

National Forum of Engineering Centres

Midlands Regional Seminar – Walsall College

Notes – Friday 21st October 2011

The Chair (BM) thanked delegates for giving of their time to attend and Walsall College (particularly Jackie Pugh and David Blest) for kindly hosting the Seminar.

1. Present

1.1 Please see attached Attendance List.

2. Matters from Previous Seminar – Not Included in Programme

2.1 All key matters from the previous seminar will be included in this one.

3. New/Current Matters of Concern

3.1 Summit Skills – BM represented NFEC at a meeting with the AoC and BACH in June to plan the next phase of preparation for a meeting with Summit Skills. Noted that a questionnaire to the Building Services Industry was required to seek (effectively) a mandate to be able to approach Summit Skills with evidence of the support of Industry for the current single-skilled qualifications. This would then form a basis to work with the SSC to review these qualifications to ensure the knowledge aligned to the knowledge elements on the new competence-based qualifications that form the basis of the apprenticeship programmes. The questionnaire has been sent out and the AoC will be analysing the results soon.

3.2 Noted that the Welsh Regional Electro-Technical Training Forum had carried out a similar survey of the Industry in Wales. The size of the survey is not known but the results were very revealing including:

- Only 21% know the apprenticeship was changing.
- 86% were not aware there would not be any Electrical Installation at Levels 1 or 2. (This predates Michael Gove's announcement)
- 94% were not happy with trainees moving straight into a Level 3 course as an apprentice without previous practical training.
- 97% wanted colleges to continue running what are effectively "Pre-Apprenticeship" programmes of training and education to identify ability prior to employment.
- **98% had not been consulted by Summit Skills on the new qualification!**

4. SASE-Compliant Apprenticeships – Key Issues

Key points noted include:

- a) Section 96 freeze – **ACTION:** Bernie Fishpool to contact Siva at EDEXCEL.
- b) Reported that Ian Carnell (IC) (SEMTA) was asking for suggestions for a further 20 VRQs for inclusion in the various framework pathways. **ACTION:** Delegates to let BM know of their suggestions for passing on. **(Since the meeting, IC contacted BM to say there'd been a misunderstanding and there were enough suggestions already received.)**
- c) Noted that the EDEXCEL BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma in Engineering (QCF) does not meet the requirements of the Advanced Apprenticeship in content or rigour – only being half the value of a full diploma and can be completed in a year. (Since the Seminar, Phil Hurrell (South Cheshire College) has emailed IC on this matter.
- d) Concerns expressed about there being no recognition of recently achieved NQF qualifications under QCF programmes. Noted that the PEO can be recognised but by RPL but awarding bodies will charge for this. An example of the effects of this issue came from Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) where a learner having completed a two-year full-time BTEC National Diploma in Engineering under NQF (the only version available at the time) was told this hard-won qualification is not recognised under the new SASE-compliant frameworks. An immediate solution is required. A simple blanket statement from the SSC covering all qualifications that were simply transferred from NQF to QCF without change to the content should suffice. **ACTION 1:** BM to raise at other Regional Seminars and contact IC. **ACTION 2:** Paul Gannon to check current position regarding PEO regarding RPL.
- e) SEMTA have requested suggestions for up to 5 HNCs that can be included in the Advanced Apprenticeship Framework pathways. These to be sent to Ian either directly or via BM. **ACTION:** Delegates/BM
- f) Noted that the NAS will authorise the funding at Level 3 for Level 4 qualifications.
- g) Noted that the Level 3 frameworks are now included on the LARA.
- h) Noted that an Advanced Apprenticeship in Composites is being developed by SEMTA from January 2012. Noted too that a Higher Apprenticeship in Advanced Manufacturing is currently under development.

