

Achieving the Lisbon Goal: **The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems**

Country Report: UK

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.



**Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority**

Theme 1: Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon.

1. *Strategies and barriers for improving the status, flexibility and attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET).*

Historically, training came within the voluntary domain of employers in the UK and school-based technical and vocational education did not develop to anything like the extent envisaged in the country's post-war legislation. Over the past two decades the state has played a pro-active role but barriers still exist. At some risk of oversimplification, the major barriers to the development of IVET in the UK are as follows:

- In the systems of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the post-compulsory phase has been dominated for 50 years by general or academic qualifications examined on a subject-by-subject basis rather than through grouped awards. In particular, A levels have held a dominant position; their function has included the preparation, differentiation and selection of students for higher education places, in particular for a specialised three-year honours degree course. A levels were commonly described as a 'gold standard' by government ministers until a few years ago.
- Despite the efforts of successive Governments to promote parity of esteem and the fact that qualifications are accredited by the regulatory authorities at the same levels as academic and general counterparts, vocational qualifications have been attributed a lower status in the eyes of many people than academic or general qualifications. Frequently, schools or colleges (and parents) would steer students whom they considered would not have the potential for an academic programme of studies towards a vocationally oriented programme.
- The 'pick and mix' curriculum model that A levels have established is based usually on a choice of three subjects (4 at AS level since the introduction of Curriculum 2000). This means that students' programmes of studies – whether in the general or vocationally related pathways – are usually characterised by narrowness and specialisation, rather than by breadth and coherence.

Currently, major reviews of 14 to 19 curriculum and qualifications in England and Wales and of vocational qualifications across the UK are under way. In Wales, a new qualification, the Welsh Baccalaureate, is being introduced with the aim of broadening learning at age 16-18, it has been piloted since September 2003 and is now available in 18 Schools and Colleges¹ The initial position taken by the Working Group in England on reforming the curriculum and qualifications for all young people aged 14 to 19 is worth noting. The

¹ <http://www.wbq.org.uk/index.cfm?method=content.homepage>

consultation report identifies approaches to developing a more coherent and unified 14 to 19 curriculum and qualifications framework².

The first is a climbing frame of linked but free-standing courses and qualifications. This can offer clear and flexible progression routes with options for specialisation and breadth, but without rules of combination. Students choose the volume, breadth and coverage of their programmes. The other model is much closer to baccalaureate-style approaches in other countries. It emphasises the nature and content of the whole programme by placing individual components within a framework that prescribes the breadth and types of learning that 14 to 19 year olds should undertake. It recognises achievement through a single large qualification with rules of combination, to ensure that the programme matches the prescribed framework.

The working group declares its preference for a system of qualifications each of which recognises a whole programme, and achievement across a balanced range of specialist and general learning. The working group goes on to say that flexibility will need to be built into such an approach, so that young people can progress through the stepping stones that are associated with the 'climbing frame' approach.

In Scotland, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has been created using all mainstream Scottish qualifications, from SQA's Access level to HE Doctorate. This includes qualifications traditionally regarded as 'academic' and those 'branded' as 'vocational'. The underlying principle is that appropriate learning, wherever it occurs and provided it has been or could be assessed, should be given credit. This covers qualifications provided in schools, further and higher education and the workplace.

The SCQF is designed to make the Scottish qualifications system easier to understand for all stake holders and demonstrates the relationships between qualifications. It allows learners to plan progress towards their learning and career goals; and will allow the transfer of credits from one qualification towards another in relevant subjects and therefore avoid repetition of learning. It also allows learners to move more freely from one learning environment to another, e.g. from school/college to the workplace or vice versa. Both the SCQF and the new system of National Qualifications in Scotland support the removal of the 'academic/vocational' divide.

It is hoped that increased transparency of vocational qualifications, (through the use of qualifications frameworks) and from the blurring of the divide between academic and vocational qualifications ie vocational GCSEs and Alevels, Initial VET in the UK is seen as more attractive. This is because for the learner it is now easier to take a blend of vocational and general subjects under the same qualification type and level. For other stakeholders it should be easier to gauge the value of a subject by its context within its qualifications framework³.

² <http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk/theworkinggroup/index.cfm>

³ UK ReferNet Initial VET report, 040102

2. Reducing the number of early school leavers.

Post-compulsory participation in the UK is lower than in most comparable countries, and there is considerable dropout at 17⁴. There have been a number of policy changes and strategies executed in order to improve this since the Lisbon Conference.

'Curriculum 2000' has reformed the post-compulsory programmes that students follow in the school- and college-based general and vocationally related pathways in England and Wales. For the new A levels (AS and A2) most students take four subjects in the first post-compulsory year, three in the second year for a qualification at ISCED level 3. The new Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualification represents the first year of the full A level study, and counts for 50% of the marks. The AS encourages take-up of more subjects and is intended to reduce the numbers who drop out. It is also designed to encourage more mixing of general and vocational subjects⁵.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland Vocational A levels (AVCEs) have replaced Advanced GNVQs and can be taken on a single subject basis.

Vocational A levels emphasise knowledge, skills and understanding in broad vocational areas and focus on investigative work and assignment writing. They also foster links with employers. Most students undertake work experience. Two-thirds of the work is internally assessed and externally moderated. The basic qualification is the 6-unit Vocational A level, equivalent to one GCE A level. There is also a 12-unit double award, equivalent to two A levels, and a 3-unit award equivalent to AS in a limited number of subjects. AVCE and A level grades are aligned in terms of grading. These are aimed at students who are not engaged by the traditional A level subjects and qualifications and therefore would otherwise be more likely to dropout.

In Scotland, GSVQs were replaced by SGAs from session 1999/2000 with GSVQs starting to be phased out from the summer of 2002 and no further certification after September 2004. A Scottish Group Award (SGA) demonstrates that a learner has achieved success at particular levels of study in a range of courses/units and has a core skills profile that is complete and at a level appropriate to the SGA. These qualifications are designed to prepare people for entry to FE, higher education, training or employment. All SGAs have a credit profile into which points accrued from new National Qualifications may be transferred. Previous achievement at Standard Grade and/or SVQ levels may also contribute credits to the SGA's credit profile.

At Higher and Intermediate 2 levels SGAs may be either 'Named' or 'General'.
Named

SGAs indicate competence in a particular area of study, for example business or science. General SGAs, which are also available at Access 2 and 3, Intermediate 1 and Advanced Higher levels, indicate an overall level of achievement across a range of subjects⁶.

⁴ UK TO 4.5.4.4.

⁵ UK TO 4.5.2

⁶ UK TO 4.5.4.2

Educational Maintenance Awards are grants to 16 to 19 year olds from poorer backgrounds in the UK for participation in post-compulsory (not HE) courses. The aim is to encourage participation and reduce the need to earn (from part time employment) thus freeing time for study. Pilots have been successful, and the scheme was nationalised in 2004⁷.

Government Strategy aims to increase the attractiveness of 16-19 pathways and increase the uptake of Modern Apprenticeship (more detail given in Section 8).

3. Increasing VET at tertiary level.

Over 850,000 people in the 18 - 21 age group are currently engaged in HE and the Government is committed to raising this figure to 50 % of future age cohorts in England Wales and Northern Ireland (a threshold already achieved in Scotland). In England and Wales (but not in Scotland) students must pay a €1,684.65 (£1,125) yearly tuition charge; most students only pay a proportion of the charge on a means-tested basis; tuition is free for students from lower income families⁸. There has been protest by students over the introduction of tuition fees but there has been only anecdotal evidence of this influencing enrolment levels onto university courses.

There is considerable flexibility in the higher education system to recognise the potential of people who do not have the traditional qualifications for access. The leading institution in this respect is the Open University (OU), which has been offering degrees and other qualifications through distance learning since the 1970s. The OU is a major national institution that has developed non-traditional pathways to HE qualifications⁹. Nearly all OU students are part-time and about 70% of undergraduate students remain in full-time employment throughout their studies. Undergraduate level courses do not require any entry qualifications and over a third of people starting these courses have qualifications below conventional university entry requirements. Despite this, around 70% of OU students successfully complete their courses each year. It claims to be the worlds leading E-University¹⁰. The OU currently awards more degrees annually than any other UK university and is aiming for 'steady, incremental growth in student numbers of 3-5% per annum, generated and sustained by: a better conversion of enquiries to students; improved completion and progression rates; a more attractive and responsive curriculum.^{11 12,}

Though the most notable the OU is not the only flexible institution: Birkbeck College of London University (specialising in part-time higher education courses for adults) and Ruskin College, Oxford (opening up Oxford University to students from non-traditional backgrounds, such as trade union activists) have also provided innovative access to higher education. Furthermore many

⁷ UK TO 4.5.4.9.

