution towards Gold Standard achievement
- Access to the Academy Skills Passport system, which can be used to record and monitor your learners

Approval costs are dependent on the size of the course (starting from £750), as are the Skills Passport costs (starting from £5 per learner). A discounted rate will be applied to multiple submissions, and those from Academy accredited providers.

To take advantage of this business development opportunity for your business, please contact the Academy at email: providers@process.nacademy.co.uk or call 01325 740 902 to discuss your ideas.

Validated courses will be monitored via the Skills Passport system, to ensure delivery consistently meets the required standard.



Provider workshops deliver real benefits



The events were designed to bring together and show support to both private and public sector training provider organisations and share with them the tools and resources that the Academy has on offer to accredited providers.

The programme included a series of seminars and an interactive workshop, aimed at demonstrating how training providers can increase marketing opportunities, particularly through the Academy and its accredited provider programme. The event highlighted the success of the Academy's business referral system, which matches employer needs with solutions offered by accredited providers, and launched a new training opportunities system allowing providers to highlight spaces on courses, availability of funded training, and to promote 'special offers' to industry.

Specifically structured to be two-way sessions, the events also provided a useful environment for providers to share their experience of using Academy information to engage more closely with employers and respond to their needs. Delegates also took the opportunity to talk to the Academy team and have their say on future developments.

Gemma Osula, the Academy's Network Services Manager, said: "We were delighted at the high number of training providers who attended. The interaction throughout the events clearly demonstrated industry's commitment to working with us to develop a robust skills framework across our industries."

"Our mission is to continue to act as a two-way channel between employers and providers. Academy accredited providers are ready and able to deliver the training and upskilling solutions that employers have told us they want, and by working closely with providers and continually identifying and delivering opportunities for their continuing professional development, and collaborating on new service development, we can maintain a fully responsive training provision designed to meet the needs of the process industries."

Further workshops are planned for Autumn 2010 – details will be posted on the Academy website at www.process.nacademy.co.uk/news.

Academy generates £1m to training providers

THE Academy's provider referral system has seen over £1m-worth of training business referred to its accredited training provider network, since the system's launch in January.

The referral process is underpinned by a web-based platform, where specific employer training needs are posted by the Academy's Regional Manager team, as part of their work in providing hands-on practical support to employers. Accredited providers then respond and the Academy acts as honest brokers, helping the employer select the solution that best meets their needs.

Phil Jones, the Academy's CEO, said: "We are delighted that this recently launched matchmaking service is working so well for both employers and providers. It means employers can be sure they are getting the best and most cost-effective solution, with accredited providers being put directly in touch with them to meet those needs."

"Our accredited provider network operates to the very highest standards, undergoing rigorous quality checks and continual monitoring. Employers have the reassurance that the Academy brand is a kitemark of quality."

Roy Beddow, Director of Consulting Principles, one of the Academy's accredited providers, said: "The provider referral system is a key benefit of being part of the Academy network."

"Academy accreditation provides reassurance to employers that their training needs are being met by an organisation that has achieved independently audited standards of operation."

The Academy's provider network have the expertise to support a wide range of industry-specific training requirements, ranging from technical engineering, manufacturing skills and business improvement techniques, through to compliance training and leadership and management development.

Providers deliver both employer-led Academy designed training, as well as services from their own existing portfolio.

More information about the provider referral system can be accessed by visiting www.process.nacademy.co.uk and clicking on Training Providers. For more information please contact Sandra Ozturk on 01325 740 900.



Skill up or be left behind, employers urged

A FREE skills briefing organised by the Academy and training experts G&A Moulding Technology saw employers turn out to take part in a debate about the 'New Industry New Jobs' agenda, and the support packages, products and services available through the Academy.



The event, which took place at G&A Moulding's headquarters in Peterborough, was one of a series of roadshows being run by the Academy around the regions, in a bid to urge employers to engage with the skills agenda and get to grips with urgent skills issues.

The event was led by Iain Taylor, one of the Academy's team of Regional Skills Managers, who said:

"We have taken the Academy out on tour to reach as many employers as possible.

"We really can't stress strongly enough how vital it is that they act now to secure the future success of their businesses.

"The stark truth is that companies that don't have a well thought out skills development framework in place are unlikely to survive the next decade.

"That's the bad news. The flip side is that we can help them access a range of practical help and support, including funding, to meet all their workforce development needs.

"As the economy starts to pick up, employers need to enlist all the support available in order to upskill the current workforce and attract more young people into the industries, especially if we are to meet the challenges posed by overseas competitors.

"China and India are steaming ahead, while up and coming manufacturing economies in the Eastern Bloc are benefiting from the extra financial support offered to new EC members.

"If we can't compete with overseas competitors in areas such as labour costs, we must put ourselves in a position where we can out-skill them.

"We want to use these events to get the message across loud and clear to employers – there is help out there but if they don't act, and quickly, our industry will see itself left behind."

Skills bodies make measurable impact

AN independent report has shown that Cogent and other Sector Skills Councils can achieve as much as twenty times the amount of funding they receive.

Four out of 25 licensed SSCs, including Cogent and its subsidiaries the National Skills Academies for Nuclear and Process Industries, were sampled by business services specialists Baker Tilly.

Collectively, the three organisations were measured as having an annual positive economic and societal impact of £114.8m, against received funding of £5m a year.

Joanna Woolf, Cogent CEO, said: "Cogent's own Activity and Impact 2010 report incorporates Baker Tilly's conclusions, which recognise the value gained by society, employers and employees from the investment made in employer-led SSCs.

"Our work is aimed at ensuring the best possible skills infrastructure for the sector we represent, and we do this through a very focused programme of activity, led by employers."

The Cogent report assesses key performance indicators, including completion of NVQs in the sector, apprenticeship take ups, uptake of Foundation Degrees and the number of training providers signed up to the Skills Academies' quality assured networks.

Cogent Evaluation Summary	£m
Cost saving of wastage avoided	
Training costs saved through benchmarking and Skills Passport	24.5
Industry training wastage avoided	13.2
Education and qualifications	
Additional tax paid due to salary increases	6
Alternative sourcing costs	
Research and LMI	1.5
Career Pathways Tool	2.1
Economic benefits generated	
Reduction in skills shortage – related vacancies	11.2
Damage avoided due to workforce age demographic skills gaps	56.3
Total benefits measured	£114.8

John McNamara, Chief Executive of the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, said: "All the SSCs can take pride in what the review tells us. Any organisation that can achieve £100m or more of public gain, every year, from funding of only £5m can justifiably be proud of it. It is imperative that SSCs, and their funders, recognise the extent to which the benefits that SSCs are achieving for the UK economy exceed the cost of funding them."

Academy to lead Tees Valley Apprenticeship Project

REGIONAL Development Agency One North East has appointed the Skills Academy to project manage the apprenticeship project for the Tees Valley Industrial Programme (TVIP).

The TVIP is designed to support the economy of the Tees Valley through a package of industrial support, enterprise and training, which will operate from April 2010 through to March 2012. The programme is being taken forward through eight workstreams, comprising a mix of strategic and tactical projects.

The Skills Academy will manage the £2.4m funding for one of the projects, the Engineering Apprenticeship Programme, which is specifically aimed at helping over 150 apprentices who are currently on level 2 or 3 of their apprenticeship framework and who are at risk of redundancy or where they might be unable to complete their course due to the economic downturn.

Sixty five Corus apprentices have already been supported by this project to continue or complete their apprenticeship, ensuring that the Tees Valley continues to benefit from a well-trained labour force.

The Skills Academy will manage Tees Valley Apprenticeship Programme (TVAP) funding designed to accommodate apprentices to complete their frameworks and to sustain their prospects of employment in Tees Valley. As such all employers providing industry relevant products and services from premises located in Tees Valley, or hosting engineering apprentices from the Tees Valley, are eligible to participate.

The TVIP provides employers with the funding required to retain or employ those apprentices currently at risk or those that have already been made redundant. The fund will also help employers to host work experience for apprentices receiving training allowances and sponsor apprenticeship completers to enter higher education progression opportunities.

Kevin Thrower, Regional Skills Manager said: "We want to get moving as quickly as possible and ensure the right provision is in place to protect apprentices and facilitate placements for those who are suffering unemployment as a result of the economic downturn."

George Ritchie, Senior VP of Semcorp has been asked to Chair the TVAP Steering Group. George, who is also Chair of the Skills Academy's North East Regional Skills Board, said: "We are delighted that funding has been allocated to secure engineering apprenticeships that are at risk of redundancy in the Tees Valley. These new workers are vital to the future success of the engineering-based industries in the region and we need to support their training and employment."

For more information please visit: www.nsa-tvap.co.uk, or contact Alex Slater, the Skills Academy's Finance and Administration Manager, on 01325 740 900.



Leadership guru urges employers to be inspirational

THE annual Sunday Times 'Best 100 Companies to Work for' tables this year again confirmed the consistent link between happy staff and a healthy bottom line. One of the team behind the list's creation was speaking at an Academy-organised event in Yorkshire, with some tough advice for business leaders.

The event was one of a series of Sector Compact events, created to increase awareness of the training funds available for second level two and three qualifications, as part of a three-year deal between Cogent and the Government.

Nigel Crouch, who is currently driving the Inspirational Leadership programme through the alliance of Sector Skills Councils, was speaking at the Academy's Inspirational Leadership event in Bradford on March 2, in which he encouraged managers to look to their own leadership styles before assuming that the problems lay further down the management structure.

"A disappointing 62% of people in a survey by the Chartered Management Institute did not believe that leaders in their organisation were genuinely in touch with how people were feeling, while a third said they have never worked for an inspirational leader, and managers need to work to address that," he said.

The event, which was attended by 60 employers, was designed to encourage bosses to use inspirational leadership

to create a world class workforce that will help them beat off overseas competitors as the economy recovers.

"The process industries face skills challenges that threaten their very survival, but better leadership can translate into healthy profits, even in a tough economic climate," said Nigel.

"Inspirational leadership is a key factor among the companies that make the Best 100 Companies list year after year, but although a major piece of leadership research showed that 55% of people said they desired inspirational leadership, only 11% of them believed that's what they were getting.

"Successful businesses need good leaders who will bring out the best in people and involve them in making things happen. They show trust, and then they listen and act on what they hear.

"The good news is that being an inspirational leader is a skill that can be learnt like any other management technique."



Pictured above: Nigel Crouch

Downstream industry chief joins academy board

CHRIS Hunt, Director General of the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association, is the latest senior industry figure to add his support to the Academy's national board.



