

# APPRENTICESHIP SPECIAL



North East Process Academy launch: l-r Jon Nixon, Lester Tawanda, Rt Hon John Denham, Niamh Smith, Richard Harrington

## Securing the skilled employees of the future

Apprentices represent the process industries' skilled employees of the future. They will support the continued transition from a resource-intensive to a knowledge-intensive industry which is dependent upon highly skilled, technology literate operators who can operate flexibly in teams.

At the moment the number of skilled young people entering the Cogent industries is not meeting anticipated demand.

Ian Lockhart, Cogent's Apprenticeship Manager said, "our challenge is to ensure the programmes on offer are attractive, innovative, engaging and equip young people with the skills

and underpinning knowledge that these high-value industries require to meet the challenges of the global economy."

Apprentices continue to be a major strand of Cogent's work and are taking place against a backdrop of major changes in the system (see inside).

Building on the examples of existing best practice Cogent has developed a new sectoral Apprenticeship Framework. This reflects the skills needs of the operating companies across the Cogent science-using sector, but also has the flexibility to meet the specific requirements of the individual industries.

Working closely with providers has never been more important and earlier this year

Cogent held its first ever Training Providers' information day at Haydock Park Racecourse. Ian said, "this event was a great success and we'll be looking to hold another event next year – we'll also be holding information days for Scotland and Northern Ireland."

Importantly we've also been mapping across a number of Cogent's qualifications with the Professional Institutions to enable Advanced Apprentices undertaking these qualifications to gain membership at Engineering Technician level.

We've designed this special insert to bring you up-to-date information on all of this and on what's happening across the Cogent science-using sector.

## About apprenticeships

**Apprenticeships are intended to provide an integrated programme of learning leading to the acquisition and application of the skills, knowledge and understanding required by employers.**

The completion of an Apprenticeship Framework shows employers that the holder has achieved competence in the skills covered by the Apprenticeship, has demonstrated the knowledge required and has attained the level of transferable skills required by all Apprenticeships.

The content of each Apprenticeship is designed by Sector Skills Councils and employers in accordance with the following elements:

### England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- a competence based element
- a knowledge based element
- transferable, or 'key', skills
- employment rights and responsibilities.

### Scotland

- a competence based element
- core skills
- additional mandatory outcomes (if required)

The employer receives subsidised training thus offsetting the cost of employing a young person who is relatively unproductive in the early stages of their training. Importantly, the young person earns a wage while they are learning.



# World-Class Apprenticeships: what it all means

Here we summarise the key points in the Government's Strategy for the Future of Apprenticeships in England.

## Strengthening Apprenticeships

- National Completion Certificates will be issued to Apprentices, with a consistent national identity and carrying the appropriate SSC branding.
- The Government will increase the quality of the experience, with all Apprenticeships being robustly quality assured.
- The split in Apprenticeships provision between level 2 and level 3 will be adjusted to suit the increased employer demand for Advanced Apprenticeships.
- Protecting the Apprenticeship brand: so-called "Programme-led Apprenticeships" will be reformed to strictly specify the acceptable minimum level of tie-in with employers.

## A New Delivery System

- The Government will introduce a separately branded, customer-facing National Apprenticeship Service (NAS).
- This will also create a dedicated field force to support employers and Apprentices.

## Boosting Employer Supply

- Employers will be allowed to submit their own frameworks for funding, by drawing from SSC qualifications.
- Apprenticeship training that is not Government funded will still be classed as an Apprenticeship.
- Direct incentive payments will be introduced to employers to encourage growth in Apprenticeship places.
- There will be support for more employer 'ownership' of Apprenticeships, SSCs will be encouraged to set up Group Training Associations.

- A new matching service, to match employers with apprentices will be launched.
- Clear progression routes to HE will be set out, via mapping of Apprenticeships Frameworks to the UCAS tariff points system.

## Addressing Inequality

- There will be increased funding for under represented learners.
- Super-mentors will be appointed.
- Pilots will be used to encourage more learners from the sector.
- There will be investigation by the Low Pay Commission on Apprentices wages.

## NOS: the building blocks

**National Occupational Standards (NOS) are standards of competence in the workplace, which are developed by employers and practitioners, under the supervision of Cogent. They underpin training at every level: from apprenticeships through to upskilling of employees.**

The central feature of S/NVQs is the NOS on which they are based. They are the "building blocks" and cover all the main aspects of an occupation, including best practice; the ability to adapt to future requirements and the knowledge which underpins competent performance.

A number of important National Occupational Standards (NOS) projects are underway within Cogent: NOS for offshore drilling surveying and positioning is being developed; a research project investigating the skills needed to deliver high quality analysis in the lab is underway and NOS for the transportation of Hazardous Materials will be available on the NOS directory soon.

National Occupational Standards can be found at [www.ukstandards.org](http://www.ukstandards.org).

## Ensuring blueprint

**Cogent set about reviewing its Apprenticeship Frameworks after consultation with stakeholders and to meet the requirement to make its Frameworks "Blueprint" compliant. The "Blueprint" is used by those involved in the design of Apprenticeships. As Apprenticeships evolve to meet employers' needs, it is subject to periodic revision.**

Cogent has now incorporated the following aspects to its Apprenticeship Frameworks:

# Some key developments in the Cogent Sector...

## The East of England Energy

**Apprenticeship...** is making progress and a course outline has now been developed. Cogent is working with EU Skills, the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) and Semta on the Programme-led Apprenticeship. This will comprise a common core (process or craft technician), after which young people can choose a Specialist Pathway. The format means that the young people will be work-ready, undertaking their NVQ level 3 with a company – for example at a nuclear site, power station or refinery.

