



SECTOR SKILLS AGREEMENTS

The **POWER**
to get the
workforce
we need

skills
FOR BUSINESS

This leaflet tells you more about how Sector Skills Agreements work and what has been achieved so far.

To order further copies, contact SSDA on 01709 765 473 or email info@ssda.org.uk

Tough times ahead?

In 2005, China's economy overtook the UK's to become the second largest in the world – after the USA. The UK is now ranked 6th.

And across the UK, employers often find that their current workforces – and even new recruits – lack the know-how and skills that they need to compete internationally.

So tell me something new!

There is a new instrument designed to help us meet these challenging times. It is designed to ensure we are equipped for the realities of the modern working environment. It is wielded by the Skills for Business network.

The Skills for Business network

Skills for Business is an employer-led network consisting of 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and the Sector Skills Development Agency. Through its unrivalled labour market intelligence and insights from employers in all sectors of the UK economy, the network identifies change needed in policy and practice relating to education and skills development. With the influence granted by licences from the governments of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and with private and public funding, this independent network engages with the education and training supply-side, such as universities, colleges, funders and qualifications bodies, to increase productivity at all levels in the workforce.

Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs)

SSAs analyse each sector's needs and provision, and then create deals with the supply side to fill skills gaps and shortages. SSAs make sure the needs of employers form the starting point for future education and training. They are designed to ensure education meets the needs of UK business and public services.

What do Sector Skills Agreements do?

Sector Skills Agreements fundamentally alter the way skills are demanded, delivered and developed throughout the UK.

SSAs will enable government, employers, employee representatives and organisations who plan, fund and support education and training to work together to tackle the provision of skills around a common set of objectives.

By mapping out exactly what skills employers need their workforce to have, and how these skills will be supplied, SSAs will ensure the UK has the skilled workforce it needs to increase productivity and profitability, now and in the future.

They are facilitated by the network of employer-led Sector Skills Councils (more details at the back of this leaflet), but are signed up to by employers and everyone who supplies, funds and plans education and training. They are designed to shape the necessary supply of training and education at all levels to close skills gaps and shortages.

Third parties may be involved in introducing and supporting training programmes, but each SSA will lay out resource requirements and the types and levels of courses required.

Skills Gaps and Shortages – which is more important?

Skills shortages = when you can't recruit someone with the skills you are looking for. In England in 2004/05, there were 135,000 such vacancies identified.

Skills gaps = when your workforce does not have the skills you need to compete. In England in 2004/05, 22% of companies confirmed this problem: affecting a massive 2.4 million workers.

How are Sector Skills Agreements developed?

Employers have been asked to shape the SSA through their Sector Skills Council. They do this by discussing and agreeing what their skills requirements are now and in the future, and proposing how these can best be met. This can be done in conjunction with trade associations or employer bodies to get a truer representation of a whole sector both geographically and by size of company.

The organisations which supply and fund education and training are then consulted about the way in which they can ensure employers' needs are met within a set timeframe. In all, it is a five stage process:

Stage 1: A sophisticated assessment of each sector's needs to cover the long-term, medium-term and short-term, mapping the drivers of change in the sector five to ten years down the track, and determining skill needs.

Stage 2: A review of the range, nature and employer relevance of current training provision across all levels.

Stage 3: An analysis of the main gaps and weaknesses in workforce development, leading to agreed priorities to be addressed.

Stage 4: A review of the scope for collaborative action – engaging employers to invest in skills development to support improved business performance.

Stage 5: A final agreement of how the SSC and employers will work with key partners to secure the necessary supply of training.

Within each SSA are set benchmarks and milestones that are negotiated with the key delivery partners to monitor progress and employer buy-in. SSAs are subject to constant updates and development to ensure they are responding to the changing needs of competitive businesses and reforming public services.

Employer commitment

From the start, there has been strong employer support for Sector Skills Agreements.

Many firms are so busy simply doing business that there is little time for looking at widespread skills development. This is especially true for time- and finance-starved SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) who often need a third party to introduce and support training programmes. SSAs represent an active mechanism for employers to exert real influence over the supply of training in their sector. They are also the perfect tool for getting employers committed to the drive for skills – a necessity for all UK firms. The key outcomes for employers and employees from SSAs:

- Employers have genuine opportunities to shape and endorse provision so that it delivers world-class learning that is relevant to the needs of their business
- Employers benefit from a more collaborative approach within their industry sector through their Sector Skills Council
- Individuals benefit from world-class learning that is supported and shaped by employers and trades unions – and leads to real job opportunities
- Employees benefit from ongoing career development that is linked to the future direction of their industry, and opportunities that fulfil their potential.

Supply-side and government commitment

Sector Skills Agreements are a collaboration between the supply-side and the demand-side. Government, employers, employee representatives and organisations which plan, fund and support education and training are working together to tackle the effective provision of skills together around a common rallying point and set of objectives.

Each SSA clearly lays out what actions are required and where efforts should be focused. It also clarifies what types of courses are needed and at what level education and training should be available. Every organisation involved in the planning and funding of education and training has assessed and agreed these objectives so that the commitments they make are feasible and achievable.