UKPIA represents nine oil refining and marketing companies operating in the UK, which also own approximately 2,200 of the UK's 9,382 service stations, and own and operate the nine major crude oil processing refineries in the UK.

A strong believer in pan-industry dialogue and collaboration, Chris's background spans two decades in the downstream industry.

His early career was in electrical engineering, firstly with the London Electricity Board and then with a company manufacturing and installing TV studio lighting. A career change in the late 70s saw him move into the healthcare market, joining a US multinational's accounting team, before eventually running the sales and marketing operation for one of the company's business units.

In 1989 he joined Elf Oil UK Ltd's Altrincham office, and was promoted through the organisation to become head of the retail division.

He joined UKPIA as Company Secretary and Commercial Director, initially on secondment from Elf, in mid-1997, and his remit also included dealing with commercial issues facing the downstream industry. He was appointed Director General of UKPIA in 2004.

Away from work, he is a keen follower of Sale Sharks Rugby Football Club, National Hunt racing and all forms of motor racing.

Speaking about his appointment, Chris said: "As a firm believer in improving skills across the process and manufacturing industries, particularly in the vocational training arena, I am keen to add my support to the Academy's efforts as the delivery vehicle for the high level, employer-led strategies created by Cogent and the other Sector Skills Councils.

"In recent years there has been much talk and many initiatives announced. I see the employer-led Skills Academy network as the organisation that will actually make a difference on the ground, delivering practical products and services that employers need if they are to create a skills platform to take their companies forward.

"In my new appointment I hope to represent not just the views and aims of the UKPIA members, but those across the whole downstream industry.

"For instance, I hope to see progress being made on key issues such as maintaining the contractor skills base, particularly in areas such as health and safety. With areas where up to 1200 contractors can be on site at a time, we need to be sure that safety issues are being correctly managed, through further development of systems such as the Contractors Safety Passport.

"Our downstream skills issues mirror those across the rest of the process and manufacturing industries. We have a lack of young people entering our industry – and I intend to champion the cause of apprenticeships and other vocational training in my new role - an ageing workforce and a constantly-evolving demand for skills that match the modern production environment.

"I very much look forward to playing my part alongside the Academy's other Board members and partners, in ensuring we create and maintain a strong skills platform that will support the future of our industries."



Employers set to benefit from SSC partnership

EMPLOYERS in the process, manufacturing and nuclear sectors are set to benefit from a strategic partnership between Cogent and Semta SSCs, which will see both organisations collaborate on common areas of research, science and technology skills, and qualification development.

Semta works with employers in the science, engineering and manufacturing sectors, and there is natural crossover between both SSCs' employer bases, particularly in new and emerging industries, and in the application of technology in bio-science and advanced materials, which will demand the very highest skills.

The move is viewed as a natural progression, as National Skills Academies in both sector footprints already collaborate on the development of training programmes, assessors and trainers.

Cogent Chief Executive Joanna Woolf described the working relationship: "A joint forum will be established to efficiently manage the areas of interdependency between Semta and Cogent. This will eliminate repetition and ensure better use of resources and greater understanding of employer needs."

The Chairs and CEOs of both SSCs will meet quarterly to review the partnership agreement, and both will appoint a director to be responsible for the delivery of the agreement.

Philip Whiteman, Semta's Chief Executive, said: "We are committed to creating a simplified skills landscape to make the entire process of identifying and tackling skills shortages easier for employers, stakeholders and Government. As leading sector skills councils, representing employers across the engineering and process industry manufacturing sectors, Semta and Cogent are ideally placed to deliver collaborative solutions for employers."

VIEWPOINT Going for growth

I am pleased to report that since the last issue of Process magazine we have received some fantastic news on several fronts.

During mid-March the Government launched key programmes to ensure that the UK economy is supplied with the skills needed to fuel the growth of key new industries in the coming years.

We were absolutely delighted to be told that our hard work and commitment had been rewarded and we will now extend our footprint to cover two new – and vital – sectors: Composites and Biotechnology.

We are now formally in the business planning stage, drawing up detailed plans to fully define activities as we move ahead. Business plans will be submitted in September and the extension to the Academy will be up and running in December 2010.

We have also received confirmation that our proposal to manage the Tees Valley Apprenticeship Programme has been successful. This forms part of the wider Tees Valley Industrial Programme, a £60m investment between now and 2012, designed to accelerate industrial transition in the North East.

The Academy's responsibility will be to manage the apprenticeship programme, which will see us maintain and expand upon apprenticeship provision including high level and graduate apprenticeships in the Tees Valley.

The third major project to be given the go-ahead was announced by the Skills Funding Agency. The grant secured through the Academy will allow for the construction of the Gold Standard Skills Laboratory at Framwellgate School in Durham.

We will soon be introducing our own 'Going for Growth' strategy, which is an Academy Board initiative to grow the organisation. The main aims will be to scale up the Academy and engage with more employers and providers, without any compromise on the quality of our products and services.

We already work with 100 companies and 4,000 employees, and we aim to steadily increase that until we are working with at least 1000 companies and 200,000 people.

Our provider group currently numbers 30 of the UK's leading training and development organisations and we want to triple that number, again, with no downward effect on quality standards.

We realise these are ambitious aims, but we have plans in place that we believe will see us achieve them within a realistic timeframe, and with the support of a dedicated and committed team both here at the Academy, and throughout our wider support networks.

We are mindful of the fantastic commitment and support of everyone within the Academy, and our key stakeholder groups, which has enabled us to secure these major new contracts that will benefit thousands of people working in the UK Process Industries.

Exciting times lie ahead of us and we relish the challenge. There is a strong buzz about the Academy and with the energy and enthusiasm of our team, and a single-mindedness of purpose, I am confident that the next stage in the Academy's evolution will be a success, and we will continue to play a key role in the transformation of the skills agenda of the Process Industries, to all our benefit.

Phil Jones
CEO, National Skills Academy Process Industries



'Pay as you go' support for employers

THE Academy has launched a unique new 'pay as you go' Business Partner scheme, created to give businesses access to affordable training and skills support from top industry experts.

The new service is specifically designed to offer businesses of all sizes a cost-effective way of accessing a package of practical support that will boost their skills levels and make their businesses more competitive.

Based on a three-tier system according to the number of staff employed, and starting at just £100 a month, employers receive discounts on employer-designed Academy products, plus access to a range of expert consultancy and skills development services.

Discounted products include ASET, the accreditation of prior learning scheme that assesses and accredits previously delivered training and identifies any gaps; and Skills Passport, a portable, online training and skills management and record system for staff and employers.

Membership also gives employers the chance to join regional skills networking groups and take charge of shaping the skills agenda throughout their own sector.

Those businesses with an identified training need can be matched up with the Academy's bank of accredited training and development providers and education centres, which have all been through rigorous assessment in order to achieve the Academy stamp of quality.

Academy CEO Phil Jones said: "In the same way that we have created our products and services, we have designed this scheme by asking employers what they need, and how they would like it delivered.

"This 'pay as you go' option will help them keep a tight rein on cashflow, without missing out on essential support for their skills development activities.

"We have deliberately made this a low-cost, high value service to give smaller businesses the same advantages as large organisations. They effectively have all the services of an in-house skills training manager, without the cost of adding to the headcount."



Here come the girls...

COGENT'S Women and Work programme is a new, Government-supported 12-month programme for the science industries, designed to support the skills development of women, particularly into non-traditional technical roles.*

Employers are encouraged to review the skills development needs of their business and where a skills gap or a career progression opportunity is identified among female staff they may be eligible for a £650 grant per person for their development.

Rather than being targeted at any particular qualification, it supports any skills intervention that will add value to the company bottom line and promote the development of women in the workforce.

Benefits to employers:

- Cost saving – this is a subsidised programme supported by Government
- Staff motivation – investing in staff training increases motivation and boosts retention
- Choice – you can choose the course that best suits your business needs – from upskilling to outplacement solutions
- Potential – training helps to unlock the potential of people so that they can contribute fully to the business

Benefits to female employees:

- Capability boosting – training develops individuals to maximise their ability to do the job well
- Flexibility – the training can be designed to suit individual needs
- Enhanced career – women can start the move to the next level or to a technical discipline, improving their confidence along the way
- Self-belief – women at supervisory level can benefit from targeted training designed to improve self confidence and boost their managerial skills

How it works:

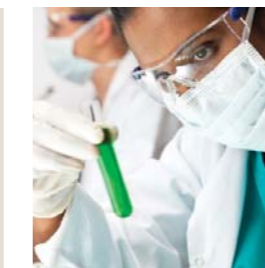
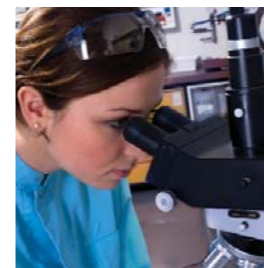
As part of the Women and Work offer, employers are encouraged to identify the skills needs of their business and potential female candidates. This leads to a completed individual training plan, or where the company identifies more than one beneficiary, a company training plan.

The plan is submitted to Cogent for a compliance check and employers are notified of the maximum grant available for the activities. Key points for consideration include:

- Employers must make a 50% contribution to the 'total' costs of training – including in kind costs such as mentoring and time off for training
- Fifteen per cent of the total cost must be paid by the employer in cash to a provider/accreditor of training or, other training delivery expenses
- In house training is eligible but must have an element of accreditation to aid future learner development
- Statutory training obligations are not supported

For more information contact Julia Bennett on: Julia.bennett@cocent-ssc.com, tel. 01925 515 232.

*Note: Male employees are not eligible for funding as this project is approved by Government and the EU as a 'positive intervention' to provide opportunities for women in non traditional roles. This is an England only initiative.



Update for ASET pioneers



AS part of the Academy's ongoing product development, staff are revisiting the ASET pioneer organisations, which were early adopters in the take up of this industry-specific service.

ASET is designed to help process industries employers gain recognition for the content, quality and delivery of their in-house training, and workforce competence. It works by benchmarking employer-delivered training against the competency requirements set out in the Cogent Gold Standard for all the key roles in the process sector.

This presents the opportunity for employers to have the training they have developed accredited, and expands the ways in which skills gaps can be addressed and learners can gain credit and recognition for their hard work and achievements.

The aim of the current programme of revisits is to update employers on the changing qualifications as a result of the reform programme, and to assess the benefits employers have realised from their initial assessments.

The first repeat visit has been held with Huntsman Polyurethanes at Wilton on Teesside. Huntman's initial assessment was held at an early development stage of Cogent's Gold Standard and resulting QCF qualifications, so additional mapping was carried out to update the report, providing the client with a more robust assessment of their training system versus the qualifications as they now stand.

