



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



**TATA STEEL**

**GT VET**

**Greening Technical VET – Sustainable Training  
Module for the European Steel Industry**



**Work Package 3**

**Industry Driven Analysis of Job Requirements**

**National Report**

**WP3**

**UK National Report: VET System**

**D.7.5.4**

**United Kingdom**

**Dr Dean Stroud**

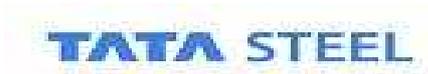
**Dr Claire Evans**



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<p>In Wales, the Welsh Assembly established two packages of assistance for employers and employees affected by the recession. The ‘ReAct – Redundancy Action Fund’ provides grant and training money to individuals who were made redundant and to employers who subsequently employ such individuals (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011). The ‘ProAct’ Fund is a financial support package, designed to help viable businesses cope with the downturn. It helps fund training during quiet time with the aim of up-skilling staff in readiness for the upturn (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).....</p>	
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## Introduction

This report provides an overview of the VET system in the UK. It is essentially an abridged and edited version of CEDEFOP's narrative *The United Kingdom: VET in Europe – Country Report 2010* (ReferNet United Kingdom). The reference year is 2009 and this constitutes the most current information available. The full version of this report is available at 'VET in Europe – Country Reports', <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>

It should be noted that since the composition of the ReferNet report, a Coalition government was elected in May 2010. There is therefore some doubt as to how this will impact upon the VET system.

This report utilises the following structure. First, the general context is outlined, in terms of outlining certain demographic characteristics of the UK, namely the size of the working population, predicted population trends, the age structure of the population, economic activity, employment rate and educational attainment of the population. The report then examines policy development, describing current objectives, mechanisms and priorities. A brief overview of the historical background to current British VET systems is then provided, before the text proceeds into a description of the legislative and institutional framework for VET in the United Kingdom. The systems and practices in place for initial VET (including apprenticeship training) and then continuing VET, both formal and non-formal, for adults are then outlined. The report concludes with an overview of VET funding mechanisms.



## 1 General Policy Context

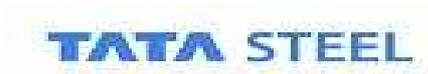
With regards to education and training, the UK has a devolved system of governance. There are differences and similarities between the education and training systems of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England, which will be reflected in this report. Scotland, in particular, has an education system with a long history of independence from other parts of the UK. In contrast to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, England has no separate elected national body exclusively responsible for its central administration. Instead, a number of government departments look after England's day-to-day administrative affairs (e.g. the Department for Education<sup>1</sup>, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (BIS) which oversees policy on adult education and training, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which is responsible for welfare of people, training and employment programmes, etc.). The Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government (the administrative organisation for the Scottish Parliament) have wide powers for social policies, including education and training. The Government of Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly also have extensive responsibilities for education and training.

### 1.1 Population and Demographics

England has the highest population density of the Union (383 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>), Scotland has the lowest density (65 per km<sup>2</sup>). The population of the UK has grown and changed significantly over the last 50 years, with inward migration contributing to a vast ethnic diversity across society and accounting for approximately half of the population growth.

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<sup>1</sup> The new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government that came to power in May 2010, has formed the Department for Education (DfE) replacing the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).



The UK has a population of 61 million and a labour force of 31 million as of 2009 that makes the UK the third largest country in the EU (Office for National Statistics, 2010) Current projections estimate the UK population to reach 71 million by 2031.

Since the late 1990s, although there has still been natural increase, net international migration into the UK from abroad has been an increasingly important factor in population change. Although slower than in some other EU Member States, the population growth in the UK is expected to continue. In Scotland the population is now projected to increase until at least 2048.

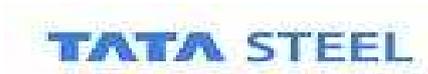
Net immigration is now the main factor in the UK population growth. Indeed, the most recent figures available show that net migration rose by 21% in 2010, with 239,000 more people arriving in the UK than those leaving (BBC, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

The long-term trend has been a decline in the under-16 age group and an increase in those aged 16-64 and those over 65 and over, a process that is now intensifying. In 2008, the proportion of the population over 65 (16%) exceeded the proportion who were under 16. At the same time, the proportion over 85 is rising by more than 5% a year: the ONS estimates that within 24 years almost a quarter of people will be over 65 and only 18% under 16. Almost 75% of the UK's 2020 workforce is already in work.

These demographic, economic and social trends have direct implications for VET in terms of employees' flexibility, occupational pathways, recognition of qualifications

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<sup>2</sup> In 2009, the total for net migration had stood at 198,000.



and upskilling or re-skilling, particularly, in the current economic and financial climate.

## 1.2 Economy and Labour Market Indicators

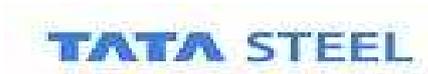
The UK economy is the fifth largest economy in the world and the second largest in Europe by real or nominated GDP. It is the sixth largest by purchasing power parity (PPP) country in the world. The 2010 World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report put Britain at 12th place, up from 13th position in 2009. According to the same report, the UK's €156 billion annual deficit is a significant constraint on the economy.

The UK entered a serious economic recession in late 2008, when the economy contracted by 1.5 per cent of GDP, the largest drop since 1980. The Treasury's analysis of independent forecasts shows that the economy was expected to shrink by 3.4 per cent in 2009, with slow growth resuming in 2010 (HM Treasury, 2009). As the financial crisis has deepened and led to sliding tax revenues and nationalisation of banks, the government has run up total public debts of £697.5 (€766) billion. In terms of debt-to-GDP ratio, the OECD ranks the UK 18th out of 28 members.

According to the Economy Watch latest report of 2009, the UK service sector accounts for 76.2 per cent of GDP and continues to dominate the UK economy - banking, insurance and business services, in particular. Until 2007, the financial services companies dominated the UK stock market, accounting for one quarter of all corporate profits.

UK industry and manufacturing constitutes 22.8 per cent of GDP. Both manufacturing and energy (4.0 per cent of GDP) have been in long-term decline, resulting in Britain becoming a net importer of energy in 2005.

UK agriculture, which accounts for 0.9 per cent of GDP, is a highly efficient sector by European standards, producing 60 per cent of its food needs but employing less than two per cent of the workforce (fewer than 500,000 workers). Only 2.8 per cent



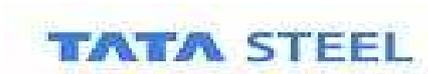
are employed in primary sectors as compared to the EU average 5.2 per cent (Eurostat, 2010).

Prior to the first signs of recession, UK experienced high levels of economic performance and consequently high employment rates. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows that the employment rate among people of working age was 75.1% in 2007 (ONS, 2010), dropping to 74.1% in March 2009. The UK's levels of employment have remained higher than in most EU Member States across most age groups and, at ISCED levels 5-6, in particular (Eurostat series 2003, 2006, 2010). The employment rate in Scotland is currently at a similar level to the UK rate.

Following the EU definition, about 22 per cent of the UK workforce is in low paid jobs, compared to 12 per cent in France, or 8.5 per cent in Denmark. 31.3 per cent of the UK's female labour force is low paid. Moreover, according to the OECD data, incidence of low pay and gender wage gap has increased in the last decade.

In recession, the contraction in output led to decline in the demand for labour, with increasing levels of redundancies and falling vacancies. At the end of 2009, the ILO unemployment rate was 7.8%, compared to 7.6% in Scotland. The UK has also continued to have a lower unemployment rate than the € zone average (8.5 per cent unemployed in April 2009, 9.2% in June 2009 - Eurostat, 2009) across all age groups, although slightly lower for the 15 to 24 year olds (19.1% in 2009, compared with the EU average of 19.7%). It should be noted that the Eurostat figures are not directly comparable with the ILO figures provided above, but allow for comparability across the EU.

OECD *Education at a Glance 2010* states that the economic crisis has hit the youngest and the least qualified the hardest. As with most other OECD countries, those with below upper-secondary education have experienced at least twice the



amount of increased unemployment compared to those with tertiary education between 2008 and 2009.

There has been further evidence that unemployment rates among those in elementary or low-skilled occupations have increased by 1.2 percentage points, while there has been a 0.5 percentage point increase among higher paid professional group over 2009.

In terms of public expenditure on education, in 2007 the UK spent 2.4% of GDP that is slightly higher than the EU average of 2.2% (Eurostat, 2008), although in real terms, the expenditure has decreased in the last five years.

### 1.3 Educational Attainment of Population

Educational attainment has risen significantly over recent years at all levels of the education system. The proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training was the highest ever in 2009, reaching 82.7%, up more than three percentage points, compared with 77.3% in 2006. Although the number of early school leavers decreased during 2002-2006, during the economic downturn it rose to 17% (2007), higher than the EU average of 14.1% (Eurostat, 2010). In 2009, the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds not in education or training, unemployment peaked, with more than half out of work for the first time in the last 15 years. Only 47% of them had a job in 2009, compared with 50% in 2008 and 58% in 2007, respectively.

Compared to other industrialised countries, attainment by the age of 16 is good, but staying-on rates after the age of 16-17 (QCF level 2 qualifications) is poor. Consequently, the proportion of the population with level 3 skills is lower than in other industrialised countries. In terms of enrolment on vocational courses, the UK has a lower number of pupils choosing vocational routes in secondary education, compared with the EU-27 average.

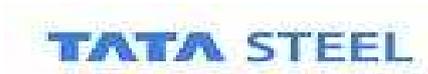


The UK compares favourably in terms of percentages participating in and graduating from higher education. However, growth in the number of maths, science and technology (MST) graduates was below EU average. The UK also performs well, with participation rates more than twice the EU average, on adult participation in lifelong learning (EC Progress Report 2009) towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training, 2009), reaching 19.9%, compared with 9.5% EU average in 2008.

According to Eurostat (2010), the UK scores particularly highly at tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-6 (only second to Sweden at 24%) – 20.6% in 2007 compared to the EU average of 12.2%, as well as at lower levels of attainment, where the achievement was less successful prior to 2007. The government has introduced some initiatives to narrow the gap in education achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged background and their peers. With regard to ISCED levels 3-4, the UK scores higher (17.2%) than the EU average (5.7%), (Eurostat, 2010).

In terms of 20 to 24 year olds who have completed at least upper secondary education, overall the UK has slightly higher rates of achievement (78.2% in 2008) compared with the EU average (78.5% in 2008). However, the figures are consistently lower, albeit slightly lower among female graduates (Eurostat, 2010). Overall, it remains lower than in some other EU countries (from over 85% in Finland to almost 95% in Slovakia).

The UK remains high on the list for participation in both formal education by labour status (second after Sweden for training of unemployed at 14.7% compared with the EU average of 6.3% (Eurostat, 2007), whereas the non-formal participation is slightly higher than the EU average (23.8% to 20.4%, respectively). Although UK showed a high level of participation in non-formal education by highest level of achievement in 2007 (40.3% compared with the EU average of 32.7%), it substantially lags behind Sweden and Norway, where the rates stands at 69.4% and 50.6%, respectively.



In 2008, the percentage of the working population (25-64 years of age) that had attained at least upper secondary education was 67 per cent in the UK compared with OECD average of 68 per cent. The upper secondary graduation rate in the UK is 86%, compared with an OECD average of 82%. Looking at different age groups within this total reveals that the improvement was at the slower rate relative to OECD average (OECD, 2009).

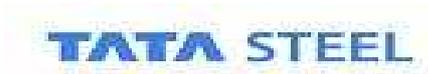
## 2 Policy Development - Objectives, Frameworks, Mechanisms and Priorities

### 2.1 Objectives and Priorities of the National Policy Development Areas of VET

#### 2.1.1 National Lifelong Learning Strategy

Lifelong learning in England, Wales and Northern Ireland often refers to learning that takes place after the young person has finished formal education and training. In Scotland, lifelong learning has a broader 'cradle to grave' definition.

In the UK, the decision on access to further education beyond statutory school age is left to the individual (an individualistic approach), except in cases where a job requires certain entry qualifications. Although government places increasing importance on up-skilling the workforce, training policies are left to employers (a 'voluntarist' approach). The UK performs comparatively well on short, workplace training courses, but overall levels of qualification compare unfavourably with a number of other EU countries (ReferNet, 2010; Dubbins, 2000).



Since 2002, vocational education has received greater attention from policy-makers with a view to increasing the skills levels of the current and future workforce, with acquisition of qualifications used as the principal evidence (Stedward, 2003). Governments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have identified priorities in lifelong learning and adult learning, in particular. For example, the Lifelong Strategy for Scotland emphasises the ‘cradle to grave’ idea of lifelong learning and widening access to learning for all citizens. In Wales, the Assembly’s government’s strategy for the promotion of lifelong learning emphasises broadening learning pathways.

The governments have set priorities for lifelong learning in the UK as follows:

- achieve cross-government action to tackle skills gaps and shortages;
- encourage employers to use higher levels of skills in the workforce to develop more ambitious and innovative business strategies;
- motivate learners to continue in and return to learning;
- make VET responsive to employers' needs; and
- raise the status and quality of initial VET.

Wales and Northern Ireland have a particular focus on the employability skills of the economically inactive. Scotland has its own version of the NEET policy; called More Choices, More Chances (MCMC, 2006). This represents an action plan to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Scotland. Scotland's approach to lifelong learning also seeks to enhance development for learners through the development of structured learning opportunities and continuous development of knowledge and skills, aimed at enhancing the individual's quality of life and society's wellbeing.

Key principles of the government strategy across the UK are increased engagement of learners, parents and employers; the extension of individual choice; the raising of standards for all; and the easing of transitions between the phases of education.



Some specific challenges include the creation of a model of lifelong progression which stresses continuity throughout the education and training process; a less directive approach to quality assurance across all sectors; and a coherent qualifications framework.

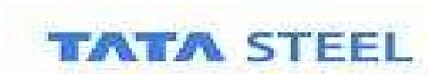
The Qualifications and Credit Framework (England, Wales and NI) aims to provide a simple qualification structure for individuals and employers across all levels and sectors, and promote lifelong learning and facilitative transfer between pathways. Current changes in the wider vocational qualifications system aim to make it less bureaucratic and more responsive to learner and employer needs.

Addressing the challenge of a 'greying workforce' , the government has created an Education and Training Committee, which brings together all the relevant government departments and national agencies. The Committee examines the implications for lifelong learning policy, including the effects of broader educational policy and collection of data on older learners, as well as the implications of age discrimination law for older learners.

### **2.1.2 Policy Developments in the Main VET Policy Areas**

For the last decade, a UK-wide policy objective has been set to improve the national skills base of the population throughout their working lives and create sustainable employment in order to compete in the globalised markets (e.g. Stedward, 2003). Government has become proactive in leading vocational education and training (VET) strategy – to raise levels of qualification in the population, to increase employability, and to improve the competitiveness and productivity of the UK economy through introducing the skills agenda.

The inter-departmental national skills strategy emphasises the economic and social benefits of skills and their role in supporting more high-quality sustainable jobs. The government has also continuously targeted unemployed and inactive segment of the



population. The government aims to achieve an employment rate of 80%, as a long-term aspiration.

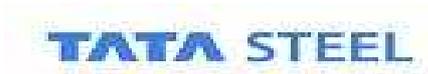
With the effects of the economic downturn, retarded economic growth (e.g. Alexander, 2011) and on the basis of current rates of progress, some of these ambitious targets are not likely to be achieved by 2020 and have been under review by the previous and current Coalition governments. In response to meeting these targets, the government published a series of policy documents, to close skills gaps at every level by 2020, through a demand-led system, where the needs of adult learners and employers are given priority. The reforms includes, amongst others, legislation on funding entitlement to free training in basic skills and first full level 2 qualifications, a guarantee of free training up to level for those aged 19-25, and a legal right for suitably qualified young people to enter Apprenticeship.

These policy papers have also concern with young people education. A number of early school leavers, although improved lately, still remains quite high compared with other EU member states. Reducing the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a priority for the Government, with the proportion of young people in England aged 16 to 18 standing at 9.8% in June 2011 (BBC, 2011b).<sup>3</sup>

Being NEET between the ages of 16–18 is a major predictor of later unemployment, low income, teenage motherhood, depression and poor physical health.

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<sup>3</sup> The proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds in England not in employment, education or training (Neet) rose to 18.4% in June 2011. The figure from the Department for Education is the highest for the second quarter since 2006, and is up from 16.3% last year. Nearly a million (979,000) 16 to 24-year-olds were Neet between April and June of 2011 (BBC, 2011b).

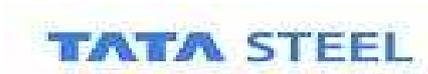


The previous government had adopted a strategy to reduce the number of NEETs by building partnerships of schools, career services and families and providing alternatives to post-compulsory education (such as pledging to guarantee apprenticeship places to those young people who wanted one) and through intended legislation to raise the education participation age to 18 (England).

Scotland adopted its strategic approach to tackle the issue of NEETs in 2006. The government implements its programme of September guarantee, which offers every school leaver an offer of a place in post-16 learning.

Financial support (Education Maintenance Allowance -EMA) to those from poorer backgrounds to stay on in education or training had been vaunted as a successful government measure. The EMA was introduced in 2004 but has been controversially scrapped by the Coalition government, despite positive evaluation results and widespread condemnation (BBC, 2011c).

To raise attainment and widen participation, especially among disadvantaged and disaffected young learners, the previous government was reforming 14 to 19 provisions, with increased flexibility in the last two years of compulsory education (work-related learning engagement programmes) and by introducing 14-19 Diplomas in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which were intended to provide a vocational alternative to general secondary education. Reforming the apprenticeship scheme by investing more resources, removing the age limit and opening up progression routes to those coming up through the vocational route had also been central to government agenda. The previous government intended to rise participation age, to 17 by 2013 and to 18 by 2015, although the new coalition government plans to review this initiative.



The government's aim for students with special needs (SEN) is that they reach their full potential in school and make a successful transition to further and higher education, training or work. Students with SEN are normally taught within a main stream environment at schools or part of the time at the specialised school. The government through local authorities and partnership arrangements provides advice and materials for teachers, parents and students. A major Ofsted review<sup>4</sup>, published in September 2010, reveals a range of concerns about the current system. The Coalition government is reviewing the SEN provision in England.

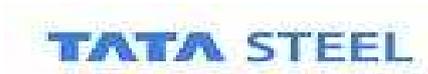
The FE strategy for VET students with SEN is based on partnership with key agencies and learning providers to build flexible packages for provision, including appropriate progression and transition routes that meet the learning needs of this cohort of learners. The lower levels (Entry levels, in particular) of qualifications frameworks across the UK are also designed to promote equity in VET provision among learners with SEN.

Initial teacher training course normally include a special needs element. Once qualified, an experienced teacher or training can take further training for special educational needs or in more specialised areas as post-graduate studies or Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The overall aim of government policy is to develop careers services available to all and to provide an easily accessible source of information, impartial advice and guidance (IAG) to both young people and adults. The Devolved Governments across the UK have been reviewing their career services to establish new universal adult career services, providing labour market focused careers advice for all adults, as well as school career education services. ICT and new media means are considered to be an effective medium providing that ways can be found to provide equal access to disadvantaged and excluded groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.



The vocational qualification reform programme aims to make qualifications more flexible through the unit and credit-based frameworks, which allow for better horizontal and vertical flexibility of the system. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in England and Northern Ireland is currently being populated, whereas the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF) is already well developed. The underlying aims of the ongoing reforms are to ensure 'parity of esteem' between vocational and academic education and ensure more flexible pathways for all.

A major aim has been to move from a model where institutions respond to government priorities to one where they respond directly to the needs and demands of individual learners, parents and employers. One reason for this has been to rebalance the roles and responsibilities of the state, employer and individual, recognising that, when potentially unlimited demand confronts limited public resource, the role of public funding must be clearly defined. Funding, however, remains a key factor in many of the options available and choices made.

In terms of governance and funding, arrangements have been changed to support government priorities, i.e. by merging or creating semi-independent agencies (e.g. for inspection, regulation of qualifications, etc). The new performance assessment framework for colleges and providers in England (Framework for Excellence) helps to trace destinations of learners and aims to improve progression and choice for learners. The switch to demand-led funding and end to the supply-side planning of adult skills provision has led to the institutional reform of planning and funding bodies. At the beginning of 2010, the responsibilities for 16 to 19 year olds were transferred to local authorities from the Learning and Skills Council (England) and the new Skills Funding Agency to distribute funding for adult learners in the FE colleges was created.



The FE sector underwent major changes between 2007 and 2010, through the introduction of new quality measures to improve the transparency and provide greater coherence of planning where decisions are based on the quality and responsiveness of the provision. The series of government policy documents aimed to:

- develop a network of colleges who have the confidence, independence and autonomy to shape their own futures for the benefit of learners, employers and their local community; and
- reduce bureaucracy by introducing a lighter touch inspection regime, based on colleges' own assessment of their performance, and a more streamlined planning and funding system that increasingly allows colleges to become more focused on priorities.

As the UK labour market is relatively unregulated, the social partnership in vocational education and training remains largely voluntary. In terms of VET policy formulation, there have been some increased strategic involvement and cooperation, despite different approaches on the part of employers and trade unions, particularly over financing of training and degree of control.

The employer-dominated Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), 23 quasi-governmental bodies coordinate enterprise training and are involved in the allocation of state funds for skills training. They take a lead in collating and communicating sectoral labour market data and intelligence that provide their input into the development and revision of occupational standards, on which qualifications and training programmes are based. They also consider collective actions to address specific sector skills needs. All SSCs have representatives of trade unions and professional bodies on their boards in their advisory roles.



