

June
2009

Skills Committee Newsletter



Welcome to the Scottish Funding Council's Skills Committee Newsletter, issue 3/09

The Skills Committee advises the Council on matters relating to skills. Further information on the remit, membership and work of the Skills Committee, can be found [on the Skills Committee page of the SFC website](#).

Our newsletter reports on skills policy issues in Scotland and the major items considered by the Committee at its last meeting on **21 May 2009**. It is issued by email and posted on our website.

Committee business

Skills Committee to advise both SFC and SDS

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Skills development Scotland (SDS) are finalising arrangements which will see the Skills Committee advise both organisations.

Both SFC and SDS recognise that they have complementary roles in Scotland's skills system and it is important that they work closely together. Using the Skills Committee to advise both boards will help ensure that the work of the two bodies is more closely aligned. The Chair of the Committee, Dr Janet Lowe, is a member of the boards of both bodies. SFC recently consulted Scotland's Colleges and Universities Scotland on

the membership of the new Committee and its main priorities. SFC and SDS hope to establish the new Committee with its new membership by August.

Economic downturn: progress with PACE

The Committee considered the work being conducted by the SDS-led Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) service. To assist with the PACE service, SFC made £7 million available to colleges over two years to help people made redundant or facing redundancy. The Committee felt more should be done to improve the engagement of colleges with PACE partnerships work and to raise awareness and the profile of PACE. The executive will disseminate examples of good practice in relation to PACE and enhanced guidance to college on the criteria for funding.

Workforce development in Scotland: a systemic approach

SFC and SDS are developing a joint approach to workforce development, which will form a major area of work for the new joint Skills Committee that will advise both organisations.

The Committee agreed that SDS's prime responsibility is creating demand among employers while SFC will focus on working with learning providers to deliver what is needed. Both organisations will work together to optimise resources and make them accessible to the end user and will work to ensure there is more and better buy-in from employers. The complexities of the current system for employers, both real and perceived, must be addressed to remove barriers and make what is on offer in Scotland clearer.

Sector Skills Councils relicensing

The Committee noted progress on the SSC relicensing process, which is being carried out by the National Audit Office on behalf of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). To date, the NAO has published the reports of the first tranche of SSCs, Gogent, people 1st, SEMTA and Skillset have been relicensed, but not the Financial Services SSC, which will be subject to an organisational review. The Committee will consider the implications from this process for Scotland at a later meeting when all 25 reports are published.

Other skills news

Skills Utilisation programme of projects launched

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Fiona Hyslop, visited West Lothian College on Friday, 5 June to launch the Skills Utilisation programme of projects which were selected by SFC in partnership with SDS. The projects will receive a total of £1.8 million of funding from the Scottish Funding Council to develop and conduct action research on new approaches to the effective use of skills in Scotland.

The twelve projects are an important set of strategic investments by the Funding Council. The full press release for the launch and brief information on each of the projects can be seen on the [Scottish Government website](#). For further information on this initiative, and on any of the individual projects, please contact Alan Hughes at: Ahughes@sfc.ac.uk

New National Training Award

Employers are being encouraged to invest in training to help survive the recession in a new campaign co-ordinated by the UKCES. In an open letter the UK's skills ministers launched the new 'Now is the Time' National Training Award developed by UK Skills.

The letter urges employers not to cut training to save costs but instead to invest in training to build workforce talent and gain competitive advantage for when recovery comes. It also

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emphasises that now is the time for organisations to take advantage of help available from government.

The new 'Now is the Time' category of the 2009 National Training Awards encourages employers, who have invested in skills during the recession, to share their experiences and get public recognition for their commitment to training and re-skilling.

Chris Humphries, CEO of UKCES said: "Cutting training budgets can be seen as a quick way to save money during a recession, but now is precisely the time to keep investing in the skills and talents of people. The skills of an organisation's workforce are its best guarantee of future prosperity and the best investment a business can make in these challenging times."

For more information please visit the [National Training Awards website](#):

talentmap, a new online tool

Employers can now get more comprehensive, practical help and information to boost the skills of their workforce than ever before, thanks to the launch of a new online tool, talentmap.

talentmap is designed to help UK employers plan more effectively by providing a single view of the entire education, talent and skills landscape in clear, simple language.

An associated online tool helps employers and their advisers to navigate the maze of education, employment and skills programmes across the UK to find the publicly

funded help and support they need.

It has been developed with employers for employers, supported by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and a broad coalition of partners including business organisations and governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

talentmap uses state-of-the-art technology to interrogate and search around 100 education, employment and skills-related sites and ensure the most relevant information is returned to the user. This is just the beginning as the web tool will continue to be developed with more sites being added into the search facility. talentmap also allows employers to develop and share their own plans internally with colleagues, and externally with suppliers.

[talentmap](#) can be accessed from 7 July 2009.



Ambition 2020

UKCES launched the *Ambition 2020: World Class Skills and Jobs for the UK* report in response to employers' concerns about the lack of employability skills among candidates for recruitment.

The report draws on the expertise and practice of over 200 organisations and

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boils their experiences down to core principles for helping learners develop employability skills - principles that every college and university can make their own.

The report and other supporting documents can be seen on the [UKCES website](#).

