

INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL SKILLS ACADEMY NETWORK



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National Skills Academies are an exciting evolution in the way we train our workforce. For the first time, employers are taking control of the design and delivery of learning in their industry, working in partnership with government and top training providers, from both the public and private sectors.

This has revolutionised thinking about the skills we need, responding to employers' insights and experience and developing programmes tailor-made for their industries. It means higher standards of training delivery, as employers know the levels of performance they need from their people to keep ahead of the competition, whether at home or abroad.

It's a simple fact of business. If we want to compete in world-class markets, we need a world-class workforce. That's what the National Skills Academy network is helping to deliver.

“The network is putting employers in the driving seat to shape training for their industry. It is already helping Britain face the challenge presented by the skills race – which we can and must win. The network is key to supporting progression, creating jobs, tackling strategic skills shortages and driving up productivity.”

Minister for Skills, David Lammy

Why now?

We recognise that one of the biggest challenges employers face in the 21st century is to recruit enough highly skilled, motivated and ambitious people who compare well with the best in the world.

“A generation ago, a British prime minister had to worry about the global arms race. Today a British prime minister has to worry about the global skills race... because the nation that shows it can bring out the best in all of its people will be the great success story of the coming decades”

Prime Minister Gordon Brown

Many industries are facing skills shortages as the current workforce retires and there are too few recruits to replace them. So we need to invest in training which is accessible and attractive for potential employees, and easy for employers to influence and invest in.

Our nation's skills are not world class and we run the risk that this will undermine the UK's long-term prosperity. Productivity continues to trail many of our main international comparators. Despite recent progress, the UK has serious social disparities with high levels of child poverty, poor employment rates for the disadvantaged, regional disparities and relatively high income inequality. Improving our skill levels can address all of these problems.

Leitch Review of Skills, December 2006

“National Skills Academies give employers the chance to shape the future skills system. Led by employers with Government support, these centres of excellence help us identify and tackle those skills shortages in sectors vital for the competitiveness of tomorrow's economy.”

John Denham, Skills Secretary

Faced with these pressures, employers are looking for a simple and streamlined approach to skills training which will bring them the kind of step change they need to maintain their productivity and competitiveness.

The National Skills Academy network has already enjoyed a great deal of success and this is set to build momentum over a broad cross section of industries. For example, in its first year of operation the National Skills Academy for Financial Services helped over 3,000 learners gain relevant sector qualifications.

The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing has helped companies like Lotus and Land Rover improve the skills of more than 700 employees and the National Skills Academy Process Industries is implementing a project to register thousands of employees with existing, non-registered qualifications, as part of its drive to upskill the sector. Each of the individual skills academies continues to develop their capabilities and their cumulative success is a real testament to how much we can benefit from them as a nation.

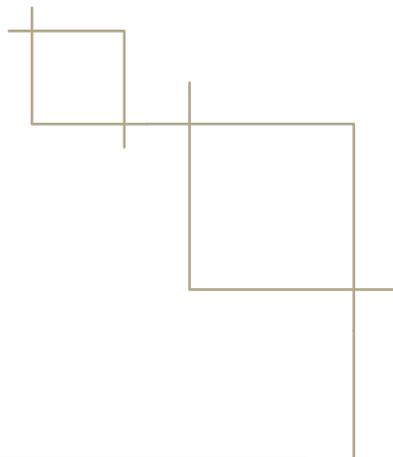
WHAT IS A NATIONAL SKILLS ACADEMY?

National Skills Academies are employer-led centres of excellence. They deliver the skills required by key sectors and sub-sectors of the economy, contributing to world-class competitiveness through world-class skills. National Skills Academies are a core part of the Government's plans for improving the skills available to employers and to creating opportunities for their employees. They come in different shapes and sizes, driven by employers' needs.

National Skills Academies bring employers together with specialist training providers to develop solutions which tackle the skills challenges facing their sector. They are focused on transforming the way a sector's training and development needs are addressed. Although each National Skills Academy will be different, because each is designed to meet the particular needs of a particular sector, it is possible to set out some of the broad features and key benefits that can be expected.