⁸ UK TO 4.8.

⁹ UK TO 4.7.2.

¹⁰ <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/>

¹¹ *History of the Open University*. OU

¹² *Plans for Change*; The University's Strategic and Development Plans for 2002 – 2012. OU

of the newer universities, some of which we previously called polytechnics, offer flexible access arrangements.

Foundation Degrees are the current key innovation, they offer opportunities to people with relevant skills and prior experience which can be accredited. For example, the Foundation Degree in Management describes the access requirements as follows: 'Foundation degrees are designed specifically for mature students and students with non-traditional backgrounds, and there are no formal entry requirements. However, good literacy and numeracy skills along with basic computer skills are required. These will be assessed from the applications and by means of a short maths test and written task taken at a selection evening.'¹³ Foundation Degrees are designed for flexibility and can be studied full or part-time and through distance learning. This means that those who are already in the workplace have the opportunity to take part in higher education on a more flexible basis to enhance their skills. Entry requirements are set by the institution and alongside more traditional entry through formal qualifications.

Access to HE Courses is also designed to help those with no or insufficient qualifications to have the opportunity to benefit from HE. The 1 year full-time (or 2 year part-time) level 3 courses prepare students for HE in specific or general areas. Access Certificates are awarded by Access Validating Agencies which are licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency. Access students are subsequently widely accepted into HE courses.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) assists students to gain vocational, academic or continuous professional development recognition or credits for prior learning and experience. APL was strongly promoted in the early 1990s, and became established as a non-traditional entry route to further and higher education, though often not to the most prestigious courses. It is now a preferred policy tool in the government's promotion of the expansion of higher education courses. Universities etc, can take into account relevant learning and provide formal accreditation against academic programmes of study. This may reduce the number of modules studied in order to gain a qualification, or provide access to a course for people who have learnt through experience, but who lack traditional entry qualifications. APL applications are considered against the pre-set criteria established by the college or university, and individuals are considered on an individual basis.

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 distinction is often made between Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), based on previous study or qualifications, for example in another field with a nationally agreed general credit value, and assessed Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), which is the accreditation of an individuals experience. A recent government report indicated that 81 % of traditional universities and 100 % of new universities

¹³ Taken from Birkbeck College, University of London website, and quoted in UK ReferNet Initial VET report 040701.

allow APEL accreditation for non-degree courses, and smaller proportions for higher-level courses¹⁴.

4. Incentives for updating knowledge & skills.

The government places emphasis on the role of employers in defining and meeting continuing VET needs. In the UK there is not traditionally a focus on social partnership in the European sense of the term. Nevertheless, trades unions have a growing influence in negotiating and agreeing how to meet training needs, for example through the system of union learning representatives that is now being established in workplaces. Furthermore, trades unions are also seen increasingly as a facilitator for training, for example through the union learning fund, which targets basic skills as well as a wide range of other learning needs.

The contribution and strength of union involvement in the Skills Alliance has been highlighted in the Skills Strategy Progress Report¹⁵, supporting progression at the delivery end of many skills drives. The Union Learning Fund is seen as a continuing success story, helping unions to exert their influence on employers, employees and training providers to encourage more people to engage in learning. In the year prior to the report the fund has helped 25,000 workers try some form of workbased learning. Following the introduction of new statutory rights for Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) via the Employment Act 2002, there are now over 7000 ULRs, (and over 3500 new ULRs have received (ULR) role related training this year). The report predicts that there could be as many as 22,000 in place by 2010, who could help over 250,000 workers a year.

In Wales, the important role of employers and trades unions has been recognised through the signing with the Welsh Assembly Government and ELWa, of a skills Concordat which sets out a joint agenda for addressing skills issues.

Employer Training Pilots were run by the LSC in six local LSC areas and begun operation in September 2002 in Birmingham & Solihull, Derbyshire, Essex, Greater Manchester, Tyne & Wear and Wiltshire & Swindon; to run for a year. The objective of employer training pilots is to deliver training to improve (amongst other things) basic literacy and numeracy levels of low skilled workers who work for employers that traditionally do not train their staff. £290M of funding has been made available to work with up to 15000 employers and 80,000 employees by Autumn 2005¹⁶.

The Skills strategy Progress Report¹⁷ gives more detail regarding the pilots:

¹⁴ UK ReferNet Initial VET report 040701.

¹⁵ Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance. DfES. Crown Copyright 2004. Page 16. Available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>.

¹⁶ More information is available at <http://etp.lsc.gov.uk/index.shtml>.

¹⁷ Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance. DfES. Crown Copyright 2004. Available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>.

What does an Employer Training Pilot (ETP) package contain?

ETPs are testing a range of measures to encourage employers to invest in skills. The exact offer varies between pilots but key components are:

- Training designed to meet the skills needs of employers and employees – around 80% of ETP training is delivered on the employer's premises and during the working day.
- Free or heavily subsidised training leading to a first full Level 2 or basic skills qualification.
- Support of a specialist broker to help source and arrange the training. That training can be sourced from a wide range of colleges and other providers, depending on what the employer wants.
- Training designed to meet identified skills gaps, with the employees' existing skills being assessed at the outset, so that the training can be designed to build the skills they need.
- Paid time off to learn for the employee.
- Depending upon the pilot and the size of the employer, compensation paid to the employer for releasing the employee to train.
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) for employers and learners, including help to identify their skills needs.

Source: taken from Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance page 11.

The report also stated that an independent evaluation¹⁸ of that first year indicated that:

- 70% are small employers (with fewer than 50 employees);
- 40% of employers had no previous contact with government agencies or schemes;
- 96% reported that the skills provided were important to their business and it boosted employees' self-confidence;
- 93% believed it improved the quality and efficiency of their products and services and helped employees to be more proficient;
- 83% of employees took part because they wanted to get a qualification; 29% wanted to do their current job better; 68% wanted to improve their self-confidence.

An Adult Learning Inspectorate survey identified a good overall standard of training, retention and achievement rates. Noting that much of the training delivery was through coaching and on-the-job skills development, instead of the style of traditional training programmes provided in college premises. From September 2004, Employer Training Pilots will be expanded to 18 pilot areas (approximately one third of England)¹⁹.

The Department for Education and Skills survey of learning at work in 2002 reported that 90% of employers had provided some form of training for at

¹⁸ Employer Training Pilots; First Year Evaluation Report. Hillage, Jim and Mitchell, Hannah. Institute for Employment Studies. Crown copyright 2003. Available from: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/ETP1.pdf>.

¹⁹ Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance. DfES. Crown Copyright 2004. Available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>. Page 11.

least some of their employees during the year²⁰. A survey of individuals by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the same year²¹ found that 72% of those interviewed had received some training at work in the past 12 months. The percentage was higher in larger organisations, amongst full time employees and amongst those with higher levels of qualifications. More than 90% of those trained considered that their training had been very or quite successful. The most usual form of training was delivered in a classroom or meeting room, closely followed by on-the-job training, but employees showed a clear preference for on-the-job methods²².

The National Skills Task Force *Final Report: Skills for All* (DfEE 2000) (not Scotland) identified the following as the main UK skills gaps and shortages:

- Basic skills – literacy and numeracy;
- Transferable skills;
- Mathematical skills;
- Intermediate level skills – specific occupational skills in many craft and associate professional occupations;
- Specialist ICT skills;
- Major adult skills gaps – notably, the large proportion of the adult workforce with no level 2 qualification.

The Report proposes the following targets for 2010:

- To reduce the proportion of adults with low numeracy and literacy levels from 20% to 10%;
- To increase the proportion of 25 year olds with a level 3 qualification from 41% to 70%;
- To increase the proportion of the adult workforce with a Level 2 qualification from 68% to 80%²³.

