Skillset Sector Compact Q and A

March 2009

The Sector Compact

1. What is the “Sector Compact”?

The compact is a non-contractual agreement between the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, the Learning and Skills Council and Skillset to work collaboratively to drive up demand for skills across England through Train to Gain.

The creative media sector has a powerful role to play in generating wealth and employment as highlighted by the publication of Creative Britain. Advances in technology and the diversity of markets and audiences for creative products and services have contributed to a great need to develop and update skills in a rapidly changing digital world.

The compact sets out a new offer to employers in the sector within Train to Gain. Each sector compact sets out the detail of this agreement including the ambition and volumes of increased demand, the specific flexibilities needed to deliver this demand and the phasing of this delivery. Each compact covers a period of up to three years and is an integrated part of the Train to Gain offer to employers, not a separate programme.

2. What does this mean for employers and others involved in skills?

The support through Train to Gain already enables employers in the sector to access advice on skills and on the Skills Pledge. Train to Gain also offers funding support for a range of vocational skills and qualifications for individuals working employers of all sizes including:

- Apprenticeships for all ages
- A first vocational qualification at NVQ Levels 2 and 3, and in some cases Level 4
- Basic Skills
- For SMEs, access to funding for units of learning in business critical areas
- Train to Gain also provides support for Leadership and Management skills in companies employing over Ten and less than 250 employees.

As a result of this Compact, creative media companies and freelancers will be able to access information and support in more flexible ways and with the confidence that Train to Gain brokers are fully aware of what the sector needs and where they can find the best solutions to meet them.

In addition to the support already available through Train to Gain, employers in the sector will now be able to access for the first time funding for repeat qualifications – i.e. to employees who already have a NVQ Level 2 or 3 (or higher) can now be supported to achieve a second Level 2 or 3. This flexibility is focussed on the most important qualifications to the sector.

As a feature of the compact Train to Gain will provide support for Leadership and Management skills in companies employing over Five and less than 250 employees.

3. Why is this new initiative needed now?
Skillset’s job is to help creative media companies remain productive and competitive. In a challenging financial climate, investing in skills is even more crucial to enable companies and freelancers to survive. Employers have told us through all our research and consultation on skills strategies that they need assistance with developing business skills and keeping up with technology to ensure they can put their innovative ideas into practice. Creative media companies and freelancers work across all sectors as they all need and want an increasingly sophisticated media and online presence so they can grow and stand out from the crowd.

4. Why the focus on this sector?

Although many working in the sector are educated to Level 4 or higher, the nature of the sector means that businesses need a diverse, skilled workforce to provide exciting and innovative products and services for increasingly media savvy clients. A particular issue for the sector in accessing skills support is the level of self-employment in the sector - freelancers make up an average of 50% of our industries, rising to 90% in film. Individuals represent themselves and need to increase the range and diversity of their employability to keep working and progress in their careers.

5. What is the desired outcome from the compact?

That employers in the sector are able to access Train to Gain via brokers who understand the needs of the sector, and can access solutions to their skills needs (both funded via TtG and other sources) that address their needs. Skillset will put creative media companies in contact with brokers who can add value to the sector specific training that Skillset supports through its industry funds and the Skillset Screen and Media Academies. We also want to help freelancers to find training solutions that support them in their careers and will work with unions, trade associations and other industry networks to do so.

6. How will progress be tracked?

The Learning and Skills Council already track employer engagement in Train to Gain and the Skills Pledge by sector/ SIC code, and collect learner take up of the qualifications identified within the compact from the Individual Learner Record completed by colleges and training providers. This data collection is part of the standard management information suite, and will be used to compile the progress report as part of the formal compact review every six months.

Accessing support through Train to Gain

7. Which companies are eligible for advice and support through Train to Gain?

All companies based in England are eligible for support through Train to Gain, except for some in the public sector. This Compact supports employers in the following sectors; Film, TV, Animation, Computer Games, Facilities, Interactive Media, Photo Imaging, Publishing and Radio. Funding for skills and qualifications relates to individual employees in these companies – some employees may be eligible for funding support to meet but some may not. Both the skills brokers and colleges and training providers can advise on eligibility for funding support as part of the Train to Gain service.

8. When is this new Train to Gain offer available from?

The new offer to employers in the sector within Train to Gain commenced at the end of October 2008, with the main rollout of the Compact commencing at the start of March 2009.

The amount of funding in the compact relates directly to the level of demand predicted from employers. If this demand does not materialise, this funding will not be available.
9. How can employers access the support from Train to Gain including funding for skills?

Employers and freelancers can access support by making contact with Skillset in a number of ways: via Skillset’s website, via e-mail or directly through Skillset’s regional and sub sector managers located across England. Employers will be put in contact with the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage service, which has been fully briefed about the needs and nature of the sector. Unions, trade associations and key industry networks will also have information about how Skillset and Train to Gain can help.

Skills Brokers will visit an employer and start the process of analysing how their performance can benefit from investment in employee skills.

