

**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION AND EXECUTIVE
AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Development of Vocational Qualifications (VQs) in agriculture –
update paper 1, October 2007**

Summary

1 The purpose of this paper is to provide AIAC members with an update on the development and promotional work associated with the suite of vocational qualifications (VQs) developed by HSE in conjunction with two awarding bodies operating in the land-based sector.

Background

2 This work is central to the Agriculture and Food sector's "Education, Skills and Competence in Agriculture" project. The background to this work and the structure of the qualifications has been set out previously in AIAC paper 070703 . At the seventh meeting of the committee held on 2 May 2007, members requested that HSE provide regular updates on progress with these VQs. It is anticipated that this paper is the first of a number of updates to inform the committee.

Uptake of the qualifications

3 Feedback from colleges in the land-based sector indicates that the level 2 qualification is seen to be of most benefit to students undertaking traditional agricultural/horticultural courses. In particular, the level 2 VQ is seen as being an essential pre-requisite for students who are required to undertake work placements on farms/holdings as a component of their course work.

4 At the time of writing this paper, Lantra Awards and NPTC have indicated that 6 land based colleges are offering VQs to their agricultural/horticultural students as an integral component of the curriculum with 380 student registrations received for levels 2 and 3. Dialogue with colleges is on-going and it is hoped that uptake will improve as the learning materials come on stream.

5 It is proposed that the VQs be incorporated within other agricultural /horticultural qualifications such as Level 2 National Certificates and Level 3 Advanced National Certificates to ensure wider uptake. To give an indication of actual numbers of students likely to register, data from 2006/07 indicates 906 students are registered for these qualifications.

6 HSE agriculture sector staff have been working closely with the Elite Consortium to develop learning materials for use by member colleges to deliver VQ training. The consortium has pooled resources to enhance delivery and it is anticipated that materials should be available for the autumn term 2007. Membership of the consortium includes the following colleges: Bishop Burton (Yorkshire), Hartpury (Gloucestershire), Moulton (Northants), Myersclough (Lancashire), and Sparsholt (Hampshire). These colleges have indicated that they intend to offer the VQs within their curricula on completion of the learning materials. For more information on the consortium see www.elite.ac.uk

7 The sector have also approached the Land Based Colleges National Consortium (LBCNC). This organisation produces a range of learning materials and resources for use by member colleges. HSE has previously worked successfully with LBCNC to produce health and safety guidance for use by college lecturers. One work stream within the sector's Education, Skills and Competence in agriculture project involves assessing the quality of health and safety teaching materials within land based colleges, and this has been instigated by collaborative work to review the health and safety content of current LBCNC publications. It is anticipated that this will also be an opportunity to integrate material aligned to the VQ learning outcomes thereby providing college staff with a complete teaching package. For more information see www.lbcnc.org.uk

Promotional Activities

8 Proposals to extend the suite of VQs to include arboriculture and/or forestry were presented at the thirteenth meeting of the AIAC's Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG) held on 25 September 2007. Members of the group were invited to consider AFAG paper 07/09 and submit their views on these proposals. Members' comments were generally favourable (although a number of issues/concerns were raised). It is anticipated that AIAC members will be updated more fully during the feedback from AFAG during the eighth meeting.

9 Sector staff are due to meet with both awarding bodies in the autumn 2007 in order to discuss a range of proposals to develop bespoke awards for a number of specific groups within the land based sector, based on the existing VQ structure. Feedback on this will be given in future AIAC papers.

10 An article to promote VQs featured in the August/September 2007 edition of the publication Land worker produced by the T and G section of Unite – the Union.

Action

11 Members are asked to note the information in this paper.

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