The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is an umbrella organisation for SSCs (executive function) and has a skills agenda strategic leadership and advisory role, by providing evidence-based advice to the government. In 2010, it advised the government to introduce a statutory entitlement to training and to simplify the number of publicly funded bodies involved in skills agenda.

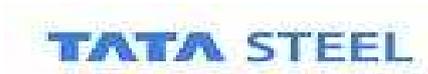
### *Validation and Recognition of non-formal and informal learning*

The UK has considerable experience and expertise in the recognition of the informal and non-formal learning, either as a non-traditional entry route into further or higher education or helping adult unemployed to return to work by identifying their job-related skills. The introduction of National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) switched the emphasis on the use of prior experience and learning in assessment for formal qualifications (accreditation of prior learning - APL).

Arrangements for the recognition of non-formal learning are linked to the outcomes orientation of competence-based NVQ qualifications and outcome-based non-N/SVQ qualifications. They do not depend on fixed syllabuses, fixed location or fixed time. Any learner, employed or not, who can provide evidence that meet the demands of the evidence requirements for a whole or partial qualification can be awarded credit.

However, the burden of providing evidence and the practicalities of assessment of non-formal/informal learning are considerable and the problems of cost and complexity are widely reported. The importance of non-formal and/or informal learning is clearly acknowledged in employers' increasing use in selection of accounts of experience, rather than formal qualifications, as evidenced in QCDA research on trends in the use of qualifications.

Typically, a portfolio evidencing the learning is produced, indicating the level and areas of expertise, then the level and content of the learning that will be assessed. APL is most likely to apply to a mature applicant.



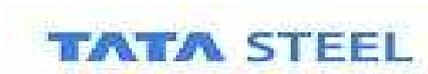
The possibility of recognising prior learning is being incorporated into the qualifications and credit frameworks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is also part of the arrangements for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) that allows credit rating and levelling of all learning, including core skills, generic skills and subject-specific learning as long as it is based upon outcomes; is assessed and is quality assured.

This process is governed by a set of guidelines for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning within the corresponding frameworks.

### **2.1.3 Current Debates**

The ongoing debate on the UK skills base, particularly in times of economic downturn, calls for some urgent action. Thus the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) warns in their progress report 'Ambition 2020' that as the supply of higher-level skills outpaces the demand: while the proportion of over-qualified employees is rising, there is no sufficient or adequate training where it is most needed. UKCES proposes an integrated strategy and demand-led skills and employment systems.

One of the first consultations launched by the coalition government has been on Skills for Sustainable Growth (England) that outlines the new ministerial vision for skills by committing to further enhancing in-work training and workplace training and includes references to the QCF. It also explores some key areas to seek further views, i.e. on how real gains in skills can be best achieved and invites comments and ideas on the role of colleges and training organisations in helping people make a smooth transition from learning to the world of work.



In terms of VET agenda, the new Coalition government has announced an independent review of vocational education for 14 to 19 year olds in England with an aim to increase parity of esteem of vocational qualifications that had left to the gap in the country's skills base. The review will examine:

- the institutional arrangements of vocational education, for example, establishment of university technical schools and colleges;
- its responsiveness to a changing the labour market;
- funding mechanisms including arrangements for who bears the cost of qualifications;
- progression from vocational education to work, higher education and higher level training;
- the role of the third sector, private providers, employers and awarding bodies.

The study and recommendations will consider ways to increase incentives for young people to participate by taking explicit account of good practice in a selection of developed economies.

As part of making post-compulsory education and training more efficient, a consultation on 'A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology' (England), which seeks views on simplifying the funding system, has also been launched.

## 2.2 The Latest Developments in the Field of European Tools

### *Credit and Qualifications Frameworks*

The ongoing Vocational Qualification reform across the UK Devolved Governments (DGs) has been refining qualifications frameworks. It aims to make qualifications landscape more understandable to employers and learners while meeting the needs



of both and providing clear and accessible routes to employability and flexible learning progression.

England has begun the process of converting the National Qualification Framework (NQF) into the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which is a unitised, credit-based and web-based regulated framework. In England, The QCF is a new way of recognising achievements of learners through the award of credit for units and qualifications that enables qualifications to be achieved gradually by the accumulation and transfer of credit. The work includes both academic and applied knowledge and skills. The aim is that the linkage of all levels, including school-based, vocational qualifications and higher education will be completed by 2011.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was instrumental in developing this process in 2002, by promoting lifelong learning in Scotland and ensuring a better understanding of qualifications in Scotland. It enabled learners, provider and employers to identify how the range of Scottish qualifications, related to each other and to other forms of learning, and how different types of qualification can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

From 2003, in Wales, all learning - including mainstream qualifications - was brought into a single unifying structure – the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The framework merges the concepts of volume of learning achievements (credit) and the demands made by that learning on the learner (level) to create a system that is able to embrace all types and styles of learning, and all qualifications.

The QCF will incorporate systems for Wales and Northern Ireland. The framework has been approved by ministers for national roll out and now is being populated with units. Training providers and Awarding Organisations have been tasked with developing common and consistent approaches to providing information, advice and guidance to learners and employers on achieving credit and qualifications from the QCF, alongside course description/s and marketing and promotional materials. This in-



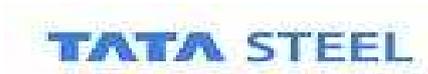
cludes a review of the assessment methodology and the implementation of processes to accommodate the award of credit consistent with the requirements of the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and regulators.

The QCF operates in England and Northern Ireland. In Wales the QCF forms part of the larger Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Both Scotland and Wales operate overarching credit and qualification frameworks: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), respectively. Both the SCQF and CQFW are meta-frameworks which encompass the relevant qualification frameworks for higher education qualifications; the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education institutions in Scotland (FQHE, Scotland) and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ, EWNI).

All UK countries have outcomes-based education systems, and the development of the outcome-based methodology has been central to the VET reform, including qualification frameworks. Most VET qualifications, school qualifications and first degrees are described and assessed in outcomes terms.

Within the QCF, every unit and qualification in the framework has a credit value and level. Units are building blocks of all qualifications. The qualifications are of three sizes (award, certificate, diploma). The framework has nine levels of difficulty (in Scotland, the SCQF has 12). When a learner completes a unit, they are awarded the relevant credits, which are recorded electronically on their learner record.

One credit is awarded for those learning outcomes achieved in ten hours of learning time. Organisations that have been recognised to do so, develop and submit units in the QCF unit database. Once they are available in the databank, they may be used to build qualifications by using approved and agreed rules of combination (RoC). Rules of combination specify the credits that need to be achieved, through particular



units, for a qualification to be awarded. All qualifications within the framework have rules of combination, developed through consultation with awarding organisations, SSCs and employer representatives. They are the mechanisms through which sets of achievements are grouped together into a qualification. The other purpose of rules of combination is to develop the structure through which credits may be transferable between qualifications and awarding bodies. This is a new feature of the QCF.

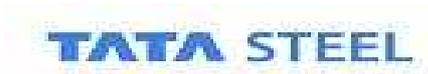
Awarding organisations subsequently use agreed RoC to develop assessment arrangements for qualifications and submit qualifications for accreditation. Once accredited, awarding organisations offer these units and qualifications to approved centres which are responsible for supporting learners; for carrying out assessment of units and ensuring the awards of credits and qualifications.

The regulatory arrangements for the QCF are maintained by respective qualifications regulators in England (Ofqual), Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) and are centred around the learners' interests, public value for money and ensuring that quality and standards are maintained by organisations operating within the QCF.

As part of the framework development, the QCF has published guidelines for credit accumulation and transfer and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning. Scotland has had this mechanism as part of the SCQF for some time. Wales adopted the 'Recognition of non formal learning' working document in 2006.

For learners the frameworks have a number of perceived benefits as they are:

- Flexible: possibility to recognise prior learning, including non-certified learning, towards a recognised qualification
- Transferable: possibility to transfer work-based skills and learning into credit that can then be put towards units and qualifications



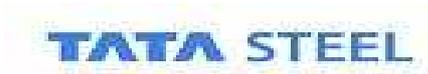
- Quality-assured: and completion of units at a pace and in a way that fits around their lives
- Easy to understand: and compare the difficulty of each qualification and the amount of work involved, so they can make a more informed choice
- Geared towards progression: they include unit-based learning that allows them to decide whether to progress further with a skill or change direction and put learning to new use.

### *Geographical Mobility in VET*

Both the inward and outward mobility of learner in the UK remains quite low compared with other EU member states, due to several reasons. Although the previous government introduced some measures to promote the mobility of learners within the remit of the EU programmes, these measures did not lead to a systemic government approach or strategy. The policy measures mainly concentrate on emerging economies and promotion of national education and attract overseas students to the UK.

Both inward and outward geographical mobility of learners in the UK, although growing remains quite low, compared with other EU Member States

Europass aims to help people make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe, thus facilitating the mobility of both learners and workers. The Europass documents have been designed in such a way as to help people chronicle their skills and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enrol in an education or training programme, looking for a job, or getting experience abroad (<http://www.europass.ie/europass>) initiative is not taken up readily in the UK, although the situation has improved in the last two years. There is no formal requirement for the awarding bodies to produce the Certificate Supplement, so the uptake is quite slow. The most advanced is the City and Guilds awarding body that

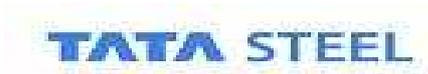


launched the Europass Certificate Supplement in 2008. Edexcel are in the process of creating theirs.

City & Guilds has a portfolio of over 500 qualifications, therefore the launch of the Certificate Supplement for every award has been phased out. An additional challenge is that a qualification might lead to more than one specialisation (i.e. certificate) at the same level. This then requires a Certificate Supplement to be produced for each individual certificate achieved because the Supplement relates not only to the qualification, but also to the route a learner has chosen to complete.

A dedicated Europass website has been created where the Certificate Supplements can be downloaded. This provides an easy, 24-hour and free access to the documents for all users. City & Guilds promoted the scheme by producing two press releases: one targeted the corporate sector to raise awareness among employers who are yet to accept Europass as a meaningful tool, while the second was aimed at managers responsible for selection and recruitment. The Europass initiative is also widely advertised in City & Guilds qualification documentation and promotional materials.

In Scotland, the HE sector has engaged with the provision of Europass Diploma Supplements and other education stakeholders are exploring the possibility of utilising the Diploma and Certificate Supplements as part of an ongoing engagement with European activity.



## 3 VET in Times of Crisis

### 3.1 Overview

The UK experienced a major economic downturn during 2008-2009, which affected most of the economic sectors in the UK. In a 2010 report, PWC stated that almost every industry sector was affected to some degree by the economic downturn. The PWC Sector Vulnerability Index, that combines ten key economic and financial indicators for 15 major industry sectors, suggests that the metal products, financial services and hotels and restaurants sectors are those which were the most vulnerable in the short term. Other sectors with above average vulnerability include engineering, transport and construction. The main factor behind these rankings is the relatively high cyclical nature of these sectors in the past, combined in some cases with weak current financial positions.

As stated in the *2010 Education at a Glance*, the economic crisis hit the youngest and the least qualified the hardest (OECD, 2010). As with most other OECD countries, those with below upper-secondary education experienced at least twice the amount of increased unemployment, compared to those with tertiary education between 2008 and 2009. In November 2009, the number of 16-24 year old NEETs reached 1.074 million, with a 105 000 increase compared to November 2008.

The number of long-term unemployed, younger than 25 years of age, has grown 66% over 12 months to November 2009. Youth, women and temporary workers have also been affected, e.g. of the 100 000 job losses associated with the downturn, 40% were among the young, although they comprise only 14% of all employees and 36% among temporary workers, although they comprise only 5% of all workers (TUC, 2009).



## 3.2. Effects of the Crisis on the VET System and Corresponding Measures

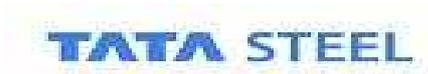
### 3.2.1 Trends in Learners' Behaviour

Recent applications to FE colleges and universities have experienced an unprecedented rise. The Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS) saw a 12% increase in applications in April 2009, reaching by 2010, a 22.9% increase (ReferNet UK, 2010). The biggest increase was from candidates aged over 25, which rose by 15.8% in 2009 (63.4% by 2010) despite a government withdrawal of funding (September 2007) for people who want to retrain in a different sphere, rather than become or stay unemployed, by studying an equivalent or lower qualification than the one they already hold (UCAS, 2010). The increase for applicants between 21-24 years of age was very high (up 44.8 per cent) in early 2010 (UCAS, 2010). It should be noted that some of the increase can be accounted for by 'new' categories of applicant coming into the UCAS applications process for the first time, such as those applying for nursing and midwifery courses, as well as the ending of later application deadlines for some courses (e.g. fine art).

Adults hoping to invest in education and training by retraining can face serious competition for places, due to the cuts in publicly funded places (5,000 in total) ordered by the government for 2010-2011.

### 3.2.2 Trends in Enterprises' Behaviour

The last recession in the 1990s showed that the level of training in companies fell (UK ReferNet, 2010). Although it may be too early to see the full impact of the current recession, it can be seen that previously, the proportion of people in receipt of training was 27 per cent in October-December 2006 (pre-recession) and stayed at that level for the same period in 2007 and 2008 (LFS Autumn 2006-2008). UKCES's *Am-*



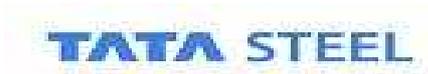
*bition 2020* notes that, during the recession, the nature of the training has changed: as recruitment levels fall, companies spend fewer resources on induction and safety, and more on developing the necessary skills to survive through the current recession and thrive when the economy improves.

Some businesses have been conducting surveys in anticipating skills needs in the economic slowdown climate as part of their future skills needs projections. Those with a wide range of skills, i.e. 'all rounders' are predicted to do well in terms of sustained employment and those in possession of management, leadership and risk management skills are most likely to sustain their jobs (Accounting Web, 2009).

The Cegos (2008) survey reveals that the biggest area of growth in company training and development will be e-learning, with nearly three quarters (73%) of organisations surveyed planning to use it for professional development in 2009. On the basis of its research, Cegos predicts that e-learning is set to increase 18 percentage points compared to June 2008, which showed 55% of organisations to be using e-learning.

More than half of respondents said blended learning will be a key part of their training strategy and one in five respondents plan to embrace mobile learning in 2009. Blended and mobile learning are also preferred modes of learning.

Although the Cegos survey covers only companies of the industrial sector, the findings are indicative of more general trends in most large companies to maintain, if marginally reduce, corporate L&D budgets and shifting to more accountable, cost-effective and less time consuming modes of training delivery, (i.e. e-learning) or developing in-house trainers. The CBI/Nord Anglia education and skills survey of 581 respondents, in November/December 2008, showed that - in response to the recession - over half of the employers (51%) say that they want to target their training more effectively in order to get maximum return on their spend. The situation varies according to sector and size of the company concerned.



Despite government's substantial investments in expanding the apprenticeships programme to help young people in the recession, the number of 16 to 18 year-olds start-up apprentices fell by 7.5% in 2009, whilst the number of 19 to 24 year olds starting Apprenticeship dropped by 5.9% over the same period (although the completion rates overall have improved). Figures released by the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills in October 2009, showed that there were 33,900 new apprenticeship starts in the fourth quarter of the academic year 2008-09. This is 29% lower than in the previous three months and 36% lower than in the same period in 2007-08. The reason for the decreasing number of apprentices is due partly to the unwillingness of firms to recruit apprentices who have initial training needs and partly to their wish to reduce discretionary spending (UKCES, 2009).

The previous UK Government was aiming to have 90000 more young people in modern apprenticeships by 2013, so as to ensure a place for every suitably qualified person between the ages of 16 and 18 who wanted one.

The economic downturn led to the previous government in England re-assessing and realigning the skills policy, which had been developed and initially implemented during a relatively continuous period of economic and labour market growth. In its report examining the impact of Leitch's 2006 review of skills, the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee (January 2009) recommended that the government would have to focus on tackling skills shortages and approaching skills as part of wider national economic development planning by building more flexibility into training support and making emphasis on re-skilling rather than upskilling as redundancies caused people move to other sectors.

The recession has brought a great mismatch in the labour market, between a weak overall demand for and the available supply of labour, creating both unemployment and unused skills (UKCES, 2009). It brings social costs as well as lost productivity.



In 2009, the government intention was to put emphasis on quality of training provision and shift to skills for employability rather than pure qualification attainment. This shift was due to a growing pressure from employers and their representative bodies for publicly-funded education and training aimed at the development of employability skills. This entails greater priority given to the cultivation of work-related skills, which are based on real work practice and applied in nature (UKCES, 2009b).

### **3.2.3 Measures Taken at Governance Levels (National, Regional and Local)**

The recession has led to an increased public debt and government's decision to curtail public expenditure. The UK budget deficit is predicted to reach more than € 150 billion in 2010-2011. The previous government started reducing public spending in 2009. As part of the €4.9 billion cuts required across all public spending in the immediate future, the further and higher education sectors and some skill investment programmes experienced substantial funding cuts in the academic year 2010-11 (£1.4 (€1.5) worth of cuts up to 2013). Overall, over 133,000 further education and training places were lost in 2010-11, due to the €320 million cuts in spending for provision of training places, with a further €218 million cut from programmes, such as Train to Gain, adult Apprentices and Skills for Life (UK REferNet, 2010).

The new coalition government has introduced even bigger cuts that will affect the education and training sector across the UK. Education spending in England could be cut by as much as 25% over the next four years, with front line spending on schools being protected for one year. Teachers and lecturers also face a two-year pay freeze from 2011.

Early into the economic downturn, the government in England introduced a series of measures using existing skills framework to offer a rapid response to the current challenges aiming at both the VET systemic level and individuals, by offering them financial assistance and fast access to training provision.



The 2009-2010 budget report pointed out that the recession accelerated government's shift from purely employer-driven to a more interventionist, strategic, longer-term sectoral approach. With a more targeted approach, the government intention was to protect the key sectors and economic infrastructure industries, such as construction and transport during the economic downturn; to promote key skills such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM); and to support growth in green industries, i.e. renewable energy and green manufacturing (UK ReferNet, 2010).

In September 2008, the government introduced initiatives to safeguard skills during the economic downturn in most affected sectors by establishing an apprenticeship 'Clearing House'. The rapid response service was aimed to find new employer places for apprentices facing redundancy and aimed to ensure that there were enough new apprentices in the system to deliver government plans for the future and meet the sectors' future needs. To help employers take on apprentices and stimulate demand, there was financial support ranging from £3,000 (€3,300) direct funding to £9,820 (€10,200) depending on the apprenticeship programme. In addition, through a network of trained advisors, ongoing mentoring and support was provided. The service was based on close co-operation of sectoral regional networks and government agencies and was operational in some sectors, such as construction.

In Northern Ireland, the Skillsafe scheme (2009) assisted apprentices who had been placed on short-time working as a result of the economic downturn. The scheme aimed to fill apprentices' downtime with accredited training that would contribute towards their Apprenticeship. They also received a training allowance to help offset the reduction in their pay.

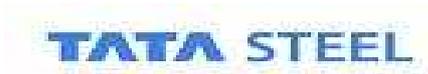
In Wales, the Welsh Assembly established two packages of assistance for employers and employees affected by the recession. The ‘ReAct – Redundancy Action Fund’ provides grant and training money to individuals who were made redundant and to employers who subsequently employ such individuals (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).<sup>5</sup> The ‘ProAct’ Fund is a financial support package, designed to help viable businesses cope with the downturn. It helps fund training during quiet time with the aim of up-skilling staff in readiness for the upturn (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).

There were measures in place for those with disabilities and health conditions to move into work through a series of active labour market programmes, e.g. Pathways to Work, the Work Preparation Programme.

In the 2009-2010 budget, over £3.1 (€3.4) billion was earmarked for providing training opportunities in the public and voluntary sectors, as well as in growing sectors for long-term young and older unemployed. In 2009, the government initiated a move to increase the role of public procurement by encouraging contractors to meet social objectives such as skills development, equality and employment opportunities. The new guidance on how to embed skills training and apprenticeship in all aspects and

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<sup>5</sup> The latest round of ReAct funding (ReAct II) covers both individuals and employers. For individuals who have become unemployed in the past six months as a result of redundancy or who are currently under notice of redundancy, support is available for eligible applicants to increase their skills and remove barriers to learning or returning to work. All applicants have their training needs assessed by Careers Wales. This body also advises on suitable training courses and training venues. Those who receive such support are eligible to have 100 per cent of training costs (up to a maximum of £1,500); help with the cost of any special equipment required; help towards the travel and overnight accommodation costs as well as a contribution towards childcare costs whilst training (subject to limits and conditions). There are two ReAct packages for employers who employ a person who has been made redundant. These are, first, the Employer Recruitment Support Fund, which provides money for employers who recruit individuals made redundant in the past six months. The award offers up to £3,000 paid in four installments as a contribution towards wage costs. The second package is the Employer Training Support fund which is a separate discretionary fund of up to £1,000 that an employer can put towards the cost of the new recruit’s job-related training (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).

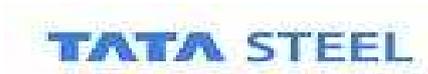


stages of the procurement process was published and covered all types of public contracts for products and services from facilities and IT to construction. Further public cuts, announced by the coalition government in 2010, will have an impact on this and other initiatives described in this section.

