

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

**Vocational Qualifications (VQs) in agriculture:
Funding and marketing in 2008/09**

Summary

- 1 This paper advises AIAC members about the availability of funding to support the uptake of the health and safety vocational qualifications (VQs).
2. The VQs developed by HSE in conjunction with awarding bodies in the land-based sector are available through a network of approved training providers. The issue of financial support is a key factor, influencing both the level of interest and uptake.
3. To promote uptake and market the VQs in 2008/09, it is proposed that:
 - HSE exploit marketing and promotional opportunities through the trade press, presence at the Royal and technical shows as part of its overall Communications Plan for the year and through links with the agricultural college network;
 - Members engage with local funding providers to fully identify, develop and promote any appropriate funding opportunities that might arise. Without such financial support there is a risk that the project will under achieve in terms of improving the education, skills and competencies of those working in the industry;
 - Members re-establish the AIAC Training and Education Project Group as a focal point for promoting the VQs; and
 - Members promote the availability of funding and the uptake of the VQs through their membership networks and other industry stakeholder links.

Background

4 The background to the VQs and the structure of the qualifications was set out in AIAC paper 070703. At the meeting on 29 October 2007, HSE offered to provide an outline of the current funding position for the VQs. The issue had previously been identified as being important in promoting uptake. In particular,

some members felt that a lack of funding would be a barrier to land based colleges adding the VQs to their portfolio of awards, and also limit their appeal to employers and the self employed.

5 This paper informs members of the current position on funding in England, Wales and Scotland. Work to initiate the VQs in Northern Ireland has not yet progressed although it is hoped that this will be addressed in the future. Funding schemes for both students in education and for workers in the industry are included. The Sector has been engaged in dialogue with a number of funding providers since the inception of the project. However, in order to maximise the marketing opportunities for the VQs throughout 2008 all possible support mechanisms should be explored. The paper is not an exhaustive account of all funding streams and other sources may be available.

England

6 The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is the non-departmental public body which took over the roles of the former Further Education Funding Council and Training and Enterprise Councils. The LSC has responsibility for planning and funding education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. Therefore, the LSC funds all learning for young people, aged 16–19 provided by colleges, schools and other training providers but does not provide funding for those entering Higher Education (HE).

7 The LSC has made it clear it will not fund training or qualifications that discharge the statutory responsibilities of employers and in their view, health and safety VQs fall into this category. However, where colleges can demonstrate that these qualifications add significantly to the overall learning outcomes to be achieved by the learner (when submitting their bids) then funding for the VQs should be available. This position was clearly stated by the LSC to college representatives in October 2006.

8 Funding for qualifications under the the LSC's "Train to Gain" initiative is aimed at employees requiring upskilling in literacy and numeracy. Whilst funds are available to enable employees to undertake National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, funds are not available for health and safety qualifications due to the qualifying criteria set by the LSC (described in para.7 above).

9 The Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) that formed part of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) available through DEFRA, provided funding towards the cost of vocational training (relating to the performance of a person's occupation or work) for those engaged in farming or forestry. The scheme had previously indicated to HSE that VQs would be eligible for funding but unfortunately VTS closed to new applications on 30 June 2006. However, some training providers continue to have funds available from this scheme and this allows the training to be funded to a maximum of 75% of the cost subject to certain criteria being met.

10 The new Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for 2007-2103 has a budget of £3.9 billion and replaces the scheme under which VTS operated. Some £600 million will be made available to make agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable and to enhance opportunity in rural areas. This fund may be available to support education and training initiatives. Funds will be distributed according to regional priorities set by the nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). For example, the Regional Development Agency “Yorkshire Forward”, working with Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector will be working on land based skills funding across the whole of Yorkshire and Humber. The funding provided can be used to develop skills in a number of key business areas including practical and technical skills, livestock and crop husbandry, training for primary processing in the agricultural and forestry sectors, and in management and business. Details of how these funding streams will operate, or what will be covered, has not yet been fully established by many of the RDAs. A full list of contact details for the RDAs is included in Annex 1.

Wales

11 Funding for training is available from a Local Education Authority or National Council for Education and Training in Wales subject to conditions set out in The Learning and Skills Act 2000. Under Section 96 of the Act, colleges, institutions and employers in Wales are eligible for funding for training courses that lead to external qualifications if the qualification has been approved by the Welsh Assembly under section 99 of the Act. The function of approving qualifications under that section has been delegated to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Welsh Assembly Government under section 62 of the Government of Wales Act 1998.

12 As a result, education and training providers can only use public funding in connection with the provision of courses leading to an external qualification, if that qualification has been approved and appears on the approved list. All three levels of the health and safety VQs offered by Lantra Awards and NPTC are listed. N.B. For learners aged over 19 years, the qualification does not have to appear on the list to be eligible for funding.

