

Sector Qualification Strategy Executive Summary

Scope of the Sector Qualification Strategy for People 1st

People 1st is the Sector Skills Council for the Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism sector. This covers 14 industries: hotels, restaurants, pubs, bars and nightclubs, contract food service providers, hospitality services, membership clubs, events, gambling, travel services, tourist services, visitor attractions, hostels, holiday centres, and self catering accommodation

There are approximately 184,900¹ individual hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism establishments in Great Britain, of which the majority are small and micro businesses (mainly pubs, bars, nightclubs and restaurants) employing fewer than 10 people. It is a large and growing sector currently employing nearly two million people. Across the sector there are large industry variations. The restaurant industry is the largest industry in terms of employment employing over half a million people, followed by hospitality services, pubs, bars and nightclubs and hotels. The sector has an important presence across all four home nations, and whilst there are differences in demography or the predominance of the differing industries, overall similar issues and priorities have been identified.

People1st completed their Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) for all four home nations of the United Kingdom in December 2006. In London in March 2007, Shaun Woodward MP, Minister for Tourism launched the National Skills Strategy for England, with key industry representatives and key partners. A document entitled 'Raising the Bar' A National Skills Strategy for the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sector was disseminated and the employer representatives and partners present committed themselves to supporting the aims. With funding from the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), People1st has worked with key sector employers to take forward Project Spinnaker which has put in place a Skills Strategy for the sector in Northern Ireland. People1st has since January 2006 been working with the Wales Tourism Alliance to ensure that the National Skills Strategy for Wales, will meet the needs of the sector, and this too has been formally launched. In Scotland the creation of a Skills Summit comprising of stakeholders, trade bodies, industry leaders and People1st has produced a Scottish Skills Strategy to tackle the workforce development issues facing the sector, although this is still to be finally ratified.

Stage 3 of the overall SSA identified issues with qualifications provision within and across the sector footprint, based on feedback from a range of stakeholders, most importantly those of employers. People 1st developed discrete qualification strategies for Food, Preparation and Cookery, Food and Drink Service and Travel and Tourism which have formed precursors for the actions described in this more comprehensive strategic document. The actions identified did not fully resolve the issues articulated through the research but set in process the development of the Diploma in Professional Cookery for example. The SQS is therefore intended to explore and articulate these issues in more detail and provide a more strategic 'direction of travel' for People 1st, its employers, and stakeholders together with identified solutions for the concerns already expressed.

¹ Source ABI 2005

The Sector Qualification Strategy (SQS) for People1st is therefore intended to address the qualification potential for all the principal occupations of the whole footprint. As such role profiles for positions from entry through to management have been identified for all 14 industries and are being verified through a staged consultation process. A comprehensive programme of consultation events was carried out throughout the UK during the autumn of 2007, which confirmed employer and provider support for the strategy. This consultation has explored how new qualifications might be developed and presented in ways that are more employer-led and accessible. The workshops will be followed up with further employer engagements through one-to-one sessions with larger employers in January 2008 and the formation of expert working groups in February and March 2008 to ratify the information obtained and to explore in more detail the qualification options which appear to be supported. One of the final outcomes of the implementation of the SQS will then be frameworks for each sub-sector illustrating the main job roles mapped against existing and proposed qualifications and identifying potential progressive and developmental routes

Learning provision and uptake

There is little available intelligence on the proportion of the workforce who holds job-specific qualifications or qualifications related to the sector, although there is information on the highest level of *any* qualification held by the workforce. The information obtained through research for the Sector Skills Agreements showed that, taking the UK as a whole, a significant percentage of the sector's workforce did not hold any qualifications at all. This has been taken up within the consultation to explore with employers why work-based qualifications are not better utilised as a means of providing individual progression and improving skills and productivity. Employers are as a rule more concerned with accessing training and ensuring that business aims can be met, and it is clear that in some cases People 1st will need to be able to present the cost/benefits in a business case to encourage employers to make greater use of qualifications as a means of raising the demonstrated level of skills and knowledge for the sector's workforce.