One of the first initiatives to go through the Parliament in 2010 in the light of deeper cuts to public spending, was the 'Small Change, Big Difference' Ten Minute Rule Bill, which aims to increase the number of private sector work-based apprenticeships available to young people by effective use of public resources. The Bill will seek to place a duty on companies who receive large public sector contracts to employ additional apprentices. It calls for each million pounds spent outside of the public sector to result in at least one additional apprentice. This builds on a UCATT's 'one in a million' campaign which has a similar ethos within the construction sector.

For the unemployed, a Job Centre Plus Rapid Response Service (RRS) was established in November 2008 to help "every employer with 20 or more redundancies and in local communities who were disproportionately affected by multiple smaller scale redundancies". It was based on a partnership with Regional Development Agencies, local authorities and post-16 planning and funding bodies, which helps with "skills matching, job search skills and access to training and re-skilling opportunities" An established integrated employment and skills service (JCP/LSC) provided the unemployed with essential skills through tailored programmes. Another scheme, the Local Employment Partnership aimed to provide a rapid pre and post employment skills response (within two weeks) for priority JCP customers. Training on offer ranged from new skills or qualifications to on-the-job training in entirely new field.

In Wales, a €11 million innovative project was intended to assist around 3 000 women through training and mentoring, to progress their careers and higher skilled employment opportunities. The training allowance scheme was also available to women wishing to improve their range of skills, as well as identifying quality part-time work.



In January 2009, to combat a short- and long-lasting consequences the recession can have on SMEs, the government introduced a financial package to the sector through T2G programme to support re-training of their staff to level 2 and additional measures to fund training to level 3, which gave firms a greater competitive edge. The £350 (€380) million package enables SMEs to access state funding for employees training for accredited units or modules of qualifications as opposed to whole qualification in 'bite-sized chunks' in subjects known to be important to SMEs, such as business improvement, team-working, customer services, and risk management. The brokers within the T2G offer tried and tested skills diagnostic and audits tools, which were fine-tuned to the needs of the sector.

The present public spending cuts will also affect the Future Jobs Fund, which was expected to provide funding for 150,000 jobs for 18-24 year olds in the public and private sector in local communities and across the voluntary sector. Another initiative for long-term unemployed, was meant to create 100,000 jobs in growing sectors (e.g. social care, hospitality) by providing specifically tailored pathways into profession and offering either a financial incentive of £1,500 (€1,600) as a recruitment subsidy for sustained employment and training or pre-employment training and £2 000 (€2,100) recruitment subsidy.

At the regional level, 'unionlearn' (a training fund supported by the trade unions and the government) has piloted Collective Learning Fund in the North West and East Midlands, which aims to help lever in more employer investment for training their workforce in transferable skills to equip them both for different jobs in the company/organization and for jobs in the wider labour market. The project will consider the implication of the economic downturn in the further development of the fund.



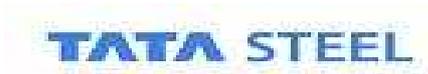
## 4 Legislative and Institutional Framework – Provision of Learning Opportunities

### 4.1 Historical Background

The history of the VET in the UK countries is quite diverse and complex, being subject to different initiatives with different purposes. This synopsis highlights some of the historical aspects of the VET developments in England from the nineteenth century.

During the 19th century, vocational and technical education was initially left to voluntary groups and employers, for example the Mechanics Institutes founded in the 1760s to provide technical education. During the next century, technical schools and colleges offering part-time technical education gradually came into being, some funded by employers and some by private subscription. Under the Technical Instruction Act 1889, responsibility for these institutions was assumed by the new county councils and county boroughs, and many existing FE colleges and universities came into existence in this way. Typically, the education provided by these technical colleges was for supervisory and technical staff rather than ordinary manual workers and was mostly carried out in the evenings, in individuals' own time. The first technical school was opened in London in 1907 (CIPD, 2009).

The gradual industrial decline of the 19th century is partly associated with the lack of a national strategy for technical education and training and the resultant failure to establish a network of technical education institutions until early 20th century, compared with France and Germany, who had already established technical universities in the early 1800s. The preoccupation with greater valued of the academic over the practical subjects and the urge to push practical subjects into an academic subject

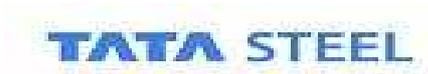


culture (i.e. ‘academic drift’) were also considered as critical factors that slowed down the development of an effective national technical education system at all levels. These factors largely explain why such issues as the so-called academic/vocational divide and the value of parity of esteem between work-based and other qualifications still dominant in political and educational debates even today (e.g. Oates, 2008 ; Raffel, 2001; Vickers and Bekhradnia, 2007; Sinclair and Connor, 2008).

The system of vocational education in the UK initially developed independently of the state, with bodies such as the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and City & Guilds that set examination for technical subjects, followed by universities, colleges, and a later stage by government (CIPD, 2009). Currently, there are over 150 awarding organisations, recognised by Ofqual (ReferNet UK, 2010).

At the time of the Second World War, when the demand for skilled labour was growing, the Education Act 1944 made provision for a tripartite system of secondary modern, secondary technical and grammar schools. But by 1975, only 0.5% of British senior students were in technical schools, whereas in Germany it reached two-thirds of the cohort (Wolf, 2002).

Successive governments have continued to promote vocational and technical education and industry involvement, with different approaches and degrees of success. The 1960s were marked by the establishment of 29 Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) and the levy/grant system in 1961. This was a marked shift from the extant system of voluntarism to a system characterised by greater financial and institutional inducement to industry to extend its training. In the 1970s, to achieve national, rather than partial coverage a national Training Services Agency (TSA) was established. Through a Training Opportunities Programme, adults could receive accelerated training in key trades. The Employment and Training Act of 1973 created a tripartite



Manpower Services Commission (MSC), with the TSA under it, with the remit of developing a national strategy for training. This embodied an acknowledgement of a more active role for the state and of training's importance to the economy.

In the 1980-90s, the Youth Training Scheme (later replaced by the New Deal) was introduced to alleviate the adverse effects of youth unemployment. IN 1986, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was established, in order to design and implement a new National Vocational Qualification (NVQ; SVQ in Scotland) framework to bring order and structure to qualifications, including accreditation for what had already been accomplished by learners.<sup>6</sup> In 1994, in recognition of the demise of traditional apprenticeships during the 1980s, Modern Apprenticeships were introduced, linked to the N/SVQ system.

Over the latter half of the 20th century there was increasing demand for courses that gave entry to higher education.

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw increased government intervention in VET and increased representation from industry in the VET policy making process. The weak industry training organisations were replaced by more broadly-based Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) from 2002 (Clough, 2007). In the same spirit of greater co-ordination, in the 2000s, the Government issued its Skills Strategies with the aims of ensuring that employers had the skills to support the success of their business and moreover, that employees had the necessary skills to be both employable and personally fulfilled throughout their lives.

In 2003, West and Steedman, of the London School of Economics, concluded that the impact of initiatives, courses, qualifications and indeed, philosophies, had resulted in:

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<sup>6</sup> This is known by the acronym 'APL' – accreditation of prior learning. Prior learning may be experiential or certificated.



- a plethora of qualifications;
- high degrees of non-completion and a dropping off of participation at 17;
- poor linkages both between the various types of vocational courses on offer, and between them and vocational offerings in higher education;
- poor linkages to the labour market, not helped by the fact that the industry bodies who are meant to set standards have been reorganized five times in the last thirty years.

The new coalition government aims to increase the esteem with which vocational studies are held (see for example, Wolf, 2011) and plans to establish university technical schools and colleges specialising in practical skills.

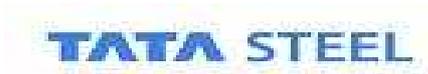
#### 4.2 Legislative Framework for Vocational Education and Training

No single piece of legislation provides the basis for the legal framework for education and training in the UK. Governance and system development has been regulated in a series of laws, each tackling different aspects of education and training. Moreover, there is no clear cut off between the IVET and CVET.

Devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has required legislation to define the boundaries of responsibility of each of devolved administration.

Other legislation has covered:

- reforming the organisations and structures for planning and funding provision;
- giving colleges in the further education sector independence from local authority control, allowing them to control their own budgets;
- revising the arrangements for approval of qualifications and the organisations responsible for that approval, as well as attempting to improve the flexibility and relevance of the qualifications; and
- making provision for training for the unemployed.



Detailed regulations (for example lists of approved qualifications) do not form part of the legislation itself; instead the law provides for the government minister (acting on advice from the relevant advisory body) to issue lists or regulations from time to time.

Training in the UK has traditionally been 'voluntary' on the part of employers, rather than 'regulated' by the state, or 'negotiated by' the social partners (e.g. Blyton and Turnbull, 2004; Clough, 2007). Thus, there is little legal obligation for employers to train staff, except where statutory licensing of organisations or individuals is a requirement. Except in the construction, engineering and film-making industries, companies do not pay training levies since the abolition of the Industrial Training Boards in 1982 (e.g. Harrison, 2005).

The extent of collective agreements vary by industry and sector, although training has tended to be a matter left more to individual employers. For the last decade, the government has placed increasing importance on up-skilling the workforce and has strengthened a sectoral approach to skills policy in the UK by enhancing the role of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). SSCs are tasked with identifying skill trends within their sector, and establishing priorities for skill investment in the sector workforce. They are also responsible for developing occupational standards and approving qualifications such as apprenticeships.<sup>7</sup> (see below: Section 5.3).

In June 2007, the government launched the Skills Pledge, a voluntary, public commitment by the company's management to support all its employees to develop their basic skills and work towards relevant qualifications (at least level 2).

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<sup>7</sup> The Sector Skills Councils were established in 2012, and replaced the former National Training Organisations. These 25 councils, in conjunction with the central co-ordinating Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) constituted the Skills for Business Network (SfBN). The SSDA was replaced by the Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in 2008.

Unions are taking a stronger interest in training than previously. The value of this role has been increasingly recognised by policy-makers over the past decade and under the Labour Governments of 1997 to 2010, union involvement was formalised and increased in scope and significance (e.g. McIlroy, 2008; Hoque and Bacon, 2008). This increase in state support manifested, for instance, in the provision of statutory status of Union Learning Representatives (ULR) in 2002 and the establishment of a Union Learning Fund in 1998 (e.g. Clough, 2007).<sup>8</sup> However, the link between training, access to a job, salary level and progression is less clearly defined or regulated than in countries where an institutionalised social partnership approach structures these arrangements.

#### 4.3 Institutional Framework for Vocational Education and Training

There is no official definition of IVET in the UK and it can take place in various settings, which are administered by different bodies. The devolution of governance in the UK means that the government and institutional frameworks differ between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, all of which have extensive autonomy. The institutional framework is complex, the table below (table 1) shows the allocation of responsibilities in broad terms, but the details may differ across the four nations of the UK.

The general pattern is as follows:

- Overall policy for vocational learning and skills is the responsibility of the Learning / Skills or Education Department of each national government, which also deals with school education.
- The funding, provision and management of learning opportunities within the learning and skills sector (see definition below) in each nation is delegated to a funding council (LSC in England until 2010, then to be replaced by two new

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<sup>8</sup> The DfES established the Union Learning Fund in 198, in order to allow trade unions to ‘develop and promote innovative learning activities at the workplace, in partnership with the employer’ (see Forrester, 2004; Munro and Rainbird, 2004).

bodies, which determine priorities and the allocation of funding, as well as overseeing data collection).<sup>9 10</sup>

- Regional and local bodies advise on the provision of learning opportunities to meet local needs, within the overall national policy and funding arrangements, but individual colleges have considerable autonomy.
- Inspection of the quality of provision is the responsibility of an independent body in each nation, as is research, evaluation of initiatives and staff development.
- Approval of qualifications for use in publicly funded provision is the responsibility of an ‘accrediting body’ for each nation, although those for England, Wales and Northern Ireland work closely on accreditation issues.
- Training programmes for the unemployed are the responsibility of the UK Department of Work and Pensions, working with the governments of the devolved administrations.
- Sector Skills Councils - responsible for identifying skills needs in economic sectors and for defining the occupational standards on which occupational qualifications are based - work across the UK, as does their co-ordinating body, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).<sup>11</sup>
- The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was set up in April 2009 under the two departments (DBIS and DCSF)<sup>12</sup> that is totally responsible for the delivery

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<sup>9</sup> ELWa was an Assembly Sponsored Public Body responsible for post-16 learning in Wales, active from 2000 to 2006. ELWa's functions are now exercised by the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. During its short history, ELWa was much criticised for financial mismanagement and poor risk management.

<sup>10</sup> The LSC had been responsible for planning and funding of education for everyone in England, other than those in universities. However, a White Paper in 2008 (DCSF and DIUS, 2008) announced the abolition of the LSC from 2010. Local LSCs were abolished by the 2007 Further Education and Training Act, which introduced ‘committees’, to be called regional learning and skills councils, for each area of England. Following abolition of the LSC, local authorities were to become responsible for the educational provision to all young people, up to age 19, in their areas. Overall planning and funding for 14-19 learners was to be the responsibility of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

<sup>11</sup> In April 2008, the 25 SSCs were reformed to become a collective body called the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, accountable to the Commission of Education and Skills.

<sup>12</sup> In May 2010, the Department of Children, Schools and Families became the Department of Education.

of Apprenticeships and by December 2010, will take responsibility for the certification process for England.

- Awarding bodies develop and award a wide range of qualifications. Awarding bodies are private companies in their own right (with either commercial or charitable status), although they are subject to regulation by accreditation bodies, e.g. Ofqual (England)<sup>13</sup>, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) (Wales), and Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) (Northern Ireland). In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national awarding body and, as such, is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), answerable directly to Scottish Ministers. SQA Accreditation is branch of SQA which has regulatory responsibility for qualifications in Scotland other than those awarded by organisations with degree awarding powers.

## 5 Partnerships

At policy level, the government has encouraged and invested in forming different partnerships representatives of various stakeholders. The creation of the SSCs and their umbrella organisation, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is seen as the formation of a strategic partnership of major stakeholders, to strengthen the employers' voice and to ensure that vocational qualifications meet their needs.

At the same time, there was progress in recognising the positive role of trade unions in helping to deliver government's Skills Strategy. Legislation in 2002 gave statutory recognition to the union learning representatives (see section 4) and in 2006, Union-learn was set up as a coherent framework within the TUC to support the learning ac-

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<sup>13</sup> The regulatory function was taken over from QCA (the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) by Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), a new body established in 2008-09. QCA was transformed in the Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in July 2009.



tivities related to the workplace. In 2007, UnionLearn was given responsibility for the Union Learning Fund (Harrison, 2009).

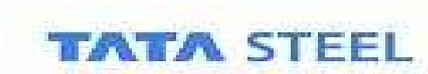
The Vocational Qualifications Partnership Project (VQPP) (under BIS) has been in place since April 2010 to develop communications, capacity building and employer engagement for post-19 qualifications.

At regional level, Regional Skills Partnerships bring together government agencies (RDAs in England, for example), employers and education and training providers in strategic partnerships to develop coherent approaches to skills challenges in the regions. A similar scheme operates in Scotland, as part of the Innovation for Scotland framework (2009).

Some employers are also involved in local education-business partnerships (EBPs), which are funded in England through local funding bodies to offer work experience, mentoring, workplace visits, and most importantly enterprise activity and professional development and to promote sustained links between education and business organisations for the benefit of students.

At local level, innovative approaches to lifelong learning are being promoted through Lifelong Learning Partnerships (LLPs). Scotland has a similar nation-wide network of LLPs, together with the Adult Guidance Networks (AGNs). LLPs work collaboratively with the Scottish University for Industry.

Locally, AimHigher Partnerships aim to widen participation in higher education, including via vocational routes. Trade Unions have a prominent role in this initiative. Many government programmes are delivered in partnership with others from the public sector, voluntary and community sector or private sector; this allows for the introduction of specialist skills and knowledge. The Campaign for Learning through museums and galleries is one of the numerous initiatives, encouraging fresh thinking



and innovation in the cultural sector. The Campaign for Learning also manages the National Workplace Learning Network (NWLN).

The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is an initiative set up to attract financial contributions from the private sector. Many local authorities have partnering arrangements with the private sector to invest in school building projects and Skills Academies are another example of PFI.

PPPs (public-private partnerships) had been promoted by the previous Labour government as a powerful tool for attracting resources from employers and individuals and have been successful in establishing new types of school.

Within the Strategic Partnership strategy (excluding Northern Ireland), BIS finance projects are based on partnerships between companies, business intermediaries including employer federations, trade unions and other employee representatives, trade associations, Business Links, Learning and Skills Councils (or equivalents), public sector bodies and charities. Their aims are to address sectoral and regional issues in six priority areas that have been agreed with TUC and Confederation of British Industry, including innovative approaches to learning and skills.

The learning and skills sector comprises further education colleges (including both general and specialist colleges and also Sixth Form colleges), post-compulsory education in school sixth forms, government funded work-based learning for young people (including Apprenticeships) and adult and community learning. The sector also has responsibility for workforce development issues, guidance for adults and education/business links.



Vocational Higher Education, whether undertaken in universities, in other institutions of higher education or in further education institutions, is the responsibility of the higher education funding and quality agencies.

**Table 1: Allocation of VET Responsibilities**

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
<b>OVERALL POLICY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>	Department for Education (DfE) <sup>14</sup> , Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) <sup>15-17</sup>	Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS)	Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI)	Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI)
<b>FUNDING OF PROVIDERS IN THE LEARNING AND</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA); Young Peo-	Department of Children, Education,	Department for Employment and	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

<sup>14</sup> Until May 2010, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

<sup>15</sup> In June 2009, the Labour Government created a new department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) by merging the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.



<p><b>SKILLS SECTOR (FE COLLEGES, ADULT LEARNING AND WORK-BASED LEARNING PROVIDERS); DETERMINING NATIONAL PRIORITIES</b></p>	<p>ple's Learning Agency (YPLA) (these bodies replaced the former National Learning and Skills Council)</p>	<p>Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS)</p>	<p>Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI)</p>	
<p><b>DETERMINATION OF PRIORITIES AT REGIONAL LEVEL AND RATIONALISATION OF PROVISION</b></p>	<p>Local Skills Funding Agencies (SFAs) via the Strategic Area Review (StARs) process. Liaison with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).</p>	<p>Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) regional offices via Regional Statements of Needs and Priorities and in consultation with Community Consortia for Education and Training</p>		<p>Scottish Enterprise (SEn) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) working with Local Enterprise Companies (LECs); Skills Development Scotland.</p>
<p><b>INSPECTION OF</b></p>	<p>HUOfstedUH</p>	<p>Estyn (HM</p>	<p>DENI (De-</p>	<p>DENI (De-</p>

<b>PROVISION IN COLLEGES AND WORK-BASED TRAINING</b>	(Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills)	Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales)	partment of Education, Northern Ireland) on behalf of DELNI	partment of Education, Northern Ireland) on behalf of DELNI
<b>RESEARCH AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT</b>	Learning and Skills Network (LSN)	Dysg (Division of DCELLS)	Learning and Skills Network, Northern Ireland (NI arm of LSN)	Scotland’s Colleges; Skills Development Scotland
<b>APPROVAL OF QUALIFICATIONS WHICH MAY BE SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDING</b>	OfqualF	DCELLS – but NVQs are responsibility of Ofqual	DWP in conjunction with Scottish government	SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority)
<b>EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND THE NEW DEAL (FLEXIBLE PROGRAMME OF ADVICE AND TRAINING FOR THE UNEMPLOYED</b>	DWP	DWP in conjunction with Wales Employment Advisory Panel	DELNI	DWP in conjunction with Scottish government



<p><b>Overall Responsibility for the Development of Occupational Standards and the Licensing of Sector Skills Bodies</b></p>	<p>UKCES: In the occupational standards programme, UKCES approves National Occupational Standards (NOS) and works in conjunction with Ofqual, SQA, DCELLS and CCEA</p>
<p><b>Development of occupational standards for specific economic sectors, together with work to identify and reduce sectoral skills gaps and increase opportunities for workforce development</b></p>	<p>SSCs (23), with special arrangements for some more specialised areas</p>
<p><b>improvements in productivity and skills</b></p>	<p>BIS (England)  Skills Development Scotland (SDS) (Scotland)</p>
<p><b>Regional economic development and regeneration, improvements in competitiveness, business efficiency and investment</b></p>	<p>RDAs (England) – responsible to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (RDAs abolished in 2010 and replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships)  Devolved Governments</p>

## 6 Background to the IVET System

Schooling is compulsory from age 5 to 16 (4 to 16 in Northern Ireland).<sup>18</sup> All publicly funded schools must provide the National Curriculum. Depending on the Key Stage of compulsory education<sup>19</sup>, the National Curriculum comprises different compulsory subjects, with core subjects like English, mathematics, science, ICT, etc., included throughout the studies. At age 16, most pupils take public examinations, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), level 2 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GCSEs are normally taken in a range of single subjects, and a certificate is issued listing the grade achieved in each subject. After completion of compulsory education in secondary schools, young people may choose to continue in school, move to a sixth-form college<sup>20</sup> or a FE college<sup>21</sup>, enter employment with training such as an apprenticeship, or enter employment without apprenticeship.

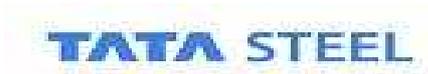
The vast majority of Scottish pupils take Scottish Qualifications Certificate qualifications provided by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Generally, most pupils take Standard Grades (but some schools offer Intermediates instead) in S3-S4, and Highers in S5. For those who wish to remain at school for the final year (S6), more Highers and Advanced Highers (formerly CSYS) in S6 can be taken. Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 qualifications - were intended to be roughly equivalent to General and Credit Level Standard Grades respectively, but in practice, Intermediate 1 is easier than General, and Intermediate 2 harder than Credit - can also be taken in lieu of any of the aforementioned qualifications. Standard Grades are Scotland's educational qualifications for students aged around 14 to 16 years. Standard Grade courses are taken over the 3rd and 4th years of a student's secondary schooling.