All of the National Skills Academies in the network tackle different problems and have the freedom to evolve approaches that best fit their sector. But they all share a set of core values about what it means to be a National Skills Academy and what a National Skills Academy is setting out to achieve:

- **Leadership:** National Skills Academies enable employers to take the lead in driving change for their sector – to come together and develop the levers that will effect that change.
- **Transformation:** National Skills Academies offer compelling solutions to current and emerging skills challenges. They are about moving the skills system to a new place including, but not limited to, the achievement of specialist excellence – they should be about increasing the supply of skills to provide innovative solutions for business.
- **Collaboration:** National Skills Academies will only realise those solutions by networking with others, facilitating wider improvement as well as delivering it. They need to find ways to network with others who share their values and aspirations – from employers and training providers, to Sector Skills Councils and Regional Development Agencies.
- **Openness:** National Skills Academies are national ventures for the good of a sector or industry and need to live up to the obligations that entails – working to ensure all employers, in all parts of the country, can access the quality products and services they have to offer.
- **Independence:** National Skills Academies have freedom to innovate because they are independent; that independence is critical to their credibility as a centre of excellence for their sector. Once fully operational, they must be able to support themselves financially and be transparent in the way they develop and manage their work and account for public funds.



WHAT DOES IT OFFER?

The National Skills Academy network is an innovative approach to give employers and learners the specialist skills they need.

This means we are in the process of redesigning, reshaping and adding to our current training programmes and qualifications in a way which best suits our industries. Employers are analysing the training and skills needs of their industries, and prioritising the skills that are most important. Across industries, all National Skills Academy programmes share a common set of core attributes:

- High-quality, globally competitive training
- First-class teaching in a modern learning environment
- Centres of innovation and creativity, developing and reshaping training programmes to better meet employers' needs
- Flexible methods of delivery, with close relationships with employers of all sizes.

National Skills Academies are providing qualifications which have a proven track record with employers. New qualifications, reflecting gaps in the current system, are also being developed by working with employers from relevant sectors. For example, the National Skills Academy for Financial Services offers a range of professional qualifications from industry awarding bodies and courses such as personal finance and financial literacy. This range of qualifications will give learners a clear sense of progression and motivate them to reach the very highest levels.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SPONSORS?

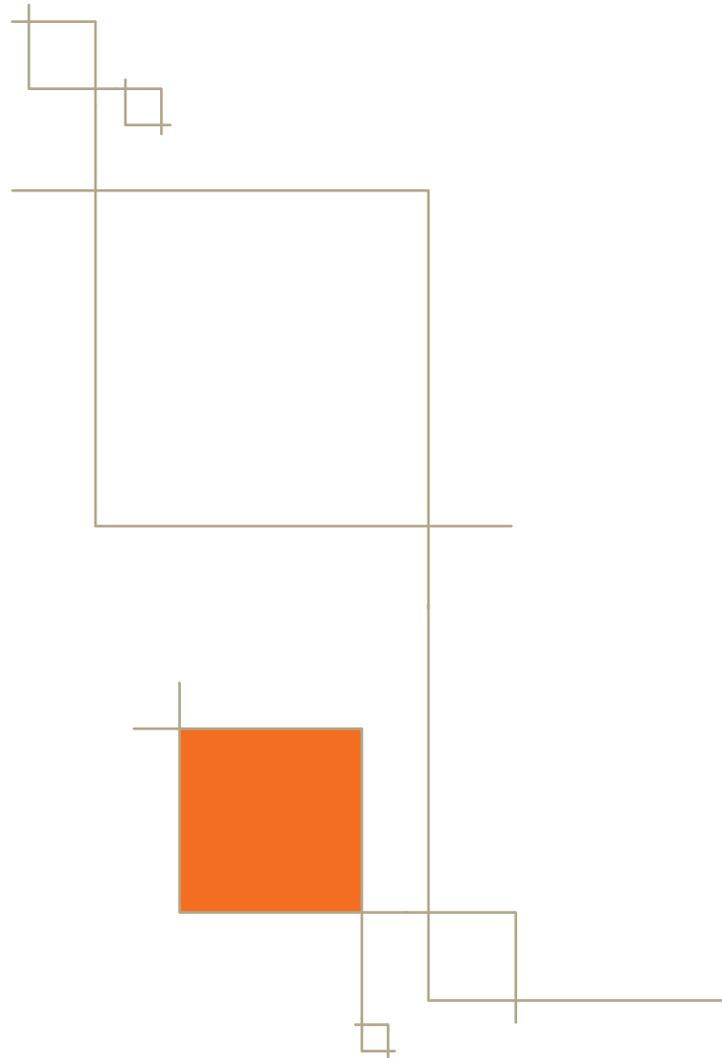
The National Skills Academy network needs commitment from employer sponsors both to contribute significant funding in partnership with the LSC, and to communicate and deliver the vision.

The employers who sponsor National Skills Academies have a shared commitment to: high-quality vocational education and training; recognition of the contribution it can make to increasing productivity and performance; and a desire to drive through change.