13 The Farming Connect Skills Development (FCSD) is a service offered by Lantra SSC for farmers and growers in Wales concerned with agriculture, production horticulture and forestry. Eligible businesses which sign up to the service may receive a free on-farm skills check, a training needs analysis, a refresher skills check every two years and up to 50% support towards the cost of approved training and assessment. The scheme gives Welsh farmers and growers the opportunity to identify their skills needs and choose from a wide range of vocational training courses, including the health and safety VQs. Although the FCSD runs until the end of March 2008, it is hoped the scheme will be continued, subject to agreement with the fund providers.

14 The Rural Development Plan 2007-2013 (RDP) is the mechanism by which the Welsh Assembly Government will deliver the activities under the EU Rural Development Regulation. It is a strategic policy document and so does not contain operational detail on the individual schemes that will be implemented. That level of detail will be set out in the scheme guidance that is currently being developed. The Welsh Assembly Government is promoting a sustainable approach to agriculture and supporting farmers in adapting for the future so it may well feature funding for education and training. See annex 1 for contact details.

Scotland

15 The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) distributes funding to Scotland's colleges and universities for teaching and learning, research and other activities in support of the Scottish Government's priorities. There are 43 colleges and 19 higher education institutions funded by SFC. Funding for learners on higher education programmes is also provided by the Students Awards Agency for Scotland.

16 Colleges wishing to obtain funding for training courses and qualifications are required to apply to the SFC. These qualifications do not necessarily need to have been approved by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA - the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications) in order for them to be eligible for funding. Therefore the health and safety VQs offered by Lantra Awards and NPTC would be fundable.

17 Individual Learning Account (ILA) Scotland is a Scottish Government scheme which helps pay for learning. It is available to individuals aged 18 years or over and living in Scotland. For those individuals earning £18,000 a year or less, the scheme pays £200 a year towards the cost of learning new skills. For those earning more than £18,000 a year, the entitlement is £100 a year. Candidates can study with any approved ILA Scotland learning provider, including local colleges, universities and private training companies.

18 All courses approved for £100 funding will lead to a recognised certificate or qualification. Approved courses are those up to Level 6 on the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework or up to Level 3 Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ). As part of the ILA Scotland scheme, learners must make a minimum personal contribution of £10 when booking a course. The total amount to contribute will depend on the overall cost of the course. In order for courses to become eligible, training providers must register them with ILA Scotland. Currently, there are a wide range of courses on offer (for example, units towards the pesticide users Certificates of Competence and fork lift truck operator training). Therefore the ILA scheme may offer an opportunity for the uptake of VQs if training providers are willing to register appropriate training courses for these qualifications. There are proposals to develop a similar scheme for businesses to be known as the business ILA.

19 Experience Counts' is a Lantra SSC project aimed at improving the employability skills of those mature workers aged over 50. The scheme targets workers from the aquaculture, horticulture and trees and timber industries. Funding is available for a variety of courses (including VQs) and is tailored to suit individual needs. The project has been widened to include other land based industries but concludes on 31 March 2008.

20 The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) will bring together a wide range of formerly separate support schemes including those covering the farming, forestry and primary processing sectors, rural enterprise and business development, diversification and rural tourism. The extent to which the SRDP will provide funding for training and qualifications has yet to be established but it may offer considerable potential. Anticipated launch date is likely to be in April or May 2008. A website address providing regional office contact details is included in Annex 1.

Other funding streams

21 The "New Deal for Young People" initiative is a key part of the Government's Welfare to Work strategy. It aims to give unemployed people aged 18 to 24 new opportunities to train and to gain work experience, so that they have the skills required of them. Employers who recruit anyone under New Deal for Young People, can get a grant of up to £750 towards the cost of an agreed vocational qualification or training certificate. Health and safety VQs and training courses are eligible. Details are available from the government agency Jobcentre Plus, and the scheme is available nationwide.

Conclusion

22 There are a variety of funding opportunities that support training and attainment of the health and safety VQs. Some of these initiatives are available on a national, regional, or local basis. The amount of funding available is variable and there are often terms and conditions applied to participants or limits to the duration of such schemes. Restrictions by age, occupation, farming activity and employment status are sometimes limiting factors. In addition, many schemes specify precisely what training or qualifications are eligible for funding (or conversely what is excluded) and this places further restrictions on the availability of financial support.