Qualification provision currently ranges widely across the sector and the analysis of linked provision is ongoing. The types of accredited qualifications available for employees within the sector include S/NVQs and other qualifications (vocational and non-vocational) of differing levels and sizes, including higher education provision. Employers and private training providers also provide a volume of learning provision which may or may not be accompanied by a non-accredited award or attendance certificate. The consultation has sought to elicit views from employers on the suitability of this provision and the potential for further targeted development.

Employers concerns and priorities

Employers have said that, in general, there were too many qualifications in the sector, leading to confusion as to the relative value within each qualification available. Because of demands on time and resources, many of the available workplace development qualifications (both S/NVQ and VQ) were viewed as too big and cumbersome for employers to use them efficiently while continuing to run their businesses. They simply cannot afford employees to be distracted from their core work for the length of time required to achieve many of the qualifications. There were also concerns that much of the content of existing qualifications (particularly pre-entry) is not appropriate for the needs of the potential employer and are 'surplus to requirements'. Employers wanted more input into the design and development of qualifications to ensure currency of content and more appropriate delivery to meet workplace requirements. Employers also expressed concerns about access to funding for the qualifications they see as priority.

From the Sector Skills Agreements the themes identified as needing priority attention and which have been fed into the SQS are:

- The need for craft skills, especially the training and qualification of chefs, which may have largely been addressed by the development of a new qualification in early stages of delivery within England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and which is also being considered in Scotland.
- Customer Service, which when explored further through the SQS consultation also linked to the preparation of young people for the workplace and interactions with customers.
- Management and Leadership, which will more likely be addressed through encouragement to utilise existing qualification options available but may need some sector specific contextualised learning.
- Recruitment and Retention, which have both been picked up through the SQS as employers showed little faith in pre-entry qualifications when selecting new entrants and have not recognised the retention value in supporting staff to access qualifications whilst in employment.

How People1st Will Help Realise the Future

People1st has developed a blueprint solution to the issues identified by employers as part of the work already undertaken for the Sector Skills Agreements. This had already been shared with key employers, other stakeholders and awarding bodies over the summer of 2007 and was then subjected to an ongoing wider consultation process. The Blueprint programme is UK-wide and all action involves the active participation of the People 1st managers within the nations and regions who facilitate both liaison and the appropriate targeting of activity. Following this SQS nation-specific Action Plans will be developed and submitted to the SSDA at the end of March 2008 and will focus on the detailed steps needed to achieve the vision of the Blueprint.

The Blueprint for Action includes the following key features:

1. A qualification rationalisation programme:

Taking forward the achievements of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme and utilising the proposed Code of Practice for working with awarding bodies to review qualifications with low take-up. The programme will also seek to address the proliferation of qualifications with similar content where market needs do not match the offer and the appropriateness of competence-based qualifications as pre-entry provision to young people.

2. The identification of qualification pathways for each industry;

One of the key outcomes of the action plans will be discrete qualification pathways for each industry and possible sub-sets of the larger industries. These will assist potential candidates and employers identify the relevant qualifications that are supported by the industry and which link to recognisable job roles, promoting the use of qualifications for both entry into the workplace, development within it and progression. In the light of the priority attached to Customer Service and Management and Leadership, these will be specifically identified as categories within the pathways to enable employers to identify provision.

3. Development of common principles for new qualifications for the sector:

People1st will propose that qualification gaps indicated by the ongoing consultation on pathways will be met by working with partnerships of awarding bodies. Proposals will be based on employer priority and developed in the context of existing NOS to provide learning and accreditation for any skills and knowledge needs identified to support job roles. Mapping

against the re-defined role profiles will also provide a way forward to re-develop existing qualifications in the sector as they come up for re-accreditation.

