

## Semta consults on strategy and urges investment in skills

Semta has held six regional consultation events to help shape its strategy for tackling skills gaps. Further events are to take place shortly. Employers from small, medium and large businesses, funding body representatives and other key stakeholders have met to consider the sector's future skills needs and actions required.

Research indicates that 10,700 engineering companies in the UK are at risk of failing and 46,600 jobs under threat as businesses are not hiring or training and are not aware of the skills

gaps amongst their workforce. And with around 40% of the workforce aged 45-64, Semta predicts that downsizing and early retirements will see an outflow of older workers and consequently a loss of skills.

At the events, Chief Executive Philip Whiteman set out Semta's five priorities for helping businesses: improving the match between supply and demand; reskilling the unqualified; improving management and leadership skills; encouraging STEM careers to replace an aging workforce, and making it easier for employers to navigate the skills landscape. "Whatever a business's size or location, our role is to improve

its performance by helping to develop its workforce. The sector can emerge stronger and fitter in the upturn by investing in skills."

He urged employers to use the sector Compact and other available funding for skills training and to invest in National Skills Academy programmes. "Investment in high-quality training brings economic returns to employers. It can provide a long-term solution to skills gaps which would otherwise threaten continued productivity improvement. The benefits are clear, quantifiable and can have a huge impact on the bottom line of small to medium-sized businesses in particular."

## Conference round-up

Speakers from Semta pressed the skills agenda at conferences around the UK this summer.

To mark VQ Day in June, Semta Chairman Sir Alan Jones highlighted the benefits of vocational qualifications for employers at a Business Champions event run by East Midlands Development Agency in Nottingham. In July Sir Alan spoke on the same theme at the first National Applied Learning Conference and later in the month he addressed the CSEU national conference in Southport. Here he explained Semta's role in working with employers on skills through the recession and the opportunities for creating sustainable UK jobs through emerging and green technologies. Sir Alan also supported the QCDA with a series of events to consult with

employers on functional skills. The QCDA is the government agency which develops qualifications for people in schools and colleges, in training and at work. It is developing functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and IT in answer to employers' concerns. Sir Alan also formed part of the Q&A panel at the Manufacturing Matters event in Birmingham, promoting Semta's Compact.

Semta's Ian Carnell spoke at a seminar on aerospace and defence apprenticeships during the Defence Systems and Equipment International exhibition in September. Known as the DSEi, the event at London's ExCeL is one of the world's largest defence and security shows, attracting more than 1,300 exhibitors and 26,000 visitors.



Sir Alan Jones pressing the skills agenda at conferences

>> 2  
Scottish  
government's  
apprentices  
cash offer

>> 3  
Diploma in  
Engineering  
consortia  
approved

>> 4  
Compact funds  
company-wide  
training

>> 5  
650 apprentices  
for Wales

>> 6  
Mechatronics  
medals for  
Northern  
Ireland

# Welcome to the Autumn issue of Semta Matters from the Chief Executive

Our role is to make it easier for employers to get the skills support they need to be competitive.



Philip Whiteman, Semta Chief Executive

We understand from sector companies that sometimes it's hard to find the right expertise to determine what you need, which training providers can supply it and how to get it funded.

That's why we have one end-to-end service with a single point of contact: 0845 643 9001.

Behind our service is a wealth of sector experience that can guide employers through the skills maze.

Using our Business2Skills model developed with Warwick University, we help companies to work out the skills they need to meet their business objectives, to find the most suitable training course that will give them measurable bottom line impact, and to access available funding.

For example through Semta's £100m funding Compact, more than 700 companies have

been supported, 78% of them SMEs, with £60m allocated for 38,000 qualifications.

Investing in skills pays. Last year through programmes like Business-Improvement Techniques, Semta's National Skills Academy for Manufacturing helped companies achieve £12m benefit from a £2m investment in skills – a 6:1 return on investment.

Of course that's not all we do. As you will read in this issue, our joined-up approach means we are working with other sector skills councils to ensure training supply meets employers' demands through SSC clusters to improve the quality and relevance of Higher and Further Education. We are also working with skills bodies and stakeholders to ensure the skills landscape is tuned to business needs.

## Scottish government's 'two-for-one' apprentices cash offer

The Scottish government has backed the Modern Apprenticeship in Life Sciences with financial support for employers.

First Minister Alex Salmond has pledged up to £3m to fund an extra 100 apprentices on Semta's new framework. Life science companies will be able to recruit two apprentices for the cost of one – with the full salary costs of the second apprentice being paid by the Scottish government's ScotAction programme.