As a result of the initial assessment, activity is ongoing to expand the site's training and development in problem solving techniques, and a number of employees have participated in the pilot of the new Gold Standard for Health and Safety, which was developed by a partnership of NEBOSH, Cogent and the Academy.

The Gold standard skills journey

EMPLOYER input to the development of the Cogent Gold Standard has resulted in a national framework for skills and competency management across the process industries.

Setting the standard for Continuous Professional Development across key roles, it operates across four key areas of competency: technical, business improvement, compliance and functional and behavioural. Staff can begin a journey that will see them work their way towards a world-leading skills set.

Employers can choose two routes:

Accredited training, through nationally accredited qualifications

- Employers access Gold Standard via the Cogent website at www.cogent-ssc/gold_standard
- Individuals' skills and training are compared to Gold Standard for each role
- Appropriate accredited training is identified to close any skills gaps
- Academy-approved providers deliver training using methods and timeframes that fit around business needs, and with support funding where possible

In-house training, through ASET (the Academy's Assessment System for Employer Training)

- ASET benchmarks employer-delivered training against Gold Standard
- An Academy auditor visits to carry out a formal training audit
- The employer receives a detailed report showing where action is required to meet Gold Standard
- The employer selects appropriate training
- Employers can gain recognition for their in-house training through an Approved Centre
- A formal certificate of achievement is issued



Whichever route to Gold Standard employers choose, all completions can be formally recorded using the Academy's web-based Skills Passport system. This supports employers as they work towards Gold Standard, providing them with a user-friendly, online skills profile for every individual, showing accredited and non accredited training and qualifications, identifying skills gaps and directing employers to Academy-accredited providers and programmes.

To find out more about Gold Standard and how it can help your organisation, visit www.cogent-ssc.com and click on Gold Standard. For a chat about how Gold Standard, ASET or Skills Passport can support your training objectives, to see what's fundable or to arrange a no-obligation visit call us on 0845 6070140 or email enquiries@process.nscademy.co.uk.

Apprenticeship awards in full swing

CELEBRATING the individuals and employers who have excelled in a range of apprenticeship programmes, the Apprenticeship Awards 2010 are currently in full swing, with regional ceremonies taking place across the country.

Over 1,300 nominations were received and regional finalists have been shortlisted in eight categories. Apprentices and employers winning regional prizes will automatically go through to face the judging panel for the national awards ceremony, which takes place on 15 July in London.

Sponsors of the awards include City & Guilds, EDI, EAL, Skills for Care, BT, Sellafield NDA and BAE Systems.

Lesley Bowen, Head of Education, Training & Development at Sellafield Ltd., sponsor of the Medium Employer of the Year category said: "We are proud to be sponsoring the Medium Employer of the Year category at the Apprenticeship Awards 2010.

"We feel it's important to get behind a programme which not only provides a career route for many young people, but is an established business model for many employers in a wider range of sectors.

"Having employed a large number of apprentices over the years, we have seen the benefits they bring such as efficient working and higher productivity. I'm sure we'll continue to support Apprenticeships for many years to come."

Full details on the Apprenticeship Awards can be found at: www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

The 2011 Apprenticeship Awards will be launched later this year.



Shown above: South Tyneside Homes winning the Large Employer of the Year at the North East regional Awards ceremony. The Awards were presented by TV presenter Kate Thornton and Apprenticeship Ambassador George Ritchie, Vice President of Sembcorp.

Left to Right: Kate Thornton, TV presenter, Jonathan McLane, Apprentice Electrician at South Tyneside Homes, Scott Gray, Apprentice Joiner at South Tyneside Homes, Gillian Jenkins, Organisation Development Advisor, South Tyneside Homes, George Ritchie, Vice President of Sembcorp and a North East Apprenticeship Ambassador



Employers support young energy talent

SIXTEEN young people who have embarked on the new Energy Skills Foundation Programme at Lowestoft College in Suffolk are getting a taster of potential careers in the region's energy sector.

The course is the result of a collaboration between the College and Cogent, ECITB and Skills for Energy, and is designed to give young people an insight into the wide range of career paths open to them.

Over £100k of development funding has been committed to the training programme, mainly by ECITB with Cogent SSC and the National Skills Academy Process Industries, and support from Lowestoft College.

The one-year course is designed for students who are interested in a career in energy, but who lack the knowledge to make an informed choice about their particular pathway or specialism.

Students study a range of theoretical and practical modules, including hands on skills training in fabrication and welding, electrical, mechanical, process and maintenance disciplines, plus health and safety aspects of the industries. Knowledge based elements cover the wide range of industries involved in the energy sector, such as oil and gas, nuclear, renewables and refining, and the career routes available.

Regional employers have got behind the programme and been involved from the outset, and many of them are supporting the students through site visits, job offers and financial training allowances.

The strategic importance of the energy industry to the UK economy and the unique mix in the East of England means it is well-placed to play an important part in the continuing development of the energy industries, all of which will require a constant feed of young people embarking on careers within the sector, and who will become the skilled workforce of the future.

Plastics employers' input needed to shape qualifications

AN online, rapid response questionnaire has been set up to encourage plastics employers to help shape the new competency based qualifications for their industry.

Cogent SSC experts are reviewing the sector's National Occupational Standards in close consultation with employers, as part of the body's role in setting standards and designing qualifications across all parts of the industry.

The call for employers to come forward and have their say is being backed by John Goff, Operations Director at plastics specialists G&A Moulding Technology.

"We believe it is vitally important that the UK industry gets involved and supports the new competency based qualifications as we move forwards out of this current economic cycle. If training is not now treated as a vital tool, there'll be a shortfall in knowledge of injection moulding technology," he said.

"Such training ultimately saves downtime and scrap, results in energy savings and safeguards future jobs, by reducing the costs to customers. By investing in the workforce now, companies will be in a stronger position for the future - and strengthen the future of the plastics industry in the UK."

To access the questionnaire, visit: www.cogent-ssc.com/general/news/QuestPolymer1.doc

For more information on the project, contact independent consultant and plastics and polymer specialist John McFarlane on e: johnmcfarlane1@ntlworld.com, mobile: 07551 627091; or Cogent's Consultant Skills Development Director for the plastics and polymer industry, Tony Pringle, on: e: tony.pringle@cogent-ssc.com, t: 01227 762851.



New standards for sustainable development

A PROJECT to develop nationally recognised workplace standards for sustainable business development has been launched by Cogent, aimed at helping employers to identify and benchmark the skills and knowledge their staff need in areas such as energy efficiency and waste reduction and elimination.

The move comes as the Government places increasing emphasis on making industry more sustainable and eco-friendly, and the new standards will be used to inform and underpin training and qualifications across all science-based industries in the Cogent footprint.

The new occupational standards will clearly define what every worker should know and practice in order for businesses to achieve the benefits to be gained from long-term sustainability.

A knock on benefit will be to improve the science-based sectors' environmental and ethical credentials, and their efficiency and competitiveness.



New manufacturing diploma set to give students a boost

AS students choose their options for September, they are being urged to consider a new qualification that will give them a head start into careers in the manufacturing sector.

The Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design (MPD) is now available to students aged 14 -19 in schools and colleges in for the first time, following a pilot phase across 12 areas of England.

One of 14 new Diplomas for 14-19s, developed to sit alongside GCSEs and A-Levels, the Diploma in MPD is designed to give young people a solid foundation either for pursuing a career in industry or undertaking further qualifications.

It is delivered through partnerships between local schools, colleges and employers, in a format that allows students to divide their time between the classroom, college, and the workplace.

The qualification, in which Cogent has played a major development role, is aimed at preparing young people for the world of work by giving them a fully-rounded education, based on a range of practical and intellectual skills, developed in a work-related context.

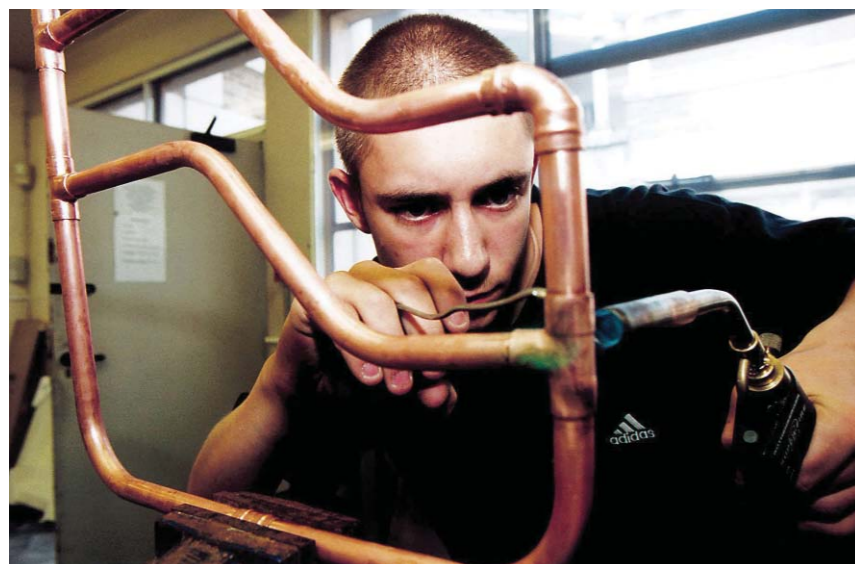
Employers can get involved in delivery by mentoring students, setting projects, hosting site visits and offering work placements. Some of the names already involved in the Diploma in MPD include Cadbury, Siemens, Boeing, Nestlé, Bombardier Transportation and the Polestar Group.

Martin Bevan, Chairman of the Diploma in MPD steering group, and UK Business Manager for SMC Training, a division of global pneumatic component giant SMC International, said: "Students taking the Diploma will have the opportunity to sample working life within the sector and build a range of skills and knowledge valued by employers.

"Employers working with schools and colleges will have the chance to nurture and shape future workers. The Diploma offers a link between industry and education and it is hoped that working with employers will inspire young people to aim for a career in the sector."

For more information visit: www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk.

Skills oracle forecasts the future



THE results of a unique project to gather primary labour market intelligence from across the science-based industries are about to be released to employers.

The Skills Oracle project is designed to create a barometer for skills, training and economy tracking across the science-based sectors.

The first Skills Oracle online survey went out to 167 employers in autumn last year, and the individuals on the panel are now about to receive their customised reports. These will benchmark the information they provided, against both their sector and the Cogent footprint as a whole.