<sup>18</sup> The leaving age will be raised to 18 by 2012-13.

<sup>19</sup> Key Stage 1 of compulsory education: ages 5 to 7; Key Stage 2: 7 to 11; Key Stage 3: 11 to 14; Key Stage 4: 14 to 16.

<sup>20</sup> Six-form college/school sixth form: post compulsory educational establishment where students prepare for their GCE A-level examination during the final two years of secondary schooling (when students are about 16 to 18 years of age).

<sup>21</sup> Further education (FE) college – full time or part time educational establishment for persons over compulsory school age of 16. Further education courses are generally up to the standard of GCE A-level or NVQ level 3. FE often provides an entry to university or/and full employment.



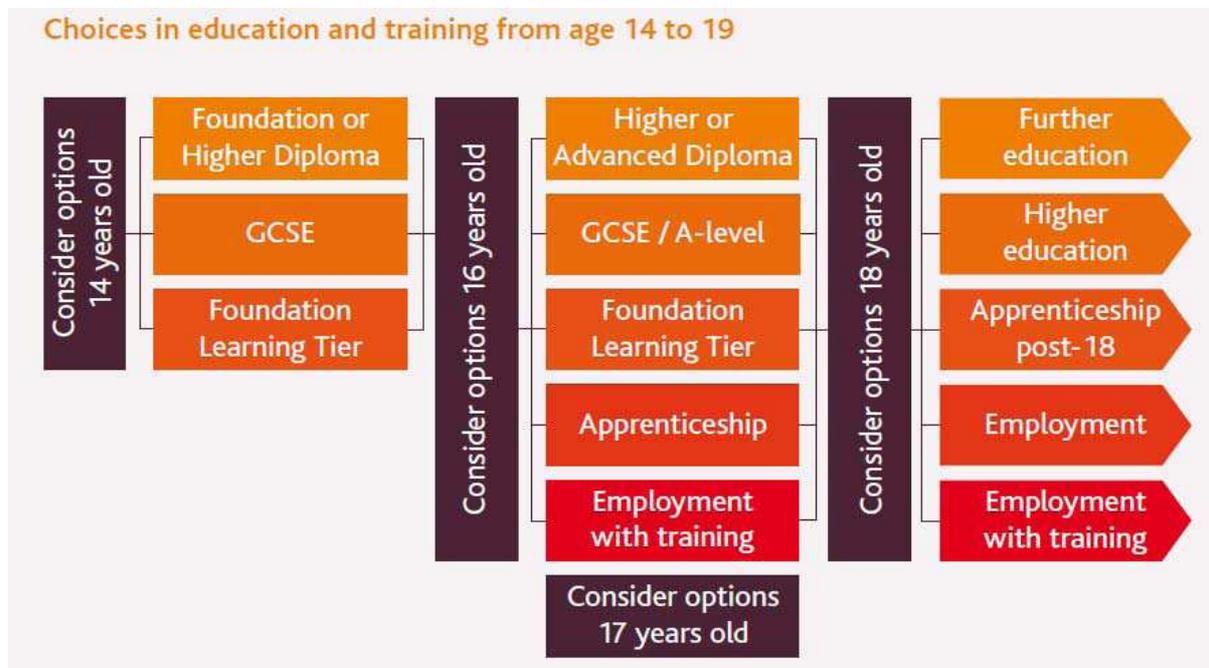
The Scottish Government's lifelong learning strategy aims to ensure that everyone develops the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need for learning, life and work. The curriculum is all the experiences that are planned for learners to support the development of these attributes, knowledge and skills. The Curriculum for Excellence aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18. It has been introduced to raise standards in learning and teaching and improve children's life chances.

The curriculum in Scotland is non statutory and so is not dictated by the Government. It is the responsibility of Government to provide the framework for learning and teaching rather than micromanage what goes on in individual schools. Responsibility for what is taught rests with local authorities and schools taking into account national guidelines and advice.

Students remaining in education at a school or a college may choose between general ('academic') and vocational subjects or take a mixture of the two. Normally, the upper secondary phase lasts two years, from age 16 to 18 or 19. The dominant qualification is General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-levels (level 3). A-levels are 'elective' single subject qualifications, which students choose on the basis of GCSE qualifications, interest and intended destination. Students are encouraged to study up to five subjects in the first year of post-secondary education and upon completion; they are awarded the GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualification. Those who continue in the second year, study more demanding units in three of these five subjects in order to obtain the full GCE A-level on successful completion (graded A to E, A\* being the highest).

School- and college-based vocational qualifications and pathways are developing. Vocational GCSEs and vocational A-levels have been introduced since 2000.

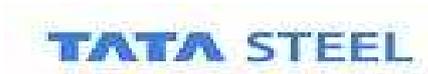
The learning options for 14 to 19 year olds are summarised in the table below.



Source: <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Be-An-Apprentice/Levels-of-Apprenticeships.aspx>

In Scotland, the education system is unique compared to any other administration in the UK. Students in Scottish schools typically take Standard Grades, Intermediate 1 or 2, or Access qualifications. There are complementary or alternative qualifications available in many Scottish schools or through school-college partnerships, such as National Certificates, National Progression Awards and Skills for Work National Courses. The late senior phase of secondary education involves students taking predominantly Highers in fifth year (S5) around age 15-16, with those progressing into sixth year (S6, age 16-17)<sup>22</sup> taking either further Highers, Advanced Highers or the Scottish Baccalaureate. Others will take up more practically or vocationally focused qualifications in addition to or as an alternative to Highers and Advanced Highers.

<sup>22</sup> In Scotland, 6th year of secondary school consists of one year of study, as opposed to two years of sixth form in the rest of the UK.



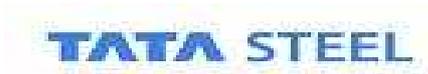
The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has broad-based political and stakeholder support and covers learning from 3-18. Pre-school and primary schools had already been warmly embracing CfE and secondary schools will all engage with CfE from August 2010. Many and probably all colleges will engage with CfE with large elements of their portfolios, in order to ensure smooth progression from schools or in collaboration with schools with which they are in partnership.

Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) have also begun engaging with CfE, directly and through Universities Scotland (the representative organisation of university Vice-Chancellors and Principals). The flexibility of provision in the senior phase of secondary schooling (ISCED level 3) will increasingly mean that Scottish HEIs can expect applicants from secondary schools and colleges to apply for their HE programmes with a range of qualifications.

### ***Strategies to Bridge Different Types and Levels of Education and Training***

Governments in England have sought to bridge the gap between general education and vocational training by achieving parity of esteem between different types of qualifications. Achieving this goal remains elusive, and is a major policy drive for the current review of 14 to 19 curriculum (introduction of new Diplomas, in particular) and qualifications and for the review of the national qualifications framework. The existing national qualifications framework defines three pathways in which a clear relationship was traced between three separate types of provision – traditional general education provision, school and college-based vocationally related education, and work-based vocational provision. The new framework contains a number of lines based on areas of knowledge, skills and competences, blurring the line between general and occupational, and encouraging transfer and mixed learning programmes.

In Scotland, reforms such as the credit-based qualification framework were designed to achieve a more unified approach to different types of education and training. The



Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a meta-framework which incorporates general, vocational and higher education qualifications. This highlights routes for vertical progression, as well as horizontal and ‘downward’ movement, which better facilitates the *enskill*ing, *upskill*ing and *reskill*ing needs of Scotland’s learners and its economy. The framework is designed to widen educational opportunities and encourage ‘parity of esteem’ for academic and vocational qualifications. It makes the qualifications available more understandable and shows their relative value.

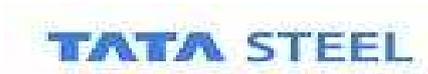
The number of young people, who drop out of education and training at 16, or before completing an upper secondary qualification, is an issue that government reforms are seeking to address. Alongside the statutory right to time off to study to certain 16 to 17 year olds who are in employment (part or full-time, permanent or temporary), to paid time off work for study or training towards an approved qualification.

The previous government introduced the new Diploma qualification.

The new qualification, 14-19 Specialised Diploma (not Scotland) combines elements of academic subjects and practical skills. It is available at levels 1, 2 and 3 (Foundation, Higher and Advanced, respectively) in 14 sector areas. All Diploma learners must complete:

1. Principal Learning related to the sector area;
2. An extended project;
3. Functional skills in Maths, English and ICT;
4. Personal, thinking and learning skills;
5. Minimum of 10 days work experience, and
6. Additional and specialist learning (ASL).

New diplomas are built on key elements of its VET system’s four features:



- the notion of competence, the criteria of assessment being the learning outcomes;
- the use of units of assessment – almost all UK qualifications are modular in delivery and assessment – which creates flexibility for learners, trainers and funding partners;
- the diversity of learning provision – learning need to be adaptable to local circumstances (economic and social) and particularly to the individual; and
- the definition of occupational standards systematically using state-of-the-art needs analysis methods and involving stakeholders as much as possible.

The new Diploma curriculum and assessment criteria has been developed jointly by the government department, UKCES and QCDA in consultation with Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) that include employers, awarding bodies, schools, colleges and universities. Employers (some 8 000) are further involved in helping schools and colleges to teach Diplomas. In 2009, almost 34 500 young people were on a Diploma course. The Ministers of the new government announced in summer 2010 that they intend to review the design and administration of the Diploma.

### ***Entry to Employment***

Pre-employment IVET may be undertaken at secondary school, or at a FE college, or with other training providers. There are two forms of IVET:

1. General vocational education is undertaken either at school (for those aged up to 18) or at a FE college (for those aged 16+). Successful completion could lead to direct employment or to further training, within a FE college or with another training provider.
2. Programmes of specific training are undertaken at a FE college and allow entry to a particular trade or profession (such as hairdressing, construction trades, etc).



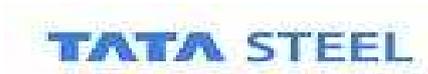
This form of VET is a blend of both of initial training (IVET: meeting pre-entry requirements) and continuing training (CVET: providing the recognised vocational qualification for practice within a particular trade or profession).

Within the UK, there is no unified VET structure and provision is profuse. Historically, VET has developed in an ad hoc way, rather than through central planning. Nonetheless, VET provision can be summarised according to the various contexts within which it takes place.

### ***Scotland***

The qualifications framework and programmes of study in Scotland differ from the rest of the UK (ReferNet UK, 2010). National Qualifications (NQs) were introduced in Scotland in 1999. National Qualifications are unit-based courses with a combination of internal assessment for the units and an external assessment to achieve the overall course. Each of the units counts as a qualification in its own right, which allows students who do not pass the whole course to achieve credit for each successfully completed unit. Pass grades are at A, B and C. Achievement of the course is also given at grade D. Since 2004, all NQs have been credit-rated and levelled in the SCQF.

One of the main aims of NQs was to bring together academic and vocational qualifications in a single coherent system that encouraged a greater parity of esteem and increased employability. There are five types of NQs (Access, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher). Students usually study NQs in fourth, fifth and sixth year of secondary education though a few schools may offer the qualifications at an earlier stage. Schools may not offer the whole range of NQs at every level, but will match provision to the allocation of resources and the needs of students. Schools often work in partnership with other learning centres, such as colleges, where there are well-established provision partnerships. Additionally, many schools will collabo-



rate over curriculum provision, particularly where resources dictate or geography provides the opportunity.

Higher and Advanced Higher courses are typically used for entrance into higher education or the workplace. Whilst Highers are the typical standard entry requirement into Scottish HEIs, Advanced Highers are courses which sit at the starting point of HE in the SCQF, so enable students to undertake enhanced specialisation of curriculum areas whilst improving their research skills and experiences of independent learning. Students with good advanced Advanced Highers can sometimes gain entry into year 2 of a degree programme at a Scottish HEI.

In Scotland, a number of local authorities are using flexibility within the curriculum to deliver work-based vocational learning programmes through the strategy for Enterprise in Education, which was promoted through *Determined to Succeed* (Scottish Executive, 2002).

In 2004, the then Scottish Executive published proposals for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), a more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18, which aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland through much greater curricula coherence and to enable young people to develop the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need in learning, life and work. The curriculum includes the totality of ‘experiences and outcomes’ which are planned for children and young people throughout their education, wherever they are being educated. The ‘experiences and outcomes’ in CfE are a set of statements describing what is expected in the learning and progression for each of eight curriculum areas. They are intended to recognise how important the quality and nature of the learning experience is in developing attributes and capabilities, and in achieving active engagement, motivation and depth of learning. The experiences and outcomes for each curriculum area build in the at-



tributes and capabilities which support the development of the ‘four capacities’. Students are therefore expected to develop into:

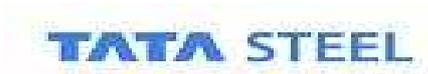
- successful learners
- confident individuals
- responsible citizens
- effective contributors

### 6.1 IVET at Lower Secondary Level

Strictly speaking, England has a nil return for IVET at lower secondary level according to the official government position. Lower secondary is ISCED level 2, which in England is classified as ending with year 9, i.e. academic age 13 at the start of the academic year. Scotland considers academic ages 14 and 15 to be lower secondary. For a UK-wide definition, academic age 13 is treated as the final year of ISCED 2.

Traditional academic qualifications, such as GCSEs, A-levels, and most university qualifications, tend not to be referred to as vocational in the UK. Some secondary schools provide pre-employment vocational education for 16-18 year-olds. At age 14, students may choose to follow a two-year programme which includes vocational courses alongside compulsory academic subjects leading to a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) for each course successfully completed.

Vocational GCSEs are available in 8 subjects: applied science, applied IT, applied business, applied art and design, engineering, manufacturing, health and social care, leisure and tourism, with other subjects under development. They offer young people the opportunity to explore a particular vocational area as part of a balanced learning programme. Through the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects, the government promotes the parity of esteem between vocational and more traditional academic subjects. A vocational GCSE is equivalent to two academic (general) GCSEs



and enable progression to further education, training or employment. GCSEs do not contain a work-based component.

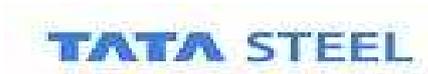
Since September 2004 there has been a statutory requirement for schools in England to make provision for work-related learning for all pupils, including opportunities for:

- learning through work (for example, through short periods of work experience);
- learning about work and careers education; and
- learning for work, by developing enterprise and employability skills (for example, through working on key skills and schemes such as the UK charity Young Enterprise).

The National Curriculum governs 14-16 year olds' learning programmes, which is a broad and balanced programme for most students, although greater specialisation towards vocational options was introduced for some students in 2002.

From 2007, the Welsh Assembly government has run five Work-based Learning Pathways pilots in automotive, construction manufacturing, sport coaching (for 14-16 year olds) and care (16-18 year olds for legal restrictions) sectors. The pilots combine core GCSEs in schools with more practical experience. The learner must achieve an industry recognised NVQ, normally at level 2. Some of the Pathways are directly linked to the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (see below) and is partly financed by the ESF.

Young Apprenticeships (introduced in England in 2004) offer an opportunity for motivated 14-16 year olds to combine practical application of skills and knowledge with studying for vocational qualifications. This allows the learner a flexible programme involving a college, training provider or employer, and is intended to lead on to an apprenticeship at the age of 16. Pupils are based in school and follow the core Na-



tional Curriculum subjects, but for two days a week (or equivalent) they also work towards nationally recognised level 2 vocational qualifications. The learning experience includes up to 50 days' experience of work over the two years of the programme.

The Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme for 14-16 year olds programme in England provides enhanced work-related learning (one to two days per week in vocational learning) through partnerships of local providers and businesses. The programme is aimed at vulnerable youngsters at risk of disaffection and becoming NEETs and has a strong emphasis on functional and employability skills.

The Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme forms part of the Foundation Learning (FL). It covers education provision at entry level and level 1 on the QCF in England and is a credit-based framework where a personalised programme of learning is built for learners, which includes:

- Functional Skills (English, Maths and ICT)
- Subject or vocational skills and understanding
- Personal and social development learning (PSD)

As a central part of the government's reforms for education and training; all local authorities are expected to provide Foundation Learning through units and qualifications on the QCF from September 2010, and in 2009/10 it is expected to account for 30% of entry level and level 1 funding.

In Scotland, SQA has developed Skills for Work (SfW) courses since 2005, following the government's call for 'more skills-for-work options for young people' to be available for pupils in third (S3) and fourth year (S4) of secondary school (14-16). Skills for Work courses focus on generic employability skills needed for success in the workplace within the context of specific vocational areas, such as construction or health



and care. A key feature of SfW is experiential learning linked to particular vocational areas. The courses are intended to provide progression pathways to further education, training and employment.

Additionally, vocational group awards, such as National Certificates and National Progression Awards are available across SCQF levels 2-6 in a number of schools.

All the above programmes offer a flexible progression route to student who can progress at their own pace to further training or education.

The curriculum in each country sets out the requirements for young people up to the end of compulsory schooling at age 16. It is primarily academic in orientation and sets out core and optional subjects. A separate certificate is awarded for each subject passed in the National Curriculum subjects. This is mainly by examination and school assessed coursework. More practically or vocationally oriented subjects have a greater work experience content, indicating that he or she is likely to succeed in the vocationally related area of study.

Entry requirements for level 2 vocationally related qualifications and NVQs are lower and may emphasise interest and commitment rather than specific qualifications. Entry to a level 3 NVQ may require the corresponding level 2 NVQ or a vocationally related qualification in a similar area. For all NVQs, access to workplace employment of experience is essential.

## 6.2 IVET at Upper Secondary Education

(Please note that traditional academic subject qualifications (i.e. GCSEs, A-levels, most university qualifications) are not being referred to as vocational).

In terms of participation rates at this level, the UK has traditionally had higher rates of participation in academic rather than purely vocational routes. Eurostat (2010) da-

ta show that in 2007, the enrolment at general courses in the UK was higher than the EU average, i.e. 58.6% and 48.5%, respectively. For the vocational-orientation courses, the enrolment was lower, at 41.4%, compared with the EU average of 46.3%, and Germany's 57.4% for the same period.

Moreover, most of the NVQ standards do not specify the type of the training programme or the time framework. (Please note; the following table does not reflect provision in Scotland).

Type of Educational Programme	Main Economic Sectors	Corresponding ISCED Level/Orientation	Balance between General and Vocational Subjects	Bal- ance be- tween school -based & work- based train- ing	Aver- age Dura- tion of Stud- ies	Transfer to other Pathways
Stand-alone qualifications, such as BTEC First or General Certificate City and	Wide range of economic sectors	3	Vary	Vary	From 6 to 12 months	Higher vocational and academic qualification

Guilds Op-erative Award and Similar						LM
NVQ/SVQ LEVEL 1	Wide range of economic sectors	3	Vary	Vary	Less than 24 months	Higher vocational and academic qualifications LM
NVQ/SVQ LEVEL 2	Wide range of sectors	3a, 3b	Vary	Vary	More than 24 months	Higher vocational and academic qualifications LM

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland upper secondary education begins at age 16. Students may transfer from secondary school to 6th form or FE college, choosing from a mix of academic and vocational studies. Again, vocational GCSEs and A-levels qualifications are available, as well as a mix of professionally accredited certificates and diplomas. Students at FE colleges may attend full- or part-time. Many of the latter would be in employment and released by their employers to attend their college-based training in varying patterns from one day per week to block periods of

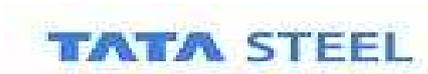


several continuous weeks. Students aged 16-18 may also be pursuing an apprenticeship scheme, which formally combines employment-based training with training provided either by a college or other training provider. Programmes are normally two years in duration, but a number of students take three years and the phase is generally considered to be ages 16 to 19. Upon completion of compulsory secondary education, the main routes for young people at this stage are to:

- continue in full-time general or vocationally related education in a school or college;
- move on to a work-based training programme, usually an apprenticeship; and
- start work by becoming employed full-time or part-time or doing voluntary work.

The main providers of upper secondary education are:

- School sixth forms (not available in all areas of the country). Traditionally these have a strong focus on general education. Recent local and national initiatives have encouraged partnerships and collaborative agreements with local colleges of further education; elsewhere school sixth forms offer only a narrow range of vocational courses, focusing on those which do not require expensive specialist facilities.
- Sixth form colleges. These provide mainly full time courses to students aged 16-19; much of their provision is academic, but they also offer a small range of vocational courses, especially AVCEs.
- Colleges of further education. This category includes tertiary colleges, specialist colleges (mainly in land-based provision and art and design) and colleges which cater for people who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or both. All of these offer a wide range of courses, for adults as well as young people. Most offer academic courses (such as A Levels), but their focus is much more strongly vocational.

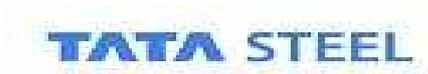


Collectively, FE colleges make up the largest sector of VET providers within state provision for both pre-employment and in-employment training for all, including adults, from the age of 16 upwards. Colleges differ in size and emphasis and the range of trades, crafts and professions catered for, but all essentially offer a common curriculum of nationally-recognised qualifications. The further education sector in the UK (2010) consists of 424 colleges, and 95 Sixth Form Colleges (England) – the latter providing mainly full time academic courses to students aged 16-19. Over 3 million learners annually attend FE colleges.