The July 2003 Government White Paper on Skills Strategies which is looked at in more detail in section 6 has initiated the drive most of the current skills policy activities²⁴.

The Labour Force Survey and surveys of employers provide an indication of the types of continuing education and training which may be provided or supported by employers:

²⁰ Spilsbury, David. IFF Research Limited for DfES. Learning and Training at Work; 2002.

Research Report No. 399. March 2003 ISBN: 1 84185 926 5.
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=13966&resultspage=1>

²¹ Who learns at work? Survey Report. CIPD. February 2002.
www.cipd.co.uk/download/anonymous/learn_surveys.pdf

²² UK ReferNet Continuing VET report, 0504

²³ UK TO 5.2.2.

²⁴ 21st Century Skills; Realising Our Potential; Individuals, Employers, Nation. July 2003. Crown Copyright

An employer may support participation of an employee in a publicly promoted course by paying the fee, associated expenses such as travel costs or by allowing time off to study. Courses of this type range in length from half a day to a full year. The employer's willingness to support the employee's participation may be influenced by specific measures to make the course attractive (for example convenient or flexible hours or tailoring content to the needs of the workplace) or by more general government measures to promote CVET.

Some employers encourage employees to use open learning and e-learning, which may be based on printed or IT based materials and may take place on or off the employer's premises; some organisations have on-site open learning centres, which offer a place where employees can study without interruption. Courses may also be delivered through the company intranet. The materials used may be generic packages bought in by the company, bespoke (developed by an outside organisation to the specifications of the employer) or developed in-house by the employer's staff.

In July 2003 the DfES released a consultation document on an e-Learning strategy; on 8th April 2004 it released its response to the consultation²⁵. There are seven action areas, proposed in the strategy:

- Help education leaders tackle the funding models that restrict innovation (Leading sustainable e-learning implementation)
- Support people who want to be innovative in the way they teach (Supporting innovation in teaching and learning)
- Give teachers and lecturers career incentives and training for e-learning (Developing the education workforce)
- Give learners better e-learning support for meeting their personal learning goals (Unifying learner support)
- Make assessment a driver of innovation, not a barrier (Aligning assessment)
- Build a better market for quality assured e-learning resources (Building a better e-learning market)
- Work out the technical standards we should all adopt for e-learning (Assuring technical and quality standards)

The Consultation Response showed that from the 430 respondents the over 50% agreed with each question – except on choice of partners where many thought more should be involved (usually including their own organization).

A number of larger organisations have 'corporate universities', offering a range of courses (not necessarily all at university level). Courses may be accredited by a partner university and provide credit towards a recognised

²⁵ Towards a Unified e-Learning Strategy; Consultation Document. July 2003. Produced by DfES. Crown copyright 2003. Available from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations2/16/>. Progress towards a Unified E-Learning Strategy. e-learning Strategy Unit, DfES. Available from <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/elearningstrategy/>.

higher education degree or diploma. Examples are Lloyds TSB, BAE Systems, British Telecom and, in the public sector, NHSU for the National Health Service.

The majority of training within employment is on-the-job training, which may be provided by private trainers, the employer's own training staff or by the line supervisor, this may be so informal that it is scarcely recognised as training, and may well be under-recorded in surveys²⁶.

Except in Engineering and Construction, there is no form of 'training levy' on employers operating.

The UK has experimented with Individual Learning Accounts. The scheme was suspended because of financial irregularities, but is being reintroduced²⁷. Another innovation which was introduced was the Investors in People (IiP) scheme²⁸. Though started in 1990 by the National Skills Taskforce, it has continued and is part of the Skills Alliance. It credits companies and organisations IiP status that have met the standard set by them based on 4 principles:

- **Commitment:** to invest in people to achieve business goals
- **Planning:** how skills, individuals and teams are to be developed to achieve these goals
- **Action:** to develop and use necessary skills in a well defined and continuing programme directly tied to business objectives
- **Evaluating:** outcomes of training and development for individuals' progress towards goals, the value achieved and future needs.

Both the IiP Standards and the organisations given IiP status are reviewed every 3 years. It is generally accepted that the investment in Human Resource Development required to meet the IiP status means that credited companies are more productive because their staff are more motivated and better trained²⁹.

5. Meeting the challenges of an aging population.

The government's National Adult Learning Survey (in England and Wales), conducted in 1997 and 2001, provides the clearest picture of current trends.

76 % of adults are estimated to have participated in learning activities in 2001, a two % increase on 1997. The proportion of taught learners has remained static, just below 60 %. A small increase in self-directed learning has taken place – from 57 to 60 %. Participation in vocational learning has changed little

²⁶ UK ReferNet Continuing VET report, 0504

²⁷ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ila/>.

²⁸ <http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/IIP/Internet/default.htm>.

²⁹ ie Doing business better: The long term impact of Investors in People. Tamkin et al.

Institute for Employment Studies (IES) 2000. <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/summary/summary.php?id=dobusbet>. And Review of research and evaluation on Investors in People. Claytor, Ann. October 2001.

<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/ejafvx5j5uceactseao5guaol5lqskizntnrithm4rus4ujitx6tdwun7qfwbm5tt6nmj4oilxo7dxnbgqd3cf7hb/Review+Research+Oct+01.doc>.

– at two thirds of the population. In fact, about 80 % of the learning that takes place on taught courses is vocational. Vocational courses tend to be short, with some 60 % provided by an employer and 40 % of provision made by education and training institutions. Use of ICT has increased rapidly, particularly for vocational courses. Work is also a strong motivator in self-directed learning. As expected participation declines with age: 80+ % participation is found among 20-49 years olds, and only 25 % among people aged 70+³⁰. For training, increased access to training is probably ‘intent’ rather than ‘reality’.

Currently the employment patterns of older workers differ from those of prime-aged and younger workers in a number of important ways. For example, older workers are less likely to become unemployed, but once unemployed take longer to return to work and are more likely to leave the labour force. Their levels of participation in both formal education and workplace-based learning are significantly lower than those of prime age and younger adults. Older workers tend to change jobs less often, and are less geographically mobile. To the extent that these differences in employment patterns are driven by age related differences in the skills, preferences, savings, or non-wage incomes of workers which persist in the future, then population ageing has the potential to lead to some changes in outcomes across the labour force as a whole, simply by changing the age composition of the labour force³¹.

The ambition is to ensure, after accounting for the economic cycle, that at least three-quarters of the working-age population are in work by 2010. The UK already exceeds the quantitative employment targets set at Lisbon and has significantly lower levels of inactivity among the working-age population than most other EU Member States³².

The Government is determined to reduce the employment rate gap between older workers (69.9%) and the working age population as a whole (74.7% in Spring 2003.) It intends to achieve this by overcoming employers’ age discrimination, removing barriers and increasing financial incentives for individuals to stay in work longer, and providing extra back-to-work help for the over 50s.

As part of its approach to tackling age discrimination the Government launched the Age Positive campaign to promote the benefits of an age diverse workforce to both business and individuals. It promotes the use of the standards set in the Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment. The website was launched in December 2001³³.

In Wales all local authorities and the voluntary sector ‘Age Alliance Wales’ have received funding to appoint development co-ordinators to ensure the strategy is implemented effectively at the local level. The Welsh Assembly Government is working closely with partners, including Jobcentre Plus Wales and local Health Boards, to implement the *Pathways to Work* pilot in Wales to

³⁰ UK TO 5.2.4.

³¹ ONS Labour Market trends February 2003 Vol 111, No 2; Implications of population ageing for the labour market.

³² UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003–2005 1.1.2.14.

³³ <http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/>

help people on Incapacity Benefit with work-limiting health problems to return to work.

Legislation outlawing age discrimination in employment and vocational training will be in place by October 2006; the legislation and supporting guidance will be published by the end of 2004 to give employers and individuals time to prepare.

The consultation report 'Simplicity, security and choice: Working and Saving for Retirement' (December 2002), set out the UK's plans to further increase the employment of older people and to create opportunities for them to stay in work longer through more flexible approaches to retirement. The pensionable age for women is already going to be raised from 60 to 65, line with men between 2010 and 2020.

