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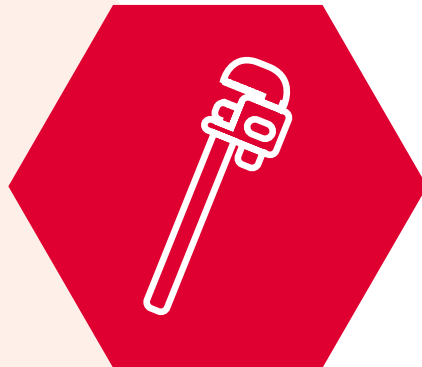
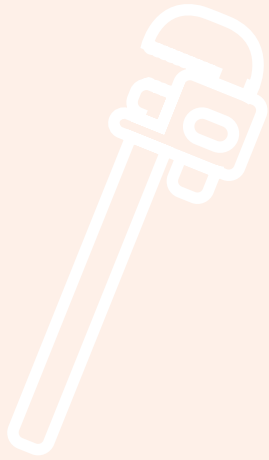
PLUMBING



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PARTNERSHIPS
working together - a partnership approach to NVQs





PLUMBING

The Joint Awarding Body For Plumbing In Northern Ireland

The background

Prior to 1992 the plumbing industry in Northern Ireland had adopted a course of study which potentially led to the achievement of 'Craft' and 'Advanced Craft' certificates as the measure of an operative's level of attainment. Successful completion of this course of study along with a period of employment provided the operative with the knowledge and ability to be identified as skilled. This course of study was organised and managed by the City and Guilds of London Institute (City and Guilds) and seen as the benchmark by the industry.

The introduction of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system brought with it Lead Industry Bodies (some of which later become National Training Organisations (NTOs)) and Sector Advisory Groups who were tasked with the development of national occupational standards for their industrial area.

As the sector representative body the Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland (CITBNI) was

involved in the development of the occupational standards for plumbing.

Following the development of occupational standards for the plumbing sector in the early 1990s awarding bodies were asked to work with the industry bodies to design National Vocational Qualifications based on the occupational standards.

Within Northern Ireland three organisations had identified an interest in how the awards would develop and be accepted by the plumbing industry.

The partners

The organisations identified below agreed to meet and discuss possible ways of working together.

The plumbing industry representative body, **The Scottish and Northern Ireland Joint Industry Board for the Plumbing Industry (SNIJIB)**, was established to ensure meaningful industry representation within this occupational sector.

Therefore it provides the industry perspective in relation to the awarding body activity.

<http://www.snipef.org>

The construction sector body, **The Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland**, acts as the sector representative body. It was established in 1964 under the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Act and the Industrial Training (NI) Orders of 1964 and 1984. The CITB is committed to continuing their role of encouraging the adequate training of both the existing workforce and of new entrants coming into the construction industry in Northern Ireland.

<http://www.citbni.org.uk>

The awarding body, **The City and Guilds of London Institute**, was established in 1878 and incorporated by royal charter to serve industry, commerce and the nations through the encouragement of education and training. City and Guilds awards certificates of achievement to candidates from the United Kingdom and overseas.

<http://www.city-and-guilds.co.uk>

The organisations discussed the structure and potential of the proposed qualification while considering the recognition the resulting NVQ would receive in Northern Ireland.

They agreed that a partnership approach was the way forward in this situation. With this collaborative arrangement in place they hoped that the developing NVQ qualifications and awarding procedures would have the support of all interested parties in Northern Ireland.

The outcome of the negotiations was the formation of a Joint Awarding Body (JAB) and their first agreement was signed on the 26 August 1992.

It was anticipated that the industry would accept the introduction of the new qualification structure if there was a united front put forward by the groups who signed the agreement.

This agreement brought the sector representative body, the industry representatives and an awarding body together to form **The Plumbing NVQ Awarding Body for Northern Ireland.**

The agreement

The first agreement was signed in August 1992 and identified the roles and responsibilities of the partner organisations involved. Over the years the individual organisations have reassessed their roles within the JAB and as a result a further agreement was ratified and signed in May 1999.

This new agreement allowed the partner organisations to consider their roles in relation to the developments within their own organisations and the qualifications framework.

The new agreement identified that City and Guilds would be taking the major role within the partnership in relation to the quality assurance and awarding of the qualifications in question. The SNIJIB and CITBNI provide the industrial expertise and are jointly involved in the development of future qualifications.

The work of the partnership

The work of the JAB is managed by a committee which brings together the representatives of the partnership organisations with representatives from the Northern Ireland Master Plumbers Association, local employers and the Amalgamated Engineering & Electrical Union (AEEU).

It was agreed to invite the non-partnership groups to be part of the committee to ensure that all groups within the industry have an input to the future development of qualifications awarded by this JAB.

The partnership committee meets no less than three times a year to consider developments and implementation issues relating to the NVQs they are accredited to offer. Each of the member organisations has identified roles within the agreement.

This committee has been considering the introduction of an Employer Led Modern Apprenticeship (ELMA) and how the JAB qualifications would fit into it. It has been decided that the JAB will work along with the organisations introducing this ELMA as recognition of achievement.

Through the self-evaluation process the JAB has identified a number of areas it wants to incorporate into its future objectives. It is hoped that these will ensure the work of the JAB remains relevant to the industry and

those working within it and are as follows:

- To have recognised standing with employers and employees representatives in respect of the awards.
- To contribute to the maintenance of the quality and relevance of the standards of competence.
- To work with the National Training Organisation responsible for setting occupational standards in relation to the development and implementation of the NVQ framework.
- To provide support and guidance to their centres in Northern Ireland through documentation and development days when appropriate.

The remainder of the areas the JAB intends to focus on are related to the implementation, management and quality assurance of the procedures and systems an awarding body is required to put in place.

The benefits of partnership

The JAB has been able to respond to the requirements of the Northern Ireland industry by developing a relevant structure for the NVQ qualifications.

Due to the close working relationships that have developed between the partners it is now possible to obtain comprehensive and reliable statistics in relation to uptake and achievement of NVQs in the plumbing industry.

By September 2001, 1220 candidates had received NVQ certificates relevant to the Northern Ireland plumbing industry.