Some colleges are designated by their specialism, as is the case of colleges for agriculture and/or horticulture, art, design and performing arts. The remainder of the sector comprises general further education colleges, tertiary colleges, and colleges that cater for people who have learning difficulties and disabilities, or both. All of these provide both initial and continuing vocational education and training, catering for both young people and adults and normally with a range of both short and long courses.

Each nation has an Inspectorate responsible for inspecting and reporting periodically on the quality of teaching, learning and management of individual schools, colleges and other learning providers, and for area reviews of post-compulsory provision of all kinds. The reports of the Inspectorate are used to monitor the quality of provision, to provide 'benchmarks' against which providers can judge their own performance (by enabling comparisons with other providers of similar size and student characteristics), to ensure that action is taken where providers are failing and to provide examples of good practice.

Nationally, excellent Colleges and private training providers have been awarded 'Beacon' status for outstanding learning and teaching. The department of some colleges, including 'Beacon' colleges, can be designated as Centres of Vocational Ex-



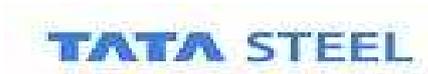
cellence (CoVEs) for the quality of their vocational education in a given occupational area. CoVEs excel in a particular area of vocational learning which meets the skills needs of employers either locally or in within a region. CoVEs offer basic skills, and (NVQ equivalent) levels 1 - 4. The number of CoVEs is increasing all the time. In 2007, 403 CoVEs were approved in England (ReferNet UK, 2010).

Alongside this quality mark, a national standard of employer responsiveness for Colleges of Further Education has been developed.

There is an important distinction between the regulation of qualifications, which is the responsibility of the national bodies in each of the nations, and the programmes of studies that a particular college or school will offer its students. In planning both general and vocationally related courses, providers have considerable autonomy, in deciding which qualifications and options to offer and in planning the timetable. For all qualification developments, the awarding organisation develops the specifications for the qualification as it is to be examined, defines the mode of assessment (external examination, internally set project, practical work, etc.) establishes the system of assessment, including marking and grading students' work; provides sufficient numbers of trained markers, assessors, moderators, as appropriate and establishes sustainable system of quality control.

The content and assessment arrangements for each qualification are subject to the accreditation requirements of the regulatory body and the requirements of National Occupational Standards, as appropriate.

The schools and colleges decide what programmes to offer and by what mode (e.g. full or part time), take major responsibility for the decisions on the delivery of the curriculum, programmes of study and pedagogy to be used and undertake much of the assessment.



The great majority of students in school-based and college-based IVET are studying for publicly recognised qualifications. Depending upon their level and subject matter, these normally allow entry to further learning, in either further or higher education, and may also be used for entry to the labour market. Historically, the terms ‘certificate’ and ‘diploma’ are used almost interchangeably in the UK, although the trend is for ‘diploma’ to indicate a more substantial qualification (with more hours of learning) than a ‘certificate’.

A diploma is not necessarily at a higher level than a certificate. The QCF has developed a common architecture for the naming of qualifications, with the intention of standardising the terms so that the size and level of the qualification is clearly identifiable by its title.

Almost all vocational qualifications allow progression to similar, higher level qualifications, which may be studied part-time or through evening courses. Depending upon their nature, they may also lead to higher education and/or into employment. ‘Broader’ vocationally related qualifications are designed to lead either to the labour market or to general or (more often) vocational higher education, whilst ‘narrower’, more occupationally specific, vocationally related qualifications are intended to lead to employment in a specific occupation or group of occupations.

As a means of quality control, most IVET courses supported by public funding must lead to recognised qualifications. It is therefore convenient to describe provision in terms of the qualification(s), to which it leads.

The principal requirement for achievement of a qualification is usually satisfactory completion of the assessment, often including both a formal written examination and an assessment of practical and project work. It is not usually necessary to have attended a course for a fixed length of time, although in practice most young people do attend such courses. Progression after completion of initial VET at Upper Secondary level depends upon the qualification route taken.



The modular design of many qualifications is intended to allow certification in individual modules and to facilitate transfer to a related course or subsequent re-entry for a student who drops out. In practice, these opportunities are probably under-utilised.

Access to A Level and AVCE courses requires five ‘good’ (grade A\*-C) passes in GCSE or equivalent. Pupils who have not reached this level at age 16 may spend an extra year trying to improve their results or may choose a less demanding alternative. Advanced level (A-level) General Certificates in Education are also available in vocational subjects with examinations taken at 18 or older. Neither GCSEs nor A-levels contain a work-based component.

Progression from A levels and AVCEs may be to employment, but is more often to general or vocational higher education. Options for progression may be limited by the subjects taken, with mathematics and science required for progression in scientific and technical subjects. AVCEs are accepted for entry to some general degree courses, but progression options are likely to be more limited than from A levels.

The 16-19 year olds’ learning programme is governed primarily by the student’s main qualification aim. Learners following work-based training such as an apprenticeship or a FE course for entry to an occupation, combine training for specific occupations with work. Training providers can be training or HR departments in firms, further education colleges or private training organisations.

The Welsh Assembly Government introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate to transform learning for 14-19 year olds in Wales. It gives broader experiences than traditional learning programmes, to suit the diverse needs of young people. It can be studied in English or Welsh, or a combination of the two languages. It has a common core curriculum on Wales, Europe and world studies (including a language module), work-related education, personal and social education and key skills. It combines personal



development skills with existing qualifications like A levels, NVQs and GCSEs to make one wider award that is valued by employers and universities.

Although government policy focuses on those qualifications which have been developed through its initiatives or which it regulates most closely, there are a large number of other approved qualifications whose influence is also significant.

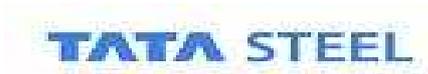
Within school- and college-based pathways, a range of qualifications is available. Provision is designed to address general employability skills as well as specific vocational skills. Qualifications involve practical experiences that require a variety of learning environments and are usually delivered via partnerships: schools with colleges/employers/training providers. These are mainly for pupils in third and fourth year of secondary school focus on the world of work. A common rationale requires experiential learning; learning through practical experience; learning through review and reflection; the development of employability skills; the development of generic skills and attitudes; and specific vocational skills/knowledge•.

The main strands are as follows.

### ***Vocational Certificates of Education (VCEs)***

The Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) is an A-level award designed for those wanting to study a broad area of work and the application of a subject. These are known as GCEs in 10 applied subjects: applied art and design, applied business, applied ICT, applied science, engineering, health and social care, media, travel and tourism, leisure, performing arts. Students study a number of units, some of which are mandatory. The total number of units required varies between levels. About two thirds of the units are externally assessed, one third internally. Progression – which is dependent on attainment

in AS- and/or A-level – is to higher education including Foundation degrees, or to apprenticeship, or to training and/or professional qualifications.



### ***National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)***

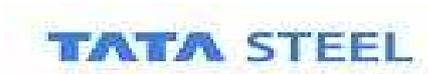
NVQs / SVQs are based on National Occupational Standards for each occupation, drawn up by the relevant Sector Skills Council in close co-operation with employers in the sector. Awarding bodies use these standards to develop qualifications (including arrangements for assessment and quality assurance), which are then submitted for accreditation to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or to the SQA Accreditation for use in Scotland.

A young person obtaining an NVQ /SVQ would normally already be employed or in training in the occupation and would be expected to remain in their job or move from an apprenticeship or traineeship to a job in the same field, but could also study for a more advanced qualification.

NVQs are designed for people to gain recognised qualifications for specific occupations. They are offered mainly at levels 1, 2 and 3. They offer progression routes to further education and training or into the labour market. NVQs were designed as qualifications that recognise work-based competences, but are often achieved through study in FE colleges.

### ***Functional Skills (FS)***

Functional skills place a greater emphasis on applying knowledge in real life situations that allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. Functional skills qualifications in English, ICT and mathematics are free standing qualifications and are available at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 to cater for full range of learners at any age. After a three year pilot, they are currently available in Apprenticeship as an alternative to Key Skills (see below), which they are expected to replace. Functional skills are also constituent qualifications of new Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas. Each qualification is assessed independently. The



assessment approach primarily utilises task-based scenario questions within a limited time duration, delivered in a controlled environment.

The assessments support problem solving, skills-based approaches. QCDA has developed, with a range of partners, a set of standards for the functional skills qualifications. The standards determine the knowledge and skills proficiency required at each level. Ofqual, the regulator, has published the criteria for functional skills assessments that enable awarding organisations to develop quality specifications and assessment materials.

Adult Functional skills pilots are developing different approaches to assessment to ensure that the qualifications are appropriate to meet the needs of adult learners. These include e-assessment, on-demand assessment and providing feedback to learners promptly following the assessment and being tested in a range of learning environments, i.e. mainstream colleges, prisons and adult community learning setting and alike. The FS are intended to replace the Skills for Life literacy and numeracy qualifications in 2012, subject to pilot results.

### ***The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ)***

The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is nationally approved and currently offered at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels. Following a successful pilot, beginning in September 2003, the qualification is now being studied by students in schools, colleges and training providers across the principality.

Table 3: The three levels of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

Level	Options Level
Foundation Diploma	D- G grade at GCSE, NVQ Level 1 or equivalent



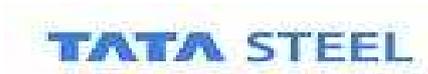
Intermediate Diploma	A* - C grade at GCSE, or NVQ Level 2 or equivalent
Advanced Diploma	GCE A Level standard, or NVQ Level 3, or equivalent

Note: The A\* grade was introduced in September 2008 for higher education entry in 2010, and is awarded to candidates who achieve an A in their overall A-level, with a score of at least 90% at A2.

The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification (WBQ) is awarded to students who complete a programme consisting of the Welsh Baccalaureate Core Certificate and optional studies drawn from existing qualifications. The optional studies element is assessed in line with the existing requirements of examining and awarding bodies. The Core involves students in the preparation of a portfolio of evidence for assessment including Key Skills and an Individual Investigation. The WBQ thus is comprised of two components:

- Core - consisting of five components i.e. Key Skills, Wales, Europe and the World, Work-related Education and Personal and Social Education and Individual Investigation.
- Options - courses/programmes currently offered e.g. GCSE, VGCSE, AS/A levels, NVQ, BTEC, Principal Learning and Project Qualification.
- 

A key feature of the WBQ is that of the personal mentor who meets regularly with the student and offers advice and encouragement.



### ***Key Skills (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to be replaced by Functional Skills (see above)***

A common complaint of employers is that young people entering employment do not have the basic skills of literacy/communication and number, and/ or the attitudes needed for employment. This was the starting point for the Key Skills initiative. Key skills qualifications are available to students across all post-16 routes. Key Skills qualifications (levels 1-3) comprise communication, application of number and information technology (IT). Also available at levels 1-3 are the wider key skills units: working with others, improving own learning and performance, problem solving. Assessment comprises a portfolio and (except for wider Key Skills) external tests. They are available and designed to be taken in tandem with the other qualifications described here.

Work experience: Most students on vocational courses and many on general courses undertake a short period of unpaid work experience, as enrichment and to learn about a particular working environment. This is often facilitated through local education/business partnerships.

### ***Pre-U Course***

In 2007, the government approved the pre-U courses for state funding. The course has been devised by Cambridge International Examinations. Thirty institutions, 24 of which are private schools (including some of the top schools like Eton, Winchester and Dulwich) are to offer pre-U's.

This is a two-year course in which students complete three main subjects as in A-levels – they could even opt to choose A-level syllabuses. They also complete a global perspectives and research component which leads to an independent research report on a topic chosen by the student. Above all, students will be assessed at the end of the two-year course, making it more like A-levels.

### 6.3 Apprenticeship Training (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Type of Educational Programme	Main Economic Sectors	Corresponding ISCED Level/Orientation	Balance between General and Vocational Subjects	Balance between School-based and Work-based Training	Average Duration of Studies	Transfer to other pathways
Young Apprenticeship	Dependent on local offer	2	9:1	2 days a week up to 50 days work experience	Two years	Further academic and/or vocational studies
Apprenticeship	Varied sectors, up to 80 occupational areas	3c	Vary	Vary	From 12 months	Higher level vocational courses, FE  LM
Advanced Apprenticeship	As above	3a 3b	Vary	Vary	From 24 months	As above



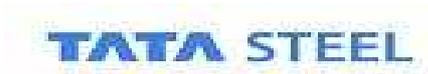
## ENGLAND

Apprenticeships provide work-based training in a broad range of sectors to people who are learning new skills and gaining recognised qualifications while they are working. They normally last between one and three years. Apprentices can enter higher education or employment depending on the successful completion of the corresponding apprenticeship training.

There are 190 types of Apprenticeships (at level 2 or five good GCSEs passes) and Advanced Apprenticeships (equal to two good A-levels or level 3 qualification) are available in over 80 different industries (retailing, engineering, car manufacturing, construction, banking, for example), hotel and catering and business administration being the main sectors where starters for apprenticeships are. There are also Higher Apprenticeships that work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 4 and, in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation degree.

The modern apprenticeship system, first launched in 1994, has been reformed with a different rate of success in terms of uptake and retention. Since 1994, one million apprentices have joined the programme and by 2008, almost 50% of British Gas engineer recruits were apprentices.

Relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) produces a framework for each apprenticeship qualification. The content of each Apprenticeship is designed by SSCs, sector bodies and their employers in accordance with the design principles of the Apprenticeship Blueprint (England and Wales). The Blueprint provides the specification for Apprenticeship and is used by SSCs to design and revise Apprenticeship frameworks. The emphasis in apprenticeships is on preparation for employment and each Apprenticeship is specific to an occupational area. Although regulations are flexible, a common pattern in Apprenticeships is for practical training and experience to take place in the



workplace on four days per week and study of the underpinning knowledge for the Technical Certificate to take place in college one day a week.

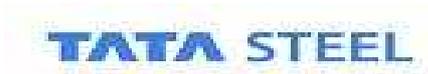
In 2009, the National Apprenticeship Service replaced the LSC in England to manage, finance and quality assure national programme through its network of training providers.

For entry to Apprenticeships, interest in the occupation and willingness to work are generally more important than formal educational qualifications, but young people are expected to have practical aptitude, interpersonal skills and/or key skills appropriate to their chosen pathway. For direct entry to an Advanced (level 3) Apprenticeship the young person would normally be expected to have some GCSE passes at Grades A\* to C. Success in a (level 2) Apprenticeship normally provides access to an Advanced (level 3) Apprenticeship, providing that a training place is available. Access depends upon the availability of suitable places, which in turn depends upon the willingness of employers to participate in the scheme.

The present apprenticeship is a mixture of work-based training and education, which includes the following basic elements:

- a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), an occupationally specific qualification delivered and assessed mainly in the workplace;
- Key Skills, e.g. communication, application of number and ICT at an appropriate level; or Functional Skills; and
- a Technical Certificate, providing the underpinning knowledge of the technical or business areas associated with the job and delivered at a FE college.

There is no single set time to complete Apprenticeships and they vary widely in content and size. Apprenticeships at level 2 take a minimum of 12 months while Advanced Apprenticeships take a minimum of 24 months.



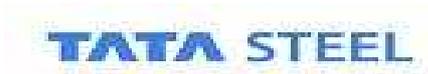
Apprenticeships were originally intended for young people, but in May 2004 the upper age limit of 25 for Apprenticeships was removed in England.

Apprentices receive pay and most have the status of employees of the organisation where they work. They typically spend one day per week at college studying the technical certificate and the remainder of their time in training or work with their employer.

Apprentices have a contract and also an individual learning plan, which employers develop with the help of local learning providers, who also handle assessment and quality control and help businesses recruit a suitable apprentice. Selection takes account of school qualifications (especially for more technical occupations) and motivation.

The NVQ is at the centre of the Apprenticeship and is the method used to assess the occupational competence of the candidate. The broad assessment arrangements for each NVQ are determined by the relevant SSC in the form of an ‘assessment strategy’. The majority of assessment takes place in the workplace and involves practical competence on the job, often with oral questioning and with ‘evidence’ such as completed pieces of work (where the task is a practical one) or records of work undertaken.

The Technical Certificate provides the underpinning knowledge and understanding for the NVQ and is normally delivered outside the workplace, for example by a Further Education college or training provider. The assessment arrangements for Technical Certificates differ, according to the nature of the occupation, but must include provision for ‘external quality control’. This normally takes the form of an external written test or assignment, which is combined with external monitoring (through visiting verifiers) of practical and other assessments undertaken by the centre.



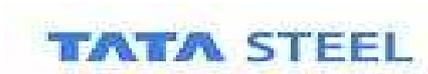
With regard to key skills, candidates are required to complete both externally set tests, which are the same for all sectors (and may be taken electronically) and a portfolio of relevant work, assessed by the centre and monitored by the awarding body.

The Inspectorate (in each of the four nations) is responsible for inspecting and reporting periodically on the quality of teaching, learning and management of individual colleges, private training providers and other learning providers. The reports of the Inspectorate are used to monitor the quality of provision, to provide ‘benchmarks’ against which providers can judge their own performance (by enabling comparisons with other providers of similar size and student characteristics), to ensure that action is taken where providers are failing and to provide examples of good practice. LSC also ensures the quality of learning provision through its FE sector financial stream arrangements.

The apprentice who successfully completes the apprenticeship receives an apprenticeship certificate, together with individual certificates for:

- National Vocational Qualification.
- Technical Certificate.
- Key Skills certificate(s).

The progression opportunities after an apprenticeship vary from industry to industry. In the motor industry, for example, there are relatively few opportunities to progress beyond level 3. On the other hand, in industries such as the chemical industry and engineering an apprenticeship at level 3 opens up a variety of progression routes, in terms of technical and managerial posts, and in terms of workplace and higher education qualifications.



The UK labour market has few regulated occupations at levels 2 and 3 and completion of an Apprenticeship or an NVQ is rarely required as a licence to practise. An exception is the Care Sector, where a Level 3 NVQ has become a requirement for some supervisory and managerial jobs.

Apprenticeships declined in the second half of the 20th century, as traditional industries due to structural change in the economy. Modern Apprenticeships were introduced by Government in the mid-1990s as a replacement, which would offer a high quality work-based alternative to full time educational routes.

The number of people taking an Apprenticeship has trebled since 1999. In the year to 2008, a record 234,000 people started an Apprenticeship, representing a four per cent increase on 2007. There were 239,900 Apprenticeship starts in the 2008-09 academic year and 143,400 Apprenticeship framework achievements. This represents the highest number of Apprenticeship starts and achievements ever in an academic year. The overall Apprenticeship success rate was 70.9% in 2008-09, compared with 53% in 2005-6.

Overall, with the economic downturn persisting, the number of Apprenticeship places have declined: the number of 16 to 18 year-olds start-up Apprentices fell by 7.5 per cent in 2009, whilst the number of 19 to 24 year olds starting Apprenticeship dropped by 5.9 per cent over the same period, although the completion rates overall have improved. Figures released by the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills in October 2009, showed that there were 33,900 new Apprenticeship starts in the fourth quarter of the academic year 2008/9. This is 29% lower than in the previous three months and 36% lower than in the same period in 2007/8. The reason for the decreasing number of Apprentices is partly the unwillingness of the firms to recruit Apprentices who have initial training needs and their wish to reduce discretionary spending (UKCES, 2009).



The Young Apprenticeship Programme provides a route for motivated students of average or above average ability to study for vocational qualifications by spending up to two weeks in the workplace, in parallel with their schools studies, in the last two years of compulsory schooling (up to 50 days).

In Wales, the age limit on Apprenticeships was removed in 2002. The Modern Skills Diploma for Adults aims to raise skills levels in business, extending the apprenticeship model to those aged over 25. The diploma programme provides structured training at level 4 for people in or out of employment. Modern Apprenticeships were introduced in Northern Ireland in 1996; arrangements are broadly similar to those in England.

#### 6.4 Other Youth Programmes and Alternative Pathways

##### ***England, Wales, Northern Ireland***

##### ***Entry Level***

Entry level qualifications are designed for learners working below GCSE level because they lack skills to operate at higher levels. They provide access to NVQ, GCSE and other level 1 qualifications. They are occupationally specific. There are vocational ‘taster- courses’ that are designed for transition from compulsory schooling to the post-16 phase. Basic qualifications are available in areas such as life or independent living skills, literacy and numeracy.

##### ***Entry to Employment (E2E)***

Entry to Employment (E2E) is an entry to level 1 work-based learning programme for young people (aged 16-18) who are not yet ready to enter an Apprenticeship, employment or structured learning at level 2. Each programme is flexible but students must undertake learning in three core strands of the curriculum: basic and/or key

skills, vocational skills and personal and social development (in formal and informal environments). Although not qualification driven, E2E must provide learners with an entitlement to work towards external qualifications (or units of it) and awards, appropriate to their ability and potential across all three strands. The E2E students are not restricted by time limit to complete the programme. Learners are recruited through referral from a guidance service, or directly from the provider or support agencies (Social Services, Youth Offending Teams, etc.). As of 2010, the Young People's Learning Agency, which replaced LSC, works in partnership with the SSCs, local providers including voluntary organisations and awarding bodies on this programme in the context of local needs. The programme has been inspected several times, with its strengths (50,000 young people in first year, over a third had progressed to FE or employment) and weaknesses (mixed quality provision).

### ***UK New Deal for Young People***

New Deal is a government's programme to help people move into and remain in work. The New Deal for Young People is for those aged 18 to 24 and claiming Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA). It aims to give young people the skills, confidence and motivation to help them find work. Participants enter a Gateway of intensive job search and specialist help, and those still claiming JSA at the end of this, have a choice of options: full time education and training leading to a qualification; training/work placement in the voluntary sector; or training/work placement through the Environment Task Force.