Awarding bodies will be encouraged to adopt common nomenclature and content for qualifications that have shared content but are offered by different bodies. This complements the use of common nomenclature in the credit frameworks and will ensure employers and learners can recognise qualifications at the appropriate level and with relevant content. The principles agreed through the Credit Common Accord for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (NICATS) will be used to inform qualifications to be developed across England Wales and Northern Ireland. It is recognised that the principal awarding bodies and others have already been engaged in developing these principles. While content and delivery templates will be shared across the nations wherever employers require a corporate approach, the design of qualifications for Scotland will need to sit within the parameters of the SCQF and the different regulatory functions of the SQA.

4. A formalised procedure for qualification support:

In conjunction with the regulatory bodies, People 1st hope to follow a uniform qualifications approval procedure to work with awarding bodies who wish to submit other qualifications for approval on the national credit frameworks for England, Wales, and Northern Ireland and for inclusion in the People 1st qualification pathways. This is currently being piloted by QCA, and if successful will establish clear criteria shared by all Sector Skills Councils. People 1st will use this process to identify responsibilities for decision-making. Awarding bodies will be encouraged to engage in early dialogue with the Sector Skills Council as to any planned qualification development. Using similar criteria People1st are pursuing an interim qualifications support procedure which will consider whether qualifications submitted for support for accreditation onto the NQF are compatible with the industry pathways and role profiles and have demonstrated employer demand and engagement in design. Whilst a different procedure will operate within the regulatory framework for Scotland, awarding bodies will be encouraged follow the same principles in putting qualifications forward to the SCQF.

People 1st advocate the adoption of a unitised qualification structure, which allows learners in the workplace more flexibility to build packages of skills and knowledge into accreditation as continuous professional development and a retention enhancement. Where more intense packages of learning are required, particularly pre-entry and on entry into the workplace, these units will form larger qualifications

5. Accreditation of in-house company schemes:

This has clearly found favour during the consultation process and links to initiatives such as the pilot work being undertaken within the CQFW (with SEMTA) and the QCF (Test and Trial) and the accreditation facilities offered through the SCQF. People 1st will seek to explore all the available options to put forward clear direction and advice to employers in the sector who want to utilise these opportunities. People 1st recognise that this is one way that qualification levels could increase given the learning opportunities provided by larger employers in the sector and would want to explore how these might be opened to other less well-resourced employers.

6. A review of assessment practice

People 1st will work with awarding bodies to review and monitor quality of assessment, particularly where existing qualifications that are essentially the same are offered by a number of different bodies with different assessment requirements. People 1st will promote standardisation activity to ensure that while there is flexibility in assessment methodology there is consistency and validity in the outcomes. The SQS consultation has confirmed that employers' confidence in the value of certain qualifications has been marred by poor experiences of delivery, particularly in assessment, rather than in the design or intention of the qualification.

7. A review of apprenticeships

People1st will review frameworks for apprenticeships and will look at where there is potential for new frameworks. The content and delivery of existing frameworks need to be considered against the following two criteria:

- Whether they have demonstrated real career progression opportunities. This may be where delivery is programme led and apprentices are not retained in work placements or find themselves failing to gain a foothold in the industry. Or where the employers are unsure of the relevance of content and do not value these as entry training.
- Whether they have provided progression to higher level qualifications and HE. Generally there is a poor engagement with all apprenticeships and progression into HE. Where there are relevant Foundation Degrees this needs to be closely examined and dialogues opened with HE to see why these progression routes are not working

8. More effective use of the UK Skills Passport

The UKSP (www.UKskillspassport.co.uk) should provide a vehicle for a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of a learner's qualification 'journey' that would mean users would make appropriate and correct decisions about qualifications, and enabling employers' needs to be met through the use of the sector's qualifications provision.

1.5 Moving forward

The Sector Qualifications Strategy will work alongside the Sector Skills Agreements, and will be kept under review and updated on a three yearly basis. The most up to date versions of the SSA and SQS documents will be available to all stakeholders via the People1st website from January 2008.