The plans include extra back-to-work help individually tailored and targeted on specific jobs for people over 50, under the New Deal for 50 plus. New Deal for 50 plus is for those over 50 who are looking for full or part time work or to start their own business, it offers: personal advice and support to find a job; a £1,500 in-work Training Grant; access to financial support when you're in work, the amount dependent on income and circumstances³⁴.

As part of this process, tax rules will be changed to allow people to draw their occupational pension and continue working for the sponsoring employer, and changes will be made to ensure that occupational pension rules do not discourage flexible retirement beyond normal retirement age. Financial incentives to remain in work after state pension age will be enhanced by offering more generous increases for deferring state pensions³⁵.

The Government also set up the Foresight Ageing Population Panel, consisting of experts from the Social Partners and part of the Department of Trade and Industry's Finance Taskforce; it looked at possible projections for 2020 and policy implications from this³⁶. Another social partner group that has been set up is the Age Advisory Group, in 2001.

6. Effectiveness and efficiency of VET.

If there is a single characteristic that distinguishes the education record, of the current UK Government, which has been in power since 1997, it is the use of Initiatives and the formation of dedicated agencies. Listed below are the main government or government funded stakeholders in UK VET:

Adult Learning Inspectorate - ALI	To inspect and report on the quality of education and training for adults and young people funded by public money. Established under the Learning and Skills Act 2000, it began inspecting in April 2001.
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency - BECTA	The strategic development and delivery of the Government's information and communications technology (ICT) and e-learning strategy for the

³⁴ <http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/>

³⁵ UK Employment Action Plan 2003, Guideline

³⁶ Ageing Population Panel, Finance Taskforce, Department of Trade and Industry, April 2000
[http://www.foresight.gov.uk/.](http://www.foresight.gov.uk/))

	schools and the learning and skills sectors. Form 1998 given ne remit in June 2003.
Department for Education and Skills – DfES	UK Government department with overall responsibility for Education, principally in England.
Office for Standards in Education – Ofsted	To improve the quality and standards of education and childcare through independent inspection and regulation, and report on the impact of government education initiatives. In 2001, Ofsted assumed responsibility for inspecting all education and training for ages 16-19 in sixth form and further education colleges.
Learning and Skills Development Agency - LSDA	Previously the Further Education Development Agency, LSDA was launched on 27 November 2000 with a new remit - the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. It operates in Wales as Dysg.
Learning and Skills Council – LSC	Established in April 2001, LSC is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England, other than in universities.
Sector Skills Development Agency – SSDA	To deliver skills to business, and to fund, support and regulate the employer-led SSCs. Creation announced in 2001.
Sector Skills Councils – SSCs (Known collectively with the SSDA as the Skills for Business Network)	Employer-led (with other stakeholders involved) independent bodies licensed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. There are 12 SSCs already licensed and a target for a total of 23 licensed by October 2004. Creation announced in 2001.
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority - QCA	Regulates the Awarding Bodies for GCSE, A level and vocational qualifications including NVQs.
University for Industry Ufi – operates LearnDirect. Scottish University for Industry – operates LearnDirect Scotland.	Learn Direct for England Wales and Northern Ireland, Learn Direct Scotland for Scotland. A network of online learning and information services to deliver flexible workforce development and lifelong learning. Although set up by the Government in 1998 Ufi didn't become fully operational until October 2000.
The National Assembly for Wales: Education and Lifelong Learning Committee	Welsh Assembly focus for education and skills policy in Wales.
Education and Learning Wales – ELWa	Welsh Assembly Sponsored Public Body established under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Responsible for funding, planning and promoting all post-16 education and training in Wales, except for Higher Education.
Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru/the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales - ACCAC	The National Assembly for Wales's principal advisory body on all aspects of the school curriculum, examinations, assessment and vocational qualifications.
Scottish Executive: Education Department	Responsible for administering policy on pre-school and school education, children and young people, and tourism, culture and sport, in Scotland. Regulates Scottish education bodies like SQA. Also has some responsibility for lifelong learning.
Scottish Executive: Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department.	To support Ministers (from the Scottish Parliament) in the delivery of objectives for economic growth, industrial development, further and higher education, skills, lifelong learning, energy, transport and digital connectivity.
Scottish Qualifications Authority – SQA	The national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment, and certification of qualifications other than degrees, including Scottish Vocational Qualifications.
Department for employment and Learning Northern Ireland - DELNI	Responsible for providing Skills and Life Long Learning in Northern Ireland.

Department for education Northern Ireland -DENI	Responsible for education provision in Northern Ireland.
Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment - CCEA	Reports to DENI and is responsible for curriculum issues in Northern Ireland.
Regional Development Agencies – RDAs.	Regional Development Agencies Act 1998. Their role is to further economic development and regeneration and in terms of VET to enhance development and application of skill relevant to employment. There are 9 RDAs: One NorthEast; North West Development Agency; Yorkshire Forward; Advantage West Midlands; East Midlands Development Agency; East of England Development Agency; South West of England Regional Development Agency ; South East England Development Agency; London Development Agency.

There is considerable funding for Education and hence Skills and Vocational Education and Training by the UK Government. More details of this can be obtained from the UK ReferNet group³⁷. The UK VET landscape is populated by many different, (mostly independent) government agencies and departments; each of which has a strategic role. However, where these stakes in VET overlap, there can be occasional conflicts of interest. Also, detailed, direct cooperation, communication and coordination is not always evident, (or perhaps even possible) between all of these bodies. Therefore there is a danger of some losses in efficiency and coherence: through duplication of effort; policy or delivery gaps, or lack of specific coordination or funding – where issues fall between more than one body. The Bureaucracy Review Group³⁸ have recommended:

- The adoption of a strategic approach to regulation , (audit/inspection/management review);
- The substantial reduction and simplification of the Management Information System;
- That QCA extend their modernisation programme to encompass all qualifications in the further education and training sector as soon as possible, and look to rationalise the administration and scrutiny requirements placed on awarding bodies providers;
- Renegotiation of the framework contract between the DfES and the LSC, to give crystal clarity to the role of the Department and the LSC;

The group also reports that the European Social Fund (ESF) co-financing arrangements operated by the LSC are still too bureaucratic. Discussions have been held with LSC to see whether any changes could be made that would reduce the burdens on providers and that further change, and further reductions in burdens, should be possible.

³⁷ <http://www.refernet.org.uk/>.

³⁸ The Bureaucracy Review Group for further education and training, 2004 Annual Report. Crown Copyright 2004. available at <http://www.successforall.gov.uk/contentList.cfm?contSectionId=8>.

Skills strategies:

In July 2003 the government presented a White Paper on Skills Strategies³⁹. This was to address UK issues of productivity and skills notably that:

Output per hour worked is around 25 per cent higher in the US and Germany and over 30 per cent higher in France than in the UK. While we compare well at higher education level, our percentage of the workforce qualified to intermediate skill levels (apprenticeship, skilled craft and technician level) is low: 28 per cent in the UK compared with 51 per cent in France and 65 per cent in Germany⁴⁰.

This also announced the need, "...to build a new Skills Alliance, where every employer, every employee and every citizen plays their part"⁴¹. The Skills Alliance is an overarching partnership of Government, employers, unions and skills delivery agencies (consists of many of the organizations listed above), its remit is to advise the Government and help it deliver the aims of the White Paper, engage employers and trade unions in taking forward the strategy and to monitor its development⁴². To date the alliance has been working to⁴³ increase the Skills for Business Network, piloting an Employer Training program, an innovation review⁴⁴, these measures indicate an HRD approach to initial and continuing training in the UK. The Skills Alliance's Skills Strategy Progress report⁴⁵ gives a good reflection of the current state of the main issues in the UK. It states that though "we are still only at the start of the journey... ..the shared ownership of this agenda is [its] greatest strength... But success depends on millions of learners and employers seeing the value of skills, training and qualifications in helping them achieve their goals, and choosing voluntarily to commit their time, energy and resources accordingly." A couple of the major challenges that it states we face are the needs to:

"Convince both employers and learners that we are making a reality of a demand-led, responsive approach to delivering training"

"To sustain clear roles for each of the many organizations who are contributing to the agenda, building strong partnerships based on shared understanding of who is contributing what to the common cause"⁴⁶

³⁹ 21st Century Skills; Realising Our Potential; Individuals, Employers, Nation. July 2003. Crown Copyright.