Sponsors bring:

- A vision which inspires and motivates everyone involved
- Financial resources to create and support the National Skills Academy network
- A record of success in business to share with experienced learning providers
- An understanding of the businesses operating in the sector
- First-hand knowledge of the vocational education and training needs of employers
- Fresh ideas, an enthusiasm for innovation and a challenge to traditional ways of thinking.

Employer sponsors work closely with their NSA to achieve a shared vision of employer-driven, world-class centres of excellence delivering the skills required by each major sector of the economy.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

National Skills Academies deliver tailored employer-led training thereby improving productivity and competitiveness by giving employers the skills their business needs.

“The Academy is a really effective and appealing network of training resources available to employers and completely appropriate to driving competitiveness in manufacturing for the UK.”

Mike Lloyd, President, Gas Turbine Operations, Rolls-Royce plc

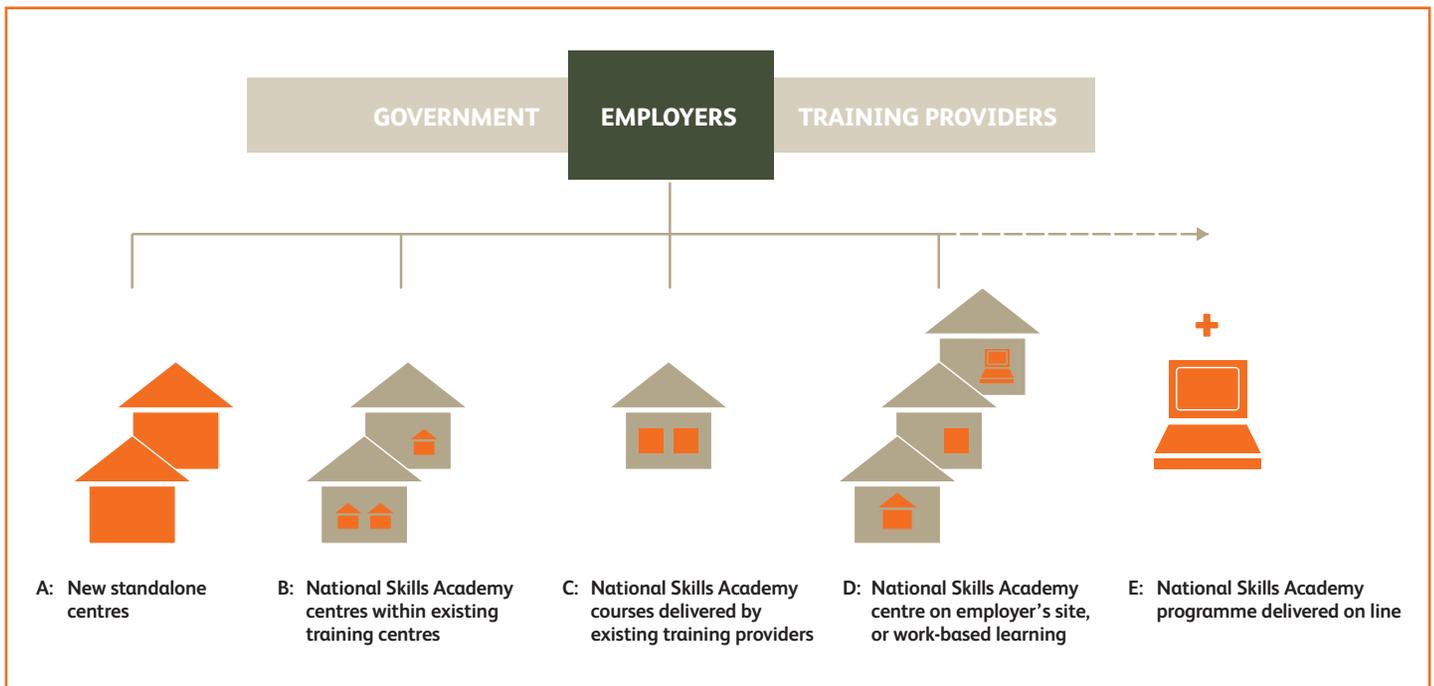
Sector Specific solutions

Employers, working with their SSC and other employer organisations, shape all aspects of the design of National Skills Academies and the delivery of the training they provide.

We are not prescriptive about what form a National Skills Academy takes. It is what is right for the sector and what employers in that sector want that determines its shape and focus. National Skills Academies operate in partnership with the best providers from colleges, schools and independent training providers, particularly with those that have achieved the Training Quality Standard.

They are helping to ensure that new thinking and new methods have a widespread impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the Further Education sector.

The diagram below shows the kinds of models proposed by National Skills Academies.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Here are some examples of how it works.

