

# Bombardier introduces innovative NVQ programme

Bombardier Aerospace in Belfast has become the first company in Northern Ireland to introduce a virtually paperless NVQ programme for its operators. In conjunction with the Engineering Training Council (the Council), the company has developed a programme whereby operators are assessed in their day-to-day work under the company's established training and development process, which serves as an alternative to producing competency portfolios. Not only does this help to reduce the use of paper, but it also helps to streamline and accelerate the NVQ process.



So far, over 250 operators undertaking the company's Flexibility Enhancement Training Programme in the main production facility have now successfully completed the pilot 'paperless' programme. A further 300 operators have completed units towards a full NVQ qualification.

For those employees who have previously completed an apprenticeship, the evidence generated through attending project specific training modules, consolidated by internal and external quality assessment, and underpinned by proven competence in this particular field of engineering, results in the accreditation of a Level 3 NVQ in Aeronautical Engineering. For those operators who have not previously completed an apprenticeship, similar evidence generated resulted in the successful completion of a Level 2 NVQ in Performing Manufacturing Operations. The company is presently extending the scheme throughout the rest of its Northern Ireland operations.

The programme was introduced to help meet operational targets over the next few years and offers employees the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification, linking directly into established operator processes.

'The company invests an average £7 million in training each year – totalling over £100 million since 1989 – and believes that investing in people through training and development is key to future business success.'

Michael Ryan, Vice-president and General Manager, Bombardier Aerospace, Belfast.

'The importance of lifelong learning cannot be underestimated in terms of helping companies retain their competitiveness. We are delighted that our commitment to continued learning and development has been recognised through the successful retention of the Investor in

People standard, which we first achieved in 1997.'

Commenting on the new NVQ programme, David Hatton, Chief Executive of the Engineering Training Council, said:

'The Council is delighted to work with Bombardier Aerospace on this groundbreaking approach to employee development and the achievement of qualifications. In the highly competitive environment in which the company competes, it is essential that employees continue to develop skills and are trained to the highest standards. We hope that the lessons and benefits gained from this approach can be rolled out and implemented by other engineering manufacturing companies in Northern Ireland.'