For advice on training and development and on qualifications available to employers through Train to Gain, employers can also talk to colleges and training providers.

10. How do employers choose their training provider?

Across England there are hundreds of colleges and training providers with contracts to deliver skills through Train to Gain - both sector specific vocational skills and generic skills including business administration and customer service. The Skills Broker can help identify potential providers, and provide the employer with advice on how to select a provider to work with.

For employers who wish to work with a training provider who does not have a Train to Gain contract, the LSC will work with new providers providing that a minimum number of learners are engaged through the contract and the provider meets the LSC’s contracting requirements. All providers within Train to Gain have to meet a minimum set of requirements and success measures in order to receive, and maintain a provider contract. Without a contract in place a provider cannot receive funding through Train to Gain.

Some Management and Leadership training can be accessed differently – the LSC’s Leadership and Management Advisory Service will both help SMEs identify their leadership and management issues and find solutions, and provide access to a grant of up to £1,000 to fund leadership and management activity. Using this funding, the employer can identify and use any provider that can deliver the training they need. Skillset will have details of how this can work for creative media employers and freelancers.

11. When training needs have been identified, what happens then?

The employer will work with the Train to Gain skills brokers to identify which training provider to work with.

12. Who will arrange the training?

When the employer has decided on their preferred provider, the Train to Gain training provider will work directly with the employer to arrange delivery of the training, in a way that best suits the employer.

13. What is the role of the National Skills Academy in the Compact?

Skillset has approved a network of Universities and Colleges which are known as Skillset Screen Academies and Skillset Media Academies. The Screen Academies focus on Film and the Media Academies on Interactive Media and TV. They have been highlighted by Skillset for their strong industry links, their vision for the future of their creative media students and their offer of courses and training which prepares graduates for working in the industries in Skillset’s footprint. They can offer and will be developing further provision that meets the needs of
industry, whether through long term courses or tailored programmes that are often available in short, manageable chunks.

The offer to employers

14. Which qualifications are supported through Train to Gain funding?

- NVQ qualifications at level 2, 3 and 4,
- All age Apprenticeships.
- Skills for Life e.g. literacy, numeracy and English as a foreign language.

Grants are also available for companies with 10 – 250 employees to address management & leadership needs.

Funding is available for any individual without a first level 2. The compact gives special flexibility for key qualifications to be available for the first time through Train to Gain as repeat qualifications – i.e. to employees who already have a NVQ Level 2 or 3 (or higher) can now be supported to achieve a second Level 2 or 3.

This flexibility is focussed on the most important qualifications to the sector:

- NVQs for Grips, Set Crafts, Photo Imaging, Production for Television, Crane Technicians, Computer Games Testing, Stagehands in Film and Television, Digital Print Production and qualifications in Media Techniques

The creative media is largely dependent on technology and craft skills so the need to demonstrate skills in technical areas is extremely important, especially for freelance staff who move from job to job. In terms of publicly-funded provision, Skillset have been told by industry that qualifications that assess such technical and craft skills in the areas listed above will be the most useful to them. For the sector, developing business and being able to make the most of market opportunities when they arise are critical skills areas which Skillset will support employers to access through both leadership and management training and access to smaller units of learning in business critical skills.

NVQ Qualifications developed by any awarding body, providing that these are available for funding purposes can be supported through Train to Gain.

15. Is there a time limit for learning to be completed?

No.

16. How does this programme differ from other Train to Gain programmes?

This is part of the Train to Gain programme. It is a specific offer to employers in the sector, based on this driving increased demand from employers.

Management and Leadership

17. Why are the management and leadership grants only available for Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs)?

The Leadership and Management support and funding through Train to Gain is targeted at SME’s with between 5 and 250 employees. Large employers are much more likely to make investments in addressing their leadership and management needs than smaller employers, which is why the service is targeted at SMEs.
**Apprenticeships**

18. Will adult employees be eligible for Apprenticeships?

Apprentices of all ages are supported through the LSC’s Apprenticeship Programme. The LSC funds the cost of delivering the skills needed by an apprenticeship so all LSC funding goes directly to the employer, college or training provider delivering the apprenticeship.

19. If a company has an existing contract for Apprentices, can they apply for more under the Compact?

The compact does not set volumes for providers. Where a company has a contract with the LSC for Apprenticeships any increase would from part of the usual negotiation with the Learning and Skills Council.

**The Partners**

20. Who is Skillset and what is their role in the process?

Skillset is the Sector Skills Council for creative media industries which works with Film, TV, Animation, Computer Games, Facilities, Interactive Media, Photo Imaging, Publishing and Radio.

Skillset will support Train to Gain brokers with sector specific information and expertise and enable companies in its footprint to find out more about how Train to Gain can help them through skills training and funding.

The SSC will not provide training.

21. What is the LSC’s role?

The LSC commissions and contracts with colleges and training providers to deliver skills and qualifications for employees through Train to Gain. As part of this existing commitment the LSC will provide the £11 million funding through the Train to Gain budget and signpost employers to the providers who can deliver the training they need. The employer can choose which training provider to use.