A: Stand-alone centres

One option is to design new, purpose-built stand-alone centres where the majority of the training takes place.

For example: The National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural. This recently approved addition to the network will deliver industry-endorsed training for young people and professionals at a new state-of-the-art training facility in Thurrock, Thames Gateway. This stand alone facility will provide a national centre, rehearsal and administrative space to showcase the industry.



B: Within training centres

National Skills Academy centres can also be developed within training centres.

For example: The National Skills Academy for Financial Services. The National Skills Academy for Financial Services celebrated its first successful year of operation in May. It currently has seven operational centres across the UK in: Tower Hamlets Norwich, Manchester, Leeds, Bristol, Birmingham and Farnborough – all of which are working to meet the needs in the sector. The focus in training centres will be on making the industry attractive and accessible to potential new recruits.



C: Courses delivered by existing training providers

This option uses existing training providers to deliver training, using approaches and materials developed by and for each sector.

For example: The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing. The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing concentrates on developing innovative and appropriate curricula for the existing network of manufacturing training providers. For example Lotus and Land Rover have worked closely with the National Skills Academy for Manufacturing to improve the skills of more than 700 of their employees. It is also helping to raise standards for teachers and assessors, and it is increasing capacity for high-quality, responsive and innovative training.

HOW DOES IT WORK?



D: Site-based training centres, or work-based learning

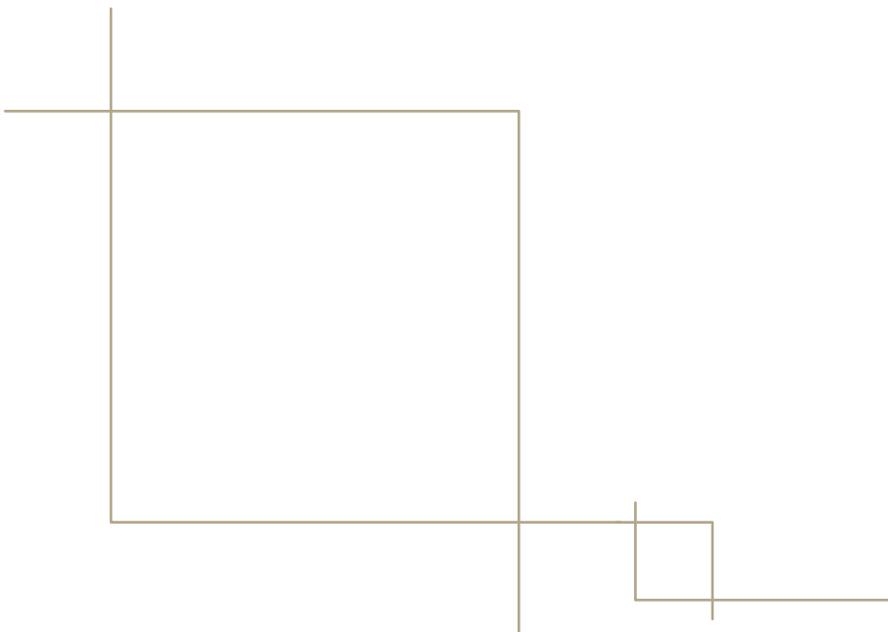
For some industries, the nature of the work and the equipment or technology involved means that site-based centres are the most appropriate.

For example: The National Skills Academy for Construction. The construction industry has created a network of site-based training centres linked to major construction projects supported by a central hub. Clients, contractors and local training centres get together to identify the training and development needs for a project, and agree how best to deliver the training. One of the first training centres was set up on the construction sites for the 2012 Olympic Games facilities and the wider Thames Gateway project.

E: Courses delivered online

Finally, web-based learning is an important option for all the skills academies, particularly because of its flexibility and ability to reach SMEs. However, it does need to be used in conjunction with face-to-face training. An entirely virtual programme would not be appropriate.

Various National Skills Academies capitalise on web-based learning. To reflect the amount of learning that takes place in workplaces and the need for this to be delivered in a flexible, timely manner the NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing is building the largest online catalogue of learning courses relevant to the sector with over 70 courses currently available. To date learners have undertaken online lean manufacturing courses developed specifically for the seafood and meat and poultry sectors as well as leadership and management courses developed in conjunction with the Chartered Management Institute'.



WHO IS IT FOR?