- i) There aren't many tutors trained in composites and to help, specialist trainers are being sub-contracted to providers. Brian Thornton (SEMATA) is in a position to help on this matter. He asked that delegates contact him if needs be. **ACTION:** Delegates.
- j) Noted that GLHs now no longer reflect the actual time required to deliver a programme but are purely a basis for funding. This begs the question – why have GLHs – why not just allocate funds to programmes? This matter will form part of one of the presentations at National Conference on 24th and 25th November.
- k) Noted that a percentage of GLHs have to be off-the-job. There is a definition of Off-the-Job within SASE. These hours will need monitoring throughout the apprenticeship.

5. EAL – Entry to Engineering Programme

- 5.1 PowerPoint slides of this presentation were distributed prior to the Seminar. The Programme was welcomed as a very useful preparation for employment.

6. Progressing Curriculum Development Initiative

- 6.1 BM shared details of the work TCAT (Steve Jones) and Worcester College of Technology (Jill Mustard) were progressing. Fundamentally, after each college had given permission to EDEXCEL to share programmes being delivered by each, a comparison of units was carried out revealing significant commonality. Staff teaching these at both colleges agreed to their contact details being listed against each respective unit and shared with each college. These staff are now in a position to contact one another with a view to sharing teaching and learning materials and other related issues.

- 6.2 Noted that Birmingham Metropolitan College wished to be involved. **ACTION: Graham Rowley** to email Bernie Fishpool (EDEXCEL) confirming allowing EDEXCEL to release details of EDEXCEL programmes to TCAT and Worcester College of Technology.

7. Strategy for HE in FE

- 7.1 Noted that there will be a presentation at National Conference on the HE White Paper and implications for FE. Agreed that there will be opportunities for FE in delivering HE programmes. There are two clear drivers (interlinked) – firstly, the ability to deliver degree programmes at lower costs to that of universities and secondly, when the £9,000 annual fee is implemented, people will vote with their feet and opt to study at their local college.

7.2 To try to head this off, there is evidence in the press that some colleges who deliver franchised degrees are being told by their partner university to increase their fees in line with that of the university they deal with.

7.3 Noted that Coventry University are planning a degree studied flexibly for £4,500 per year. Students will be allowed up to 9 years to complete!

7.4 Providers are also aware the £9,000 fee level will (subject to employment places) increase applications for apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programmes.

8. Qualifications and Awarding Bodies – Current Developments and General Issues

8.1 **EDEXCEL** – The key points outlined by Bernie Fishpool (who had to leave immediately after lunch) included:

- a) The redevelopment of Level 2 provision to be made available by 2012.
- b) The current qualifications can continue for another year.
- c) The schools won't be able to deliver the Extended Diplomas and Certificates so there will be the opportunity for colleges to provide top-up opportunities.
- d) Level 3 Extended Certs/Dips will be available in December 2012.
- e) By 2013, there will be new Level 3 specs allowing for two, 90 credit diplomas – each delivered in a year. This allows the learner to claim a 90-credit Diploma after a year, providing greater flexibility for achievement if required.
- f) EXDECEL are in talks with SEMTA with a view to include the 90-credit Diploma in the Advanced Apprenticeship Frameworks by April 2012. This would be under NQF – not QCF.
- g) Pearsons are developing their degree awarding powers. Pilots hope to be started in September 2012.

8.2 **C&G** – Tony Pawsey distributed prepared hand-outs outlining current updates.

9. Date and Venue for Next Seminar

9.1 David Blest offered to speak with ten Principal of ten new Black Country UTC with a view to them hosting. Since then **this has been agreed and it will take place on Friday 16th March 2012.**

10. Suggested Topics

10.1 These to include:

- a) Update on developments relating to SASE-Compliant Apprenticeships.
- b) NQF to QCF RPL – update.
- c) Share ideas on Functional Skills implementation – Claire Griffiths (Birmingham Metropolitan College).
- d) Delivery of ERR. (Paul Gannon (EAL) to confirm availability of EAL rep – possibly Exam Officer - with BM)**
- e) Higher Apprenticeships to be deferred to November 2012 Seminar.