The results will highlight data on:

- Industry Demographics
- Recruitment and Staff Turnover
- Training Budgets
- Skills Gaps and Shortages
- Future Skills Needs
- Skills and the Economy

Cogent plan to release a report soon, detailing the overall findings.

Julie Plumbley, Cogent Research Advisor, explains: "Skills Oracle will form an incredibly valuable source of very specific, science-based industries data, which has previously not been gathered at such a detailed level.

"Upskilling is a key priority in our industries, and Skills Oracle will give an indication of 'stock and flow' of skills across the board, and help us to identify where the gaps are and where employers need support.

"Those employers who took part will be able to see how they score against the industries' skills footprint, and where their own skills issues are, which in turn will help them to plan for the future."

"It has only been possible to gather this very detailed data with the help of employers, and we hope to encourage more of them to come forward and get involved, so that the breadth of data grows with each successive year."

The next phase of the project starts in July 2010, with the survey itself going live in September. This will build on the information gathered in 2009 to enable the development of trend analysis.

Anyone interested in being involved in the next phase of the project should email: julie.plumbley@kogent-ssc.com for more information.

Working Higher - laying a foundation for skills

A £2.9m project piloting bespoke courses for the science based industries is being supported by Cogent.

The Working Higher project will see the development and roll-out of modular, work-based foundation degrees for the chemical, polymer, petroleum, bioscience and nuclear industries.

The new foundation degrees will allow for a step-on, step-off modular approach to learning, allowing learners to easily access knowledge and skills which can lead to an academic qualification. The aim is to incorporate practical work based learning with academic study.

A collaboration between Cogent, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Physical Sciences Centre, led by the University of Hull, the project fund includes a 50% subsidy of the cost of the provision to the sector.

Cogent's role is to stimulate demand and lead on employer engagement across these strategic industries. Six industry champions have been recruited for each part of the sector, to ensure a robust employer-led programme that delivers what industry needs.

Cogent has identified higher level skills gaps across the sector in areas such as project management and innovation, as well as in higher level technical skills.

The Working Higher programme aims to fill that skills gap across these vital industries. It will support people already working in sciences to develop their talents and reduce shortages of expertise in a sector where many highly experience individuals are moving closer to retirement.

The courses will be developed and delivered by the consortium partners for specific industries:

University Partners

The universities chosen to deliver Working Higher, under the leadership of the University of Hull, are:

- University of Hull (Petrochemicals)
- Manchester Metropolitan University (Chemicals)
- University of Kent (Bioscience)
- London Metropolitan University (Polymers)
- University of Central Lancashire (Nuclear)

The Working Higher project is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) under their Employer Engagement Fund.

For further information on the Working Higher contact Pauline Maden at Cogent on 01925 515 214 or email: pauline.maden@kogent-ssc.com.

Technically higher - a skills strategy for success

EMPLOYERS are being urged to step up and get involved with making sure the 4,000 higher level recruits coming into the process industries each year are 'work ready' and then supported through work-related learning and skills development.

The Technically Higher initiative is Cogent's strategy for promoting high level skills across the science based industries. With recent Government policy papers such as Skills for Growth and Higher Ambitions underlining the importance of employer engagement with higher education, and the direction of funding for strategic workforce development at technical levels, Technically Higher forms an essential element in the success of the industries.

Technically Higher brings clarity to the complementary roles of Cogent and the Academy, directing how the annual action plans will sit within the UK skills policy framework, and engaging key stakeholders in order to maximize impact.

Around 45% of process industries graduates enter from the STEM subject streams, but many of them still lack the employability skills – and in some cases the technical skills - that employers need.

In order to identify and remove these obstacles, Cogent's Higher Education team is working with stakeholders including universities, professional institutes, funding councils, RDAs, the national higher education STEM programme and other bodies.

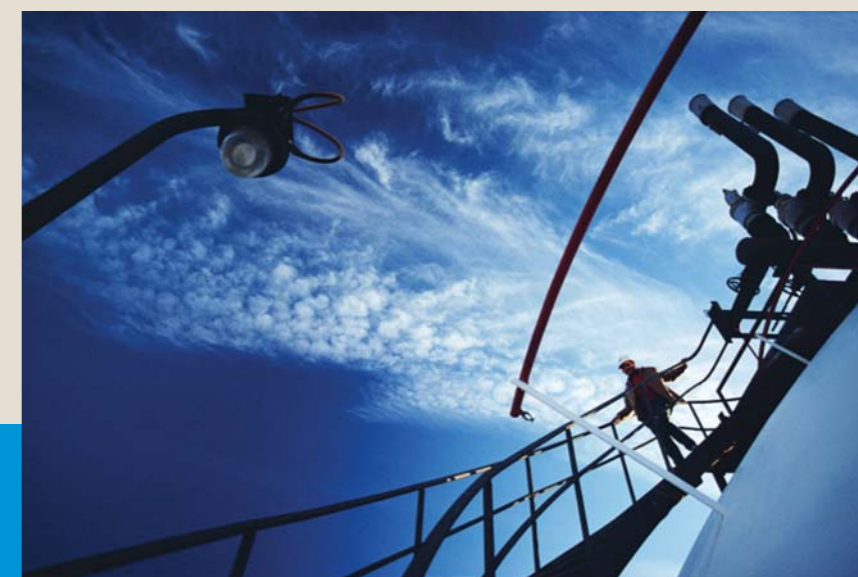
The strategy is to create a roadmap to higher level skills, which starts by addressing the problems at source, re-shaping the underlying curriculum development to incorporate more specialist knowledge, and adding in project-based work placements. Once the graduate is in the workplace, continuous professional development and short courses should also form part of their work-related learning and skills development.

Technically Higher promotes best practice initiatives such as Liverpool John Moores University's 'World of Work' programme. This is being held up as an example of how to add employability skills to graduates' degree knowledge, boost their career prospects and make sure employers get people who are 'work ready'.

One of the provisions within Technically Higher is Working Higher - the recently created £2.9m specialist Foundation Degrees framework - aimed at upskilling those already in the technical workforce, and is funded by HEFCE and BIS.

The appointment of industry champions for each sector will help to promote the widespread use of these new and very specific industry-based qualifications, and ensure our future employees are equipped with the knowledge for industry.

If you are interested in helping to shape the future of higher education talent streams into the process industries, contact Caroline Sudworth, Cogent's HE Development Manager, on email: caroline.sudworth@kogent-ssc.com.



Preparing the process industries for the future



One of the biggest challenges facing the process industries today is addressing skills and training needs. The National Skills Academy Process Industries is having a huge impact on equipping the UK process industries for the global stage. Working with MyKnowledgeMap, the National Skills Academy has embraced modern technological skills solutions to create a highly skilled workforce ready to face modern challenges.

Capability Matrix offers a solution for organisations looking to address the skills and training problems of today. Now used by prestigious blue chip clients ranging from Barclays to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), it offers a fully customisable capability management system which allows you to unlock the hidden potential of your organisation. The user-friendly interface lets you easily track, manage and develop the capabilities of all of your staff. It's not just about what you are now—it's about what you're capable of becoming.

What do your people know? What should they know? What could they learn to help them progress? Your employees identify gaps in their knowledge through easy-to-use, online skills gap assessments. The assessments can be taken at a pace suited to the employee and revisited when necessary. At the end of their assessment, they'll find useful training opportunities to help them gain the skills they need to reach their full potential.

Capability Matrix offers full 360° assessment so that employees can invite colleagues, peers, subordinates and managers to review their skills. This means you're not just getting your employee's perspective on their skills, but a balanced view based on as many people's opinions as you like. These assessments help organisations define areas for development with pinpoint accuracy and can also reveal talents and skills which may have gone undiscovered.

Powerful reports let you see at a glance how the talent in your organisation is growing and keep on top of the strengths and weaknesses of your staff. An accurate knowledge of your organisation's key skills gaps and critical training needs will help you make more effective decisions.

New ways to manage skills in your industry

As the leading technology provider for the Academy, MyKnowledgeMap has provided a range of modern skill solutions for the process industries. Working with Cogent, MyKnowledgeMap has produced a Passport and Upskilling Platform that records personal learning and development for the National Skills Academy Process Industries and National Skills Academy for Nuclear.

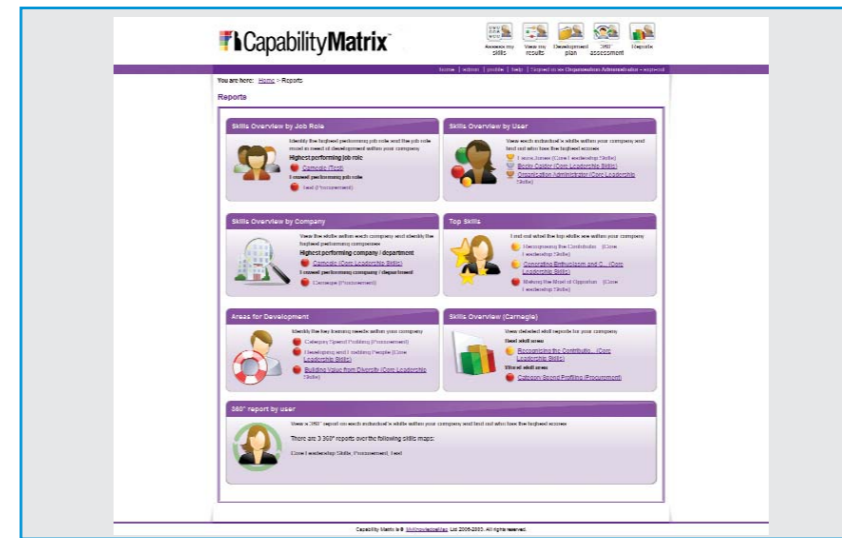
The new web-based platform allows both sectors to easily manage competency frameworks and map qualifications, professional development paths, and continuing professional development activities to these frameworks.

Employers and employees receive a Skills Passport – a user-friendly, online record of their accredited and non accredited training and qualifications. This gives both the employee and their organisation a full skills profile. The Skills Passport allows employers to work towards the Cogent SSC Industry Gold Standard for key job roles in the organisation. It identifies skills gaps against the Standard and directs the user to an Academy Accredited Training Provider and potential training programme.

Our work

MyKnowledgeMap's innovative developments in learning products and systems continue to excite the industry today. It is this innovation combined with our commitment to high quality design and customer service that has resulted in MyKnowledgeMap leading on many large scale national projects in both public and private sectors for prestigious clients such as NHS, 3M, and CIPD.

