



Consultation (1) 2011

A Note on Skills and Qualifications

Across all UK industries, employees and employers are saying they need skills and knowledge in order to do their jobs more effectively and to make their businesses more profitable.

We have taken note of this development - one that focuses not only on the qualifications people hold but on the skills they develop - not just in their formal training - but throughout their working lives.

For that reason we have elected to call this consultation a "Skills Strategy Consultation" and we envisage creating such a strategy rather than refreshing the Construction Qualifications Strategy (CQS) that we have produced in past years.

Notes on this document and where to send it when you have completed it:

This document covers UK wide/ England specific issues. There are similar, but separate documents for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. At this point in the development process, it asks broad questions around key themes. All responses will be reviewed and used as a basis to draft a new Skills Strategy.

We wish to hear from all areas of the industry, including employers, SMEs, the federations, trade unions, higher and further education institutions, universities, professional institutions and awarding organisations.

Once you have read this document and completed your responses you will need to save it (ignoring any note that says 'read-only') and send it by email to: construction@pyetait.com before 28th October 2011.

Forms can also be sent by post to:

Pye Tait Limited
FREEPOST RRXU-CXZB-ZRRU
Royal House
110 Station Parade
HARROGATE
HG1 1EP

Please note: the consultation organised and lead by CSCS Ltd on Cards Structure consultation is an entirely separate consultation.

[Introduction for respondents...](#)

Thank you for agreeing to give us your views to inform a Skills Strategy for the industry. Before we start we need to tell you a bit about why the research is going on.

As you may be aware, the overriding aim of ConstructionSkills - the Sector Skills Council for the construction industry (a partnership involving CITB ConstructionSkills, CITB-Northern Ireland and Construction Industry Council) - is to work closely with employers in order to support, enable and undertake informed activities that specifically reduce skills shortages, improve business performance, bring a diverse range of people into the industry, improve learning for apprenticeships, higher and further education and develop professional standards for occupations at all levels. The Construction Industry Training Board has a specific role in improving training and skills by ensuring the training and learning infrastructures across the UK reflect the needs of the industry in terms of quantity, quality and location of training, mode of learning and funding mechanisms. CITB Construction Skills and the SSC, Construction Skills, are working on this consultation together, as it touches remits and areas of work for both. The review relates to the whole construction sector, however, for ease we will simply refer to 'CITB Construction Skills' throughout the document rather than attempt to reference both names.

As you are aware, our industry is one of THE most important in the UK economy. It is critical that CITB ConstructionSkills focuses on the future - the future not only of hundreds of thousands of businesses but a workforce of more than 2 million people, not including those who work in the vital supply chain and related industries with which we work collaboratively, for example engineering construction, facilities management and across the built environment.

We are making plans and stimulating ideas on how to ensure the industry continues to encourage, develop and have access to future generations of capable and competent professional construction employees. For that, we need to know precisely what skills, knowledge and behaviours they need - and what provision will be needed to underpin it all.

You may also know that a number of extremely important reports on skills and education have been published in the last year by CITB ConstructionSkills, the UK central government and by the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These reports have a direct bearing on the environment in which construction education and training will take place in the future. We have listed some of the most important of these published reports below, so that, if you wish, you can refer to them directly.

Your responses will help us with the drafting of a new 'Construction Skills Strategy' for 2012-2017. Consultation closing date: Friday 28th October 2011

In short, CITB ConstructionSkills needs to be clear as to its **strategic aims and objectives** for the skills development of the workforce in order to set out sensible and cost-effective proposals, and to set in train ways of effectively measuring success.

And for that we need and welcome your expert input.

Timelines of the consultation and development process

The CITB Construction Skills Strategy is due to be completed early 2012 and there will be several stages:

1. The 'first consultation' is taking place from late August through to early November 2011. And here you can give us your views on the broad questions we have set out in this consultation document which you have downloaded. To do this please read and complete as many questions as you wish in this document, save it and return by email to construction@pyetait.com (or you can post it using the FREEPOST address given on page 1). Or you can use this document to feed back your views via a Federation, a Professional Body meeting or via specific employer regional and national events.
2. Using the feedback from the first consultation we will produce a draft Strategy document, and then there will be a more focussed 'second consultation' based on the direction and shape the Strategy is taking. This consultation will take place during December /January 2012.