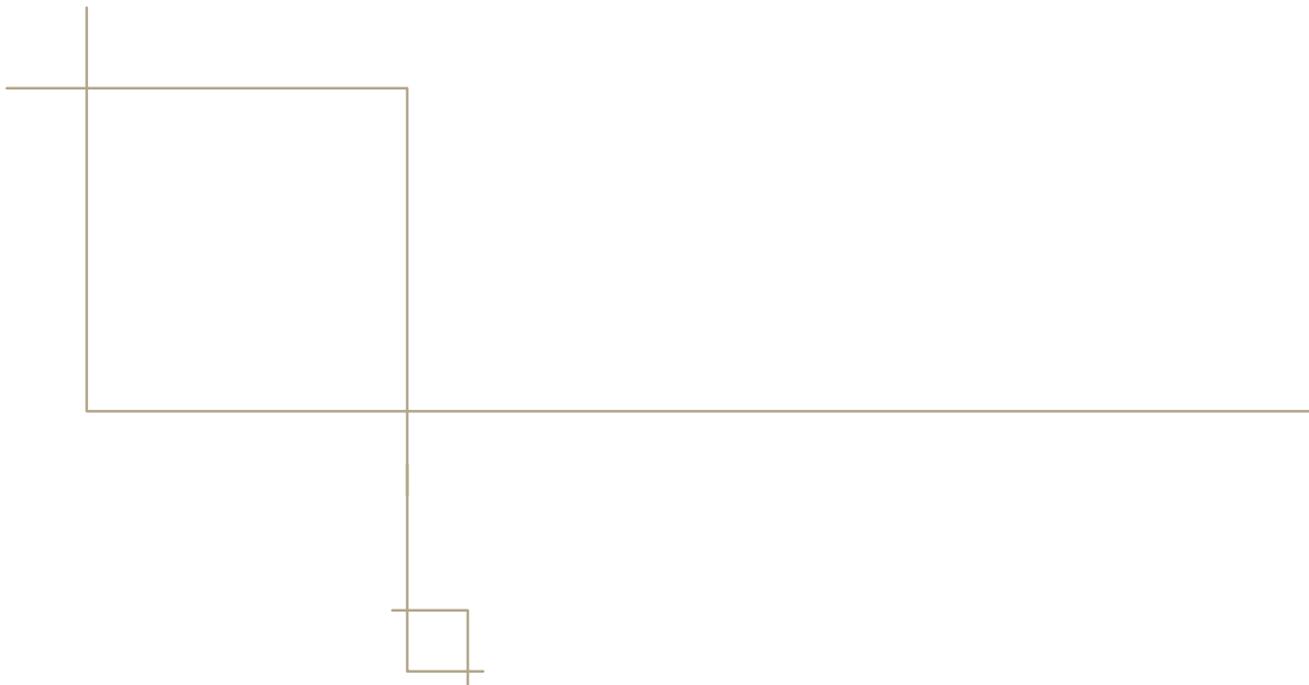
The National Skills Academy is designed to provide skills training for everyone who will benefit from it.

This could be:

- Employers
- School and college leavers
- Graduates
- Adults
- Existing employees
- New entrants to the workforce
- People who are changing career.

Over time we expect that the skills academies will form even closer links with schools and so significantly influence the whole pattern of education for school leavers. Currently some skills academies such as the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure are developing specialised diplomas in order to provide clear progression routes for young people.

There are no barriers of age or education to joining the National Skills Academies. In fact an important role for us is to tackle the obstacles which some groups face in accessing skills training. This will significantly broaden the base of recruitment for employers and ensure that our workforce truly reflects the talent and diversity of our population as a whole.



WHO BENEFITS?

Major investment bringing significant benefits to our economy.

Clearly National Skills Academies represent a major investment for both government and employers across industry. So who benefits?

Employers

The major benefits of the National Skills Academy are undoubtedly for employers across all sizes and types of organisation. Skills gaps cost a typical 50-employee business £165,000 a year and 130,000 jobs remain unfilled because of a lack of skilled candidates (NESS 2007)

“Getting involved in the National Skills Academy for Financial Services has been a great success and has helped us to meet our own business objectives by improved leadership and management skills throughout the organisation. Our employees and customers are already seeing the benefits of our involvement, through better communication and interaction among staff and management.”

Malcolm Streatfield, CEO Lighthouse Group Plc

For example, Valve Train Components increased their manufacturing capacity by 50% as a result of improved efficiency created by up-skilling their staff with the National Skills Academy for Manufacturing. Guttridge Limited – a company with 100 employees – made an estimated annual saving of £129,720 due to the work of their skills academy trained NVQ candidates.

In other words, long-term investment in high quality training brings real returns to employers. It provides a long-term solution to skills shortages and gaps which would otherwise threaten their continued productivity and economic success. Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform studies consistently show that employer-led learning in countries such as Germany, France and Scandinavia is the most successful approach to solving skills problems.

Skills education and training

National Skills Academies bring benefits to the whole education and training system.