⁴⁰ 21st Century Skills; Realising Our Potential; Individuals, Employers, Nation. July 2003. Crown Copyright. Page 12, point 6.

⁴¹ 21st Century Skills; Realising Our Potential; Individuals, Employers, Nation. July 2003. Crown Copyright .Page 18, point 1.4.

⁴² DfES Skills Strategy website:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/subPage.cfm?action=skills.tor> .

⁴³ DfES Skills Strategy progress update:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/subPage.cfm?action=progUpdates.default>.

⁴⁴ DTI Innovation report. Competing in the global economy: the innovation challenge. 17 December 2003. Crown copyright.

⁴⁵ Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance. DfES. Crown Copyright 2004. Available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>.

⁴⁶ Skills Strategy Progress Report. Skills Alliance. DfES. Crown Copyright 2004. Available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/>. Quotes taken from Introduction.

In 2000 the National Skills Task Force (established to advise on the main skills gaps and shortages, current and anticipated, in the labour force and how they can be addressed⁴⁷) released three reports. The third report⁴⁸ looked at the issue of low-skilled older members of the labour force (those who left school before the late 1980s) and how to deliver work-place based learning so that they could improve their skills, and hence career progression prospects. The Final Report⁴⁹ unveiled a National Skills Agenda comprising of six goals:

- Instill a culture of Lifelong Learning;
- Better anticipation of future skills requirements;
- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to equip themselves properly, in terms of basic skills needed, for working life and to widen opportunities for further learning and economic mobility;
- Maximise the opportunities for workforce members to develop new skills and broaden their skill base so they can adapt flexibly and successfully to industry and occupational change;
- To enhance the status and quality of vocational education and training compared to general education;
- Manage the post-16 education and training system in order to establish and maintain a sound match between skills needs and supply; minimizing the negative economic and social impact of skills shortages and gaps.

The other publication was a research report describing in more detail the research evidence which underpins the conclusions in the Final Report, on where the UK's main skills gaps and shortages are to be found⁵⁰.

It concluded that the gap in qualification levels between the UK and France and Germany is particularly significant with regard to vocational qualifications, where Germany has double the proportion of 25-28 year olds at Level 2 and treble the proportion at Level 3 compared with the UK (Adult Literacy in Britain 1997 (IALS)). Though significant numbers of the UK population do acquire Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications after reaching the age of 25, this still only represents just 1% of that working age population (older than 25)⁵¹.

Skills as measured by qualifications have risen substantially during the last twenty years⁵². However, most growth at higher levels has occurred in Higher Education whilst vocational attainment remains at relatively low levels. The majority do not gain intermediate competence in mathematics despite the relatively high returns to such qualifications and there are still many people with no qualifications and a significant proportion with poor basic skills. Neither current trends in education nor workplace learning appear set to

⁴⁷ Towards a National Skills Agenda; First Report of the National Skills Task Force.

⁴⁸ Third Report of the National Skills Task Force. Tackling the adult skills gap: Upskilling adults and the role of workplace learning. Crown copyright 2000. ISBN: 1 84185 195 7.

⁴⁹ Skills for all: Proposals for a National Skills Agenda; Final Report of the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. ISBN: 1 84185 313 5.

⁵⁰ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000.

⁵¹ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Section 4.35 page 67.

⁵² Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Section 4.77 page 78.

change these trends. Consequently, it is expected that much of the growth in qualifications during the next decade will continue to be concentrated in Higher Education. Attainment in vocational qualifications is likely to remain at relatively low levels and significantly behind some of our main European partners should current trends persist. There is little evidence that the 'long tail' of low achievement will be corrected as those who do not achieve qualifications at school and those with poor basic skills are less likely to take part in education or training in later life.

The Returns to Education.

As well as the research noted above, it also reviewed the notion that investment in skills gives, through a more productive labour force, national economic returns (the social rate of return). It states the best evidence would be that which demonstrated the skills with the highest rate of return; because further investment in these skills would be most beneficial to the economy. Though measuring the wider or social rate of return to a particular skill is very problematic⁵³; whilst the concept is simple, in practice the required information too intangible to extract, so research is reliant on proxy measures⁵⁴. Previous in the UK have tended

to ignore the complex routes (compared for general qualifications) many people take in acquiring vocational qualifications⁵⁵. The report states that in contrast to previous UK research, the research by Dearden et al (2000)⁵⁶, suggests the rate of return to vocational qualifications at NVQ Level 3 or higher bear comparison with their academic equivalents if due account is taken of the different lengths of time required to obtain each new qualification. However, while annualised rates of return to vocational qualifications at Level 3 and above are comparable to those gained through academic qualifications, there is little evidence of good rate of returns for vocational qualifications below that level. (The Dearden et al study reveals no return to lower level NVQs for either gender). The research also found that returns to vocational, though not academic, qualifications were higher for those with low prior ability. The returns to vocational qualifications at NVQ Levels 2, 3 and 4 for low ability individuals were double those of higher ability⁵⁷.

At least from looking at the reports and initiatives mentioned above there appears to be a lot of activity nationally on driving skills delivery to improve national productivity (and presumably the effectiveness and efficiency of UK VET in the process). However, when considering the picture for employment based CVET there is an argument to suggest that employers are essentially

⁵³ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Section 1.7 and 1.8 page 17.

⁵⁴ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Section 7.6 page 123.

⁵⁵ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Sections 7.9,7.12,7.13,7.16,7.17.

⁵⁶ The Returns to Academic and Vocational Qualifications in Britain. Dearden et al. November 2000. ISBN 0 7530 1435 1. There has also been more research carried out on returns to education ie Further Analysis of the Returns to Academic and Vocational Qualifications, McIntosh January 2004. Britain's Record On Skills Layard et al. May 2002

⁵⁷ Skills for all: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force. Crown copyright 2000. Sections 7.9,7.12,7.13,7.16,7.17.

providing the same sort of training for their employees as they have done before 2000, but are packaging it under different name (ie Modern Apprenticeship which is detailed section 8) in order to take advantage of public rather than corporate funding. The picture of effectiveness and efficiency of the UK system is perhaps not quite as encouraging when viewed from this perspective, since we always come back to the point of departure, low productivity on the part of quite large sections of the workforce and industry in the UK.

Theme 2: Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes.

7. Improvements in learning processes and contents.

The strategy of Central Government relies on meeting demand side needs in the labour market by encouraging individuals to take up learning and training opportunities, and by introducing voluntary measures to increase employers involvement in CVET.

The formation of the UK's devolved administrations and various skills agencies have produced sponsor initiatives and schemes to encourage learning in the community. For example, ELWa is developing a pilot Community Learning Account programme in Wales. Research suggests that many such schemes may overcome the barriers that more formal learning raises.

Although formed before the Lisbon Conference, (1998) The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) and its portal, the National Grid for Learning, (and the Scottish Executive Education Department managed National Grid for Learning Scotland), continue to seek to use ICT to the maximum, to raise standards and achievement, extend opportunity, create a highly ICT literate workforce and to ensure that ICT learning opportunities are of a high standard⁵⁸. In January 2002 the Government released a major Consultation Paper on the use of ICT in teaching⁵⁹. A literature review later commissioned by BECTA on behalf of the DfES has identified that:

...there is extensive evidence of ICT contributing to improved learning by pupils. The benefits include: enabling pupils to challenge their preconceptions; giving them the means of providing more powerful explanations; helping them develop better reasoning strategies; developing their confidence in their ability to communicate their

⁵⁸ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview, 0703.

⁵⁹ DfES: *Transforming the way we learn; a vision for the future of ICT in Schools*, January 2002.

*knowledge to others; helping them achieve more autonomy in their learning; and helping them relate their learning in a wider context.*⁶⁰

The University for Industry, (known as 'learndirect'), and Scottish University for Industry, (known as learndirect scotland) have been formed to stimulate demand for learning by providing easily accessible advice to potential learners about all kinds of opportunities. For example, learndirect Scotland provides learners with advice on learning opportunities available throughout Scotland, including information on childcare facilities. Its network of over 370 learndirect scotland 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.