Other documentation

We mentioned that there are some key reports in the preamble, above. Should you wish to refer to one or more of them, they are as follows:

1. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr877.pdf>
2. <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/The%20Wolf%20Report.pdf>
3. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/s/10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf>
4. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmbis/writev/885/m38.htm>
5. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs//10-1266-low-carbon-construction-igt-final-report.pdf>
6. http://www.cskills.org/uploads/Understanding-Change-Final-Report-Oct_2010_tcm17-26341.pdf

All responses will be received and analysed by Pye Tait Consulting, a research and development consultancy who work strictly to the MRS code of conduct. All responses will be analysed on the basis of organisation type and kept anonymous.

Your responses will help us with the drafting of a new 'Construction Skills Strategy' for 2012-2017.
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If you do NOT wish your name or your organisation's name to be passed on to CITB Construction Skills please insert a cross here.	
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Firstly, please complete these details below so we have an understanding of your role/work or relationship to the industry and can send you information about the next stage if you wish to receive it. Thank for your time and cooperation with this first broad consultation.

1. **Your name:**

John Preston

2. **Your contact details (by providing these we assume you are happy to be contacted either about the next steps or if there is a problem with receiving your form).**

Email: education@ihbc.org.uk
Phone: 01223 562534

3. **The name of the organisation you work for, if applicable:**

Institute of Historic Building Conservation

4. **Please clarify the main activity of the organisation** (eg University, building firm specialising in heritage work) this is important as it will help us with seeing where the responses have come from.

UK's professional body for built and historic environment conservation specialists

5. **Could you confirm if you are answering as an individual, or on behalf of the organisation mentioned above, or perhaps an entirely different organisation by inserting an 'x'.**

I am representing my own views in completing this document	
I am representing the organisation mentioned above	X
I am representing another organisation: Branches of the IHBC (http://www.ihbc.org.uk/branches_new/) where there are no separate submissions	
Name of organisation: In the capacity of: Committee Chair	

6. **Are you interested in attending events that may take place (October) or being contacted further about the next stage of consultation? If yes, please indicate this here:**

Yes, I am interested in hearing further about the Skills Strategy	X
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[A Competence Strategy](#)

The Construction Skills Strategy needs to continue to build upon the reputation of previous Qualification Strategies for being valuable and credible tools to inform not just CITB ConstructionSkills and the sector but all those who interface with it, on how to become and remain a competent worker at any level in the industry.

It will provide strong leadership against the background of fundamental structural and institutional change in the qualifications, education and training arenas, and within the industry itself. This is why we believe a straightforward "qualifications strategy" may not be enough: there needs, instead, to be a comprehensive competence strategy for the construction workforce – not just for entry into the workforces, but for developing people throughout their working lives.

[Where we are now ...](#)

Since the previous Construction Qualifications Strategy (CQS), the education and training landscape has altered dramatically, not least with the rollout of the Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme including the development of various forms of credit and qualification frameworks across the four nations of the UK and Europe. This has been supplemented with widespread reform of 14-19 learning and Higher Education funding.

Since early 2010, there have been further, significant changes to that landscape. CITB ConstructionSkills has participated in a number of government departmental reviews, worked around changes of remit and the closure of a number of public sector bodies, and embraced the increased focus on apprenticeships allied with changes in structure and funding. These and other changes have formed an ever-moving backdrop to CITB ConstructionSkills' own research, evaluation, maintenance of national occupational standards (NOS) and qualifications developments.

[Key themes for discussion...](#)

Topics or issues have been selected for discussion on the basis that they are either recurring or have been singled out by CITB ConstructionSkills and/or the Government as critical future issues for the industry. If you have topics that you feel are of equal importance please go to the end of this form to add in additional comment.

The topics are laid out below along with broad, generic questions:

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Please review the sections below and respond to as many of the individual questions as you wish.

A. COMPETENCE

The working definition of competence that has been used is based on National Occupational Standards and Scottish and National Vocational Qualifications based on these standards. However, there are suggestions that the concept of competence needs careful consideration and review.

The question of **competence** has emerged as an important theme in the recent Pye Tait report (the remit for which was solely site-based workers, supervisors and managers) researched for the HSE and CITB ConstructionSkills¹ ([see link 1](#)). This says that, in the context of the industry's health and safety performance, the industry's current understanding of competence warrants being extended and enhanced, in other words, a broader conception of competence may now be needed. This would include: 'occupational skills, deep and relevant knowledge and understanding, and ongoing evidence of appropriate behaviours and attitudes'.² The report went on to suggest a need to embrace the even bigger challenge of "continuous improvement" in helping to reduce injuries and fatalities still further, by developing a bespoke "industry-specific" definition of competence that considers formally broadening competence to include human-factors (it called this, as a working title, the "New Competence").