Our main areas of activity centres around skill and knowledge assessment, advanced learning content tools and web-based portfolio systems, but we're always looking to get involved in new and exciting areas. Our technical capabilities encompass the latest web 2.0 and mobile technologies in addition to highly secure large scale systems. We are dedicated to helping you, whether it's with new ideas, cutting edge development, or integrating the systems that you already have.



Generate powerful reports for moment-of-need talent management



See at a glance how talent is growing in your organisation

The modern approach

MyKnowledgeMap also designed the new National Skills Academy Process Industries website. The new design is based on MyKnowledgeMap's bespoke academy infrastructure and is tailored specifically to the needs of the process industries. It offers an intuitive and user-friendly portal which Academy employees can easily update to reflect the changing requirements of their organisation.

The new structure includes a new conference website, RSS feeds, animated PDF brochures, and the flexibility to incorporate a range of Web 2.0 functionality, such as YouTube videos. A new members' area features a range of free benefits for both employers and employees working in process industries such as access to relevant industry resources, discussion forums, and a free Skills Passport.

Contact us:

We're always open to new ideas. If you would like to work with us, please get in touch using the details below.

Tel: 01904 659465

Email: info@myknowledgemap.com



CapabilityMatrix™

Going Mobile

Mobile learning is one of the most exciting recent developments in assessment technologies. Our system for managing online and offline assessments using mobile devices helped the Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings (ALPS) project win the 2009 Innovation Award. The system is used at five Yorkshire universities to support health and social care students on work-based practice. MyKnowledgeMap is also developing a similar system to introduce mobile learning into all FE colleges in the UK.

The interest in our mobile technology solution continues to grow. It is now being used across a range of sectors to support management skills development and continuing professional development.



In the regions - North East

NEPIC boost for apprenticeships

DESPITE the current economic woes it is important that the North East region does not lose sight of the long term need for skilled staff to take their businesses forward as the good times return. If one casts one's mind back a couple of years we were experiencing a severe shortage of high quality staff at many levels within businesses and were struggling to understand where we were going to find staff to operate, maintain and refurbish plants.

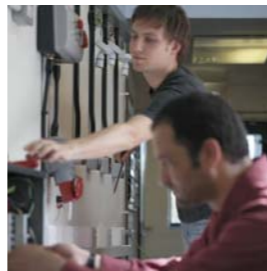
Clearly the world is a different place now - or is it? The recession has led to redundancies in some companies and recruitment freezes in many others, and there have been several site closures, particularly in the Tees Valley. But the effect of this is merely to mask the underlying skills shortages, and will not provide long term closure of the skills difficulties.

From NEPIC's discussions with companies before the recession, the average age of technicians across the region was well over 50; a situation that continues to worsen as time goes by. It is therefore imperative that we don't neglect to train and develop younger staff in preparedness for the upturn.

So what is NEPIC doing to help?

We are supporting a number of training providers in their recruitment to and development of apprentices to help meet the demands of the industry, including finding sites that may be prepared to take apprentices onto site and allow them to develop their skills in a working environment.

In the Tees Valley during January 2010, the public sector investment under the Tees Valley Investment Programme has identified around £2.3m for the support of apprentices whose future is under threat through redundancy. This will provide apprentices with support to complete their current stage of their training, provide incentives for employers to take apprentices into their workplace, help apprentices develop their skills to enhance their employability, and even support them if they wish to pursue an educational route. A delivery agent for this support will soon be in place and this two year programme can begin to develop support for young people in this difficult time.



In other parts of the region, the National Apprenticeship Service (www.apprenticeships.org.uk) can provide help and advice for young people wishing to find an apprenticeship in the sector, and local training providers and further education Colleges, many of which can be found in the Education and Training section of the NEPIC Directory, can also provide guidance and support.

Why should I choose an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship provides practical training in the skills needed for employment within the sector, whilst also providing education to obtain the qualifications that underpin the practical skills. Typically an apprentice would spend the first two years in a training centre, or in a local college, learning the basic skills that will be essential for the future employment. This usually leads to a Level 2 qualification in the chosen subject. An Advanced Apprenticeship then takes the learner to Level 3, and involves more work based experience, whilst adding to the qualifications that underpin this.

In many cases, companies will sponsor learners who show the aptitude, and who want to learn, to pursue further study and in many cases will lead to a degree in a relevant subject.

Altogether, this means that learners who choose an apprenticeship will gain real work skills, earning a wage while they do it, and they can continue to study if they wish to in order to get higher skills that will provide the springboard to a higher level career.

For more information on apprenticeships please email ian.findley@nepic.co.uk

Skills foundation secured



THE Skills Funding Agency has announced that it will invest in the 'Skills Lab', a new facility which will be integrated with Durham's Building Schools for the Future programme on the Durham Framwellgate Campus site. The campus will provide a unique combination of primary and secondary phase education, special needs provision, further education and adult learning with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

A partnership between the Academy, Framwellgate School Durham and Newcastle College will create the 'Skills Lab', a £2m learning space dedicated to developing the skills required by the process industry. Cogent Gold Standard and accredited courses will be delivered in this new facility in 2013.

Joan Sjøvoll, Head Teacher of Framwellgate School Durham, said: "Our vision at Framwellgate is to create a world class centre for science education and training through a coherent, collaborative approach. The 'Skills Lab' will create exciting and relevant opportunities to benefit learners regionally and nationally."

Kevin Thrower, the Academy's Regional Skills Manager, said: "This is very significant for young people and adults in the region who wish to pursue careers in science industries. It is a real achievement for the bidding partners. We have come a long way together on this project, it has been a great team effort and I have personally enjoyed every moment of competing for this funding. For many years to come, children and adults can come to Framwellgate and develop the skills which are used every day across the science related process industries."

Rob Storey, Business Development Manager, School of Applied Science & Technology at Newcastle College, said: "The Skills Lab is another example of excellent partnership building by Newcastle College, which will positively benefit a wide range of STEM related stakeholders across the region for many years to come."

This is only the beginning of the partnership. Work will continue to grow and develop this innovative sector, creating a stronger and more sustainable regional and national economy. Framwellgate School Durham has a long track record of innovation in its science specialism and its vision and commitment to the STEM agenda is what ultimately led to this fantastic development opportunity.

Phil Jones, Academy CEO, added: "This is excellent news for the region, for STEM education, for the Academy's vision and of course the process industries in the North East of England."

"Widening opportunities for young people in science, technology, engineering and maths will give many more young people a real chance to develop their skills, whilst opening up employment opportunities in a wide range of careers."

Polymer industry targeted

A **MARKETING** campaign targeting the North East polymer industry was rolled out during the first quarter of 2010 and is now being targeted at polymer employers up and down the country. This has resulted in a number of appointments with polymer companies that had previously not been engaged with the Academy. As a result, Polymer Compounders Limited has become the first company targeted under this campaign to join the Academy's Business Partnership scheme.

Around 10,500 people are employed within the region's polymer sector, and the companies involved manufacture a wide variety of products, ranging from parts used in car assembly through to polymers used as prosthetics within the body.

Kevin Thrower, Regional Skills Manager, said: "The UK is one of the top five plastics processing countries in the EU, but maintaining that lead will be highly dependent on continuously reviewing and revitalising the skills platform within the sector."

"The response we have had from North East polymer employers highlights the importance that they place on skills, and also that many of them lack the expertise to create strong development programmes allied to their business aims."

"Our job is to get the message across loud and clear that we can help them access a whole raft of support aimed at helping them upskill their existing workforce, and encourage young talent into the sector."

The next few months will see the Academy team arrange follow up appointments to outline the benefits of the Gold Standard journey, and related products and services.



Partnership approach proves no skills desert

THE North East region has seen its first Business Partner service sign up, and is now working with Arizona Chemicals, based in Birtley, to help the company develop a long term development plan for the business and its 22 direct and indirect staff.

The company has enlisted the Academy's help to implement Business Improvement Techniques with the aim of increasing productivity and competitiveness, while reducing waste.

Kevin Thrower, the Academy's Regional Skills Manager, is working alongside Arizona's management team to identify training and development needs and then match them with the right providers to deliver the plan.

Kevin said: "Arizona is a thriving business with a clear view of its future, and recognises that having the right skills development framework in place is key to its success. Business Partner status gives the company access to top flight support through our network of expert consultants and providers, and we are delighted to be working with the team."

Arizona's UK Plant Manager David Schofield added: "Not having the benefit of an in-house HR function we saw the Business Partner service as the perfect way to out-source our needs to an expert in our industry."

"We are regularly approached by individual providers on a piecemeal basis, but we are looking for a more structured approach to our skills development. We simply don't have the time or inclination to filter out bad providers or work out what we want and where the funding might be, and that's where the Academy will save us a lot of costly time and effort."

"When we restructured in 2008, it brought home that our people had years of experience but not the qualifications to match, so the plan will include working towards using the Gold Standard to create a qualifications and accreditation framework, particularly for our plant operators."

"Working with the Academy we will be able to create a flexible, best practice framework, supported by quality providers to take the business forward."

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In the regions - Yorkshire and the Humber

Skills pledge proves commitment

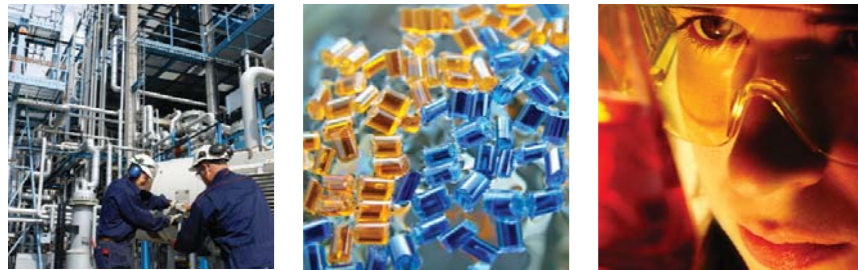
AS part of its employer engagement work the Academy is also promoting the national Skills Pledge, and around 30 Yorkshire and the Humber-based companies have now signed up to demonstrate their commitment to workforce skills.

The Skills Pledge is simply a voluntary, public commitment made by an organisation to work towards realising the potential of all their employees by developing basic skills and gaining relevant, valuable qualifications, where appropriate.

There is no obligation on companies to immediately embark on a training programme. Indeed most companies are already meeting the Skills Pledge commitment.

One of the key benefits of the Skills Pledge is that employers can get priority access and support from a Business Link adviser – at absolutely no cost to their business.

Advisers work in partnership with the Academy, with the latter taking a lead on skills and the Business Link adviser providing expertise on funding availability. Visits are often carried out jointly, to make best use of time and ensure a joined up approach.