Ufi/learndirect both also make a contribution to SMEs development. So in 2003-04 (up to end February 2004) over 150,000 courses have been taken by 45,000 SMEs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland whereas in 2002-03 over 75,000 courses were taken up by 33,000 SMEs through learndirect.

Scotland has pioneered the expansion of higher education in local FE colleges, including part-time courses of particular interest to CVET students who are often not geographically mobile because of work and family commitments. Students can thus begin their higher education near their homes and workplaces, which in many cases can be some distance from the nearest university. Many progress to the later years of degrees which in some cases are also delivered in the college in partnership with the validating university⁶¹.

In the UK, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are largely based upon national occupational standards, or statements of the outcomes to be achieved to meet the requirements for certification. These are mainly developed by a Sector Skill Council (SSC). These are employer-led bodies, and normally include representatives of relevant trade unions, professional bodies and training organisations from the sector.

NVQ and SVQ criteria require national occupational standards to be able 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.

⁶⁰ From Conclusion of *ICT and Pedagogy; a review of the Research Literature*. Cox, Margaret. Webb, Mary. Abbott, Chris. Blakeley, Barry. Beauchamp, Tony. Rhodes, Valerie. ICT in Schools Research and Evaluation Series -No. 18.

⁶¹ UK ReferNet Continuing VET report, 050105.

The development of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) will also assist in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying opportunities for international progression routes and credit transfer.

The Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) aims to support key developments and innovations in teaching and learning in the further education sector in Scotland, in 2001 its status changed from government agency to independent organisation⁶². In England since 2000 a raft of new agencies have been created with an involvement in skills and vocational training: the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) provides a base for developing and disseminating best practice and innovation to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and to the further education sector; the Sector Skills Development Agency's (SSDA) remit is to deliver skills to business and to fund and regulate the SSCs; the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was formed to inspect and report on the quality of education and training for adults and young people funded by public money⁶³.

8. *Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning.*

Traditionally there has been little or no integration between school and the work place. A main aspect is two weeks of work experience for pupils⁶⁴, but this is designed to give an orientation rather than education. This is gradually changing after a move to introduce vocational subject qualifications (ie vocational GCSEs). The Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds programme has created partnerships between FE colleges, schools and training providers to enhance work-related learning opportunities for local 14-16 year olds. Government intends to expand this programme⁶⁵.

In Scotland, a 2002 Review Group, which looked at Enterprise in Education, recommended that all pupils over the age of 14 would have an opportunity for work-based vocational learning linked to accompanying relevant qualifications. The Scottish Executive will shortly produce a response to this. In Scotland, there is no formal Initial Vocational Training (IVT) currently available in schools. However, there are examples of this type of activity in two local authorities⁶⁶.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) assists students to gain vocational, academic or continuous professional development recognition or credits for prior learning and experience. Universities etc, can take into account relevant learning and provide formal accreditation against academic programmes of study. This may reduce the number of modules studied in order to gain a qualification, or provide access to a course for people who have learnt

⁶² SFEU Summary Annual Review 2002-2003 and Summary Strategic Plan 2003-2006
<http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/uploadFiles/AnnualReview.pdf>

⁶³ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview, 0703.

⁶⁴ UK TO 4.4.3.

⁶⁵ UK TO 4.4.4.

⁶⁶ UK TO 4.4.5.

through experience, but who lack traditional entry qualifications. APL applications are considered against the pre-set criteria established by the college or university, and individuals are considered on an individual basis.

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 distinction is often made between Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), based on previous study or qualifications, for example in another field with a nationally agreed general credit value, and assessed Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), which is the accreditation of an individual's experience. A recent government report indicated that that 81 % of traditional universities and 100 % of new universities allow APEL accreditation for non-degree courses, and smaller proportions for higher-level courses.

APL was strongly promoted in the early 1990s, and became established as a non-traditional entry route to further and higher education, though often not to the most prestigious courses. It is now a preferred policy tool in the government's promotion of the expansion of higher education courses.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Implementation Plan (October 2002) details the future developments of the SCQF. One target is to develop and agree a set of guidelines on recognition of prior learning and experiential learning (APEL) which would then allow credit rating and levelling on the framework⁶⁷.

The SSDA and the Regional Development Agencies are intended to bring about a clear relationship between the demand side for skills (employers) and providing in schools, colleges and the private sector.

Apprenticeship declined in the UK along with the decline in the Manufacturing Industries where they were mainly based. The 'Modern Apprenticeship' (MA) was introduced in the 1990s. After the Cassels⁶⁸ report on an action plan 'for the development, promotion and delivery of modern apprenticeships', they were re-launched in November 2001⁶⁹. The report recommended 'a longer-term aim of 35% of young people entering apprenticeship each year by 2010, and a more immediate target for 2004 of 28%, or 175,000, young people entering apprenticeship between the ages of 16 and 21'⁷⁰. The report announced Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, equivalent to NVQ level 2, and Advanced Modern Apprenticeships, equivalent to NVQ level 3. For 2002-2003 there were 163000 people starting an MA71. Regarding numbers actually on MA programmes, at any one time, 4.4% of the 16-21 population were on programmes. There was a figure in the Cassells report of 23%, which has mistakenly been assumed to be the percentage of the cohort on a

⁶⁷ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview 5.5.

⁶⁸ Modern Apprenticeships; the way to work. The Report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. September 2001. ISBN: 1 84185 632 0.)

⁶⁹ DfES Press Release 29 November 2001.

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2001_0400

⁷⁰ Modern Apprenticeships; the way to work. The Report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. September 2001. ISBN: 1 84185 632 0. Page 7

⁷¹ Learning and Skills Council. Statistical First Release: ILR/SFR03. Weds 31 March 2004. Table 5. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000452/index.shtml>

MA scheme – this widely quoted figure has caused confusion⁷². Between October and December 2003 another review of Modern Apprenticeships were carried out⁷³. It found that MAs involve 42,000 organisations including 36,000 employers and 224,000 apprentices at any one time. Whilst it highlighted some strengths, it recommended that MAs be made more flexible through the development of unitisation and credit transfer, and a simplified and more flexible Apprenticeship framework implemented; and should concentrate on a sector core with a choice of components relevant to employers’ collective needs. It also recommended that there should be a clear progression route through to the MAs and on to the Advanced Apprenticeships and, where appropriate, Foundation Degrees.

9. Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision.

Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision within the UK can be divided into two categories. The first is the scrutiny of inbuilt checks that occur as part of the system of the design and evaluation of an individual qualification. The second covers more general aspects of VET such as delivery and general quality assurance.

As an example, listed below is the process used for developing an NVQ or SVQ (for example City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Amenity Horticulture). The clear steps in place and involvement of stakeholders (except for candidates), ensures that at the end of the process there exists a vocational qualification that: meets demand; carries suitable ‘currency’; satisfies the requirements of the main stakeholders. The key aspect of NVQs/SVQs is the use of National Occupational Standards of competence as a basis for the qualification. This should ensure from the start, that the qualification is developed from the requirements of the sector that will be using it. The internal verifiers and the assessors are people who have knowledge and experience of the skills required for a particular NVQ/SVQ because their careers within that sector.

Steps for developing an NVQ/SVQ	Note
1. Sector Skills Councils develop National Occupational Standards and assessment strategies.	These are the standards of occupational competence and the professional profiles for a particular group of jobs. The SSCs are usually the standards setting body.
2. QCA and regulatory bodies in Wales, NI and Scotland approve the occupational standards and	Approval of the identified standards by the regulatory boards is a requirement.

⁷² The 23% quoted in the Cassells report is a ‘chances’ figure’, yielded by dividing 145,000 (total active on programme excluding those that have done FMA and AMA) into one year cohort (610,000), giving this population a 23% chance of being on an MA programme between the ages of 16-21.