Partners and government agree to provide support for the proposals and solutions contained in the SSAs, and ensure the required resources are available for effective implementation.

Who is involved?

Sector Skills Agreements are brokered by Sector Skills Councils in partnership with the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) as well as the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Executive and the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DEL).

Key delivery partners include, but are not limited to:

- funding bodies, including the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and The Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales.
- economic development agencies
- regulatory authorities
- higher education institutions and organisations
- further education institutions and organisations
- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- careers advice bodies, including Careers Scotland, Careers Wales, Future Skills Scotland, Future Skills Wales and Connexions
- Investors in People UK
- University for Industry (Ufi) and Scottish UFI
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
- Association of Learning Providers (ALP)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Jobcentre Plus
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Universities UK (UUK).

Sector Skills Agreements also involve close consultation with trades unions, who will play a key role in their delivery. This includes, but is not limited to:

- the Union Learning Fund across the UK
- Unionlearn and the rapidly growing network of Union Learning Representatives across the UK.

Achievements so far

Summer 2005

Skillset

SCREEN ACADEMIES

The Film Skills Fund, developed by **Skillset**, raises investment by a voluntary levy and funds a £50m skills strategy including a network of Skillset Screen Academies across the UK based at existing universities and colleges. Skillset will be rolling out Skillset Academies to the TV and Interactive sectors in 2007 and has recently established the new TV Skills Fund with contributions from the UK's broadcasters.

e-skills UK

COMPUTER CLUBS FOR GIRLS

Women are hugely under-represented in the IT workforce. To transform the attitudes of a generation of younger girls toward technology-related careers, **e-skills UK** established Computer Clubs for Girls (CC4G) as part of its SSA. To date around 41,000 girls in 2,250 schools are benefiting from these clubs and two-thirds of those participating report that they are more likely to consider a technology-related career as a result. Employers support CC4G through a wide range of activities including a volunteer network, courseware development and teacher training. e-skills UK forecasts £22 million of employer support by 2008 for the delivery of its SSA objectives.

Summer 2006

SkillsActive

BRINGING MORE WOMEN INTO COACHING

SkillsActive is working in partnership with the Women's Sport Foundation to encourage more women into working in sport through a European Social Fund project across London. The project gives women the skills and training required to move into, or progress within, sports coaching and leadership by providing support to women who would normally face barriers to employment within the sector. The project's aim is also to raise the profile of women as sports coaches, and it has been so successful that it was granted additional funding.

Skills for Logistics

YOUNG LGV DRIVERS

The Young LGV Driver Scheme, managed by **Skills for Logistics** on behalf of the Department for Transport, gives young people the chance to obtain a full Category C driving licence at 18, rather than 21, and a Category C+E licence before their 21st birthday. Young drivers are able to do a real and productive job, whilst receiving first-class training towards an LGV licence and industry-specific, nationally-recognised qualifications. Registered young drivers follow a structured training programme leading to a Level 2 Scottish / National Vocational Qualification (S/NVQ) in 'Driving Goods Vehicles'.

Lantra

GROOMING A BETTER WORKFORCE

Lantra is working with the equine industry to develop an elite grooms skills passport. The passport will recognise ability and experience, and help grooms to plan their career. The passport aims to bridge the gap for many grooms who have practical experience, but lack the qualifications currently offered. Plans are in place to create a relevant pilot for the racing industry with input from racing employers and thoroughbred breeders.

Construction Skills INVESTING IN GRADUATES

The construction industry needs to recruit over 36,000 professional workers every year to 2010. To increase applications to construction and built environment-related degree course[s], **ConstructionSkills** has launched 'Inspire Scholarships', a £1m collaborative employer sponsorship fund. In 2006, the scheme attracted over 700 applications and will offer 120 students up to £9,000 to help fund their studies. The programme also provides scholars with on-site experience with top employers, as well as the possibility of a permanent job after graduation.

SEMTA ENGINEERING FOR THE FUTURE

SEMTA have identified management and leadership, productivity and competitiveness, and technical workforce development as three key issues for their sector. Working with employers, they are looking to combine resources, and have secured funding to develop Information Advice and Guidance and a demand-focused NVQ Level 3 in the West Midlands and North West.

Skills for Health DELIVERING A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

Skills for Health is establishing strategic partnerships and agreements to meet the sector's need for a more flexible workforce including bringing together, for the first time, sources of labour market intelligence to improve workforce planning. They are also developing interactive tools to support employers in designing (and re-designing) job roles and service delivery, and improving access to flexible learning including the development of an e-learning road map for the sector.

Cogent COGENT'S GOLD STANDARD

Cogent is leading a DTI-sponsored initiative to align funding with accredited qualifications under the banner of "Chemical Gold Standard". This will define the skills competencies and qualifications required for a world class industry. Individual companies will be able to measure themselves against this and structure their training accordingly. The first stage will focus on training people to a minimum NVQ Level 3 in License to Operate, productivity and innovation. The next phase will include science, engineering and technology skills.