As employers establish their position as education leaders, standards will rise and the vocational training system as a whole will gain in confidence and authority.

The economy

The ability of the National Skills Academy network to respond to the needs of particular sectors or localities will result in strong support to the economy at all levels.

Learners

Learners benefit from easy access to the skills academies and their flexible learning programmes. This results in the engagement of new and different types of learners:

- Those who may previously have been excluded from training opportunities
- Those who may have thought particular types of skills training were beyond their reach
- Those who are attracted into sectors they may not have considered previously.

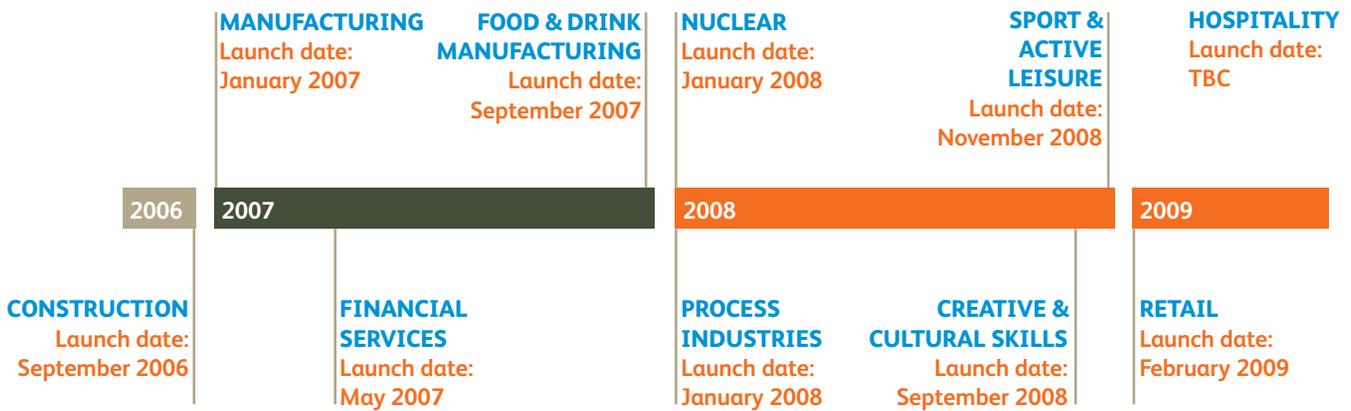
And since employers are ensuring that the training is in real skills for real jobs, learners can look forward to a head start in their chosen sector as well as long-term potential in their chosen career.

“Before I studied the financial courses I wanted to become an actor. Now I would like to work in Investment Banking, or work at the FSA where I can help promote consumer rights. In the future, I would like to give something back to the community and help somebody in the way that I have been helped by the Skills Academy.”

Dorian Williams, Tower Hamlets

TIMELINE

We are working to an ambitious timeline which aims to have a National Skills Academy in each major sector of the economy, resources permitting.



Construction

Launch date: September 2006

The National Skills Academy for Construction delivers training on site through the use of a dedicated skills academy training space on construction projects. By 2010 more than 30 National Skills Academy for Construction projects, supported by specialist training centres meeting regional priorities, will be established on-site at major construction projects throughout the UK, including the London 2012 Olympics site. The skills academy also has the support of major employers in the sector including Bovis Lend Lease and Balfour Beatty.

“Bovis Lend Lease is delighted to be involved in the National Skills Academy for Construction, which breaks the mould in construction training.”

John Spanswick, Chairman, Bovis Lend Lease

Manufacturing

Launch date: January 2007

The National Skills Academy for Manufacturing uses the hub and spoke business model and currently has a hub in each English region and Northern Ireland. It aims to influence the training of 40,000 people by 2012. The skills academy is supported by Semta and their employer sponsors include Nissan, Toyota, Corus, Rolls-Royce, Caterpillar, Ford, GKN, VT Group, Airbus, and BAE Systems.

“The Academy is a really effective and appealing network of training resources available to employers and completely appropriate to driving competitiveness in manufacturing for the UK.”

Mike Lloyd, President, Gas Turbine Operations, Rolls-Royce plc

TIMELINE...

Financial Services

Launch date: May 2007

The National Skills Academy for Financial Services uses the hub and spoke business model and currently has seven regional hubs in England. It has already enrolled 3,000 learners in its first full year of operation and aims to have an additional 15,000 learners over three years. Its vision is to ensure that the UK has a better educated financial services workforce

“Norwich Union is delighted to be associated with the development of the National Skills Academy for Financial Services and would encourage other employers to get involved in expanding this crucial network. Driving forward the skills levels of our workforce is a critical component of future business success.”