⁷³ 21st century apprenticeships; End to End Review of the Delivery of Modern Apprenticeships. Modern Apprenticeship Delivery End to End Review Team DfES and LSC.

assessment strategies.	
3. Awarding bodies develop NVQs (SVQs) for Scotland.	Awarding bodies, working with the Sector Skills Council, can now develop the units for an NVQ/SVQ qualification and the assessment and quality assurance requirements, based on the identified competences.
4. QCA/the regulatory bodies accredit NVQs/SVQs.	As part of quality assurance, the regulators must provide quality control to ensure that NVQs are of quality
5. Awarding bodies make arrangements for 'delivery' of NVQs/SVQs.	It is for the awarding bodies to make arrangements following the code of practice to ensure that the structure, units, competences, and assessment requirements are clearly understandable and that arrangements are in place.
6. External verifiers appointed.	Again, this and the associated training is part of the responsibility of the awarding body
7. Approved centres established with internal verifiers, assessors, and candidates.	Awarding bodies must be satisfied that centres are up-to-the job and that internal verifiers and assessors are in place and trained. OFSTED inspections may uncover unacceptably low performance standards; in this case, the LSC may withhold funding.

A further example is listed below; it shows the steps involved in the design and set up of a new Modern Apprenticeship program.

Steps for developing an MA	Note
Regulation, funding and specification of MA frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning and Skills Council • Sector Skills Development Agency • QCA and the regulatory bodies in the devolved administrations of the UK
Design of the MAs for a particular sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sector Skills Council (NVQ and Technical Certificate) • QCA and the regulatory bodies QCA and the regulatory bodies (regulation of National Occupational Standards and NVQs and oversight of Technical Certificate and key skills) • Awarding bodies
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employer • Awarding body • Training agency/agencies involved (e.g. Further

	education colleges and private training providers)
Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted in colleges • ALI in Workplace.

In December 2002, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), assigned a new joint remit for the VQ system to QCA, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and the other regulatory authorities for Scotland (SQA), Wales (ACCAC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). Ministers have now endorsed the proposed programme of work, which is based on 5 themes:

- national occupational standards and industry-led curricula
- flexibility in the system and framework
- revised regulation model
- supportive funding arrangements
- effective communication.

National Occupational Standards are to: benchmarked against international best practice; reflect the skills and knowledge required by employers; designed to be developed and updated quickly in response to emerging needs. It has also been decided that Industry-led curricula will be created, linked to national occupational standards, to ensure that qualifications meet employment needs.

On the theme of flexibility, a unit-based national system of qualifications and credit will be developed. This is to recognise diverse achievement and support the flexibility needed to promote lifelong learning. It is intended that this more flexible qualifications framework be stocked with qualifications that: reflect current and emerging requirements; have suitable assessment and quality assurance arrangements; help candidates go on to further learning, whether at work or with a learning provider; can be customised for specific employment needs.

A revised model for regulating Vocational Qualifications will be developed so that they can be accredited quickly and monitoring activity can be targeted effectively. Funding arrangements will also be reviewed to see that they support the new framework. A strategy is also being developed to ensure effective communication of key messages about the program of work⁷⁴.

10. Professional development and status of teachers and trainers.

Previously, there were few if any requirements for trainers and other VET teachers to have formal training or hold qualifications to teach, unless they

⁷⁴ *Developing a more responsive VQ system.* QCA website: http://www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/607_1619.html.

worked in the maintained school sector. However, the growth of certificated, state-validated VET qualifications and an emphasis on pedagogy (training the trainers) is now leading to recognition and requirements for trainers to be properly trained. The main policy priority in this area across the UK is to increase the number of FE lecturers who hold the teaching qualification in further education [TQ(FE)]. Following the EU drive to establish a professional base and raise quality within the training of trainers sector, in England from September 2001, it became mandatory for new FE teachers to hold or work towards a recognised teaching qualifications in the move to ensure that - added to their knowledge of their subject - lecturers are also qualified to teach.

Parallel developments are taking place in England and Scotland; the examples given throughout this theme concentrate on Scotland, as a case study for the UK.

To support this drive for increased professionalism, the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) has set a target that aims to ensure that 90% of full-time lecturing staff has a TQ(FE) or its equivalent. Assessment of lecturers in training is carried out by members of staff in the teacher education institutions in co-operation with the supervising staff in the lecturer's workplace.

Trade Unions also play a key role in developing staff in the workplace. Unions can bid for money from the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF), which funds unions to develop specific work-based projects. Many of these projects have created a network of training facilitators to encourage staff development⁷⁵.

Further detail is provided in the UK draft to CEDEFOP on Teachers and Training.

Theme 3: Building European competences for a European Labour Market.

11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy.

The UK exceeds all the employment rate targets, including those for women and for older workers. Despite the slowdown in the global economy, employment rates have remained fairly stable and unemployment levels are well below the EU average. However productivity levels – especially as expressed per hour worked – remain comparatively low and require special attention.

⁷⁵ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview 6.1.

The Kok report also makes the following recommendations:

- To increase adaptability, ensure that wage developments do not exceed productivity developments.
- Reduce the rising number of people claiming sickness or disability benefit by assessing individual working capacities and ensuring that those capable of working receive work-oriented solutions, such as training or sheltered work.
- Implement the New Deal for adults at an earlier stage than the current 18 months, in order to prevent de-skilling and improve the chances of sustainable (re-)integration of adults into the labour market. Particular attention should be given to the low-skilled, ethnic minorities, older workers and people in deprived areas or in less-developed regions.
- Improve access to, and affordability of, childcare; address other causes of the gender pay gap such as sectoral and occupational segregation.
- Ensure effective implementation of national skills strategies to achieve a general improvement in skills levels, develop lifelong learning and increase participation in training. Particular emphasis should be put on addressing the situation of the low-skilled and underperformance at school level, early school leaving and poor adult literacy⁷⁶.

12. Involving stakeholders.

The extent of social partnership in the UK is generally very limited and it is not a widely understood concept. Traditionally, training in the UK is employer-led on a 'voluntarist' model. Nevertheless, stakeholders' participation in formulating VET is characterised in the different ways that industrial relations operate through different models and at different levels of formality.

While the public perception of industrial relations is coloured by conflict-based models, there has in practice been a high level of consensus between social partners on the benefits of training. In spite of different approaches and policies on the part of employers and trade unions, particularly over financing of training and degree of control, vocational training tends to be an area in which there is a high degree of cooperation.

Differences occur within the ranks of employers and trade unions between the concerns of representatives at national level and those at local level. This often relates to the tension between broad issues of labour market policy and the specific interests of particular companies or groups of workers.

Three models represent social partnership arrangements in the UK:

- Collective bargaining;
- Consultation;
- Participation in formal structures.

⁷⁶ Kok Report, Country Message for UK.

Collective bargaining within the qualifications system tends to be limited to mainly localised negotiations on access to training and qualifications, including apprenticeship arrangements. The last two tend to be a feature of training policy at national or sectoral level and the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the system.

At national level, consultation is the primary mechanism. Participation occurs more at sectoral level. All three models include formal and informal mechanisms. These, and different levels of involvement, come into play in different parts of the system: VET policymaking, strategic planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

Union learning representatives have recently been enacted for workplaces; whilst early indications are positive, it remains to be seen how this innovation will operate over the longer term⁷⁷.

13. Transparency, recognition & mobility.

Each successive reform of vocational qualifications intends to rationalise the whole system to make it more legible and understandable to learners, employers and the public. However, what happened when NVQs were introduced was the introduction of a whole new series of qualifications alongside rather than instead of the older qualifications. Perhaps this is the consequence of a voluntary system. In any case it means that the vocational system of qualifications is less easy to read than the well known general qualifications. Also vocational qualifications are in a constant state of reform. For example the GNVQs have been introduced and withdrawn in not much more than 10 years. However the efforts of the devolved country administrations and the introduction of qualification frameworks have helped to ease this.

The creation of devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and (in part) Northern Ireland has increased any previous tendency towards divergence in the systems in these different parts of the UK. The administrations are committed to collaboration and development of coherence – not least because of labour migration and movement of higher education students – but there is an emerging tendency towards distinctive policy solutions to specific issues. This tendency is exemplified in the development of credit systems (discussed in detail below).

Northern Ireland and Wales have produced separate credit frameworks. However, recent close liaison between Wales and Northern Ireland has meant that their approaches are closely aligned.

Scotland has a separate Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF)⁷⁸. In the SCQF two measures are used to place qualifications in the framework.