Strengthening the supply chain through partnership

OPITO – The Oil & Gas Academy is the industry’s focal point for skills, learning and workforce development which proactively leads on a number of valuable skills and recruitment projects on behalf of the industry.

It identifies workforce development and skills issues affecting the sector, and aims to enhance collaboration between industry, government and education.

The Academy is arranging an industry workshop with SFC and SDS over the summer period to address the importance of improved use of skills within the workplace; more work experience for graduates through formalised graduate placement programmes; and to assess the impact of the expanding renewables industry on skills needs for the future.

Its MA scheme has recruited over 1000 new apprentices into the industry in 8 years with one of the best retention rates in the country.

The Academy’s new transformation training scheme will attract skilled workers into the industry who have gained knowledge and experience in

key engineering disciplines in other industry sectors – a potential new career for those recently made redundant – and the Academy is currently working with some colleges and Government funding agencies to formalise this training.

For more information please contact Gillian Black at: Gillian.black@opito.com

Pilot for part-time post-grads

Ten Scottish universities are to receive a share of around £250,000 to enable 150 part-time postgraduate students to study fee free in the next academic year - the first time that such support has been made available to part-time postgraduates.

Nineteen courses - six new and 13 existing - will have places funded through the scheme at UHI Millennium, Robert Gordon, Aberdeen, Abertay, Heriot-Watt, Edinburgh Napier, Strathclyde, West of Scotland and at Dundee and Stirling through a joint project.

These institutions were successful in their bids to have places funded through the Scottish Government's new pilot scheme, which aims to enable students to undertake courses during the downturn which support the Government's economic priority sectors: the creative industries, energy, financial and business services, food and drink, life sciences and tourism and the public sector priority areas of health and education.

As well as supporting students and these key sectors, the pilot will help the



Scottish Government examine the feasibility of extending such support to a wider range of part-time postgraduates and courses.

The Skills Committee looks forward to the development of these pilots and will continue to contribute to this area of work.

Additional funding for colleges

On 4th June the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Fiona Hyslop, announced an additional £28.1 million of funding for colleges to enable them to meet more of the increased demand from people, particularly young people, caused by the economic downturn. The Council will allocate this money strategically to the areas where there is evidence of greatest need and potential impact.

The Committee and the Council want to reduce the chance of this economic downturn creating a “lost generation” of young people, who miss out on jobs or training as has been seen in previous recessions.

Further information on how this additional money will be allocated will be published in due course.

Commonwealth Games Legacy

On the 23 July 2014 the XXth Commonwealth Games will open in Glasgow. Over 8,000 athletes and officials from 71 Commonwealth countries will take part in 17 sports. It is an opportunity to put Scotland at the centre of a major international sporting event.

To make the most of the opportunity of hosting the Games the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that the games should bring wider benefits and a lasting legacy to Glasgow and to Scotland. The legacy aspires to, for example, get more people active and enjoying the health benefits that sport brings, to develop our business capability, to raise Scotland’s profile internationally and to regenerate the East End of Glasgow.

In February 2008, the Scottish Government launched a national consultation asking people across the length and breadth of Scotland what they would like the benefits and legacy to be in Scotland from the Games. An interim Games Legacy Plan was produced, by the Government, shaped by this consultation. The interim plan can be seen on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Skills Utilisation e-bulletin

The third edition of the Scottish Governments Skills Utilisation e-bulletin is now available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

The bulletin updates stakeholders on the progress made to improve skills utilisation in Scotland.

RESG progress

The Renewable Energy Skills Group (RESG) that was set up in December 2008 met for the third time on 19 May 2009. Chaired by Committee and Council member, Paul McKelvie, it includes a wide range of representatives from the HE and FE sectors, industry and government. In

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May 2009, the group considered the evidence on provision and demand for skills in this area as part of a report led by EU-skills.

The group is currently working on issues relating to non-advanced provision for maintenance contracts, especially for onshore wind farms, and provision for micro-renewable skills. SummitSkills is currently working with SQA to ensure that appropriate up-skilling and re-skilling is possible through the availability of suitable bolt-on qualifications.

The Group welcomed the Funding Council's call for proposals from universities for knowledge exchange proposals for Strategic Priority Investments in Research and Innovation Translation (SPIRIT). Renewable energy is one of the priority sectors from which proposals are being sought. The universities would need to collaborate with industry on the proposals, and the projects themselves should involve two or three universities working together on a significant project that clearly demonstrates how and where it will make an impact. See circular letter [SFC/19/2009](#) on the [SFC website](#).

The next meeting of RESG will take place in late summer 2009. For further information about RESG, please contact Nicola Lynch at: nlynch@sfc.ac.uk.

Forthcoming Skills Committee meetings

27 August 2009
26 November 2009
11 February 2010
20 May 2010

Contact and further information

We welcome contributions from colleges, universities and employers to our newsletter.

Please contact Andrew Youngson, Clerk to the Skills Committee, Strategic Development, Tel: 0131 313 6574, email: ayoungson@sfc.ac.uk or Dr. André Reibig, Secretary to the Skills Committee, Strategic Development, Tel: 0131 313 6695, email: areibig@sfc.ac.uk to make a contribution, request further information, or add your name to the distribution list.

The next edition of the newsletter will be published in September 2009.