Yorkshire provider network boost

TWO of Yorkshire's best-known training providers have joined the ranks of the Academy's accredited provider network.

Rotherham-based Develop-U, and Yorkshire Productivity, a division of Ilkley-based Virtual College, have both gained accredited provider status for delivering excellence in Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) and training.

Both companies bring a wealth of experience and a solid track record of success in delivering BIT programmes that allow their clients to generate real and measurable returns on their training investment.

BIT is often seen as being of greater relevance to component manufacturing companies but both Develop-U and Virtual College are working with a range of process industry clients who are reporting massive savings as a result of the training interventions.

Iain Taylor, the Academy's Regional Skills Manager for Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "Academy accreditation of their products and services offers real business opportunities for our providers. Not only does it give employers the confidence of knowing they are using quality provision, highly experienced in our industry, the providers' Academy status also generates new business through our business referral process.

"Many of the companies we visit are looking for help with training. We work alongside them to review their training needs, and then circulate our accredited providers with the information. Those providers who fit the bill and are interested in pitching for the business come back to us to start the process.

"On a national basis we have put some £1.3m worth of business in the direction of our providers over the last few months. This has generated a surge of training providers wanting to reap the benefits of becoming Academy accredited."

More information on our latest accredited providers can be found at: www.process.nscademy.co.uk

Flexible alternative to IEE classroom training

EMPLOYERS seeking cost-effective and flexible training to meet 17th Edition IEE wiring regulations are set to benefit from the launch of an Academy supported e-learning programme, developed by Virtual College.

With traditional delivery of 17th Edition training involving a three-day workshop followed by a fourth day at an assessment centre, many employers are struggling to find the time to release staff for a four-day block of study.

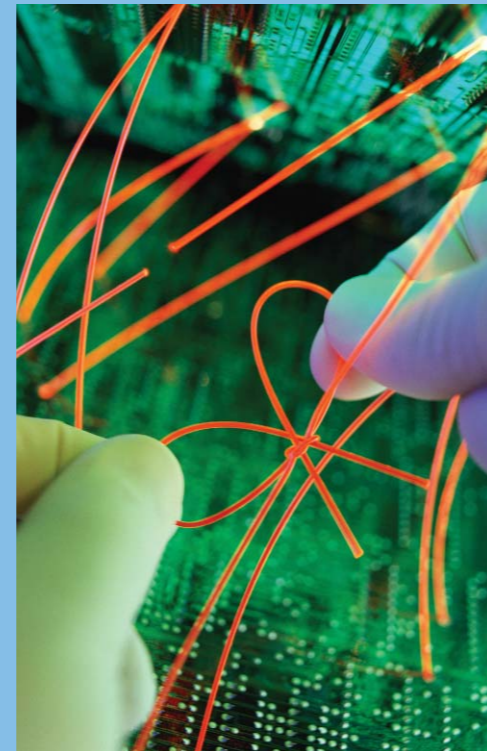
Academy-accredited provider Virtual College has worked with NICEIC to deliver the same comprehensive package in an online format, delivered via the internet and available 24/7, so students can fit study in around other commitments, and without having to travel.

User-friendly software, bite-sized interactive modules and revision practice tests are supported with backup telephone and email support.

To receive a 5% discount on the RRP of £399 plus VAT, simply quote 'NSAPI' at the time of booking.

The 17th Edition Standard Manual is also available to buy, at £52.50 plus VAT.

For more information visit: www.virtual-college.co.uk, email: info@virtual-college.co.uk, or telephone 01943 605 976.



Skills facility wins £6m boost

CAPACITY at the Humber's innovative training facility will be doubled, following Yorkshire Forward's agreement to pump more than £1.5 million into expanding the Centre for Assessment of Technical Competence Humber (CATCH) in North East Lincolnshire.

CATCH is an independent facility specialising in providing an authentic site environment for training provision to the processing, manufacturing and energy industries, together with their associated contractor support services.

Operated by an independent organisation, reporting to a board of industrialists and part of Humber Chemical Focus (HCF), it represents a unique partnership between funders, the local authority, training providers and industry.

The project, which is worth a total of £6.67million, will double the capacity of the centre and see the construction of a light trades workshop and an extension to the process plant. It will extend the current facilities to accommodate the increasing demand for skilled labour, as well as anticipating the need for trained staff in the growing bio-fuels and renewable energy sectors, which are expected to become key employers in the Humber region.

Sarah Pearson, Yorkshire Forward's Assistant Director for the Humber, said: "The increased capacity at CATCH is needed to meet existing demand from the chemicals and related industries for apprenticeship places, and workforce development activity to support the continued competitiveness of the process industries in the Humber.

"The expansion also provides growth space to proactively develop CATCH as the hub for future training activity relating to the renewable energy industries, which are identified regionally as a growth sector and are expected to provide a key future source of jobs in the Humber."

In addition to the £1.58 million contribution from Yorkshire Forward, the Academy backed a successful bid to the region's ERDF programme, securing a further £2.54m investment. The project is also attracting £0.75m private sector support, and £1.8m from North East Lincolnshire Council, making a total project value of £6.67m.

Iain Taylor, the Academy's Regional Skills Manager, said: "CATCH is a prime example of how a partnership between employers, training providers, industry representative bodies and the public sector can result in the continuous development of a key regional asset in the battle to transform the region's skills platform, and the career prospects for the people who live here."

And Clive Rounce, General Manager of CATCH, said: "We are delighted that this considerable funding package had been approved. It is real vote of confidence and I would like to thank all of our partners for helping to make CATCH the success that it is. We look forward to continuing our work together, serving the needs of industry."



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Skills push for East of England

GOOD progress is being made in establishing an Academy presence to work alongside employers across the East of England.

A series of briefing meetings have been held with a wide range of businesses in the biotechnology, polymer and chemicals industries, and with the providers who support these sectors.

One of the first companies to sign up to the Academy's Business Partner service is facilities management specialist EMCOR. The arrangement will see EMCOR benefit from expert organisational development support, through the partnership framework that starts from around £100 per month, depending on the size and complexity of the organisation.

Norwich-based BayerCrop Science is another convert to the Business Partner service, as it consolidates its Norwich operation and bids to become a Gold Standard company.

Regional Skills Manager Iain Taylor, who is spearheading activity in the East of England, said: "In terms of output the East of England is one of the key process industry regions outside of the areas where we are already fully established.

"The region is particularly strong in biotechnology, which is of real interest to us as an Academy, as we aim to expand our activities in those areas of emerging technology which are so dependent on skills and innovation.

"The level of interest from businesses has demonstrated that employers are looking for expert guidance and access to services that will help improve business performance and strengthen the skills programmes they need to have in place to succeed."

Meetings are also being held with various colleges and universities around the region, with the aim of establishing a provider network and encouraging applications for Academy accreditation.

Bodies such as the East of England Development Agency and other key stakeholder organisations are also showing their support for the Academy's activities.

For an informal chat about getting involved and shaping the future of the process industries, please contact Iain Taylor on email: i.taylor@process.nscademy.co.uk.



In the regions - East and West Midlands

New approach to employee engagement takes flight

A UNIQUE training approach that uses birds of prey to demonstrate how to encourage employee engagement and discourage dependency is taking off for Northampton-based provider Festo Training & Consulting.

The company's 'Don't just feed me chicken' workshop takes place at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Hampshire, where a range of birds are used by trainers to highlight the effectiveness of various management and coaching techniques.

A recent Gallup survey showed that 24% of employees are disengaged from their employer – the second highest rate in the world. And 75% of workers don't believe that their opinions count in the workplace.

To be at their most effective and to ensure they work efficiently, organisations need their work force to be fully engaged. This requires employees who are enabled and empowered to handle their work with minimum external or management support, rather than being dependent on their supervisor's input at every turn.

The one day course demonstrates the different techniques used to train birds of prey to perform in shows, compared to those used to prepare them for a return to the wild.

It also examines areas such as the difference between training and coaching; the significance of recognising performance; how rewarding performance is actually something more than praising people; and considers the impact of personality and behavior style in coaching.

The birds are very much part of the day, and delegates get to observe and handle a range of raptors.

Neil Wilkinson, the Academy's Skills Manager for the East and West Midlands, said: "Festo is currently part-way through the process of becoming an Academy-accredited provider, and we were very impressed with their innovative approach to learning."

"This particular workshop is a unique and thought-provoking method of getting across information in a way that really stays with the delegates."

"Managers need to be able to lead and encourage their teams, without making them overly dependent. Using parallels with nature, the workshop gets to grips with the links between leadership and engagement, and shows

how coaching principles can be used to avoid employee dependency and encourage initiative.

"Observing and handling the birds brings home how important it is to use the right techniques and methods, and even the impact that environmental conditions have on an individual."

"The 'Don't just feed me chicken' workshop is a great example of using 'out of the box' thinking to create content that gives delegates an insight into behavior, and their impact as coaches and mentors."

Festo Training & Consulting run Don't Just Feed Me Chicken throughout the summer months for clients wishing to learn more about employee engagement. www.festo-didactic.co.uk

The next course will be run on the 23rd June 2010 and will cost only £250, including breakfast, lunch and refreshments throughout the day.



Images courtesy of The Hawk Conservancy Trust

Exhibition sparks big interest

THE IPE Exhibition which took place at G&A Moulding Technology in April saw a numbers of visitors to the Academy stand, with questions ranging from 'Is there funding available for training?' to 'Can you help with this particular skills issue?'

The Academy stand was manned by Regional Skills Managers Iain Taylor and Neil Wilkinson, together with Lisa Maw, Employer Engagement Officer.

The Academy team was able to advise the stand visitors that in all cases the answers or solutions could be achieved through the Academy's Business Partnership service.

The event also included workshops on upskilling through industry 'fit for purpose' training and industrial support from machine manufacturers.

For more information or to book a meeting with a Regional Skills Manager to discuss how the Academy's Business Partner service could benefit your organisation, please call Lisa Maw on 01325 740 900.

Nurturing new leaders

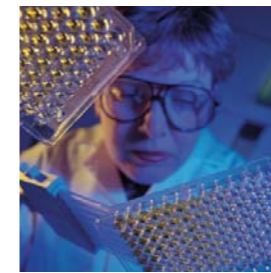
ONE of the outcomes of the East Midlands Regional Skills board was the identification of the need for support in identifying leadership traits in non leaders. Employer experiences of promoting the best operator into a supervisory role has at times resulted in problems due to the lack of management and leadership ability. Not only do they lose a good operator, but they also see increased staff problems through having an unskilled manager in place.