The report revealed a number of serious concerns relating to the use of card schemes as proxies for competence: not the least of these are the facts that formal

¹ Routes to Competence a summary report for HSE and ConstructionSkills, March 2011

² Pye Tait Consulting (2011), *A Commentary on Routes to Competence in the Construction Sector*. HSE Research Report RR877 (page 29).

occupational qualifications are still not essential in most of them, that card-levels do not necessarily relate to the level of work being undertaken on site, that a few cards can still be obtained simply by application and payment of a fee, and that the overall system is complex and confusing for employers and employees alike. It went on to suggest that the plethora of card, certification and passport schemes available in the industry is of doubtful and inconsistent value in helping employers to judge competence.

It was suggested that the construction industry should move to this 'new competence' approach which requires not just occupational (job) competence, but more **robust general health & safety competence** and behavioural/human factors implementation throughout an operative's working life.

The report also stressed:

the importance of site management and supervision for helping to build a competent workforce, an occupational area where qualifications take-up and penetration are found to be notably low,

the need to distinguish between 'primary' evidence of competence in the form of competence-based qualifications, and secondary evidence of qualifications such as industry card and registration schemes,

that few secondary forms of evidence, i.e. cards, certification and passport registration schemes, consistently require primary evidence of competence i.e. formally assessed qualification.

As mentioned above, the remit for the report did not include professional qualifications. These are perhaps the ultimate target for many within the industry. In this context, technical competence is coupled with professional conduct and underpinned by academic achievement with a requirement to maintain competence through Continuing Professional Development.

1. What are your experiences in relation to the above on competence: do you broadly agree or disagree with these conclusions within the report above? What needs to be done, if anything, in your view?

Write your answer here:

The IHBC supports the report's conclusions in relation to competence.

The IHBC would go beyond the report's focus on health and safety, to stress the importance of site-based supervisors and managers in securing quality outcomes. This is particularly vital in work on historic buildings, where understanding of an individual trade in isolation, and not in the context of the building and the job as a whole, can be counterproductive to the point of damaging.

2. Some industry card and registration schemes have come under significant criticism from employers. The Pye Tait report recommended that the industry establish a single standard for the schemes and possibly even a single registration body. What is your view on this?

Write your answer here:

Card and registration schemes have, above all, to be recognisable and credible to employers – from individual property owners up to major firms. The IHBC considers that a single clear standard and a single registration body would improve both recognition and credibility. However any single standard and body must be fully able to cover both specialist and general skills and competence.

3. How should vocational education and training qualifications relate to professional qualifications (including continuing professional development) in terms of confirming competence?

Write your answer here:

The IHBC's experience is that vocational qualifications have historically lacked credibility among the construction professions (the complexity of the standards being a very significant factor), but ought in theory be extremely helpful in demonstrating competence. Such qualifications provide a potential avenue for people to come into building conservation from a variety of different backgrounds, and to achieve professional recognition on the basis of work carried out. This is why the IHBC is investing considerable resources in assisting the development of the current NVQ with CITB Construction Skills, as did its IHBC's predecessor body, the ACO, in the development of the previous NVQs in Building Conservation. In practice, take-up depends on employer support and demonstrable benefit to the employee; these have not been achieved for Vocational Qualifications in

Building Conservation.

Meanwhile, professions' admission and CPD requirements measured in terms of times, rather than tested outcomes, have not necessarily provided assurance of professional competence and development. In this context it is important to appreciate that the IHBC's entry skills assessment and entry assessment criteria do not favour either vocational or non-vocational backgrounds over the other.

Greater simplicity, clarity, convergence, and rigour are needed to ensure a) that vocational qualifications meet the needs of professions and clients, and b) that professions have a clear basis for ongoing assessment and development of competence. Progress made by the "Edinburgh Group" of conservation-related professions needs to be supported.

4. Occupational regulation' is a subject currently under debate in a number of UK sectors. Some already have voluntary accreditation others have mandatory registration or even licensing. Without getting into the detail what are your broad views on this concept for the construction industry? Is the time right for something akin to the 'Licence to operate' or 'licence to practice' concept?

