National Skills Academy expands network with the launch of the National Skills Academy for the Process Industries

Hubs of training excellence for the Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, and Polymer Industries will form part of the National Skills Academy for the Process Industries which will be launched by Skills Minister David Lammy at Central Hall in Westminster. It is the fifth National Skills Academy to be launched and joins Construction, Manufacturing, Food and Drink Manufacturing and Financial Services. Following recent approval a sixth National Skills Academy for Nuclear will be launched shortly.

Contributing £23bn to the economy and employing 420,000 people, the UK process industries form an essential component of the manufacturing supply chain. They are at the forefront of technological innovation, producing hundreds of essential materials including biofuels, plastics, rubber, pharmaceuticals and chemical additives. With growth in these industries currently constrained by a lack of suitably qualified employees, a need for formalised training schemes and a wide variance in quality of training provision, the new skills academy will make a huge impact on the industry.

The National Skills Academy network is a unique structure of employer-led centres of excellence. The network was created by the Learning and Skills Council to address the skills gaps that one in six (16%) UK businesses are experiencing – this equates to 1.3 million workers. It is designed to tackle sector specific skills shortages by standardising training across the industry and uniting a team of experts and employers, to share best practice and create world-class learning environments.

To date, employers representing 12% of the sector - 50,000 employees - have invested in the National Skills Academy for Process Industries and are in control of how the skills academy develops its products and services to address the development of their workforce. It is anticipated that at least 16,000 learners will undertake training via the skills academy over the next five years. Over 50 employer organisations have pledged financial support totalling over £1 million to establish the National Skills Academy for the Process Industries.

Employers supporting the National Skills Academy for Process Industries include BASF plc, SembCorp Utilities UK, Invista Performance Technologies, Johnson Matthey, Innospec Specialty Chemicals, Banner Chemicals Ltd, Solutia UK Limited and LINPAC Group.

Chris Horton, Director of Linpac and Chair of the National Skills Academy for Process Industries Board, commented on the launch of the skills academy:

"I am delighted with the launch of the National Skills Academy which will allow Process Industry to address the skills short fall in areas of their business. It will mean that organisations will be able to identify the gaps and benchmark themselves against 'The Gold Standard' to determine where they should be. Support will then be available to these businesses to help close this skills-gap. This is a once in a decade opportunity to increase significantly the skills within the process industry, to help UK competitiveness in this £72 billion industry."

Skills Minister David Lammy said:

"I am delighted that Process Industry employers have seized upon the National Skills Academy
initiative. This demonstrates a clear commitment on their part to ensuring that skills continue to drive the growth of this important sector.”

Chris Banks, Chair, Learning and Skills Council said:

“The National Skills Academy network gives employers a direct influence over the training of their current and future workforce, and I am delighted that employers within the Process Industry are – working in partnership – with the LSC, taking collective action to address the skills and training needs of their sector in this way.

“By seeing skills as key to driving growth, these employers are leading the way for their sector and for the country as a whole. The LSC wants more employers to be part of the rapidly growing number of leaders who know that those who invest in training are more likely to attract and retain highly motivated staff, and more likely to succeed and compete in the global economy.”

Employers are at the heart of the development of the National Skills Academy network, shaping them and advising how they are run. This includes:

- influencing the curriculum to reflect employer needs
- setting standards
- advising on the network of providers used
- involvement in the management of the skills academies
- shaping their strategic direction.

NOTES TO EDITORS

National Skills Academy network

The National Skills Academy network is the new gold standard for industry training, aiming to improve productivity and tackle skills shortages across England.

Each National Skills Academy puts employers at the heart of skills training for their sector: they influence the curriculum to ensure it reflects employers’ needs; get involved in the skills academy’s management; set standards; and influence strategic direction.

National Skills Academies aim to:

- deliver high quality training for a specific sector;
- provide first-class teaching in a modern learning environment;
- be centres of innovation and creativity in skills development for their sector;
- be flexible, sustaining the closest possible relationships with employers of all sizes; and
- build specialist networks with a range of other learning providers, so that new thinking, new methods and higher standards are shared to the benefit of learners and employers.

The National Skills Academy network was initiated by the Government to address the need for a world class workforce with better skills than ever before. It is managed by the Learning and Skills Council working in partnership with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Skills for Business Network and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

The Government’s commitment to have 12 National Skills Academies in place by the end 2008 was further endorsed in ‘World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England’ presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State in July 2007.

The Skills for Business Network is made up of licensed Sector Skills Councils and their regulatory body, the Sector Skills Development Agency. This network is responsible for improving skills and productivity within the UK.
For more information see: www.nationalskillsacademy.co.uk