Participants can access one or a combination of options. In addition, an employment subsidy is available at any stage of the programme, providing an incentive for employers to employ a New Deal participant. An initiative, StepUp, builds on the New Deal for Young People and New Deal 25 Plus by providing transitional jobs for those who have not secured sustained employment through New Deal.



## 6.5 Vocational Education and Training at Post-secondary (non-tertiary) level

The UK does not have a clearly defined sector of initial vocational and training, which can be termed ‘post-secondary (non tertiary)’ – there is virtually no provision at all against this ISCED level (1997). Courses and qualifications at level 4 and above of the National Qualifications Framework are considered to be part of Higher Education, even where they do not lead to a traditional degree. IVET courses and qualifications at level 3 of the NQF form part of the offer of further education colleges or other parts of the ‘learning and skills sector’ and are described in 6.3 (IVET at upper secondary level) or 6.4 (Apprenticeship training).

## 6.6 Vocational Education and Training at Tertiary Level

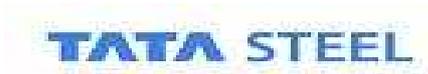
(Note that traditional academic subjects, including most university qualifications are not being referred to as vocational).

Traditionally, the UK has had high participation rates in higher education. The latest available Eurostat data (2006) shows that for ISCED 5A level (1997), the participation rates were lower than EU average (77% and 86.6%, respectively), but higher for ISCED level 5b (1997)(22.8% and 13.4%, respectively).

Type of Educational Programme	Main Economic Sectors	Corresponding ISCED Level/Orientation	Balance between General and Vocational Subjects	Balance between School-based and	Average Duration of Studies	Transfer to other pathways

				<b>Work-based Training</b>		
HNC/D	Various	5b	Vary	Vary	Certificate, 12 months  Diploma, 24 months	Progress to a full degree course  LM
NVQ LEVELS 4-5  BTEC/RSA AND ALIKE	Various, almost all economic sectors  sectors	5b	Vary	Vary	Vary, as do not specify timeframes	LM or higher degrees
Advanced Apprenticeship	As above	3a 3b	Vary	Vary	From 24 months	As above

In the UK there is no separate identification of ‘vocational’ higher education. Most institutions offer both vocational and general courses, although in differing proportions. There is a wide choice, with some 50 000 degree and non-degree courses available through the common application body (UCAS).



Increasing numbers of adults take higher education courses at both sub-degree and higher levels. Flexible learning arrangements, including part-time degrees and open learning make it easier to combine study with work. Credit may be given for other qualifications (e.g. professional qualifications or HNDs), reducing the study time required for the degree. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) awards credit for demonstrated learning that has occurred outside formal qualifications and can apply to university entry, as well as to other forms of learning.

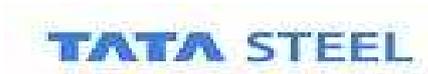
The sector includes universities, colleges of HE, and specialist institutions, e.g. for art and agriculture. Higher education courses are also increasingly offered in further education colleges. All universities in the UK have independent governance as chartered institutions, benefit from state funding through national funding councils and are subject to quality control for both teaching and research activity.

The Open University (OU) operates on a different basis compared to other universities. It has been offering degrees and other qualifications through distance learning since the 1970s. The OU is a major national institution that has also developed non-traditional pathways to HE qualifications.

The UK higher education sector has a number of sub-degrees HE qualifications (such as HNC, HND, Certificates in HE, Diplomas in HE and Foundation Degrees) and a three-level system of graduate qualifications: Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate. These reflect closely the structures contained in the Bologna process.

### ***Sub-Degree Qualifications***

Until the introduction of Foundation degrees in 2001, the most usual sub-degree HE qualifications were the Higher National Certificates and Diploma (HNCs and HNDs), which are vocational qualifications in their own right. HNDs are normally offered as full-time, two-year courses or through a longer part-time route, with HNCs normally offered as either one year full time or two years part time. Well-developed articulation



arrangements are in place for HNC/D students to progress to degree courses. A wide range of HND courses are on offer, particularly in Scotland, with some involving a combination of college and workplace learning.

Certificates in Higher Education (one year) and Diplomas in Higher Education (two years) are also offered and may serve as qualifications in their own right or as stepping-stones to first degree. Diplomas in Higher Education are widely taken as part of the education and training of nurses, though in Scotland the primary route to nursing qualification is through the Bachelor in Nursing.

### ***Foundation Degrees***

Since their introduction in 2000 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, Foundation degrees have seen some success. The 2010 Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) report confirms that the growth in the number of students studying on foundation degree programmes is on track to exceed the government target of 100,000 by 2010. The report says that there are 99,475 students enrolled on Foundation degree programmes in 2009-10. This includes 53,750 entrants to Foundation degree programmes: around 5,000 more than were reported in 2008-09.

Foundation Degrees integrate academic and work-based learning through close collaboration between employers and programme providers. They build upon a long history of design and delivery of vocational qualifications in higher education, and are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, so satisfying the needs of employees and employers and widen participation. They are shorter than Bachelors degrees, mainly in applied and vocational subjects, and designed to be taught in

HE and FE colleges. Features of the programme include:

- employer involvement;

- accessibility and flexibility;
- skills/knowledge application in the workplace;
- credit accumulation and transfer; and
- articulation and progression within work and/or to an honours degree.

Foundation degrees provide self-standing qualifications of specific value, but are also expected to provide for opportunities for further (life long) study which could take a number of different forms (e.g. professional body qualifications, higher level NVQs, etc.).

In addition, Foundation degrees will normally link to at least one programme leading to a bachelors degree with honours. The qualification benchmark is developed in co-operation with certain SSCs and is designed to be used as a 'reference point' to inform and clarify matters concerning purposes, expectations and achievements, and quality assurance. This qualification benchmark describes the distinctive features of a Foundation degree in terms of its purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes. In doing so it provides a reference point to:

- assist those directly involved in designing or validating Foundation Degree programmes
- provide general guidance for describing the generic learning outcomes for the Foundation Degree;
- provide general guidance for strategies on teaching, learning and assessment;
- support internal and external quality assurance;
- help interested parties to understand the purpose, generic content and outcomes of Foundation Degree programmes.

The assessment of each element of study within Foundation degree programmes, including the assessment of work-based learning, is governed by the Quality Assur-



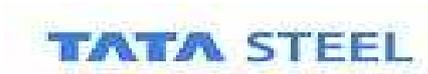
ance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education<sup>65</sup> and should be specified at the time of validation. Assessment may include a variety of formal and informal, and formative and summative techniques, provided that they are all capable of rigorous testing and independent verification. Through the combination of assessment of work-based learning and other more traditional means of assessment, Foundation degree can integrate a variety of delivery modes and assessments undertaken by institutions and employers.

Employers are expected to be involved in the assessment of work-based learning. Arrangements between institutions and employers should be specified fully at the outset of any partnership, and should include any training for employers that may be required in, for example, assessment procedures. Such arrangements should be reviewed regularly as part of the ongoing monitoring and review of the programme. In cases where employers are involved in the support of the learner and in their assessment, it may be necessary to provide support in the form of mentoring or other types of professional development.

The awarding institution and the provider are responsible for ensuring that all assessment, including that of work based learning, is applied consistently and is appropriate to the expected learning outcomes relevant to a qualification that is located within the Intermediate level of the FHEQ. As from 2009, further education institutions in England are now able to apply to the Privy Council for powers to award their own Foundation degrees.

### ***Bachelors Degree***

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) courses usually last three years (full-time). Some courses last four years, involving placements in industry or periods abroad; these have the same academic standing as three-year courses.



Most courses are modular in structure, with a compulsory common core. Courses usually include a project or dissertation based on independent research.

### ***Masters Degrees (MA and MSC, etc.)***

These are post-graduate courses and may take one-year full time or two years part time. They are usually self-funded; entry is dependent on results at bachelor level. There is a greater component of independent working, including a dissertation or thesis based on independent research. Some Masters degrees, such as MEng, are first degrees available for more able students. They are at a level between honours degree and Masters degree.

### ***Post-Graduate Certificates (eg PGCE)***

Some post-graduate courses are below Masters level and are intended to provide preparation for a specific occupation, following completion of a general degree. One of the best-known examples is the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), which prepares graduates for a career in teaching and is a pre-requisite for Qualified Teacher Status for those who do not have B Ed as their first degree.

### ***Doctorate (PhD)***

Entry onto a PhD is dependent on results at either Masters or Bachelor level. PhDs are funded but it is up to the student to gain that funding. They take at least three years to complete, the first year (or first two years) of which may consist of an MPhil (Masters of Philosophy) qualification. Part-time PhDs may take the candidate considerably longer to complete.



### ***Progression to Employment***

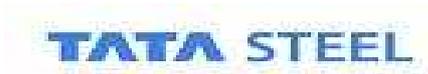
Possession of a relevant first degree is essential for entry to further training and employment in many professions; this is true for doctors, dentists and veterinary surgeons.

For other professions such as engineering there are alternatives such as registration and assessment via professional institutions. These are the independent bodies that set and maintain the standards for a specific profession. In engineering, they are overseen by the Engineering Council, which sets the UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence

(UK-SPEC). The Engineering Council licenses the professional engineering institutions to assess candidates for inclusion on its Register of Professional Engineers and Technicians.

There are 36 licensed members and a number of affiliates so candidates need to choose the most relevant institution(s) for their specialism. For accountants and lawyers, postgraduate courses following an unrelated first degree are not uncommon. For example; although to become an accountant candidates generally need a reasonable degree it is not essential. A degree will get the learner exemptions from some elements of vocational training or examination.

There are three main accounting bodies - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA).



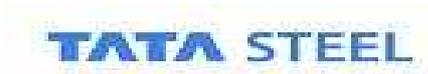
## 7 General Background (Administrative Structure and Financing)

For the last decade, the government policy has aimed to strengthen economic competitiveness through raising levels of skills and qualifications of the adult population, which led to an increased attention on the quality of training that lead to specific vocational qualifications. The strategy of government relies on encouraging individuals to take up learning and training opportunities, with a strong focus on the learner's needs rather than on the institutional interest of the providers (HM Treasury, 2005).

Flexibility exists at many points in the UK education systems, helping people who lack formal qualifications or training earlier in life to achieve qualifications later on. Nevertheless, barriers to learning are particularly strong for those who are socially excluded or at risk.

The implementation of the Leitch recommendations in England signalled the continued strengthening of a sectoral approach to skills policy in the UK (HM Treasury, 2006). A voluntary approach to training of the workforce on the part of the employers is supported by the government, with state intervention focused on the supply side. The aim is to stimulate employer and individual demand by improving quality and the responsiveness of learning providers, whilst making training attractive to employers – the initiatives include greater involvement of employer led Sector Skills Councils, reforming qualifications frameworks and others.

The report also emphasises the necessity of shared responsibility: employers and individuals, as well as the government, should increase their investment in training and education. A significant change recommended by Leitch is that the provision of vocational education and training should be demand-led, adaptable and responsive.



The government priority has been on providing public funds for those with low skills to bring them into the mainstream economy and improve their social standing. Considerable research into the individual, social and economic barriers to continuing participation have highlighted the need for a major change. Approximately 7.1 per cent of each age cohort still leaves school without qualification and without progressing to further education, training or a job with training (LSC, 2008).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, some seven to eight million adults are identified as lacking in basic skills. As such, finding ways that encourage large numbers of people to be involved in learning remains a key policy issue.

In response to this, numerous policy measures were introduced, such as an entitlement to free learning to anyone without a good foundation of employability skills to get the training needed to achieve a level 2 qualifications (DfES, 2007).<sup>24</sup> There was also increased government support (in terms of funding and access) for higher level skills at technician, higher craft or associated professional level (level 3 qualification) in areas of sectoral or regional priority.<sup>25</sup> Other strategy documents put employers' needs at the centre of the design and delivery of training, set a new entitlement to free training for young people up to the age of 25 to achieve a level 3 (ISCED 3) qualification, whilst announcing a new programme to support in-company basic training respectively (DfES, 2005; 2006).

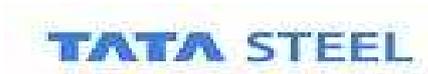
The main bodies responsible for developing and implementing national policy for training are being reformed (see above), in line with government's move towards a demand-led approach in post-compulsory education and training system, where the shape and volume of activities is more driven by employer and learner demand than

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<sup>23</sup> Figure for England only.

<sup>24</sup> A full level 2 refers to any qualification equivalent in standard and breadth to 5 GCSEs at A\*-C or National Vocational Qualification at level 2.

<sup>25</sup> A full level 3 refers to a standard equivalent to two A-levels or a National Vocational Qualification at level 3.



by central planning. The funding of post-compulsory education is devolved to funding councils.

Research by NIACE suggests that expenditure on adult skills development accounted for some £55 (€60.5) billion in 2007-08, of which the public sector accounted for 47%, private sector employers 30%, individuals 17% and the remaining 7% being contributed by the voluntary and community sectors (UKCES, 2010).

The government concern with the skills levels of the UK workforce and its competitiveness agenda, led to its increasing strategic involvement in the national skills formation agenda. To reiterate, the government established the UK-wide, employer-led network of Sector Skills Councils in 2002 and their umbrella organisation UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in 2008. Representing over 90% of the UK's workforce, the SSCs are tasked with securing increased levels of investment in skills and training by raising employer ambition in their sectors. They take a lead role in collating and communicating sectoral labour market data and intelligence, developing occupational standards, approving vocational qualifications and considering collective action to address specific sector skills needs.

UKCES works with devolved governments to ensure closer working relations between the employment and skills systems to meet employers' and individuals' needs. The Commission has a strategic leadership and advisory role: it provides evidence-based advice to the government. In 2010 it advised the government to introduce a statutory entitlement to training and to simplify the skills institutional landscape by reducing the number of publicly funded agencies by 30 in three years' time.

In England, the UK Commission also advises Government on skills and employment strategy and targets, assesses progress towards the targets and oversee the performance and reform of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) as part of its executive function.



The Employment and Skills Commissioners of the UK's devolved governments have a place on the UK Commission, representing their national interests and report to their corresponding Ministers, whilst overseeing their employment and skills issues locally and chairing their national employment and skills boards.

The SSCs all have representatives of trade unions and professional bodies on their boards. Their role includes collecting and communicating labour market data on their respective sectors, drawing up Sector Skills Agreements and their respective Sector Qualification Strategy, which provides their inputs into the vocational qualification reform and development and revision of national occupational standards, on which qualifications and training programmes are based.

### ***Encouragement of Community Learning***

The UK's devolved administrations sponsor initiatives and schemes to encourage learning in the community. Research suggests that many such schemes may overcome the barriers that more formal learning raises.

Learning can take place in a variety of settings and modes of delivery. The UK has a long-standing tradition of distance learning and an increasing number of courses offered could be delivered online.

### ***University for Industry/LearnDirect***

Learndirect aims to stimulate demand for learning by providing easily accessible information and advice to potential learners about all kinds of opportunities. This organisation provides learners with advice on learning opportunities available throughout Scotland, including information on childcare facilities.



Its network of branded learning centres takes learning into the community, making access to learning easier and more flexible. These learning centres are located in libraries; shopping centres, leisure centres and other locally based facilities. LearnDirect also works closely with businesses, providing advice on training needs and to identify appropriate courses.

### ***Range of Approaches to Workplace Learning***

Government, the CBI and the trade unions are encouraging a range of approaches to workplace learning. To raise the profile of workplace learning and to involve the trade unions in a more focused way, legislation now enables the election or appointment of learning representatives by trade union branches. The Union Learning Fund (ULF) has been set up with government funding through the TUC, in order to encourage an innovative approach whereby unions work with employers, often at workplace level, to extend the training provision offered to their members (e.g. tackling basic skills weaknesses among their members). Unionlearn, the TUC's learning and skills organisation provides a strategic framework and support for unions' work on learning and skills and the training of union representatives and officers.

Unionlearn covers the whole of the UK. Most of its activities are delivered at a regional level, where the majority of staff are employed to support union learning and skills projects and manage trade union education programmes. In Scotland, the Scottish government funds the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) as part of the strategy to tackle skills issues.

The Union Learning Representatives (ULR), who have statutory rights, support employees to take up learning and training in the workplace.



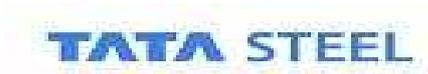
## 7.1 Major Characteristics of Formal CVET

In general, there is a significant crossover between IVET and CVET qualification systems and they are not designed as separate systems in principle. For example, NVQ2 and NVQ3 could equally serve for IVET and CVET. For full NVQs, City and Guilds Qualifications and similar qualifications offered by other Awarding Organisations, shorter courses or modules that do not lead to a full qualification at a level of the UK NQF could be described as being at an ISCED level but not as completion of an ISCED level.

A qualifications drift has taken place, as employers expect higher levels of qualifications from entrants to the labour market and jobs become more complex. Unless specific qualifications are required – e.g. for a career such as nursing, the law, teaching or engineering - general qualifications are often taken as a sign of ‘trainability’. Licences to practice requirements are not common in the UK, so vocational qualifications are often not seen as a necessary requirement for labour market entry.

### ***Participation Rates***

Traditionally, the UK has high participation rates in training (ReferNet UK, 2010). The latest Eurostat data (2007) put the UK at the highest place in overall participation of the workforce in education and training in the last 12 months prior to the survey (i.e. 15% compared with the EU average of 6.3%), particularly, at ISCED levels 5-6 (20.6% and 12.2%, respectively. It equally applies to the participation in training of unemployed (only Belgium has a higher participation rate, i.e. 16.3% as compared with the UK's 14.7% and EU's average of 6.3%).



### ***Delivery Mechanisms and Providers***

While much initial training is government-funded, the employer funds most workplace continuing training. Much continuing training is provided in-company or through specialist consultants or agencies. Most community and leisure learning provision, while it may be part-funded by a body such as the local authority, carries a financial cost to the individual.

At the same time, the public further and higher education establishments are major training providers. A wide range of private training organisations is involved.

Further education colleges, the largest players in the sector, are general purpose institutions covering both general and vocational education, and are also all-age institutions with large numbers of adults enrolled and normally with a range of both short and long courses.

The further education sector in the UK (2010) consists of 424 colleges, of which 95 are Sixth Form Colleges providing mainly full time academic courses to students aged 16-19, and 70 independent specialist colleges. Among those are general further education colleges, tertiary colleges, specialist colleges (mainly in land-based provision and art and design) and colleges that cater for people who have learning difficulties or disabilities, or both.

In 2009, FE institutions in the UK supplied 18.4% of students for higher education (UCAS, 2009). In Scotland, 22.5% of HE students came from colleges (ibid.).

There is a diverse range of provision within the post-compulsory education and training sector in addition to 6th form and FE colleges. This includes VET within enterprises, voluntary organisations, the prison service, uniformed services (police, armed services, emergency services), health and care services. There are, for example,



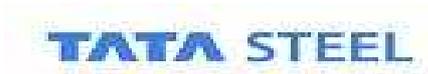
many independent colleges (e.g. secretarial colleges for secretarial and administrative training). There are also many private language training schools. None of these private or independent colleges require government approval, but about 100 of them are registered with the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education.

There are also numerous private training providers contracted by employers and local authorities to deliver specified training programmes (e.g. courses in human resource development and qualifications in particular occupational areas). Nationally, there is significant in-house training provided by employers. In-house trainers may work for an employer organisation and may be dedicated full-time to provide training; or they may be employed to undertake such training duties alongside other work. Other trainers may be contracted by the organisation to provide training or to assess employees' levels of competence.

There is a long tradition of people who lacked formal qualifications or training earlier in life achieving qualifications flexibly later on. Access courses to HE are recognised by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) through their inclusion in a national scheme. A student who successfully completes an Access course is awarded a certificate bearing the QAA Access logo.

QAA regulates the national recognition of Access courses. It is responsible for assuring the quality of recognised Access courses, and the adequacy of standards of student achievement on these courses. QAA has established a scheme, through which it can meet these responsibilities, the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (the recognition Scheme).

This overview indicates elsewhere many of the initiatives that government and other stakeholders have taken. Five such policies are cited below:



- ‘Work-Life Balance’ policies;
- The expansion of higher education;
- Emphasis on developing Foundation degrees (NB not in Scotland);
- The reform of management and administrative frameworks for VET;
- An emphasis on e-learning, community and workplace learning.

The intention is to put the learner at the centre.

### ***Renewal of Curricula***

In the UK, NVQs and SVQs are largely based upon National Occupational Standards (NOS), or statements of the outcomes to be achieved to meet the requirements for certification. These are mainly developed by Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), which are employer-led bodies and normally include trade unions representatives on a minority basis together with representatives of relevant professional bodies and training organisations from the sector.

Because curricula are not usually nationally prescribed (the assessment requirements for qualifications normally being independent of delivery), curricula tend to be developed mainly by the organisations providing the education and training, for example by colleges, training organisations and employers at a decentralised level. However, for programmes such as modern apprenticeship, SSCs are increasingly involved in developing and disseminating curriculum models.



### ***The Place of Basic Skills and Key Competences in the Learning Culture***

Key or core skills (to become functional skills) units are available at all levels of the NQF and SCQF in communication, number, information technology, problem solving, working with others, and developing own learning/skills. Key skills units in communication, number, information technology, problem solving, working with others and developing own learning skills are available at all levels of the NQF. They may be certificated as freestanding key skill qualifications. Key and core skills were widely seen as a potential bridge between different types of qualification provision and are a compulsory element of all modern apprenticeship programmes. Implementation of key skills programmes and assessment remains problematic.