Patrick Snowball, Group Executive Director, Aviva UK

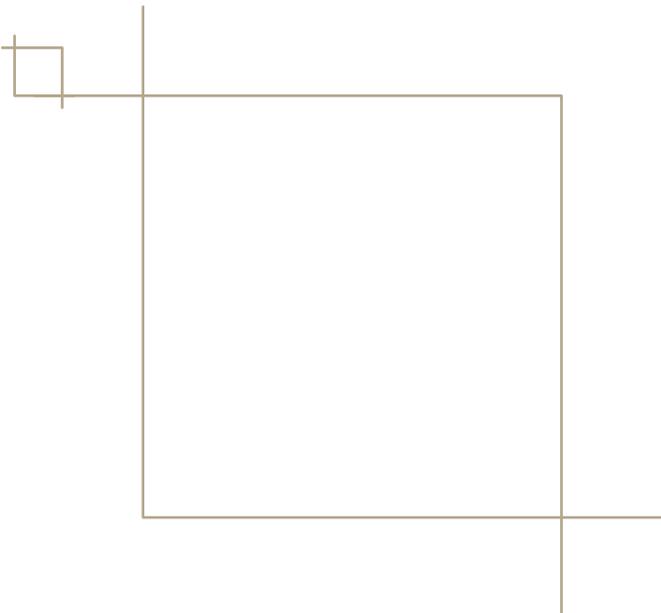
Food and Drink Manufacturing

Launch date: September 2007

The National Skills Academy for Food and Drink Manufacturing is based in York and operates on a hub and spoke model. It has several regional hubs and aims to create a total of 45 academy centres by 2009, and to have 28,000 learners by 2011. As the skills academy develops it will be able to meet the needs of all the different food and drink sub-sectors and specialisms including: bakery and confectionery, dairy, seafood, meat and poultry, fresh produce, drinks, lean manufacturing, leadership and management etc. Its mission is to grow a thriving food and drink sector in the UK, where employers and learning organisations work together to create value.

“The Skills Academy is a vital step in meeting the skills challenges that the food and drink manufacturing sector faces... It has been designed by employers for employers, and it will provide an effective and accessible system to deliver high-quality, relevant training through a mix of online, distance and site-based vocational courses.”

Jack Matthews, Chief Executive of Improve Limited



TIMELINE...

Process Industries

Launch date: January 2008

The National Skills Academy for Process Industries uses a hub and spoke business model and aims to train almost 27,000 learners in its first five years. Its vision is to lead the UK Process Industries in Creating a World-Class Workforce The skills academy already has over 40 active employer sponsors including Linpac, SABIC UK, North East Process Industry Cluster, and Chemical Industry Association.

“I am delighted with the launch of the National Skills Academy which will allow Process Industry to address the skills short fall in areas of their business. It will mean that organisations will be able to identify the gaps and benchmark themselves against ‘The Gold Standard’ to determine where they should be. Support will then be available to these businesses to help close this skills-gap. This is a once in a decade opportunity to increase significantly the skills within the process industry, to help UK competitiveness in this £72 billion industry.”

Chris Horton, Operations Director, Linpac Plastics

Nuclear

Launch date: January 2008

The National Skills Academy for Nuclear use the hub and spoke business model and has a head office in Cockermouth, Cumbria. It is structured around the five main areas of Nuclear activity across the UK (Northwest/Northeast, Southeast/East, Southwest, Scotland and Wales), and a Regional Training Cluster (RTC) is being established in each region. The skills academy has been established to deal with skills issues in all of the sub-sectors of the Nuclear industry including, decommissioning, defence, the fuel cycle and new build. Its vision is to create, develop and promote world class skills and career pathways to support a sustainable future for the UK nuclear industry. The skills academy already has over 20 employers who are fully paid Associate Members which include the NDA (Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, Fluor, British Energy, UKAEA and Serco/SBB Nuclear.

“The nuclear industry has some unique requirements and the National Skills Academy will ensure that these are met in a consistent way as we move forward into the future... employers will be able to determine the programme on offer and to shape the content, design and delivery of training and development, taking intelligence-based decisions.”

David Bonser, Director, BNFL

TIMELINE...

Creative & Cultural Skills

Launch date: September 2008

The National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills will provide world-class training for the world's greatest stages. The Skills academy is using a hub and spoke model creating a purpose built state-of-the-art training facility in Thurrock, Thames Gateway that will provide a national centre, rehearsal and administrative space to showcase the industry. The National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills will provide people with the right training for off-stage and backstage skills. The skills academy has received support from over 120 leading employers and organisations such as the Professional Lighting and Sound Association (PLASA). Its vision is: an internationally acclaimed technical theatre and live music sector, supporting the best stages in the world; industry and training providers collaborating to mutual advantage, to deliver the highly-skilled and flexible workforce we need for the 21st century.