A new Management Tool Kit, funded by the Academy and developed by accredited provider Focus Management for Business, is designed to use a simple process of identifying management skills in those not employed as managers.

It can be used in both the recruitment and promotion process, although companies are recommended to take all staff through the Management Tool Kit as part of their appraisal process.

The tool kit is currently being trialled by polymer specialists Linecross UK, following which it will be available through the Academy's website.

The Regional Skills Board is also finalising its other main project, the Student Apprenticeship scheme, and discussing potential projects for the coming year. These include working with schools and supporting graduate recruitment within the industry.



New skills partners sign up

EMPLOYERS in the Midlands are coming forward to sign up to the Academy's new Business Partner service, with two of the region's well established chemicals specialists signing up to a range of development support services.

At Daventry-based Endeavour Speciality Chemicals our experts have agreed several immediate actions over the coming months. These include support in sourcing preferred provision for a range of needs, advising on funding availability and development of a training action plan.

In addition to the core Business Partnership offering, a series of other key actions have been agreed and the Academy acted promptly to develop a modular Leadership and Management training programme; identifying a suitable PAC Analyst with appropriate background and a suitable BIT provider with funding available to deliver BIT projects.

At Bentley Creative Chemicals in Kidderminster the Academy team is working on sourcing a suitable provider for Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, for engineers to support delivery of masterclasses in the use of creative chemicals.

Talks are now taking place to support the company's on line learning materials and short courses, soon to be accredited by the Academy, and Bentley Chemicals may eventually become an Industry Learning Centre.

To view the current courses visit: www.curetime.co.uk

How to contact your East and West Midlands Regional Skills Manager:

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Endorsements success

The Polymer Innovation Training Centre (PITC) and G & A Moulding Technology are two of the latest providers to embark on the journey to gain Academy endorsement for their work.

PITC, which is part of Wolverhampton College and based at the Telford Campus, launched its new polymer training facility in May and is on the road to becoming an Academy-accredited centre, with the aim of ultimately becoming a Polymer Centre of Excellence.

Peterborough-based G&A Moulding Technology has already achieved Academy Centre status - the first tier of accreditation - and is now working towards Centre of Excellence status. The company offers support, training and advisory services to the injection moulding industry. Its ethos is to analyse and apply training interventions to seek productivity improvements through more effective use of available production hours, better quality parts and cycle time reduction.

Neil Wilkinson, Skills Manager for the East and West Midlands, said: "Achieving a good balance between public and private sector training and development organisations strengthens our aim to bring together as wide a range as possible of providers to suit the diverse needs of employers across the process sector."

National polymer provider network

WORK continues on developing the National Polymer Provider Network, which was developed and is managed in partnership between Cogent and the Academy.

Originally established to address and remedy the shortage of providers delivering apprenticeships in the West Midlands, Cogent and the Academy have held several meetings with employers, providers and other stakeholders to identify what provision there is in place, identify the areas where there are gaps, and look at what is holding back the delivery of apprenticeships in the region.

For more information about how to get involved, contact Regional Skills Manager Neil Wilkinson on 07894 483 697 or email: n.wilkinson@process.nsacademy.co.uk.

In the regions - North West

Employers urged to step up to help graduates

EMPLOYERS in the North West's £10.2 billion chemicals sector are being urged to get behind an innovative scheme that could see the popular sandwich courses resurrected, helping them solve workforce skills shortages without adding to their headcount, and giving chemistry undergraduates a career kickstart.

The Academy is working with industrial chemist David Swale of Rawdon Chemical Services, and Manchester Metropolitan University to create a scheme to allow BSc (Hons) chemistry undergraduates to take up a year's placement with an employer as part of their course. This is designed to add in the crucial 'real-world' experience that may help graduates also convert their degree into an M.Chem degree, a step towards professional qualification with the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Roger Langford, the Academy's Regional Skills Manager, explains more about the proposed scheme: "Despite employers needing to attract more graduates, recent research showed that only one in ten focuses their job search on the North West.

"Employers have told us that they would like to see a return to the days of the sandwich courses, which were a perfect combination of academic achievement plus experience in a real workplace, working on real projects.

"How we see the scheme working is that employers would offer a one-year placement to a student, funded by a nominal contribution from the business. Part of that payment would go to the University to cover tuition fees, with the remainder going to the student as a bursary.

"Because the company does not actually employ the person there is no addition to the headcount and no graduate-level salary to find, but employers will still benefit from a high calibre, extra member of the team who has the skills to make a contribution to the business.

"If we can get this scheme off the ground we could see the cream of the region's talent given a start with local employers, and make sure we don't lose the brightest and best to other industries."

Former teacher David Swale said: "Graduate unemployment is at its highest for a decade. Including an extra year in the workplace will add an essential practical element to a graduate's qualifications, improving their employability and giving them a leg up onto the career ladder.

"The scheme would be an ideal bridge between employers who want to encourage young people into the industry, but currently lack the funds to create new staff positions, and the pool of graduates looking for work experience that will hopefully lead to permanent jobs.

"Our university partner has pledged to find the student talent, if we can get enough employers to commit to the scheme."

Professor Herman Potgeiter, Head of Chemistry and Materials and Manchester Metropolitan University, said: "Currently there are very few placement offers for chemistry students, so we need to raise awareness among employers of the benefits of placements to both themselves and the students."

Anyone who is interested can contact Roger Langford on email: r.langford@process.nacademy.co.uk for more details.



Academy helps lean assessors learn

TRAINING provider and 'lean' specialist Yorkshire Productivity turned to the Academy when it wanted to help its experienced BIT NVQ assessors learn more about the unique needs of process industries employers.

While Yorkshire Productivity's six BIT NVQ assessors are highly knowledgeable about the qualification in a general manufacturing context, as part of the company's aim to become an Academy accredited provider it wanted to enhance their skills and give them a more in-depth understanding of how the principles can be applied to process industries issues.

The Academy's Regional Skills Manager Roger Langford arranged for the assessors to visit Academy member Innospec, in Ellesmere Port, to spend time with its in-house trainers and look at how the company's skills programmes are developed and delivered.

Roger said: "This project is a prime example of our partnership approach. Linking employers and providers by facilitating projects like this one adds real value, by further enhancing their ability, increasing competitiveness and allowing us to support the employer base effectively."

Yorkshire Productivity specialises in applying lean techniques to eliminate waste and improve productivity, and holds the matrix standard – the nationally recognised quality mark for organisations that provide support to individuals to make learning and work more accessible. Its cost effective, often highly subsidised training, diagnostics and implementation support have resulted in long term partnerships with manufacturing customers in a range of market sectors across the UK.

Liam Prendergast, the company's Business Development Manager, said: "The purpose of the site visit was for our BIT Assessors to familiarise themselves with common lean activities conducted at 'best practice' operations such as Innospec, and gain a full understanding of which modules in the lean toolkit can further assist both the learner and the business.

"The fact-finding mission that the Academy set up for us was invaluable in terms of giving our assessors an insight into specific process industries issues, and how lean principles can help them."

One of the assessors who visited Innospec added: "This was a very useful session. The process industry focus on Health and Safety means there are big opportunities for approved prior achievement of that knowledge. Increased focus on measuring and thus improving overall equipment effectiveness would give lots of scope for improvements across quality, cost, delivery milestones. Plus the optional units of problem solving, total productive maintenance, standard operating procedure and lead time analysis would lend themselves very easily to solving waste elimination issues for process employers."



Chemical awards recognise talent

AS part of their joint remit to encourage upskilling and recognise talent across the science-based industries, the Academy and Cogent were co-sponsors of the Investor in Training category of this year's annual Chemicals Northwest Awards.



Created to honour innovation and young talent in the industry as well as recognising best practice and sustainability, the awards are open to all North West chemical companies (or sites operating independently within the North West) and those that provide services to the sector.

The judging panel is made up of the CEO of Chemicals Northwest, the CEO of the Chemical Industries Association, the CEO of Chemistry Innovation Knowledge Transfer Network, industrialists and representatives of the awards sponsors.

Cogent and the Academy sponsored the 'Investor in Training Award' which this year was won by Total Petrochemicals Ltd. This Award recognised a significant commitment to the training of current and future employees through a strategic approach to workforce development. Shortlisted companies included; SGS UK Ltd, Total Petrochemicals Ltd, William Blythe Limited.

The Academy's Regional Skills Manager, Roger Langford, said: "What is really impressive this year is the high quality of submissions. All of the entries demonstrate a very real commitment to addressing skills issues, making the decision of the judging panel an extremely difficult one."

How to contact your North West Regional Skills Manager:

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In the regions - South East and London

Unionlearn strengthens skills

AS a report from Leeds University shows that 55% of employers report that staff have improved their qualifications because of union-led projects, the four Sector Skills Councils which make up the Manufacturing Skills Alliance (MSA) - Cogent, Improve Ltd, Semta and Proskills – are each running an event across the UK with Union Learning representatives in a bid to better understand the role of SSCs and unions.

The Proskills event in March gathered together a number of representatives from the MSA and various unions, and feedback from the majority of attendees was very positive.

Carl Leonard, Regional Lead Midlands, Proskills UK, said: “The event provided the opportunity to work more closely with union members and gave a better understanding of skills development activities being delivered in the workplace.”

Sarah Butler, Health and Safety representative at Unite, said: “The event was interesting. I came to find out about learning in the workplace, and I have come away with a bit more knowledge than I had before.”

Jayne Edwards, Cogent’s Project Manager for Sector Compact, added: “The event has been a very good networking opportunity and the benefits of engaging the unions are clearer for SSCs in the MSA.”

The Leeds University report polled 415 employers, which together employ one million people, split evenly between private and public sector. It looked at the work and impact of 23,000 Union Learning Reps, delivering 30,000 Skills for Life courses and reaching 250,000 learners per year.

Some of the key points in the report included:

- Barriers: securing time off for staff to take part in learning and reps to carry out their functions.
- Funding: Whilst four in 10 employers state that learning activities would continue without external funding, more than a quarter (28%) disagreed.
- No training: A third of employers still do not provide training for their workers.
- 30% of employers said organisational performance had improved.

The full report - ‘Assessing the impact of union learning and the Union Learning Fund: union and employer perspectives’ - can be read in full at: <http://lubswww2.leeds.ac.uk/CERIC/index.php?id=373>

Skills pledge for Flambeau Europlast Ltd

RAMSGATE-based plastics specialist Flambeau Europlast Ltd is one of several employers to sign up to the Skills Pledge over the last few months, demonstrating their public commitment to investing in the skills of their people.