⁷⁷ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview 3.3

⁷⁸ *An Introduction to The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework*. September 2001. Publication code: AE1243. (2nd Edition produced October 2003 Publication code: AE1243/2) available from <http://www.scqf.org.uk/home.aspx>.

These are the levels of the outcomes of learning and the volume of these outcomes, described in terms of SCOTCAT (Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer) points. The SCQF, (shown below) has 12 levels. Increases in level of demand relate to changes in factors such as:

- Complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding;
- Links to associated academic, vocational or professional practice;
- The degree of integration, independence and creativity required;
- The range and sophistication of application/practice;
- The role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks.

Levels are not directly related to years of study. Over a lifetime of learning individuals will move from higher to lower levels, or across levels of qualifications; as they take on new learning and acquire new skills.

Each level is described in terms of its characteristic general outcomes under five broad areas:

- Knowledge and understanding - mainly subject based;
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding);
- Generic cognitive skills, e.g. evaluation, critical analysis;
- Communication, numeracy and IT skills;
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

The SCQF Implementation Plan⁷⁹ details the next stages of development and includes the publication of guidelines on determining the level and credit value of particular programmes of learning. Details of progress can be found at the SCQF website⁸⁰, however two key items of progress are: A conference held in March 2004⁸¹ for representatives of all the stakeholders to work together in deciding how to use the SCQF to make a real difference to the lives of users; and work on - recognising prior informal learning⁸².

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF levels	SQA National Units, courses and group awards	Higher Education (HE) qualifications	SVQs	SCQF levels
12		Doctorate		12

⁷⁹ The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework National Plan for Implementation of the Framework. December 2002.

⁸⁰ SCQF website: <http://www.scqf.org.uk/home.aspx>.

⁸¹ SCQF Conference Report – Making it Happen 2004 08 March 2004 details available from SCQF website.

⁸² Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF); Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) Project Summary. April 2004.

11		Masters	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours degree		10
9		Ordinary degree		9
8		HND Diploma of HE	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	HNC Certificate of HE		7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2/ Credit S Grade		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1/ General S Grade		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3/ Foundation S Grade			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

The SCQF has been created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework - higher education qualifications; HNCs and HNDs; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 (National Qualification) at SCQF level 1 to Doctorate at SCQF level 12. Each qualification - unit, group of units or larger group award – has also been allocated a number of SCQF credits, each credit representing 10 notional hours of required learning. Doctorates based on a thesis are an exception. The SCQF also offers a means to allocate levels and credit values to other assessed and quality assured learning.

*The positioning of SVQs in the table gives a **broad** indication of their place in the framework. A major project is underway to refine the position of SVQs in the framework within a UK context.*

Source: SCQF website: <http://www.scqf.org.uk/default.aspx?id=0&c=1&d=-8>

During 2002, QCA submitted to the Government its advice on the development of unitisation and credit within the English system. AS, A2 and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (the successors to Advanced level GNVQs) are all expressed in the form of units. Unitisation is a continuing trend in the system, and is associated with commitments to 'flexibility' in qualifications. The advice to Government on unitisation suggested that future work in England should continue to follow the three phases: immediate and continuing: voluntary application of design principles by awarding bodies; by December 2001: technical issues resolved and design principles disseminated with appropriate guidance; by April 2003: mandatory application

of design principles by awarding bodies. On moving to a credit-based system, QCA recommended that, with the regulatory partners and other key players, QCA should take exploratory steps towards a credit-based qualifications framework as follows: engagement in formulating national credit principles, with either leadership from or participation by QCA; followed by formal consultation on the operation of those principles; and evaluation of the implementation of other national credit systems in the UK. The advice emphasised that these steps should not be the signal that a credit-based system will necessarily be adopted over time⁸³. With support from awarding bodies, QCA will assign a credit value to all existing units in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and develop a shared approach to credit, including the mutual recognition of units. Concurrently LSC will review credit systems outside the NQF to see: what is required to make these systems use the same principles of credit; and how applying credit principles can recognise learning achievement and lead to entry into the NQF⁸⁴.

QCA, ACCAC and CCEA have also revised the National Qualifications Framework itself, part of this involved a public consultation⁸⁵. As a result the new NQF will take effect from 1 September 2004. The new framework should aid recognition and mobility as it bears greater similarity with qualifications frameworks in other countries. The main change is that the number of levels in the NQF has increased from six (entry level to level 5) to nine (entry level to level 8). This gives more recognition to higher level qualifications at Masters and Doctorate level. The proposed new NQF is shown below.

⁸³ UK ReferNet Thematic Overview 8.2

⁸⁴ *Credit Framework*. QCA website: http://www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/607_2685.html.

⁸⁵ The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. 2004. Ref QCA/04/1293 available from *The national qualifications framework*. QCA Website: <http://www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/493.html>.

Proposed National Qualifications Framework level indicators

<i>Framework level</i>	<i>Level indicators</i>	<i>Examples of qualifications</i>
Entry	Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.	Qualifications are offered at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3, in a range of subjects
Level 1	Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities which mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence.	NVQ 1; Certificate in Plastering; GCSEs Grades D–G; Certificate in Motor Vehicle Studies.
Level 2	Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles.	NVQ 2; GCSEs Grades A*–C; Certificate in Coaching Football; Diploma for Beauty Specialists.
Level 3	Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently, or in some areas supervising and training others in their field of work.	Certificate for Teaching Assistants; NVQ 3; A-levels; Advanced Extension Awards; Certificate in Small Animal Care.
Level 4	Level 4 qualifications recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others. Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education.	Diploma in Sport & Recreation; Certificate in Site Management; Certificate in Early Years Practice.
Level 5	Level 5 qualifications recognise the ability to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding of an area of work or study to enable the formulation of solutions and responses to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high levels of knowledge, a high level of work expertise in job roles and competence in managing and training others. Qualifications at this level are appropriate for people working as higher grade technicians, professionals or managers. Level 5 qualifications are at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications such as Diplomas of Higher Education, Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes.	Diploma in Construction; Certificate in Performing Arts.

Framework level	Level indicators	Examples of qualifications
Level 6	Level 6 qualifications recognise a specialist high level knowledge of an area of work or study to enable the use of an individual's own ideas and research in response to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the achievement of a high level of professional knowledge and is appropriate for people working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions. Level 6 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Bachelors degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas.	Certificate or Diploma in Management
Level 7	Level 7 qualifications recognise highly developed and complex levels of knowledge which enable the development of in-depth and original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high level specialist professional knowledge and is appropriate for senior professionals and managers. Level 7 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.	Diploma in Translation; Fellowship in Music Literacy.
Level 8	Level 8 qualifications recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.	Specialist awards

* Please note that currently titles such as 'Certificate' and 'Diploma' are not indicators of the level of a qualification.

Source: Appendix 2: A guide to National Qualifications Framework Levels. Page 36. from Ref b.

Between 2000 and now, 6000 Europass documents have been issued in the UK. The majority of those have been issued as part of a Leonardo Da Vinci program with only one or two percent issued for other European programs. Germany, France and Spain have proved to be the most popular destinations and many of the participants have been involved in the catering, leisure and hospitality Sectors. Whilst Europass doesn't formally accredit experience and skills learnt, in conjunction with Leonardo Da Vinci, the Europass document has served as a record of training that has helped holders' progression.

With the advent of the new Europass a National Europass Centre will be setup; which will be responsible for administering Europass and other European education-mobility documents. It has not yet been decided who will run this, though the centre will be responsible to DfES⁸⁶.

⁸⁶ Information from the Joint International Unit of the DfES and the Department of Work and Pensions.

Methodology

The Country Writing frame has been taken as the structure for this report. This has then been populated with the relevant information to produce the report. This has been done initially by cutting and pasting and then modifying and editing to produce a report. The editing and modifying is done in order to make the content flow and relevant to the headings rather than from a plagiarism point of view. The primary source used has been UK ReferNet, and it's Thematic Overview. The National Action Plans for employment and social inclusion have been checked and similarly used for relevant material, along with the UK ReferNet IVET and CVET reports. Then where gaps remain, specific internet searches for websites and reports and questions to targeted individuals used.