Skillfast-UK SKILLS HQ

As part of their "Skills HQ" programme addressing specialist training for technical roles, **Skillfast-UK** worked with Mulberry to put in place a leather production apprenticeship programme. This involved pulling together a fit-for-purpose qualification, bringing in a local college to deliver the qualification in a flexible way in Mulberry's workplace, and using "expert witnesses" from Mulberry's own staff in the assessment process to increase the level of technical expertise in assessment. As a result of this work, Mulberry will take on 20 new apprentices themselves, and will be opening up the training programme to other small businesses in the region.

The first Sector Skills Agreements were launched in Spring/Summer 2005, with others coming on stream gradually until the end of 2007.

Sector Skills Councils: a guide

Asset Skills

SECTOR: Property services, housing, cleaning services and facilities management

Tel: 01392 423399

Email: enquiries@assetskills.org

Website: www.assetskills.org

Automotive Skills

SECTOR: The retail motor industry

Tel: 020 7436 6373

Email: info@automotiveskills.org.uk

Website: www.automotiveskills.org.uk

Cogent

SECTOR: Chemical, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymer industries

Tel: 01925 515 200

Email: info@cogent-ssc.com

Website: www.cogent-ssc.com

ConstructionSkills

SECTOR: Construction

Tel: 01485 577577

Email: information.centre@citb.co.uk

Website: www.constructionskills.net

Creative & Cultural Skills

SECTOR: Advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary and visual arts

Tel: 020 7089 5866

Email: info@ccskills.org.uk

Website: www.ccskills.org.uk

Energy & Utility Skills

SECTOR: Electricity, gas, waste management and water industries

Tel: 0845 077 9922

Email: enquiries@euskills.co.uk

Website: www.euskills.co.uk

e-skills UK

SECTOR: Information technology, telecommunications and contact centres

Tel: 020 7963 8920

Email: info@e-skills.com

Website: www.e-skills.com

Financial Services Skills Council

SECTOR: Financial services industry

Tel: 020 7216 7366

Email: info@fssc.org.uk

Website: www.fssc.org.uk

GoSkills

SECTOR: Passenger transport

Tel: 0121 635 5520

Email: info@goskills.org

Website: www.goskills.org

Government Skills

SECTOR: The Civil Service (including executive agencies), non-departmental public bodies, and the armed forces

Tel: 020 7276 1611

Email: cgssc@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.government-skills.gov.uk

Improve Ltd

SECTOR: Food and drink manufacturing

Tel: 0845 644 0448

Email: info@improveltd.co.uk

Website: www.improveltd.co.uk

Lantra

SECTOR: Environmental and land-based industries

Tel: 0845 707 8007

Email: connect@lantra.co.uk

Website: www.lantra.co.uk

Lifelong Learning UK

SECTOR: Community learning and development, further education, higher education, libraries, archives and information services, work-based learning and development

Tel: 0870 757 7890

Email: enquiries@lifelonglearninguk.org

Website: www.lifelonglearninguk.org

People 1st

SECTOR: Hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism

Tel: 0870 060 2550

Email: info@people1st.co.uk

Website: www.people1st.co.uk

Proskills UK

SECTOR: Process and manufacturing, coatings, extractives, glass, building products and printing industries

Tel: 01235 833 844

Email: info@proskills.co.uk

Website: www.proskills.co.uk

SEMTA

SECTOR: Science, engineering and manufacturing technologies

Tel: 01923 238441

Email: infodesk@semta.org.uk

Website: www.semta.org.uk

Skillfast-UK

SECTOR: Apparel, footwear, textiles and related businesses

Tel: 0870 120 6197

Email: enquiries@skillfastuk.org

Website: www.skillfast-uk.org

Skills for Health

SECTOR: Health sector across the UK

Tel: 0117 922 1155

Email: office@skillsforhealth.org.uk

Website: www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Skills for Justice

SECTOR: Custodial care, community justice, court services, prosecution services, policing and law enforcement

Tel: 0114 261 1499

Email: info@skillsforjustice.com

Website: www.skillsforjustice.com

Skills for Logistics

SECTOR: Freight logistics industry

Tel: 01908 313360

Email: info@skillsforlogistics.org

Website: www.skillsforlogistics.org

SkillsActive

SECTOR: Sport and recreation, health and fitness, outdoors, playwork and caravans

Tel: 020 7632 2000

Email: skills@skillsactive.com

Website: www.skillsactive.com

Skillset

SECTOR: Broadcast, film, video, interactive media and photo imaging

Tel: 020 7520 5757

Email: info@skillset.org

Website: www.skillset.org

Skillsmart Retail

SECTOR: Retail

Tel: 020 7399 3450

Email: contactus@skillsmartretail.com

Website: www.skillsmartretail.com

Skills for Care & Development

SECTOR: Social care, children, young people and families

Tel: 0113 241 1251

Email: sscadmin@skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk

Website: www.skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk

SummitSkills

SECTOR: Building services engineering

Tel: 01908 303 960

Email: enquiries@summitskills.org.uk

Website: www.summitskills.org.uk

Skills for Business is an employer-led network consisting of 25 Sector Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Development Agency.

Through labour market intelligence, the identification of skills needs at all levels and its influence on the UK's education and training infrastructure, the network aims to increase productivity in business and public services.



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