The First Minister said: "The life sciences sector is an important component of the local economy. We are investing heavily in the generations of the future by supporting a strong modern apprenticeship programme. Equally, we are investing in the sectors of the future, such as life sciences and renewable energy, so we can build on our comparative advantage and harness our full economic potential."



ScotAction will fund 100 extra life sciences apprentices

## Alliance streamlines skills provision

The Manufacturing Skills Alliance (MSA) has presented its plan at a House of Lords event with Business and Regulatory Reform Minister Ian Lucas MP. Formed by sector skills councils Semta, Cogent, Improve Ltd, Proskills and Skillfast-UK, the Alliance sets out to improve access to quality training and development for manufacturing employers across the UK.



Dick Martin, Chairman of Kembrey Wiring Systems Ltd, speaks at the House of Lords event

MSA priorities include adopting a common approach in Higher Education to help increase employer engagement in innovation and knowledge transfer, and developing a coherent set of programmes to meet the needs of manufacturing employers and improve transferability for individuals.

One of the MSA's first initiatives to benefit employers is its Productivity and Competitiveness (PAC) programme. This provides training in lean manufacturing, using Business-Improvement Techniques to improve quality, cost and delivery. The 14 companies completing the pilot saw profits increase by an average of £93,000.

# 14-19 Diplomas

## Diploma in Engineering

Another 80 consortia have been approved to deliver the Diploma in Engineering as it moves into its second year. Around 2,500 students are continuing on their two-year programmes and an estimated 4,500 students began studying for the Diploma last month.

Those who completed one-year Diploma programmes are now available for employment and a guide – 'Recruiting Diploma in Engineering Graduates' – has been produced for employers.

It explains the nature and content of the Diploma at each level: Foundation, Higher and Advanced, how it differs from other qualifications and how it equips young people for work. A chart shows the Diploma's equivalence to other qualifications.

A short video has also been produced which outlines one Diploma student's work experience at SembCorp Utilities (UK) and explains why the company is backing the Diploma. To download a copy of the guide or view the video visit

[www.engineeringdiploma.com](http://www.engineeringdiploma.com).



The first engineering diploma holders are ready for work

## Diploma in Science gets go-ahead

Ofqual, the qualifications regulator, has accepted proposals for the Diploma in Science at the Foundation and Higher levels. This signals the go-ahead to consult on the detailed content of the qualification which is scheduled for first teaching in 2011. Acceptance of the Diploma at the Advanced level, due to be available in 2012, is pending.

The Science Diploma Development Partnership (SDDP), led by Semta, submitted a detailed document to Ofqual that outlines the rationale, vision and content of the Diploma in Science and forms a principal learning component of the qualification. This will now be used to guide its development.

SDDP Chairman, Professor Hugh Lawlor, said: "Developing a qualification that is flexible and relevant to the needs of both students and employers is a crucial challenge. It is only by gaining feedback from a broad group of stakeholders that we can be assured the new Diploma will deliver the skills and knowledge required by the science sector." Leading science employers supporting the development of the Diploma in Science include the Metropolitan Police, IBM, Pfizer, Johnson Matthey, GE Aviation and Corus.

For more information visit

[www.sciencediploma.co.uk](http://www.sciencediploma.co.uk)

## New Diploma in MPD website launched

The new interactive website for the Diploma in Manufacturing and Product Design launched in August. It has been tailored to meet the specific needs of three different audiences:

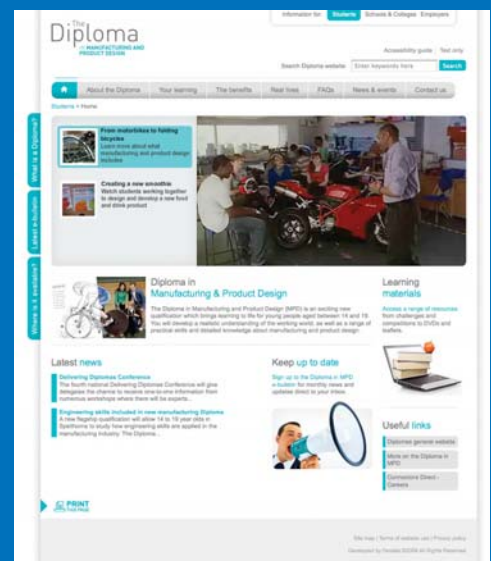
- Employers
- Schools and colleges
- Students

The employers' section introduces employers to all aspects of the industry-designed qualification and explains how employers can get involved. It includes DVDs, employer case studies and quotes illustrating the experience of organisations already involved with student learning.