Action

23 Members are asked to agree to the following coordinated strategy to market and promote the uptake of the VQs in Great Britain in 2008/09:

(i) That HSE seeks to exploit marketing and promotional opportunities through the trade press and its presence at the Royal and technical shows as part of its overall Communications Plan for the year and to continue to work through links with the agricultural college network;

(ii) That members establish and maintain contacts with their local/regional funding providers to actively encourage the provision of funding for VQs and to promote their uptake. Annex 1 provides contact details.

(iii) That members re-establish the AIAC Training and Education Project Group as a focal point for promoting the VQs and in particular, use the group as a means of sharing the knowledge gained through their involvement with local/regional funding providers.

(iv) That the availability of and access to funding for the VQs be actively promoted and encouraged by members through their membership networks and other industry stakeholder links as a key driver for uptake of the VQs project.

Contact

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Policy Group - Agriculture and Food Sector
HSE

CONTACT DETAILS

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

The decision to establish Regional Development Agencies was taken by the Government in 1997 following a manifesto commitment to give more emphasis to regional development in England. All RDAs have a common mission statement which is: to transform England's regions through sustainable economic development.

There are nine regional development agencies (RDAs). If you are unsure which RDA has responsibility for the geographical area you are interested in, visit www.englishrdas.com/rdaregions.aspx.

1. The South West

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/>

The South West of England Regional Development Agency
Sterling House , Dix's Field, Exeter, EX1 1QA

David Williams
Director of Skills
Tel: 01202 441933
Email: david.williams@southwestrda.org.uk

2. The South East

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

<http://www.seeda.co.uk/>

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), Cross Lanes,
Guildford GU1 1YA

Tel: 01483 484200

[Poul Christensen CBE](#) – board member with agricultural interests

3. The North West

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)

<http://www.nwda.co.uk/>

Email: info@nwda.co.uk

PO Box 37,
Renaissance House, Centre Park, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 1XB

The Business Enquiry team acts as the first point of contact for the Enterprise, Innovation & Skills division of the NWDA. This includes finance and grant enquiries.
01925 400 495

4. The East of England

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA)

<http://www.eeda.org.uk/>

EEDA, The Business Centre, Station Road, Histon
Cambridgeshire, CB24 9LQ
Telephone 01223 713900.

Alison Webster, executive director of skills and communities. For more information call the communities directorate team on 01223 484632, or email skillsandcommunities@eeda.org.uk.

5. The East Midlands

The East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA)
EMDA, Apex Court, City Link, Nottingham, NG2 4LA
Telephone 0115 9888300
<http://www.emda.org.uk/main/info@emd.org.uk>

From the EMDA website (Skills and vocational training)

“Our consultations with stakeholders have suggested there are gaps in current vocational skills provision in the sector and EMDA is keen to see these addressed through the new programme. Funding will be available for skills development in agricultural, horticultural, food and forestry businesses and organisations. This will be focused on business training, skills, sharing of knowledge and good practice.”

RDPE Team at EMDA - rdpe@emd.org.uk or call 0115 947 1797.

6. Yorkshire and Humberside

Yorkshire Forward is the Regional Development Agency charged with improving the Yorkshire and Humber economy.

<http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/index.asp>

Yorkshire Forward, Victoria House, Victoria Place, Leeds, LS11 5AE

Telephone 0113 3949600

Lord Haskins is a board member with Yorkshire Forward and has a lead role/responsibility in rural issues

7. The West Midlands

Advantage West Midlands is the RDA for this region

<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/>

Advantage West Midlands, 3 Priestley Wharf, Holt Street, Aston Science Park, Birmingham B7 4BN Tel: 0 121 380 3500

Ian Baker

Head of Rural Renaissance RDPE Programme Manager

ianbaker@advantagewm.co.uk

07919 168 238

8. The North East

One North East is the RDA for this region

<http://www.onenortheast.com/>

One North East, Riverside House, Goldcrest Way, Newburn Riverside

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 8NY

Tel: 0191 229 6711

Contacts: Jim Anderson - Rural & Business Support Specialist Advisor

jim.anderson@onenortheast.co.uk

Frances Rowe - Rural & Environment Manager

frances.rowe@onenortheast.co.uk

Tel: 0191 229 6370

9. London

The London Development Agency (LDA) is responsible for the capital.

<http://www.lda.gov.uk/>

Email: info@lda.gov.uk

London Development Agency

Palestra, 197 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8AA

Telephone: 020 7593 9000

Regional Assemblies

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/>
rah.requests@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Rural Affairs, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ
Telephone 0845 010 3300

Scotland

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture>

Tel: 0131 556 8400 or 08457 741741 <mailto:ruralpolicyteam@scotland.gsi.gov.uk>

For information about the Scotland Rural Development Programme you can contact your local RPID area office by post, email or telephone. A list of contact details will be found at the following web site address:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/AOcontacts/contacts>