Where students learn in a school-or college environment, securing sufficient direct experience of workplace learning and the professional competences and identities that are learnt this way is often a difficulty. A new framework of specialised diplomas is being developed in England, and work-based learning is to be a clear feature of these new qualifications.

### ***Integration of New Methods and Technologies into Curricula***

NVQ and SVQ criteria required national occupational standards to reflect the ability to respond to new technologies and innovations in working methods and forms of work organisation. This reflects the high degree of emphasis placed on facilitating flexibility and mobility in employment and ensuring that qualifications do not become out-dated too quickly.

Standards for vocational qualifications are generally reviewed at 3 to 5 yearly intervals. Curricula must be based upon the standards, and it is a matter for VET providers to ensure that curricula are kept up-to-date in line with industry requirements. In practice, the close relationship between providers and employers is often assumed to ensure that training delivery keeps pace with industry requirements, although



there is some evidence that training tends to follow, rather than lead, innovative practices in industry.

There is a growing use of ICT and e-learning in VET (ReferNet UK, 2010). The UK scores quite highly in most of the European and international comparisons in this regard.

Following a rigorous and demanding regime of quality assurance and regulation in the last decade, well performing FE and HE institutions have now 'lighter touch' inspection regime. Ofsted, the inspection body, now concentrates on external monitoring and support of the institutions that have evident performance problems.

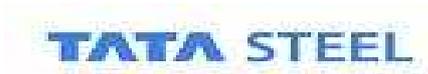
Investors in People (IiP) are currently a nationally recognised business standard that encourages employers to invest in training. IiP UK is an executive non-departmental public body set up in 1993. The award maintains a national standard. The IiP award indicates that a company or workplace has a high commitment to develop all employees, reviews training for all employees regularly, takes action to train and develop employees effectively, and evaluates the outcome of training and HR development. By 2008, approximately 8 million employees had benefitted from the Investors in People scheme, equating to 32% of the UK workforce (UKCES, 2008).

### ***Improving Support for Individuals to Learn in all Circumstances***

The following is an illustrative list of government's initiatives and priorities that are intended to improve access to continuing training, but is not intended to be exhaustive:

#### ***Train to Gain (T2G)***

The nationwide programme is a previous government initiative encouraging employers to train low-skilled employees by reimbursing employers the cost of granting low-skilled employees paid time off work to pursue education and training courses. During recession, the rather strict rules for financing participating SMEs were relaxed.



A similar demand-led programme, Workforce Development Programme is run in Wales.

Advisers work with employers to determine their priorities and identify skills needs and help them access local training opportunities. The programme focuses on priority sectors and businesses and supports employers who already engage in training. The Welsh programme has been described as more flexible and less qualification-driven than its English counterpart (OECD, 2009).

### ***Foundation Degrees (not Scotland)***

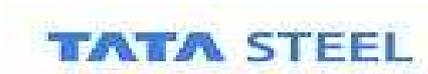
The Foundation Degree is a vocationally oriented qualification below the level of a BA degree level, which allows for progression to a full degree. They are meant for learners with non-traditional academic background and are designed in conjunction with employers. Foundation degrees do not feature as a part of Scotland provision due to the continuing success of their HNC/HND provision.

## ***7.2 Non-Formal Education***

### **7.2.1 General Background (Administrative Structure and Financing)**

Institutional and funding arrangements for non-formal learning are similar to those of the formal CVET. For government priority groups, those who have low skills, public funding is available.

The UK's system allows for flexible access and progression, although the evidence is that many experience barriers to learning. In terms of workplace learning for example, there is still little emphasis in several sectors on progression beyond qualifications at level 2 or 3.



The UK has considerable experience and expertise in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. There is no overarching UK policy approach, as the devolution of responsibilities for education and training to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, allows the devolved governments to introduce their distinct strategy.

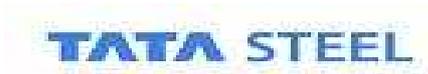
The possibility of recognising prior learning is being incorporated into the developing Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Scotland has adopted 'Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning' as a part of the arrangements for the SQCF.

### **7.2.2 Major Characteristics of Non-formal CVET**

In 2005, 17% of employers provided training towards an NVQ for a least one of their employees, and 48% had training that did not lead to qualification. At the same time 35% of employers did not provide any training to their staff (LSC, 2008). At the European level, although the UK has higher levels of participation in informal learning, almost double at all ISCED levels of the EU-25 average, it still lacks behind Scandinavian countries (Eurostat, 2005).

Examining patterns in employer participation in learning and training shows that the proportion of employers providing training continues to increase over time: in England, for example, from 64% in 2004 to 67% in 2007 and, despite the recession, 68% in 2009. In Scotland 65% of employers provide some form of training to their staff, as do 78% in Northern Ireland. The data from Wales is not quite comparable, where 58% of employers provide off-the-job training (UKCES, 2010).

Much of this training concerns induction, health and safety – and four out of five employers provide job specific training. The most common form of training is by training companies, followed by further education colleges, then equipment providers. Most on the job training is provided by a line manager, supervisor or an experienced col-



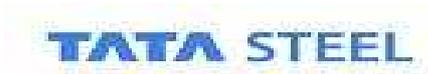
league, followed by specialist training staff. Increasingly, IT based packages are used for training.

Considerable differences exist between employers in the same industry or sector. The type and quality of training also varies. Overall, about 40% of employer-funded training leads to qualification or part qualification, and a considerable proportion related to induction rather than medium- or high-term skills development.

In November 2009, the right to request time to train became a statutory right. The new coalition government has confirmed the introduction of the right in phases, starting with organisations with 250 or more employees from 2010 before being extended to all employees from 2011. This will give smaller organisations and businesses more time to prepare the introduction of the new right. Employers will need to be ready to handle any requests they receive under the new statutory right to request time to train.

Many workplaces offer employees the opportunity to achieve formal recognition of their level of competence through the work-based route of National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs), which are designed to assess job-specific skills. Within reason, NVQs do not have to be completed in a specified amount of time or in a specific learning institution. It follows that the qualification can be gained either wholly or partly through the assessment of previously acquired knowledge and skills. Performance is assessed on-the-job at five different levels of standards as set by the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for that occupational area of employment.

Most other qualifications offered in the learning and skills sector give providers' considerable discretion over who may be admitted to the course and over course length, allowing prior learning to be taken into consideration. In practice, however, it is often simpler to follow the complete course than to combine attendance at some sessions with APL.

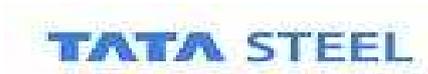


There is less opportunity for learners to have their existing skills recognised outside the framework of a formal qualification. This is partly because public policy and the desire for accountability, supported by the funding regime, have put pressure on colleges to align their courses to nationally accredited qualifications. Open College Networks have considerable experience in identifying and recognising learners' existing skills, usually in the context of a college-devised, externally validated certificate. The English RARPA scheme offers a means of accrediting skills outside the qualification framework (see below).

To address these issues, the devolved governments have been refining their qualification frameworks to promote progression and transfer, while providing clear and accessible routes to employability. All UK countries have outcomes-based education systems, and the development of the outcome-based methodology has been central to the VET reform, including qualification frameworks.

As previously stated; the recognition of prior learning is incorporated into the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Both England and Scotland have adopted 'Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning' as a part of the arrangements for their corresponding frameworks.

Recognising prior learning considers whether a learner can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills which they already possess and do not need to develop through further learning. Learners will be awarded credit when they have successfully shown that they have met the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a QCF unit.



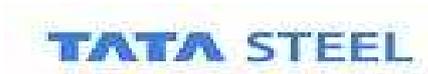
Employers in the UK acknowledge the value of prior learning within the work context and learning within the organisation, but this is rarely recognised by any form of certification.

### ***RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning in England)***

The RARPA project was initiated to address two issues in relation to non-accredited learning (i.e. learning which does not lead to a qualification) in the learning and skills sector. The first was how learner achievement could be recognised in the absence of a target qualification and the second was the need to improve quality, especially in recognising and recording learner progress and achievement, which inspection reports had noted as an area of weakness.

A theoretical model, the ‘Staged Process’ was developed as a way of recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited provision. The staged process comprises five elements, linked explicitly to key parts of the Common Inspection Framework:

- aims appropriate to an individual learner or group of learners;
- initial assessment to establish the learner’s starting point;
- identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives: initial, renegotiated, and revised;
- recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme
- (formative assessment): tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress
- reviews; and
- end of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement in relation to objectives identi-



fied at the beginning or during the programme, potentially including recognition of learning

- outcomes not specified during the programme.

RARPA was accepted as a valid method of recognising and recording learner achievement in learning where more usual measures (e.g. qualifications) are not appropriate – for example, in Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL - formerly known as ACL) and Entry to Employment (E2E).

During the lifetime of the RARPA project, significant changes were introduced or signalled in the funding of non-accredited provision. These led to sharp falls in adult learners and hence reduced the impact of the RARPA approach.

In 2007 (Eurostat, 2007), 40.3% of people of working age (25-64 years of age) in the UK participated in non-formal job-related training in the last 12 months prior to the survey, which compares favourably to the EU average of 32.7%. Employees were more likely to receive job-related training than self-employed, the unemployed or the economically inactive. For both, the EU average and the UK, the rates of training of employed are almost twice as high as unemployed.

### ***Social Partners - UnionLearn***

Unionlearn, is the Trade Union Congress's (TUC) learning and skills organisation, which was established in 2006, in order to provide a strategic framework and support for unions' work on learning and skills. Mostly funded by the government, it is a union-led organisation, with a Board comprising 15 senior TUC General Council members. The mission of Unionlearn is to increase workers' life chances through opening more learning opportunities to their members, particularly those disadvantaged in the labour market. There are two targets set: that by 2010 there should be 22,000 trained and accredited ULRs and that these will help a quarter of a million employees per year into training.



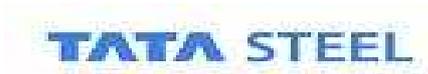
### 7.3 Measures to help Jobseekers and People vulnerable to exclusion from the labour market

There is no national definition for 'vulnerable groups' across the UK. Broadly speaking, vulnerable groups are defined as those who are likely to have additional needs and experience poorer outcomes if these needs are not met. These include children in care and care leavers; children with learning difficulties and disabilities and emotional or behavioural difficulties; some black and minority ethnic groups; pregnant teenagers and teenage parents; young offenders; young carers; refugees and asylum seekers; gypsies and travellers and other emerging communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT); young people; children and young people in substance misusing families; children and young people experiencing domestic violence; homeless children and young people. The long-term unemployed are also included in this group.

In the last decade, the previous government made an effort to encourage more people back into work, more employers to invest in training and more learning to achieve higher levels of qualifications after leaving school. This included initiatives to change the welfare system, particularly in the current economic climate, with some specific actions to address additional barriers the downturn creates. The new coalition government has launched a review of the welfare reform that is intended to reduce the number of people on benefits and encourage them into work.

In 2007 (Eurostat, 2007), the rates of participation of unemployed in formal and non-formal learning was higher than in most EU countries at 33.5%, but still lower than in Austria (41.4%), Norway (45.8%) and Sweden (58.6%).

Training for the unemployed (TfU) is training for persons aged 18 and over who are actively seeking work and are registered as unemployed. Those persons aged 16-17

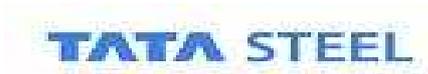


who are unemployed are classified as IVET as they are not entitled to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The UK government welfare to work policy has been delivered through a number of training programmes targeted at specific groups of unemployed and vulnerable (New Deal, Ambition Programme, etc).

Since April 2002, in England and Wales, state provided work-based learning for long-term unemployed adults has been delivered through the Jobcentre Plus, under the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). In the economic downturn, a package of additional support was put in place for those who are still unemployed at six months to help them back into work, become self-employed or gain new skills through work-focused training. The enhanced support is offered through Jobcentre Plus personal advisers to help unemployed people review their job search, work skills and effective job application process.

The Integrated Employment and Skills Service, which has been piloted to be rolled out across England in 2010-11, focuses on better identification of skills needs among the Jobcentre Plus customers, help them progress to higher skilled and sustainable employment. Special measures are envisaged for disabled people, offenders and other vulnerable groups.

There continue to be some active labour government training initiatives for the unemployed, the New Deal Programme and Work-based learning for Adults (WBLA), in particular. After more than a 10-year run of the programme, in October 2009, the government introduced the Flexible New Deal that has a more flexible personalised approach with a strong focus on helping the most disadvantaged jobseekers get and sustain work. In January 2008, the government was spending £5 (€5.5) billion less on unemployment than in 1997 and claimant unemployment was at a 30 year low. According to the programme evaluation, the New Deal has contributed to this success.

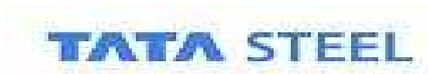


### ***The Flexible New Deal***

New Deal, an active labour market policy measure, was a key part of the previous government's Welfare to Work strategy since 1998. In a ten year period, 1.8 million people were helped move into work and improve their employability. At the end of 2007, the government published 'Ready for Work', which set out its plans for a more flexible, personalised New Deal with a strong focus on helping the most disadvantaged jobseekers get and sustain work (DWP, 2007).

As a result, in October 2009, the new Flexible New Deal (FND) was introduced. The new single New Deal Programme replaced the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) and NewDeal 25+. It aims at long-term unemployed and is based on five core principles:

- from passive benefit recipients to active jobseekers;
- tailored employment and skills support to meet the need of an individual and local employers based on a personalised and responsive approach;
- public, private and third sector organisations working in partnership based to maximise innovation;
- sustainable employment in the centre of local regeneration by empowering communities; and
- an emphasis on sustaining and progressing in work to ensure all customers develop their skills and have access to the relevant pre-employment and in-work training.



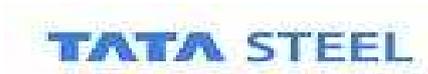
## 8 Matching VET Provision (Skills) with Labour Market Needs (Jobs)

### 8.1 Systems and Mechanisms for the Anticipation of Skill Needs (in Sectors, Occupations, Education Level)

The UK Government has a stated ambition of being in the top eight countries in the world for skills, jobs and productivity by 2020. Since 2002, with the introduction of the UK-wide Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), followed by creation of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in 2008, the government has aimed to enhance employer understanding of their future labour market and skills requirements, with the aim of leading to improved employability and matched skills demand and supply.

The UKCES has a strategic advisory role and the SSCs lead on anticipation of training and qualification needs for their sectors. These sectoral arrangements aim to improve their capacity for undertaking labour market analysis in anticipation of emerging sector skill requirements. Traditional labour market forecasting techniques have been refined and more holistic approaches are being adopted.

The developing Sector Skills Councils and awarding bodies respectively review the labour market need and uptake of qualifications with specific priority being given to employers' needs. Relevant labour market data comes from a variety of national sources including the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Annual Employment Survey (AES), and from national, regional or sectoral surveys, and skill audits. Quantitative methods utilised include mechanistic/extrapolative techniques, behavioural/econometric models, as well as surveys of employers' opinions and skills audits. Qualitative approaches include Delphi techniques, case studies, focus groups and holistic modelling approaches, such as scenarios.



Strong emphasis is now placed on identifying and planning skill development programmes to meet regional/local labour market needs. Each of the 23 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs),<sup>26</sup> led by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, are required by the government to develop Sector Qualifications Strategies (SQS) and a Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) between employers and providers of learning and training within in their sector.

Amongst other things, SSCs have the role of representing employers' skills needs to government and raising employer demand for skills, as well as representing the interests of other stakeholders, particularly relevant trade unions.

The Sector Skills Agreement is now recognised as the mechanism through which employer skills needs in the UK are identified and met. Target groups include the full range of groups that are likely to be represented amongst the low skilled, including NEETs, immigrants, members of some ethnic minorities, those lacking in basic skills.

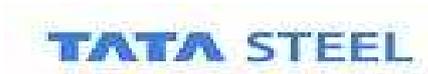
The composition of an SSA has five stages:

1. Assessment of current and future skills needs in the sector;
2. Assessment of current provision in the sector;
3. Analysis of gaps and weaknesses in demand and supply;
4. Identification of the scope for collaborative action with employers; and
5. Production of a costed action plan with supply side partners.

The objective of the SSA include identifying the drivers of productivity and competitiveness in the sector, as well as what constitutes leading-edge practice around the world, supporting measurable improvements in business performance and identifying the skills needed to achieve these targets.

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<sup>26</sup> As part of the relicensing process, all 25 Sector Skills Councils went through a comprehensive assessment process led by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. As a result, 23 SSCs were relicensed in 2010.



SSCs lead the work on reviewing and developing new occupational standards (NOS), followed by the agreements with providers and other national and regional partners on funding issues and support for flexible training patterns.

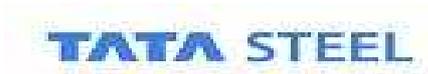
NOS (on which NVQs and SVQs are based) are developed through a process of functional analysis. Standards are specified in the form of units, aggregated to meet qualifications needs of specific occupations, which are identified by a parallel process of occupational mapping.

SSCs are required to take into account future labour market requirements. Each SSC has an agreed Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS). SQS identifies priority qualifications for the jobs roles across the sector in addition to identifying gaps, for which awarding organisations might develop new qualifications. The SQS forms the basis of any recommendations for public funding.

The anticipation of skills needs is taken forward initially on a sectoral basis, followed by a regional and local perspective, based on the sectoral needs analysis. In England, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) take this agenda forward.

The Skillsbase database provides a wide range of labour market information. There is a substantial national investment in statistical infrastructure for gathering and analysing the aforementioned data. Forecasting is primarily publicly-funded, but some more sector-specific surveys are financed by employers' organisations.

The SSCs and awarding bodies respectively review the labour market need and uptake of specific qualifications. Routine monitoring of qualifications and system trends is undertaken by the Ofqual (England, Wales and NI), UKCES and DGs' corresponding bodies.



The renewal of qualifications admitted to the national qualifications framework is determined by a ‘re-accreditation cycle’ in which qualifications are subject to review on an agreed cycle – typically 3 years. On average, new qualifications are developed over an 18 months’ cycle.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children Services and Skills (Ofsted) is responsible for appraising and reporting to Government on the quality of training provision; this is done through visits to training settings and can include commentary on the performance of specific initiatives and reforms.

## 8.2 Practices to Match VET Provision (Skills) with Skills Needs (Jobs)

The UK’s VET system is largely outcomes-based. Training providers have the flexibility to plan learner-centred delivery systems to meet users’ needs. The same qualifications are offered in both the initial and the continuing VET and the flexibility offered by the outcomes approach has been greatest in providing adult learners with access to individually targeted learning and assessment. Young people however, increasingly since the advent of apprenticeships, tend to follow more standardised learning programmes.

The modular or unitised structure of N/SVQs and most other vocational qualifications provides a high degree of flexibility, opening up possibilities for modular delivery and credit transfer. The number of people gaining individual units, often through job-focused in-company training, is increasing in some sectors.

Many providers of education and training use mixed mode delivery, incorporating elements of conventional and open or distance learning.

The VET reforms in England were aimed at refining qualifications frameworks, reflecting concerns that existing qualification frameworks were incoherent, with a large



number of qualifications and awarding bodies,<sup>27</sup> and with limited opportunities to accumulate credit or to develop flexible progression routes. The reforms aim to make qualifications landscape more understandable to employers and learners whilst meeting the needs of both and providing clear and accessible routes to employability and learning progression.

Since 2002, the reform of vocational qualifications (VQ) has been implemented across the UK. Within England, this includes the proposed merging of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) into the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which is a credit-based and web-based regulated framework. In England, the QCF is a new way of recognising achievements of learners through the award of credit for units and qualifications that enables qualifications to be achieved gradually by accumulating learning and transferring credit. The work includes both academic and applied knowledge and skills, the linkage of all levels, including school-based, vocational qualifications and higher education and was completed by the end of 2010.

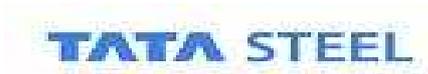
Every unit and qualification in the framework has a credit value and level. The qualifications are of three sizes (award, certificate, diploma). The framework has nine levels of difficulty. When a learner completes a unit, they are awarded the relevant credits, which are recorded electronically on their learner record.

England has an outcomes-based education system, and the development of the outcome-based methodology has been central to the VET reform, including the development of QCF. Most

VET qualifications, school qualifications and first degrees are described and assessed in outcomes terms. The 23 Sector Skills Councils have a major role in defining learning outcomes in terms of employability. One credit is awarded for those learning outcomes achieved in ten hours of learning time. Rules of combination

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<sup>27</sup> In England, there are over 130 awarding bodies, both commercial and charitable in status.



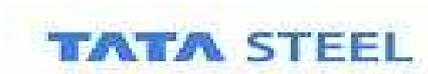
specify the credits that need to be achieved, through particular units, for a qualification to be awarded. All qualifications within the framework have rules of combination. They are the mechanisms through which sets of achievements are grouped together into a qualification. The other purpose of rules of combination is the structure through which credits are transferable between qualifications and awarding bodies. This is a new feature of the QCF.

Ofqual, the government regulator, in partnership with planning and funding bodies, UKCES and the relevant bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is responsible for implementing qualifications reform in England (and for certain vocational qualifications, in Wales and Northern Ireland also), through mechanisms such as the design of the review of national framework and the criteria for inclusion, and the approval of awarding bodies.