A pilot cohort of 10 to 15 young people will start in January next year. If successful the award will be submitted to the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) and become a regulated qualification eligible for mainstream funding. In the future the programme would be open to young and more mature students alike.

## Oxford and Cherwell Valley College

**(OCVC)...** has announced the introduction of an exciting new industry-specific Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship. This new and unique Apprenticeship will provide employers an opportunity to train and develop their employees in the workplace, from school leavers to graduate level. It will also be equally suitable for bridging the skills gap of those already working in the industry, and offered to entrants of all ages.

Polymer careers, l-r, Lucas Pocock, James Young and Shaun Clarke



David Brooks, Manager of Materials Science at Crown Packaging UK Plc based in Wantage has welcomed the new programme, "this will enable us to provide our staff with formal qualifications and a structured training programme tailored to our company needs which in turn will improve our prospects of recruiting to fill our skills gaps."

## Polymer employers from the East Midlands...

... have expanded their apprenticeship training programmes in the past year. They have supplemented their direct recruitment of apprentices by providing sponsorships to full time engineering students at local Further Education Colleges. Piloted initially last year with Grantham College, the sponsorships offer the students a programme of workplace inductions, work experience, a guarantee of an interview for an apprenticeship and a bursary of £500. A total of 14 young people in the past year are now

employed or sponsored by polymer employers in the region.

Stuart Fry, Managing Director of Linecross said: "the Forum employers agreed the need to develop highly qualified, competent technicians for the future. The partnership involving local employers and FE colleges is addressing this. We're very pleased with the results so far... showing that the industry can attract well qualified and motivated young people to a career in polymers."

**Signmaking in Scotland...** Cogent is in discussions with employers and the British Sign and Graphics Association to develop community apprenticeships and a training centre for sign making training in Scotland.

**Cogent is also investigating...** the possibility of developing NVQ level 4 Apprenticeships that will include Foundation Degrees.

## compliant frameworks

### Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in Process Technology

We've added Technical Certificates to support the underpinning knowledge of the competence components of this Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship.

### Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in Polymer Processing or Signmaking

Cogent and PAA\WQ-SET are developing new forms of assessment to enable the underpinning knowledge element of the NVQ to be assessed separately. Once the assessment formula has been completed, this apprenticeship will be submitted to the Apprenticeship Approvals group. In the meantime the old Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship will remain in operation.

### Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship in Specialised Process Operations (Nuclear Option)

This new Apprenticeship/Foundation Modern Apprenticeship has three pathways: Decommissioning, Process and Health Physics. With the Health Physics pathway there is no Technical Certificate to support Cogent and City and Guilds are developing a procedure to assess the underpinning knowledge element of the NVQ separately.

The Apprenticeships in Process Technology and Specialised Process Technology (Nuclear Options) are now available.

The Polymer Processing and Signmaking Framework will be available later in the year, and the current Framework remains in use for now.



# Signing up to on-the-job success

**Lydia Bickley shares her experience of undertaking an apprenticeship in signmaking at Allen Signs, a successful Lincoln-based Sign-making company.**

Twenty year old Lydia joined Allen Signs in September 2006, having gained an impressive 4 A levels and 10 GCSEs at school. Lydia Bickley takes up the story: "I'm very pleased that I chose a vocational option rather than going to University. I enjoy the non-routine parts of my job and the fact that with signmaking you work on all elements from design to installation."

Allen Signs currently employs 11 people and has a turnover of £450,000. The company is committed to investing in the skills development of young people. Lydia's Apprenticeship programme was developed in conjunction with Walsall College and encompassed an NVQ in Signmaking and selected Key Skills.

The Apprenticeship programme combines high standards of vocational competence with generic skills such as communications and customer service.

As part of the programme, the apprentice joins their employer at an early stage, helping

them to acquire new skills and to get involved in teamwork.

Lydia said: "Allen Signs has supported me exceptionally well throughout my Apprenticeship and helping me gain my vocational qualifications. I really enjoy working for a small family business."

David Allen, Managing Director of is delighted with Lydia's progress: "Lydia is the fourth Apprentice at Allen Signs to successfully complete her Apprenticeship programme. We're pleased we have helped her into a successful career with us."

## ChemSkills in Yorkshire and Humber

**The Humber ChemSkills group has developed a brand new Process Technician Apprenticeship to be delivered at the CATCH training centre and employer sites, ready for the September 2009 intake of young people.**

A working group comprising BP Chemicals, Cristal Global, Huntsman Tioxide, Nippon Gohsei and Total LOR has decided the curriculum content and is managing the engagement with Hull College, chosen to work with the ChemSkills group and which is getting the new qualification accredited.

The launch will take place on the 1 December when recruitment of suitable candidates will get underway. So far five employers have committed to sponsor 12-15 candidates in total, and it is envisaged that a further 5-8 candidates will be able to join this first cohort.

This new programme is fully supported by Cogent and the Learning & Skills Council. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch with Sabine Holmes at Humber Chemical Focus Ltd: 01469 552842 or 07789 533093 or [sabine.holmes@humberchemical.co.uk](mailto:sabine.holmes@humberchemical.co.uk)



## Scotland's Modern Apprenticeships Review

Cogent has also been reviewing its Modern Apprenticeship in Scotland. The Alliance for Scotland has now introduced SVQ level 2 through to SVQ level 5 Modern Apprenticeships. Cogent's currently discussing with employers their requirements in relation to these new levels of Modern Apprenticeships.

Discussions are now underway around:

- Modern Apprenticeship in Radiation Protection
- Modern Apprenticeship in Jetty Operations

These reviewed and new Modern Apprenticeships will be available later this year.