Write your answer here:

The fundamental issue is how to ensure that skills employed are fit for the job being done, without restraint of trade or unreasonable constraints on the client. Within building conservation, English Heritage and Historic Scotland require accreditation for lead professionals on grant-aided works, but this has achieved very limited progress in driving up skill levels. If requirements for recognised accreditation or licensing were set for all work on listed or other protected buildings, these would probably bring short term difficulties for building owners, but in the longer term they would provide a massive boost to skill levels as well as to owners' confidence. Any such scheme would have to have buy in across the user spectrum – in heritage matters, the clients, third party interests, trade and professional operators and regulators. The IHBC has been in discussion with such interests to explore the possibility of developing such schemes.

However licensing can be counterproductive to the point of and damaging if it removes activities from interaction with other relevant considerations and /or controls – e.g. where currently (through deregulation) licensed window installers have been enabled to ignore the special consideration for historic buildings under the building regulations, and in the proposed licensing for the Green Deal under PAS2030 (no mention of, e.g., assessment of condensation risks, or of breathability - both key considerations for

traditional /historic buildings).

B. SUPERVISORS & MANAGERS

The take up of site-based supervisory and management qualifications remains very low while a number of recent reports have pointed to this "middle" level as being crucial for the mentoring and on-going training of the workforce in skills and knowledge - as well as in the increasingly important behaviours that underpin efficiency and health and safety.

5. In your experience is this an important issue? Or are there other job roles (aside from site supervisors and managers) with greater skills gaps and training issues?

This is a key issue, particularly given the reduced role of architects in providing on-site supervision.

6. Would you agree or disagree that site managers and supervisors should play the front-line role in ensuring and maintaining competence?

Write your answer here:

Agreed.

7. What do you think needs to be done about training for site supervisors and site managers? Should courses, for example Site Management Safety Training Scheme – SMSTS or Site Supervisor Safety Training Scheme – SSSTS, play a part in evidencing their competence?

Write your answer here:

Site supervisor and managers need to be trained in delivering quality outcomes as well as safe and efficient processes. This needs to be through an integrated approach.

C. LOW CARBON AND GREEN DEAL

Looking forward there are likely to be significant changes to the nature of construction skills needs as a result of the low carbon agenda. The UK agenda for **lowering the global carbon footprint and a commitment to sustainable development** and the implications on skills of rapidly advancing technology and the Government's "Green Deal" is a critical driver. Work across industries is already on-going in relation to the strategic framework set out by the Low Carbon Innovation and Growth Team ([see link 5](#))³. One such objective is the development of new specialist skills to support new technologies in which manufacturer-provided training will also play an important role. A recent report on Home Building Skills 2020 states *'the consensus is that most of today's core skills for home building will be very similar in the future'*. Building awareness of the challenges posed by low/zero carbon is however a necessary underpinning activity.⁴

Key points set out within the strategic framework by the Low Carbon Innovation and Growth Team (IGT) Final Report⁵ state that:

The industry must make significant changes to methods to support the regulatory move to zero carbon new-build, and retrofitting of existing buildings;

There will be a move to 'whole-life' assessment of the carbon efficiency of building – that is to say including both embodied and operational carbon intensity;

The introduction of Building Information Modelling (BIM) to improve understanding of how buildings will perform;

Development of new specialist skills will be necessary to support new technologies, in which manufacturer provided training will have an important role;

Improvement of existing skills will be necessary because energy efficient construction (sealed envelope) requires high precision;

Need for a coordinated approach across the entire construction and facilities management areas, requiring close cooperation or even merging of construction related SSCs.

The Green Deal is part of the Government's commitment to improving energy efficiency of domestic and commercial buildings, and is one component of the all-encompassing focus on a low carbon agenda. From the autumn of 2012, providers will be able to offer customers a Green Deal plan, which will enable them to secure

³ IGT (2011) *Low Carbon Construction: Innovation and Growth Team Final Report*

⁴ Home Building Skills Project (2010), *Homes Building Skills 2020 Report and recommendations*, p.7.

⁵ IGT (2011) *Low Carbon Construction: Innovation and Growth Team Final Report*

finance for the installation of measures to support energy efficiency - such as insulation, new forms of heating or lighting systems or other developments as new technologies emerge.

The overall structure is very similar to the Competent Person Schemes developed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for specific domestic construction activities, such as gas installation and double-glazing installation. Indeed, there is currently now a new Competent Person scheme being developed for the installation of insulation, to ensure that installers have the necessary competence to produce work of appropriate standard.⁶ Recent research for CITB Construction-Skills ([see link 6](#)) suggested that sustainable construction, and the requirement for increased productivity and 'competence', may require an increased focus on competence standards. It stated:

'A review of competence standards is likely to be needed, in response to the emergence of new or enhanced skills and job roles in the sector'.⁷

Clearly, the Green Deal proposals strongly emphasise a standards-based route, underpinned qualifications and quality assurance certification, and this is likely to have a significant impact those parts of the construction industry that wish to compete for the work financed through the Green Deal mechanism.