In the schools and colleges section, teachers and learning providers can find a wealth of information, support and additional resources to assist with understanding, planning and delivery of the qualification.

The learning resources section of the site includes useful links, and downloads for all audiences.

Along with the website, the e-bulletin has also been improved. To sign up to receive the Diploma in MPD e-bulletin visit [www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk](http://www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk)



# Compact funds company-wide training

Tapping into funds through the sector Compact is helping Nifco UK Ltd raise employee skills throughout the business. A supplier to the automotive industry, the company employs 175 people in Cleveland. Developing people is one of Nifco's key drivers and it sought to upskill staff in all areas where gaps had been identified – including engineering, assembly, sales and marketing. The company's aim is to increase productivity, reduce operating costs, raise customer care standards, improve communications and increase awareness of lean.

Having seen the benefits of implementing B-IT training on the shop floor, the company was keen to introduce lean working in the office areas and identified 60 employees to undertake the B-IT NVQ at Level 2. The company's needs also included formal training in sales, administration and the use of IT. Putting 15 people through the Performing Engineering Operations NVQ will raise the engineering skills base, whilst training 20 managers, supervisors and team leaders, will develop leadership capabilities across the company. All training has been approved for funding through the Semta Compact. Compact offers £100m worth of Train to Gain funding which is available to businesses in England. For more details on Compact and how it can help your business visit [www.semta.org.uk](http://www.semta.org.uk) and click on the red 'Funding for Skills Training' box.



Nifco is using Compact funding to develop leadership skills

## Qualified to support business

To ensure Semta offers a consistently high standard of service in the field, all our advisers are to gain the NVQ Level 4 in Business Support. The qualification is based on national occupational standards developed by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) – the government-recognised UK standards-setting body for business support. It means that customers receiving face-to-face advice and guidance from Semta can be confident that those providing it understand their needs and are competent in their role.

One of the first to complete is Patrick Hore, Regional Sector Lead in the North East. "I believe the Level 4 NVQ in Business Support is very relevant to my role within Semta," he says. "It has helped me understand the wider picture of business support and armed me with more knowledge to strengthen my capabilities regarding the support business requires in today's competitive market. Gaining this qualification can only enhance the support that I and my colleagues provide, and consolidate the professional manner in which Semta serves the sector."

## Record maths and science A level entries

This year's exam results showed the highest number of A level entries for mathematics and further mathematics for over a decade – and good achievement rates. Maths saw a 12.2% rise in students taking the A level compared with 2008, and a 20.6% rise since 2007. Entries for further maths were up 15.2% on last year. Both subjects recorded the highest proportion of A-grade passes.

There was an above-average (4.8%) rise in students taking physics and a 2% increase in chemistry candidates. Philip Whiteman commented: "Semta is committed to promoting the take-up of STEM subjects and this year's results show an encouraging trend. We're delighted to see growing numbers of students entering and achieving good A level grades in the subjects key to science and engineering employers."



Maths and science A levels see entries rise

## Semta leading on STEM Skills Cluster of Sector Skills Councils

Semta is leading a group of ten SSCs to enhance the provision of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing) skills for the UK.

The cluster has established working groups on 14-19 Education, Higher Education, Workforce Development and Research/Labour Market Intelligence.

The four groups are initially pooling collective knowledge to identify cross-sector demand signals and shortages, and will move onto cross-sector solutions. The planned outcomes are:

- To co-ordinate initiatives and identify best practice in school and further education
- To develop and implement a coherent strategy for approaching and influencing HE on behalf of employers
- To ensure appropriate provision is made for increasing skills and training in all sectors of the UK economy
- To aggregate demand for skills with FE, HE and accredited qualifications

Semta's Chief Executive Philip Whiteman is chairing the top-level cluster group, and Lynn Tomkins, Employer Engagement Director for Semta, is chairing the workforce development group.

The cluster is to work in partnership with our advisory UK STEM Skills Forum of senior stakeholders chaired by the National STEM Director, Professor John Holman, which will prioritise activities and represent the SSCs' common recommendations.



## Scheme to supply 650 apprentices for Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) is funding a new scheme to boost apprentice numbers in Wales. Its Pathway to Apprenticeship programme will support 650 young people on a one-year programme leading to NVQ level 2 in Performing Engineering Operations, six Key Skills and the Welsh Baccalaureate at intermediate level. Semta has represented employers' interests to WAG and provided guidance on shaping the initiative.