Originally established in 1975, and now part of American company Flambeau® Inc., Flambeau Europlast provides a wide range of services, including manufacturing at its Kent site, and exports its products across Europe.

Regional Skills Manager Lucy Milton is in discussions with senior management about how the Academy can help the company develop its skills framework, potentially with the help of Academy-accredited specialist training providers.

New forum for South East operations managers

THE first South East forum dedicated to the polymer production disciplines took place in May, bringing together production, operations, training and HR managers, and focussing on continuing professional development.

The Academy’s Regional Skills Manager, Lucy Milton, who is chairing the events, said: “The idea of setting up a production/operations forum got very positive feedback from employers. The idea is that it will enable a high level of networking and business development activities across the group.

“The forum’s agenda is set around quality, cost and delivery efficiencies and learning from best practice.

“As well as encouraging the sharing of ideas and best practice, the forum will also play a key part in delivering new tools and techniques that will benefit everyone involved.”

To take part in the engaging forum discussions, and collaborate with other managers from your industry please contact Lucy Milton.

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PAC pays off for South East companies

SOUTH East employer Data Plastics Ltd is the latest company to sign up to the Academy’s Productivity and Competitiveness (PAC) Analysis programme, the skills initiative to improve access to quality BIT training for manufacturing employers.

Managing Director Carl Reeve gives us an insight into PAC’s impact within the company:

Q: What were the key drivers for calling in the Academy?

A: The main reason was that we were finding it increasingly difficult to employ skilled staff. We found ourselves forced to take on unskilled staff and then devote considerable resources to training them up.

Q: What were you looking to achieve in the way of outcomes from PAC?

A: Our primary aim was to see business efficiencies, and a good return on our investment.

Q: How did you find the process worked for you?

A: The initial work, for instance the PAC analysis, was good, but getting BIT up and running has been a little more

complex. Although we may have lost a little momentum our production team is keen to get stuck in to the high impact project that was identified as part of the process.

Q: Did the process throw up any unexpected results?

A: It has thrown up some surprising figures, as well as highlighting some areas we were already aware of. We’ve discovered that the true cost of down time is fairly dramatic, and we’ve also identified some immediate savings.

Q: What are the next steps?

A: Thanks to being able to spot where the wasted time was, we have re-organised how our setters go about setting machines. In the last six weeks we have increased the number of tool changes, and therefore machine occupancy.

HAMPSHIRE-based Camberley Rubber Mouldings Ltd is another company going through the Academy’s PAC process, in search of the many productivity and competitiveness benefits to be gained.

Manufacturing Manager Colin Dunn outlines the progress made so far:

Q. What were the key drivers for calling in the Academy?

We had been through the BIT training but did not know how best to use those skills in the business to get full realisation of the benefits of the BIT tools. We felt that the Academy’s PAC process would show us that path.

Q. What were you looking to achieve in the way of outcomes from PAC?

I think the main thing was a structural map to maintain the BIT philosophy throughout the company, and overcome the existing culture barriers. The key factor was that it would give us a directional map which we could implement and maintain, and be able to show the benefits of PAC/BIT and promote it within the organisation.

Q. What was the timescale and scope of the agreed project?

We didn’t really have an agreed project timescale as we did it in reverse to some extent, having already gone through BIT training. The timings were good.

Q. How did you find the process – was it straightforward?

Yes, relatively straightforward once we understood the requirements. A lot of the barriers were in the terminology used.

Q. Did the project throw up any unexpected results?

Nothing that surprised us really. But one of the good things was that the results that came out didn’t highlight any new issues that we weren’t already aware of. In fact it was rewarding that we were focused on the right elements and in control.

Q. What are the next steps?

We are trying to move forward and continue to promote the philosophy within the business. We particularly want to promote BIT skills, and to identify projects and any new skills needed within the workforce.

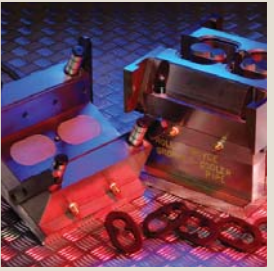
Speaking about the Academy’s PAC process, Regional Skills Manager Lucy Milton said: “Data Plastics Ltd and Camberley Rubber are just two of the companies in the region to recognise the benefits that PAC can bring.

“An analysis by a licensed Continuous Improvement specialist - clearly focused on quality, cost and delivery measures - will almost certainly reduce costs and increase productivity.

“Studies have shown that the small outlay in terms of investment will bring on average a ten-fold return. Nationally, 29 companies have been through the programme, identifying potential savings of £12.8 million.

“We are urging employers to find out more about how PAC can help them become a leaner organisation. They have nothing to lose and potentially a considerable amount to gain.”

For more details on the PAC programme, contact Lucy Milton on 07590 486 278, or email: l.milton@process.nscademy.co.uk.



Business partnership pays off for AEV

THE UK's largest electrical varnish and resin manufacturer is encouraging 'bottom up innovation' after signing up to a 'pay as you go' organisational development service from the industry's national skills body.

Sixth generation family business AEV, which was established in 1849 in Birkenhead, is putting 60% of its factory floor workforce through subsidised Gold Standard training in a bid to improve productivity, quality, efficiency and cost throughout the business.

The company employs 28 staff and is the UK's largest manufacturer of electrical varnishes and resins, exporting to 60 countries and with subsidiaries in Spain and Malaysia.

Registered to ISO BS EN ISO 9001:2008, AEV runs continuous regulatory compliance training, and also carries out ad hoc technical and generic skills training, the majority of which is internal and non-accredited.

Managing Director Jonathan Kemp explains the company's skills history: "Traditionally, we have always maintained a training plan of sorts, but without the benefit of a clear development framework.

"We got involved with the National Skills Academy Process Industries via a Manufacturing Advisory Service event, where we met Regional Skills Manager Roger Langford. The Academy's new Business Partner service is ideal for our needs, and we immediately saw the value of committing to it.

"Basically we are benefitting from the equivalent of a sector-specific organisational development specialist for around £100 per month. For a relatively small company like ourselves, without those in-house skills, it's an absolute no brainer when you look at the return on investment."

One of the most immediate opportunities the Academy spotted was a way of cascading the results of a MAS lean manufacturing programme which its production manager had attended.

Roger Langford explains: "This was an excellent programme, and AEV had done some work on disseminating the results, however there was a big opportunity to really maximise on that investment by integrating that new knowledge right through the shop floor.

"As a follow on to that, we are now helping AEV take six of its ten factory floor staff through national Gold Standard Chemical Process Operator NVQ Level Two, and three supervisors through Business Improvement Techniques NVQ Level Three.

"This will give individual recognition, to a national standard, and encourage everyone's buy in to lean manufacturing. The ultimate result will be improved productivity, quality, efficiency and cost control throughout the business.

"Training is not a 'nice to have' option, it's a real necessity if a business is to be successful in the long term. It must be dealt with in an intelligent way, it's no good putting the cart before the horse.

"A robust competency development programme allied to business aims almost allows the actual detail to fall out of it, by generating individual training plans that are constantly refreshed and linked back to the needs of the business. However, few businesses have access to effective organisational development expertise and our new Business Partnership offering gives them the same cost effective access to relevant resource much as they might do with sub-contracting pay roll or plant services now."

Jonathan is clear about where he sees the Business Partner service adding value: "Process improvements will come not from some edict issued from the top, but from the people who actually do the job, and that in turn will come from their self-confidence.

"In a long-standing business it takes time and thought to change the legacy mindset.

"We want to encourage a culture where our people feel they can say: 'I know we've always done process X this way, but I've had an idea about how we can do it more efficiently.' That's when we will see real, bottom up innovation and improvement."

The current NVQ L2 and L3 programme is expected to take between six to 12 months, and Roger has identified a subsidy to offset the cost. This will fund up to 70 hours per person, spent out of the factory on training.

"We encourage employers to view skills development like ripples in a pond. It's about freeing up all those pockets of skill and knowledge, and disseminating it to best effect," said Roger.

"Training and skills development is about what the businesses get, not about what the programmes do.

"And it must be tangible. We expect to see BIT programmes, for example, to deliver a 5:1 return on investment and with the right sector-specific providers as partners, that's very achievable."

Jonathan added: "We're not aiming to build a huge business, but what we do want to see is see increased margin out of current volumes, which means having the right skills in place.

"We also want to make sure we are getting best value for money from our training budget and we spend it in the right places, with the right providers. Finding our way through the plethora of training-related systems and funding streams is time consuming and frustrating.

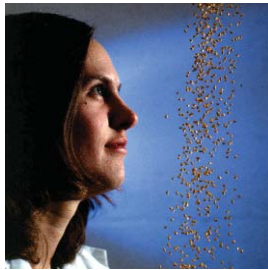
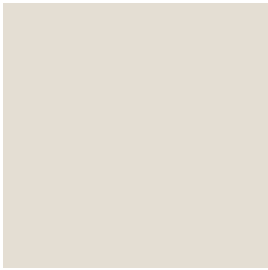
"That's another area where we will really benefit from some help and some very clear signposting from the Academy – and all at a very nominal outlay."



Dates for your diary

2010

Jun	2-3rd June The ERBI Conference 2010 - Cambridge UK www.erbiconference.co.uk	16th June The Organisation Workshop - Runcorn www.chemicalsnorth-west.org.uk/events	16th June Science and Innovation 2010 - QEII Conference Centre www.govnet.co.uk/science	24th June Chemical Industry Awards 2010 - Liverpool www.ciaawards.co.uk
Jun	29th June NEPIC Safety Seminar - Riverside Stadium, Middlesbrough www.nepic.co.uk			
Aug	9th August NEPIC Tall Ships - Hartlepool www.nepic.co.uk			
Sept	9th September NEPIC Golf Day – Northumberland www.nepic.co.uk	16-18th September Skills Cymru - Millennium Stadium, Cardiff www.skillscymru.co.uk	22nd September CIA Business Outlook Conference - London www.ciaevents@cia.org.uk	29-30th September Skills Yorkshire and the Humber - Sheffield Arena www.skillsyh.co.uk
Oct	6th October Occupied Buildings Conference – Leeds www.ycf.org.uk	7-9th October Skills London - ExCel London www.skillslondon2010.co.uk	12th October Plastics Recycling - London www.bpf.co.uk	
Nov	18th November Chemical Industries Association Awards Dinner - Grosvenor House, London www.ciaannualdinner.co.uk			



To find out more about the National Skills Academy Process Industries visit our website at: www.process.nsacademy.co.uk or email: enquiries@process.nsacademy.co.uk