8. In line with the future skills agenda and sustainability, in your view will the skills be primarily similar to those currently used in the sector, or will there be a need for new skills for such new technologies?

Write your answer here:

There will be a continuing need for much improved skills in refurbishing and adapting existing buildings in particular for traditional construction, or 'pre-1919' fabric, which demands its own specific skills sets, alongside the introduction of new skills.

A very significant proportion of the work will be to existing buildings. Understanding of what measures are appropriate to such buildings on a whole-life-cycle embodied energy basis, and what may be counterproductive, is absolutely vital.

Training for this work must take into account the very different performance characteristics of pre-1919 and other traditional buildings, as noted above. It should recognise the need for solutions to be developed that suit the physical and performance character of the building(s), with a coordinated approach to the refurbishment of terraces and other groups of buildings of coherent

⁶ CITB-ConstructionSkills (2010) *Understanding Future Change in Construction*, p.18.

⁷ CITB-ConstructionSkills (2010) *Understanding Future Change in Construction*, p.36.

character. Much damage to the character and performance of such buildings (which are inherently sustainable in many ways) has been caused by the inappropriate use of “modern” materials and methods – notably, e.g., the use of cement rather than lime mortars (so trapping moisture and leading to selective degradation of energy-intensive fired or quarried materials), and the use of impermeable renders and coatings over “breathing” walls, with similarly damaging results. Such problems could be vastly magnified by the extensive use of impermeable external insulation.

9. Following on from that which 'new' skills are likely to be most in demand? For example BIM, Building Envelope specialists, other?

Write your answer here:

Whole life energy assessment. Building envelope specialists. At a planning level, skills in sustainable development which, in current planning policy development in England, will be increasingly a core consideration for the construction industry

10. How would you recommend the 'necessary competence' is demonstrated – is a card or regulation appropriate here? Does such an approach apply to assessors and advisers for the Green Deal?

Write your answer here:

IHBC is very concerned that competent person schemes (e.g. that for insulation) devised for modern buildings will not ensure the right skills for, and could be dangerously damaging to existing buildings. Any such schemes need to specify the type of structure(s) to which the certified skills relate. There have been major problems with Home Energy Assessors trained to deal with modern buildings, who have no understanding of traditional buildings.

Green Deal assessors and surveyors must be fully conversant with the behaviours and performance of traditional buildings; if not, much damage could be done and much money and energy wasted, and in some cases legal responsibilities could be transgressed. PAS2030 in its present form (consultation document to 24th Oct 2011) provides no assurance whatever that such awareness and competence will be provided. Green deal “authorised surveyors” may only have completed an “installer designed training programme” tailored to one product or system; this will not provide overall understanding of how a building performs, or the range of potential options

for improving energy efficiency. These problems are highlighted by, e.g., the GQA Level 3 NVQ in Fenestration Surveying, noted as a route to competence in Annex R of the draft PAS 2030, which makes no mention of the Building Regulations special consideration for historic buildings.

IHBC is very concerned indeed that CITB ConstructionSkills has been associated with the development, under the draft PAS 2030, of Green Deal roles and competences which completely overlook the characteristics, performance, and needs of the historic and traditional buildings which form up to 25% of the building stock. This is a situation which has to be remedied.

A helpful starting point would be for PAS2030 to state that works must comply with relevant statutory requirements (including for listed buildings and conservation areas, plus relevant provisions and special consideration under the Building Regulations), and British Standards (including BS7913 *a guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings*, and BS 5250 *control of condensation in buildings*). This must be accompanied by mandatory requirements for Green Deal assessors to be fully conversant with these requirements and their implications.

D. SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS 14-19

Professor Wolf's Report in early 2011⁸ ([see link 2](#)), and its positive reception by the government, suggests that there will be **major changes in 14-19 vocational education** in England in coming years. These, in summary, could be:

different treatment of vocational education in the 14-19 and 19+ phases, with the former ensuring a broader focus than occupational competence, better standards of general education;

a move away from national occupational standards and NVQs as the core occupational standards and qualifications for 16-19 year old apprentices;

a new funding mechanism based on students and programmes, rather than individual qualifications needs;

strong support for Apprenticeships as the basic framework for 16-19 vocational education;

a move away from Ofqual regulating individual qualifications, with the regulatory focus moving to Awarding Organisations and their assessment standards and methods;

⁸ Wolf (2011) *Report on Vocational Qualifications*

with regards to which qualifications should be funded: increased freedom for colleges, Awarding Organisations and employers to develop and choose the qualifications they want, with an emphasis on developing solutions at local, rather than national, levels.