A Welsh network of Apprenticeship Development Centres, based at colleges with input from private training providers, will deliver full-time training for the first six months. During this period learners will make five visits to leading manufacturing companies in Wales. Employer involvement is further ensured by establishing five Engineering Experience Centres linked to the Apprenticeship Development Centres. Regional clusters of manufacturing companies with the necessary resources make up the Engineering

Experience Centres, which provide learners with structured work experience after the college-based phase.

The programme is open to those with relevant GCSEs at grade C or above (or equivalent) who meet rigorous selection criteria. Learners receive an Education Maintenance Allowance and all training costs are met. Those completing the programme will be available for employers to recruit as apprentices.



New initiative will give Wales 650 more engineering apprentices

## STOP PRESS: WorldSkills success

Congratulations to Stewart Wright of the Royal Navy, who won a bronze medal in aircraft maintenance at WorldSkills 2009.

UK success also included Medallions for Excellence for two engineering competitors. Melanie Adlam, a student at the University of Bristol who works for MBDA UK, gained hers for electronics. Martin Eusebi, who works for MB Aerospace Ltd and attends Motherwell College, won his for mechanical engineering CAD. Both gained over 500 points in the competition to achieve world-class standard.

# Mechatronics medals for Northern Ireland maintenance apprentices

Following their success in the Northern Ireland competition, Patrick Gillian of Fivemiletown Creamery and Roy Hitching of FG Wilson Engineering won the mechatronics gold medal at this year's UK Skills competition. Both are students at Belfast Metropolitan College. Northern Ireland's runner-up team – Fergal Doherty of Schrader Electronics and Daniel Latimer of FG Wilson – took bronze at the national event.

David Hatton from ETC NI, which represents Semta in Northern Ireland, said: "The young people who compete in the mechatronics competition are a credit to the manufacturing industry and help promote a positive image of engineering to other young people."

Success is not new to Patrick. He took the top prize in ETC NI's Maintenance Apprentice of the Year competition in 2008,

then – against competition from all industry sectors – went on to win the 2008 Apprentice of the Year title, awarded by the Department for Employment and Learning.

ETC NI will announce the 2009 Maintenance Apprentice of the Year at the NI Maintenance Matters conference to be held in Belfast on 29 October. For further details visit [www.etcni.org.uk](http://www.etcni.org.uk)



Mechatronics medallists Patrick Gillian and Roy Hitching (centre) with David Hatton, ETC NI (left) and Alan Edgar, Belfast Metropolitan College (right)

## Call for WorldSkills training support

With 2009 WorldSkills UK competitions completed, the search will soon be on for 2010 competitors. Winners from both years will be considered for a place in the team to represent the UK at London's 2011 WorldSkills.

Semta supports competitions in its footprint and is appealing on behalf of UK Skills for training managers in mechatronics and mobile robotics to support contestants through the competition. Training managers are essential to help UK competitors achieve their potential and get the best chance to compete internationally. If you have expertise in mechatronics or mobile robotics, the skills to train and support talented young people, and the time to commit to this, UK Skills would love to hear from you. To find out what is required, visit [www.semta.org.uk](http://www.semta.org.uk) and use the 'skills competitions' quick link; or contact Charles Turner: **T: 020 7612 9270**, **E: Charles.Turner@ukskills.org.uk**

## Customer Services success

Semta's Customer Services function has proved a great success since its launch last year and is handling record numbers of enquiries. It was set up as the first point of contact for customers to get prompt and professional information, advice and guidance on Semta's activities and the sectors it represents. The service takes enquiries by telephone, email and through the website.

Team Leader Debbie Brown, along with Nicola Pinchin and Lauren Henderson make up the current team. They respond to an average of over 250 enquiries a month from employers, providers, individuals and stakeholders. Apprenticeships, frameworks and diplomas have been major growth areas. The wide range of topics dealt with includes skills, training, funding, qualifications, careers, research and publications. The team are also the first point of contact for employers interested in the sector Compact and they arrange for advisers to visit companies.



Nicola Pinchin

Lauren Henderson

Debbie Brown

### Contact details

Contact Semta Customer Service team on: **0845 643 9001** or [customerservices@semta.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@semta.org.uk)

For more information on the Semta Group visit: [www.semta.org.uk](http://www.semta.org.uk); [www.metskill.co.uk](http://www.metskill.co.uk); [www.nsa-m.co.uk](http://www.nsa-m.co.uk); [www.eal.org.uk](http://www.eal.org.uk)