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REGIONAL REVIEW

The Newsletter from the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board

*Offsite Region
November 2007*

GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT REACTING TO INDUSTRY NEEDS

As a result of discussions at the Offsite Regional Forums, companies have identified a need to set up an industry working group to look at graduate development.

Keith French, who chairs the group, said the ECITB is keen to develop the right products for the industry. "We've sent out an industry survey to over a hundred registered inscope companies that employ professional engineers. We'll use the information gleaned to help direct the way the working group moves forward."

Offsite Regional Chairman Richard Leamon said there's an urgent need to increase skills levels for graduates. "The issue is about getting graduates from a bachelors to a masters level. There's a need for this because institutions are now looking for a higher level of qualification for corporate membership. Some of the graduates simply aren't able to do this because of the financial difficulties, so what we're hoping to do is assist companies to bridge that gap and are developing ways of making it easy and cost efficient for everyone."

Members of the working group became involved in order to help maximise the products available from the ECITB. Liz Thornton, Training Manager at the Wood Group said, "With a lot of the programmes we currently run, we have to purchase additional training materials. If the



ECITB can produce the right products for us, then we can maximise our levy to its full potential by getting access to all training without the extra costs."

Meg Finlay, HR Business Partner (Graduates) at AMEC in Aberdeen wanted to be proactive in ECITB initiatives to ensure she gets the products she needs. "There are areas where we sometimes struggle to find MEng, in which case the ECITB development funding would be extremely helpful."

Other areas the Offsite Regional Forum has suggested the ECITB investigates, are plant layout and design and estimator training which will be developed in conjunction with the industry.

IT'S ALL UNDER CONTROL!

The North East region is leading the way with piloting the much needed Project Control Apprenticeships. As reported in the National Review, it's hoped that the new apprenticeship will be rolled out nationally very soon.

The first year of the course will involve 40 weeks block training, with apprentices spending four days at NETA Training Group in Stockton on theory and practical activities, with one day at Darlington College to undergo the National Certificate in Construction. During the year there will be periods when the learners will be back with their employers. Andy Brown from the ECITB's Product Development and Occupational Standards team said, "This is so the employers can ensure the training is completely relevant to their job. The best place for the apprentices to consolidate their learning is to do it on the job."

In the second year, apprentices will continue with College day release to complete their National Certificate and the rest of their time with their employers. An on the job training package will prepare them for their NVQ Level 2 in Project Control Support and they'll learn about budgets, estimates, schedules, generating reports and managing information for their Project Manager. In year three they'll follow structured training that prepares them for their NVQ Level 3 in Project Control. This new initiative will be financially supported by the ECITB with up to £10,000 grants for apprenticeship framework completion.

CENTRAL FORUM

MAKING OFFSITE MORE ACCESSIBLE

A third Offsite Regional Forum was held in Leeds in July. The Forum followed the same agenda as those held in London and Aberdeen, but was responding to the needs of companies based in central England, as Regional Account Manager Keith French explained.

"The reason we went to Leeds was to maximise the opportunity for companies to attend the Forums. As companies are scattered far and wide over the country, we went to Leeds to see how it went, and to give levy paying companies in the middle of the UK the opportunity to attend one."

The opportunity was taken up enthusiastically by Ian Muscroft, Training & Development Manager of Aker Kvaerner Engineering Services, Nuclear & Industrial. "I went to the Leeds Forum because it was only an hour's drive away. I wouldn't have had time to visit London or Aberdeen at all. I got my points across and I'm looking forward to seeing them being implemented. I'm very keen to attend future Forums, but can only do so if they're at a convenient location."

Taken as a whole, the three Forums were attended by representatives from 30 companies. Steve Franklin from CB&I is a keen advocate of the work of the Forums. "The more focus you have, the better it is. A recent development is the graduate working group which came out of the Forum. The Forum manages the process and the groups do the work, so if you want to get something out of it, get involved! As long as we're paying the levy, I'll continue to attend."



The ECITB looks set to hold Regional Forums in central England in the future. Chair Richard Leamon thinks it makes life easier for companies. "Offsite is the only region which is national, so we have to be prepared to travel. The Leeds Forum was useful in that both parties found it helpful to continue Offsite business but at a local forum."

PICTURED ABOVE:
An Offsite Regional Forum in progress

CHANGE OF STAFF

After 24 years with the ECITB Keith French is retiring. Tony Featherstone said, "Keith will be sorely missed. His hard work in careers over the last 12 months has enabled the ECITB message to reach 35,000 young people in 2007 alone; and his work for the new Offsite region has ensured its outstanding success."

"Keith will be replaced by John Edwards, a familiar ECITB figure. Over the past year John has worked on PD&OS and will go back into operations with renewed vigour, new ideas and ways of working." John will take over his new position on the 1st of January 2008.

Following Colin Grime's appointment as Regional Account Manager for the Offshore region, Don Atkinson will be taking over responsibility for Offsite companies in Middle England.

PRODUCT TAKE UP

There has been a lot of interest in the new suite of Offsite products and uptake of the Project Control apprenticeship has been especially encouraging. The target for training places on the ECITB courses for the year was 1,000, but as of September, there had already been 1,456!

Understandably, Regional Chair Richard Leamon is pleased with these figures. "Even in June, we had more people on courses in 2007 than in the whole of 2006. I'd encourage the industry to keep using the products in order to increase the skills levels in engineering construction. After all, the more products you use, the better value your levy becomes!"

Head of Technical, Supervisory and Management Programmes Norman Harrison said, "What's particularly good is that a number of our companies have volunteered premises as venues for the courses. We're looking forward to rolling out a full programme soon, so welcome new take up!"

Further details can be found on the ECITB website.

CHAIR'S OVERVIEW

Regional Chair, Richard Leamon, provides an update on what's been happening in the region.

"Since the inaugural meetings, we've run three further Regional Forums in London, Leeds and Aberdeen. I'm very pleased with how well they all went, the level of attendance and the number of companies engaging with the ECITB. They were all very lively with good debates and lots of ideas and interaction. Please continue to support these Forums because the more successful they are, the more everyone will benefit.

My goal is for the Offsite region to continue increasing the number of high quality products available to the industry. We are in constant consultation with Forum members to develop these new courses and are always looking at ways to improve the current tranche of courses.

Finally, I'm delighted with the increased take up of training opportunities this year, with a significant increase in the number of delegates over those who attended in 2006. Next year we'll be taking on significantly more apprentices – between 50 and 100 – which reflects the nationwide upward trend and is excellent news for the industry as a whole."

OFFSITE REGIONAL FORUM UPDATE

Please find below key points taken from the Aberdeen and London forums which took place on 25 October and 7 November respectively:

- Careers roadshow events widely welcomed by representatives
- Numbers of candidates attending ECITB courses and programmes has exceeded the target set for 2007 and is currently estimated to be almost doubled the target by year end
- The Graduate Working Group set up to find ways to enable graduates to move from B Eng to M Eng is making good progress.
- The other two Working Groups set up to identify possible courses/programmes for Estimators and Plant Layout design will meet 22 November in London

For more detailed information view the minutes from the forum at <http://www.ecitb.org.uk/offsiteregion-forum2007>

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