

LEADING EMPLOYERS IN A WORLD-CLASS WORKFORCE

PARLIAMENTARY E-BRIEFING, MARCH 2008

The key objectives of the National Skills Academy Process Industries, the fifth Academy to launch as part of the Government's drive to upskill the UK workforce, were announced at the official launch at Westminster in January. It was the culmination of many months of discussion and hard work, built on a culture of co-operation and a willingness to create new standards of training and education that will underpin a fully sustainable future for the industry.

Owned by Cogent Sector Skills Council (Cogent SSC), the Skills Academy is an employer-led centre of excellence launched in response to skills shortages in the UK Process Industries. This £72bn industry directly employs 420,000 people and includes the key sectors of chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing as well as polymer processing, sitting at the forefront of technical innovation.

Working alongside employers, training and education organisations, the Skills Academy is designed to identify and address skills gaps standing in the way of developing a world-class Process Industries workforce. The launch event audience heard Interim Chief Executive Craig Crowther announce key deliverables, including:

- Deploying standards – establishing the 'Gold Standard' as a benchmark for skills and competence.
- Developing training provision – improving capacity and capability, and assuring quality to achieve the Gold Standard.
- Directing funding – obtaining central and regional funding for skills development, and influencing and simplifying the funding regime.
- Supporting employers – improving access to good practice in skills development.
- Delivery - to deliver more than 1000 learners in the first year.

Keynote speakers at the launch event included David Lammy, MP, Minister for Skills, Chris Horton of LINPAC Plastics, Chair of the National Skills Academy Process Industries and top UK entrepreneur and Dragon's Den Judge, Duncan Bannatyne.

With a central office based on Teesside and regional spokes throughout the UK, the eleven-strong team is already working on a series of activities including:

- The ASET Accreditation of Prior Learning scheme, which will see employers step up to be assessed against the Gold Standard.
- Production of a comprehensive Good Practice guide, containing case studies and other useful material.
- A service leavers programme being developed in partnership with the Armed Forces, which will help convert skills into those suitable for a move into a process industry career, and fill identified skills gaps.
- A national training recording system, enabling companies and individuals to log qualifications and experience, view benchmarks and see where they rank against the Gold Standard.
- Signing up Further Education colleges, Universities and other seats of learning to be accredited Academy Centres of Excellence across the UK.
- Establishing a series of bursaries to be awarded to apprentices around the UK.

With four Regional Skills Managers already in place throughout the North East, North West, Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber, the Skills Academy is currently recruiting further Managers in advance of a series of regional launch events to ensure its message reaches the entire UK Process industries sector.

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