Candidates may be awarded qualifications on the basis of accreditation of prior learning (APL) evidence alone. In practice, this has proved difficult because of the substantial requirements for verification. However, the availability of direct access to assessment for those able to show that they have sufficient learning to be assessed without having to follow a complete learning programme is another factor contributing to flexibility. In 2008, a set of guidelines allowing for recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland was published by QCDA.

The development of these frameworks will facilitate transfer and accumulation of qualifications and credits across the four nations of the UK. The work to reference the qualification frameworks in the UK with the EQF has been completed.

In England, three National Skills Academies (NSAs) were launched in 2006. Led by employers but with government support these aim to encourage excellence in voca-



tional education at national level, operating as world class centres of excellence in training for their occupational sectors. By the end of 2008 there were 12 academies across England.

At regional level employers, education and training providers and government agencies come together to develop coordinated approaches to skills issues through Regional Skills Partnerships, and at local level Local Aimhigher Partnerships bring together partners to develop and coordinate initiatives to widen participation in higher education, including vocational routes.

## 9 Financing: Investment in Human Resources

### 9.1 Funding for Initial Vocational Education and Training

The state is the major contributor to Initial Vocational Training (IVET). The majority of funding for school-based IVET (whether undertaken at a further education – FE – college or school) originates from the central government departments). There are some slight variations on the funding sources depending on the provider and the age of learner.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) redistributes resources in the light of changing economic and social priorities. This funding is linked to a set of public service agreements (PSAs) and indicators, which HM Treasury uses to measure the impact of the investment.

Investment in the devolved governments (DGs) is less directly linked to PSAs than in England, as the DGs control their own budgets within the overall allocations from HM Treasury.



Currently, in England, funding flows from the government departments (BIS and DfE) to the two newly established agencies (April 2010) that replaced the Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) and then to training providers. The new Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) looks after the 16-19 provision and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is responsible for all post-19 funding, including Apprenticeships, informal adult learning and learners with learning disabilities. They both consult with the range of partners regarding the most appropriate mode of delivery for training provision, taking account of quality, access and strategic planning priorities.

Publicly funded secondary schools in England and Wales receive their funding from local authorities (LA) based on the funding formulae (number of students, their age, students with special education needs, etc). LA raises funds through local taxation. Local authorities and education institutions also receive a small proportion of direct funding from the DfE or the Welsh Assembly Government. Schools can also raise some funds through voluntary contributions and renting out premises.

The YPLA is also responsible for funding school sixth forms. The YPLA does not fund them directly – it funds the LAs, which include the allocation within their schools' budget shares. Most schools are within the authority of local governments and are funded on the basis of a formula with the majority of the weighting given to a student number.

For FE colleges in England, their sources of budgets are the following:

- 70% from the SFA – subject to funding agreement with their local funding agencies;
- 10% from students' fees;
- 10% from other sources (including the European Union and training provision for companies); and
- 10% from diverse sources such as sales of materials and interest on their investments.



This breakdown cannot distinguish between what the FE college spends on providing school-based IVET or for other VET programmes provided privately (e.g. to enterprises), for adults, etc. (i.e. there is no budget hypothecation). Specifically for IVET, however, an FE college receives funds from the SFA, which in turn receives money from the government departments as a grant. The funding agency gives colleges a three-year indicative budget.

Money goes as a grant to FE corporations, HE institutions offering FE, special designated institutions (which are not FE colleges) or adult education services. Providers get annual allocation from the funding agency, which are paid in scheduled monthly amounts and settled at the year-end following an audit.

The size of the grant to colleges is conditional on a funding agreement specifying various targets. SFA reserves the right to reduce the amount it pays if the funding agreement is not met. How that college decides to spend the funds is largely at its discretion as long as it delivers the quantity of training to which it has agreed. Colleges have to report on what they spend their money on in terms of student retention, student recruitment, achievement rates and value for money. Accountability focuses on what they have produced in return for funding. A similar situation broadly pertains in schools.

### ***Changes to the Funding Mechanism for Government-Funded Training***

Changes in the 2008-09 academic year related to the mechanisms of funding rather than the types of learning that the government fund. It affected the mechanisms by which the funding is calculated, paid and recovered in line with demand. The impact of these changes will be measured as the changed funding arrangements take root.

The government has increased the assumed private contribution towards fees where learners are not undertaking priority courses. By 2010-11, an equal balance between public and private fee contributions is expected to be reached. The funding reform



envisaged that FE colleges would increase their income by providing more courses, consultancy and research work for employers at full cost recovery rates, selling other goods and services, or charging full-cost fees to overseas students, where there is existing and growing demand or where the provision is no longer attracting public funding.

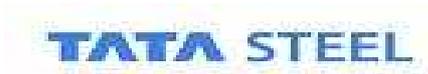
In England, new funding models and methods were introduced during 2008-2009, also as part of the vocational qualification reform and QCF implementation, making funding more demand-led by learners and employers and reflecting the introduction of new programmes.

As the QCF is being populated with units during 2009-2010, the funding is being switched from NQF qualifications to QCF qualifications. As the new qualification system is unit-based, a unit-based funding approach is being trialled during this period to test whether unit funding can incentivise the completion of full qualifications. The new system incorporates the employer-responsive and the adult-responsive funding modes. With the outset of the economic downturn, some flexibility, particularly, for SMEs for funding of repeat or partial/incomplete qualifications was introduced.

2009-2010 was the first year of aligning funding to qualifications nominated for public funding by the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)/Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs). Eventually, funding for post-19 qualifications will be prioritised for the SSC-nominated qualifications. The system is still in transition.

### ***Funding in the Devolved Administrations***

In Wales, the National Assembly has devolved responsibility for the funding of education and lifelong learning. Although the key objectives are broadly consistent with those for England, there are a number of significant differences in structures and the



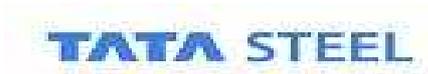
way that programmes are offered and funded. All central government funding for education in Wales is provided by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). WAG decides the sums to be spent on its various areas of activities, including education, and distributes resources accordingly.

In Wales the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) supports a credit-based framework. Funding is based on Credit Equivalence Units (CEUs), which were developed as a component of the NPFS funding model pending the wider credit valuation of funded learning.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government provides funding for the 43 Scottish tertiary colleges through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The SFC funds the 42 incorporated (self-governing) colleges directly, and Orkney and Shetland colleges through their local authorities. All the colleges also receive fees from their students and from organisations and firms for which they supply education and training.

In Northern Ireland, virtually all schools have delegated budgets under which school governors determine spending priorities. DELNI is responsible for funding Jobskills, the training scheme for young people. The programme comprises three strands: Access, for young people with essential skills or special skills needs that require additional support; Traineeship (the equivalent of FMA in England); and Modern Apprenticeship, (the equivalent of Advanced Apprenticeship in England).

At tertiary level, the government funding for universities is channelled through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Department of Employment and Learning Northern Ireland and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), to support teaching programmes and a core of research funding. Much research is separately funded



across the UK by the Office of Science and Technology and through research Councils.

## 9.2 Funding for CVET and Adult Learning

### 9.2 .1 Funding for Publicly Provided CVET

There are a number of government programmes, which supply different types of funding, particularly for those without basic skills or level 2 qualifications. Companies can also qualify for the government-sponsored programmes for low-skilled employees (for example, Train to Gain).

Employed individuals can undertake CVT with their own funding plus some government support or with public funding by enrolling at a further education college. A key principle of publicly funded continuing vocational education and training in the UK is to focus on stimulating demand and creating a framework which best serves the individual.

One important organisation is the University for Industry (Ufi), which stimulates demand amongst both adults and businesses. The Ufi acts like a training broker providing access to ICT under its brand name learndirect, with 6,000 online centres and almost 2,000 learning centres across the UK.

Trade unions through their union learning representatives (ULRs) encourage the low skilled employees to engage in training and to support those with higher skills to maintain their continuous professional development. Government sponsors the Union Learning Fund, which trains and accredits union learning representatives, who had the aim of assisting 250,000 employees per year annually by 2010. The Union Academy has been established with government financial support to provide courses ranging from basic skills to MBAs.



### ***Adult and Community Learning***

An identifiable characteristic of adult education opportunities in the UK is the range and flexibility of provision. A wide range of adult part- and full-time courses is available through publicly funded further education and adult education colleges in the community (for priority areas and priority qualifications), as well as distance learning courses, such as through the Open University. Increasingly, study programmes and guidance are available online.

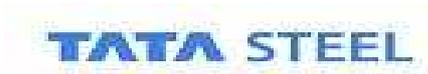
The mode and length of study vary depending on the type of course and the institution. Courses may be full or part-time and may last from a day or two for employer-based courses, to several years for a first-degree course.

A number of adults also attend secondary schools for part of the time and take particular classes with the pupils. Adult education units are also active within Her Majesty's Prisons (HMPs). Most of community and leisure learning provision, while it may be part-funded by bodies, such local authority, carries a financial cost to the individuals, apart from some disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Although traditionally the adult learning participation has been high, it has dropped (49% change in enrolment 2003-2007) due to the funding changes, which took effect in 2005-2006 and were followed by further funding cuts in non-priority areas in 2006-2007. Training providers have been obliged to increase courses fees for adults who did not fall into the government's priority groups (those without basic skill level 2 qualifications, amongst others).

The duty to secure the adult and community-learning sector rests with the SFA in England and the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales. These bodies agree adult learning plans with Local Authorities (LAs).

As part of a common funding approach:



- adult learners continue to make a substantial contribution to the costs of their learning where they are able to do so; and
- sufficient public funding is available to encourage providers to offer and increase learning opportunities to disadvantaged learners at no cost or low cost.

In Northern Ireland, it provided by the further education sector, supplemented by the work of a range of non-statutory providers, using established funding streams.

Adult education in Scotland is a statutory duty of education authorities and is generally known as community learning or community education. General responsibility for promotion, development and oversight of community learning and development lies with Communities Scotland.

## 9.2 .2 Funding for CVET in Enterprises

Statutorily, employers are not required to provide training to employees (with some exceptions, such as health and safety). Nevertheless, employers spend a considerable amount on training: the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) claims that employers spend some £32 (€35.2) billion per annum on training, including the costs of the time staff spend training. Enterprises pay, both in real funds and in-kind, the biggest portion of the overall VET bill for Continuing Vocational Training (CVET), while individuals contribute through fees less than 1% of IVET and CVET. The current reform envisages that a higher contribution will be required from employers and individuals, who have got level 2 qualifications. The training might be in-house, by a private provider or by a further education college.

The CVT survey 3 (Eurostat, 2005) shows that total cost of CVT courses as % of total labour cost in 2005 was 1.3% and slightly lower than the EU average and much lower than a previous CVT survey 2 in 1999, which was 3.6%. This trend equally applies across the board, from SMEs to big companies.



### 9.3 General Funding Arrangements and Mechanisms

#### ***Perspectives and Issues: From Funding to Investing in Human Resources***

The national priorities for funding training are closely linked to the priorities of central government's and the devolved administrations' main objectives for education and training. From 2005, the focus of policy for adult learning changed to acquisition of skills, the aim being to meet the needs of employers and boost the country's economic competitiveness. Therefore, the major objective in the financing in education and training has been to alter the balance of resources between the state, employers and individuals.

With limited public resources, state funding is to be channelled to areas of demonstrated market failure and used to support government priorities, notably provision for young people and initiatives for adults without a full level 2 qualification or above, whilst encouraging employers' further contribution into their staff training as well as individuals'.

The recent institutional changes (abolishment of LSCs and channelling funding streams through different structures) and funding mechanisms review are meant to support this shift.

The linking of strategy, funding and the different learning streams is an intentional part of government policy and of the new legislation.

These policies fit within an overall strategy to develop human capital as a resource and as a means of achieving higher levels of productivity and competitiveness. Access to education and training beyond the statutory requirements of school attendance and entry to jobs that have entry qualification requirements is left in most re-



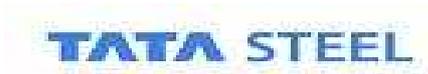
spects to individuals (an individualistic approach) and, as far as training is concerned, to employers (the voluntarist approach).

In recent years, adult learning has become more targeted and government in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have become more involved in identifying priorities. Nowadays, state-provided funding is geared to contributing to the achievement of these objectives. The funding regime and mechanism is used as a conscious system driver to attempt to achieve system goals. This began more than a decade ago with the move to fund the main public providers of training at ISCED levels 2 and 3 (the further education colleges) through a mechanism that would reward the achievement of objectives such as successful retention and completion rates, rather than simply fund on a per capita basis, the number of students or learners enrolled at a particular date. Though simplified and at a transitional phase, the funding mechanisms continue this practice of targeting and rewarding.

A number of issues and problems are to the forefront, notably:

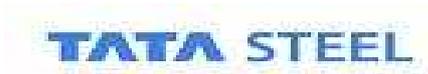
- How to incentivise low-skilled and reluctant adults to re-engage with learning.
- How to raise intermediate or technical skills levels among the workforce: State funding of apprenticeships, new diplomas for young learners, the expansion of non-degree higher education and the current review of vocational qualifications aim to tackle this issue, although major concerns remain.
- How to fund the expansion of higher education: in particular, the extent to which the stock of graduates is an individual good as compared to a social/economic good is a sharp political issue. The administrations of the UK take divergent positions on this issue.

### ***Sectoral Funds***



Only three industry training boards (ITBs) (construction, engineering construction and audiovisual industry) collect statutory levy and provide training grants. They have been licenced as SSCs and have some additional public funding for their activities. Following consultation with employers, the industry training boards recommend the rates of training levy to the Secretary of State and to Parliament for approval. A Levy Order is then passed which sets out the rates of training levy to be applied and provides the ITBs with the authority to raise a training levy.

All establishments on the ITB's Register of Leviable Establishments are required by law to complete an annual Statutory Manpower and Payroll Return. The information provided on the Return enables the ITBs to assess the amount of training levy payable (if any), followed by the distribution of funds according to the training needs of the qualifying companies.



## 10 National VET Statistics

### 10.1 Classification of National VET Programmes

#### 10.1.1 Main Criteria used to Allocate VET Programmes

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was designed by UNESCO in the early 1970s to serve ‘as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting statistics of education both within individual countries and internationally’. It was approved by the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 1975), and was subsequently endorsed by UNESCO’s General Conference.

The present classification, now known as ISCED 1997, was approved by the UNESCO General Conference at its 29th session in November 1997. However, in 2009, the UIS established an ISCED Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to make recommendations for the review of the ISCED to be presented for adoption at the UNESCO General Conference in 2011. This review is ongoing; and likely to be published within the next year.

For England, the main points are:

- NQF levels 2 and 3 are coded to ISCED 3;
- ISCED 4 is hardly used at all;
- NQF level 4 is equivalent to ISCED 5B.

Moreover, the UK data collection as regards qualification levels of the population is yet to adopt a harmonised approach. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is yet to produce a mapping of the UK categories in terms of ISCED level.



### ***VET Levels in the National Education System***

The following table provides an overview of UK qualification levels, based on the National Education Attainment Classification, as compared to ISCED levels.

**Table 10.1: ISCED Levels of sample English Qualifications based on National Education Attainment Classification as Compared with EU LFS Coding (DfES)**

<b>ISCED 1 -2</b>	<b>ISCED 3</b>	<b>ISCED 4</b>	<b>ISCED 5</b>	<b>ISCED 6</b>
Key skills, basic skills, entry level qualifications, YTP certificate, no qualifications	NVQ levels 1-3, City and Guilds Pt 1-2, CSE/GCSE below grade C, RSA diploma, BTEC, etc; A levels, Apprenticeship, Advanced Apprenticeship	Access to HE	HNC/D, Undergraduate, Postgraduate or equivalent, NVQ 4 and 5; higher diploma, e.g. RSA/BTEC	Postgraduate or equivalent, NVQ 4 and 5; higher diploma, e.g. RSA/BTEC PhD/M.Phil

Source: ReferNet UK, 2010: 110



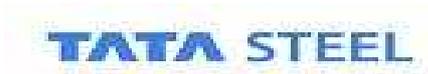
## 10.2 Links between National Qualifications and International Qualifications or Classifications

Taking the UK as a whole, the longer-term strategy is to develop qualifications and learning programmes that engage a wide range of learners, based on the principles of equality and diversity and supported by transparent systems of credit and qualifications frameworks. Scotland has already implemented such a framework, the Scottish credit and qualifications framework; England, Wales and Northern Ireland have developed such frameworks and are in the process of populating credit-based Qualifications and Credit Frameworks.

Each of the established frameworks within the UK is based on learning outcomes. All four countries of the UK have made provision for credit accumulation and transfer and the accreditation of informal and non-formal learning in their qualifications frameworks.

In November 2007, the UK government signed up to a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union on the establishment of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. This commitment was underlined with the principle of referencing national qualifications systems to it by 2010. In 2008/9, three exercises were carried out to reference the UK qualifications frameworks to the EQF in accordance with the criteria and procedures developed by the EQF Advisory Group. Two clear objectives remain:

- To relate national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, in particular by referencing qualification levels to the levels of the EQF in a transparent manner
- To adopt measures so that by 2012 all new qualification certificates, diplomas and “Europass” documents issued by the competent authorities contain a

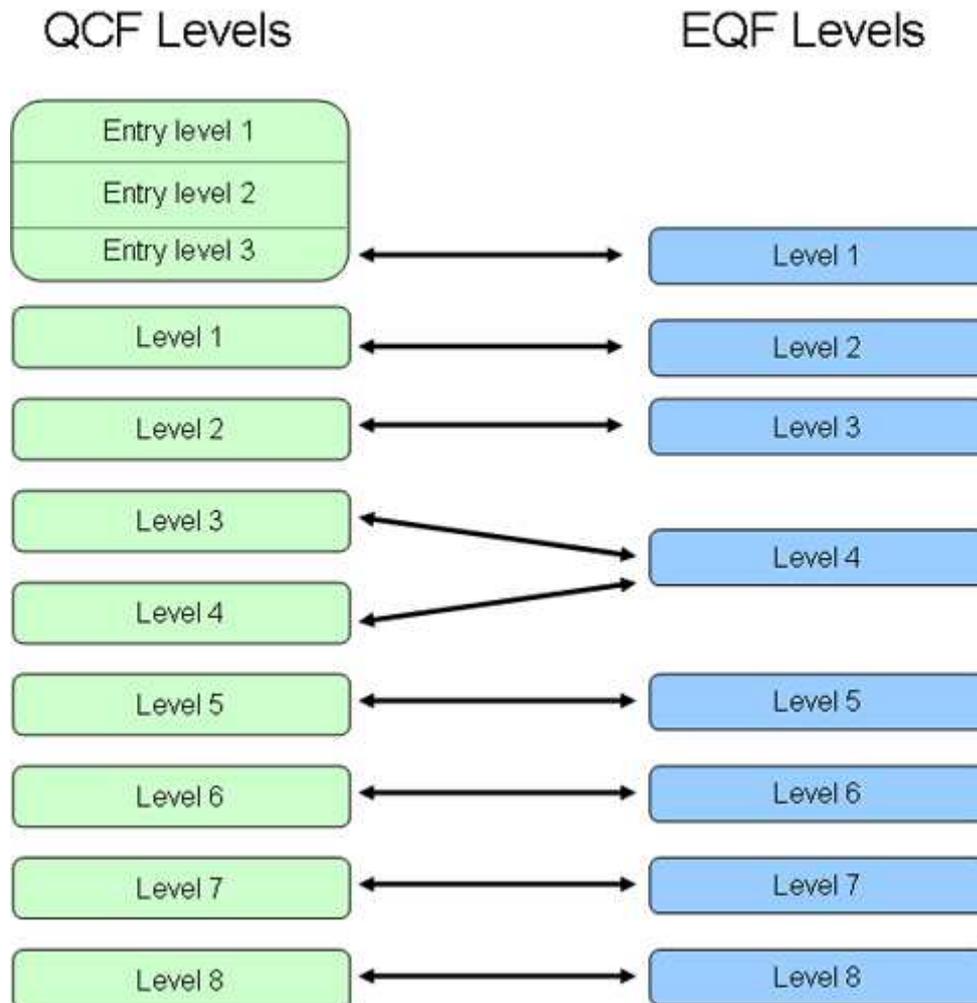


clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

The referencing of the EQF in the UK is being organised to relate to the various credit and qualifications frameworks in the UK already established or in development, including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), the QCF in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ).

England and Northern Ireland have cross-referenced the levels of the QCF to those of the EQF and the final results were published in 2009.

The consultants' report concludes that: while there are legitimate differences in emphasis between the QCF and the EQF, there is a consistent relationship between the levels of the two frameworks which is indicated in the following figure:



**Source:** Lester (2008).

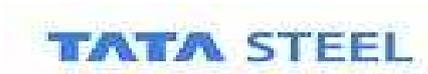
<b>QCF</b>	E (3)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>EQF</b>	1	2	3	4	5	5/6	6	7	8



Key challenges for VET across the UK are highly consistent with the Lisbon aims: Successive UK reform programmes aim to develop an effective skills agenda so as to:

- achieve cross-government action to tackle skills gaps and shortages;
- act on the demand side to encourage employers to use skills to develop more ambitious and innovative business strategies;
- motivate learners to continue in and return to learning, and tackle low skills;
- make VET responsive to employers' needs; and
- raise the status and quality of initial VET to achieve: a coherent 14-19 phase of learning; a broader range of courses and programmes; high quality vocational options; higher levels of participation and lower levels of early school drop-out; higher levels of qualification, etc.

## 11 Conclusions



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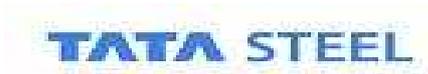
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