“I was delighted to be asked to be chairman of the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills. For twenty-five years I have worked in theatres and concert venues, learning from the best talent, not only on stage but also behind the scenes. At Live Nation we pride ourselves on producing the best concerts, festivals and events and we can only do that by continually up-skilling our workforce and that is very much the mantra of the Skills Academy.”

*Paul Latham, UK President, Live Nation
Chair, National Skills Academy for Creative
& Cultural Skills*

Sport & Active Leisure

Launch date: November 2008

The National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure uses the hub and spoke business model. It aims to have 21,000 learners by the end of its first year of operation and 85,000 by the end of its fifth year. The skills academy has support from employers and organisation sponsors including Sport England, Sheffield United Football Club, the Amateur Swimming Association and the England and Wales Cricket Board. Its vision is to revolutionise the UK sport and active leisure industry by providing one, single coherent approach to the very best skills training in the sector.

“We are facing a skills crisis in our sector; the launch of a specialised National Skills Academy presents an inspiring opportunity for employers of all sizes. It will not be like anything we have seen before and it promises to revolutionise the way in which employees are recruited and trained.”

Mark Sesnan, Managing Director, GLL

TIMELINE...

Retail

The National Skills Academy for Retail is developing a network of 70 professional retail Skills Shops in high streets and shopping centres – there will be 15 skills shops up and running by the end of 2008 with at least one in each of the English regions. By 2014 the retail sector expects to create 250,000 new jobs and the skills academy will give the sector the skilled workforce it needs. The National Skills Academy for Retail has a great deal of industry support from major employers such as BAA, BMB Clothing, Boots, Claire’s Accessories, Dollond & Aitchison, John Lewis Partnership, Marks & Spencer and Tesco.

“Retail can justify and deserves a national skills academy. We’re the largest sector of employers, with three million people, a third of which are employed by just 10 key retailers. For me, the National Skills Academy is a really exciting venture: it’s low risk, makes commercial sense and a great opportunity for all.”

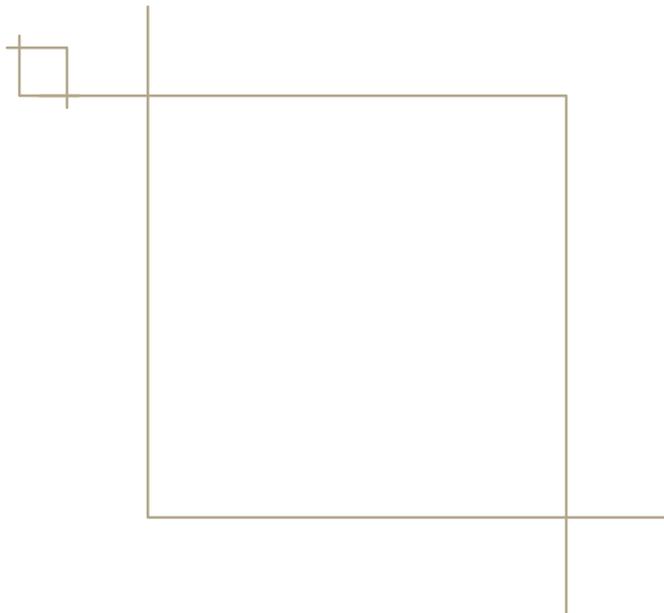
Suzy Welby, Manager, Government Initiatives, John Lewis Partnerships:

Hospitality

The National Skills Academy for Hospitality has its head office in Uxbridge, Middlesex and will deliver learning provision through a network of both new and innovative facilities, virtual learning and existing learning providers. The founding employer members include Edge Foundation, Barceló Hotels (Bournemouth Hotel School), Terry Laybourne and Compass Plc. In addition to these founding members, the first Virtual Academy in London has been joined by The Berkeley Hotel, Claridges, the Connaught, InterContinental London Park Lane and The Savoy. By 2013 the skills academy aims to have engaged with 500 employers.

“Hospitality is a vibrant and dynamic industry that plays a key and growing role in the success of the UK. The government is committed to supporting the sector as it strives to improve and renew its skills base. This new skills academy will not only help the industry stay competitive, but will enable thousands of people to gain the skills and confidence to build successful and rewarding careers.”

David Lammy, Minister for Skills



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HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Any queries can be directed to
the Learning and Skills Council at
nationalskillsacademies@lsc.gov.uk