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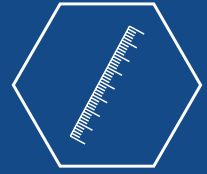


Qualifications and Curriculum Authority  
2nd Floor, Glendinning House, 6 Murray Street, Belfast, BT1 6DN  
Tel: 028 9033 0706 Fax: 028 9023 1621 E-mail: [infoni@qca.org.uk](mailto:infoni@qca.org.uk)  
website: [www.qca.org.uk/ni](http://www.qca.org.uk/ni)



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ENGINEERING



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PARTNERSHIPS  
working together - a partnership approach to NVQs



## Centres of Excellence: Working Together For Engineering

### The background

In September 2000 the Engineering Training Council - Northern Ireland (ETCNI), acting on concerns expressed by a number of companies, embarked on a sectoral initiative aimed at identifying the level of skills shortages being experienced in the area of Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) machining.

During the period October – November 2000 ETCNI's Chief Executive met with groups of employers from across Northern Ireland and discussed their needs and requirements in relation to CNC staff training. It became apparent that there was no ready-made solution in the form of an existing course.

In November 2000 a meeting took place between representatives from potential training providers and the ETCNI. The training providers supported by ETCNI were asked to develop a foundation CNC machinists' training programme aimed specifically at addressing employers' short-term requirements.

It was also agreed that the programme should link to the level 2 NVQ in Engineering Production.

The original requirement was for 50 CNC machinists to be trained as soon as possible. However by November 2001 this had reduced due to the downturn in the aerospace industry following the events of 11 September 2001.

With ETCNI acting as the initial catalyst, an informal partnership was formed with the training providers who were willing to put the time and effort into the development of a new programme for the group of companies consulted at the start of the initiative.

The partnership that emerged was comprised of three member bodies.

### The partners

The organisations and institutes involved in this partnership arrangement are established in their own right and have come together to provide a service to the engineering industry.

### **Engineering Training Council - (Northern Ireland)**

The ETCNI is dedicated to supporting the Northern Ireland Industry in developing and maintaining an engineering workforce that is trained to the highest international standards. The Engineering Training Council is an employer-led body, governed by a Council whose members are elected to ensure a broad representation of the engineering community. The Council consists of Employer, Trade Union and Educational representatives. The Council's vision is that the provision of engineering training and education in Northern Ireland is second to none.

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

### **The North Down and Ards Institute of Further and Higher Education (NDAI)**

is an established education and training provider with a strong commitment to the community and economy of Northern Ireland as identified in its mission statement.

*'Through a process of continuous review and development the*

*Institute will create learning opportunities for individuals, businesses and the community thereby contributing to personal, economic and community development.'*

Their role in this partnership was managed and implemented by the School of Engineering and the Built Environment at Bangor campus. The employers involved with the partnership at NDAI were Langford Lodge Engineering, Crumlin and Hughes Christensen Engineering, Belfast.

<http://www.ndai.ac.uk>

**North East Institute of Further and Higher Education (NEI)** is also an established education and training provider and its commitment to making a contribution to Northern Ireland's economic growth and stability is evident in its mission statement.

*'Providing quality education and training for life - the Institute will strive to achieve superior and sustainable financial growth to enable a greater responsiveness and flexibility in the delivery of education and training. The Institute will aim to meet the needs of the economy of Northern Ireland, the community and the professional and career development of the individual student.'*

NEI's involvement in the partnership was led by the Manufacturing Engineering section at the Farm Lodge Campus. The employers involved with the partnership at NEI were Langford Lodge Engineering, Crumlin, NACCO Materials Handling, Portadown.

<http://www.nei.ac.uk>

At the time when the partnership was evolving both NEI and NDAI were awarded the status of

'Manufacturing Engineering Centres of Excellence' by the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). This acknowledged the level of commitment by staff to a high standard in curriculum participation and achievement, the adoption of delivery methods and resources suitable for modern manufacturing and ensuring training is in tune with future development.

### **The work of the partnership**

The work of the partnership is based on a number of common aims:

- To provide training progression opportunities for individuals.
- To meet the needs of the community.
- To assist in the growth of the economy in Northern Ireland.

The partnership secured funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and DEL as it was recognised that the work would be of benefit to industry and the community.

As well as each Centre of Excellence being prepared to deliver the programme their representatives agreed to help and support each other in terms of making facilities available and allowing lecturers/instructors to work between sites as required.

The teams working on the development of the training programme realised the importance of addressing the issue of the shortage of skilled labour and produced a training programme that was both flexible and comprehensive. Close links with the

awarding body ensured that the programme would meet the requirements of the employers and provide evidence towards the NVQ.

The group produced a fast track CNC machinists' training programme that would allow candidates, if desired, to achieve the level 2 NVQ in Engineering Production. The programme was developed with flexibility in mind and companies were able to buy into the training cycle depending on the skill levels of their employees.

A further degree of flexibility was shown by the commitment of the staff in the two institutes when they agreed to be available over the summer months to provide training for the candidates.

### **The benefits**

This partnership approach to programme design and delivery enabled companies to retain existing employees by up-skilling or training them on new machinery. It was recognised that the candidates would benefit from the return to training and the development of new skills. The industry will also benefit from widening and retaining the skills base of existing employees. It is hoped also that the programme will contribute to attracting new recruits to the industry.

The Institutes also benefited by the programme team gaining up-to-date knowledge of the current industrial setting in which precision engineering operates.

In January 2002 there were 19 candidates registered on this programme who benefited from the additional funding for state of the art CNC machining hardware and software.