At the same time, the government is proposing to greatly expand support for **Apprenticeships**, including greatly increased funding for Adult Apprenticeships by up to £250 million a year by 2014/15.⁹ There is also a focus on developing Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships in technical and professional areas.

Recent research indicated that in 2010/11 approximately 63% of all starters on construction craft training are studying for a qualification such as a Diploma/Construction Award which do not require any proof of work undertaken on site. The remaining 37% started on an S/NVQ framework which does require on-site experience/assessment.

11. What are your views on 14-19 education and training from a Construction point of view?

Write your answer here:

The greater the emphasis on achievement and job satisfaction through making and building, the better. Strong support needs to be provided for Apprenticeships with smaller firms, supported by strong local networks and flexibility in the delivery of and support for education and training. .

12. What are your views on the effectiveness and adequacy of the S/NVQs: are they 1) keeping up with the needs of industry; 2) developing the right levels and types of skills and knowledge into the existing workforce?

Write your answer here:

S/NVQs have not yet met the needs of industry or developed the right levels and types of skills and knowledge. This will only happen with full employer support and buy-in. S/NVQs for Building Conservation failed because they were developed without employer support and dedicated National Occupational Standards. The Construction Industry-wide Functional map did not allow clear, appropriate and tailored Standards to be specified. CCSkills needs to provide for a much more responsive and flexible approach, as recommended in the Wolf report.

⁹ Harari (2011) *Apprenticeships* House of Commons Library Standard Note SN03052 pp.4-5

13. Do you think that the greater freedom and flexibility that the new QCF purports to bring will benefit our industry?

Write your answer here:

As noted separately, flexibility and freedom in skills development are essential to practitioners developing careers in conservation. We are unclear whether the QCF will deliver this flexibility, but support the aspirations.

14. Do you, for example, feel that the work-based element in level 2 or Level 3 Apprenticeships, for example, needs to be shorter or longer, to include more practical experience, or to incorporate different construction inputs?

Write your answer here:

Work-based experience is vital. This, and the opportunity to gain qualifications through such experience, must be available to both paid Apprentices and to the substantial number of job-seekers who are willing to undertake unpaid placements in order to gain experience. The problems noted in the Wolf Report (qualifications only being available to those in paid work) must be avoided.

15. To what extent are young people being encouraged into the most appropriate courses for the industry's needs?

Write your answer here:

There needs to be a renewed and substantial focus on conservation and repairs, as well as on new work, to recognise that new work represents only about 50% of the construction industry.

16. Some have argued for the re-introduction of skills-tests, as used in Scotland, at the end of all Apprenticeships and courses. Would you agree or disagree with this approach?

Write your answer here:

IHBC would strongly support a skills test at the end of all Apprenticeships and courses. Merely completing a course provides no guarantee that skills have been learned.

17. Employers often request improved non-technical, softer skills (often called Employability skills or work readiness attitudes and behaviours) in young people. How would you deal with this – is it appropriate for them to be embedded within training or qualifications? Is it feasible to teach them at school?

Write your answer here:

This needs to be achieved through a combination of initial teaching at school (life skills) and specific follow-up in formal training, as noted in the Wolf report.

IT may be worth noting that the IHBC recognises the value of such skills in managing change, and requires a minimum level for membership while also recognising that such skills can be at the heart of effective management. Assessment is carried out through a review of experience in, management of, negotiation with and communication across stakeholder interests in development with an heritage interest, requiring engagement with both professional and non-professional audiences. Such skills are at the heart of the conservation sector, and are highlighted for example in the people-based priorities demanded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, one of the sector's key funding sources.

18. If there was one change you could make to construction education and training for young people aged between 14-19 what would it be and why?

Write your answer here:

Visits to / involvement with building work in practice (refurbishment and new build) to open young people's perceptions of construction in general and of opportunities for individual job satisfaction. Clearly, for the later stages, encouragement to join in IHBC events (listed with many others at <http://ihbconline.co.uk/events/>) would help build skills across and break barriers between skilled practitioners and those interested in careers in the sector.

E. SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Feedback from previous CQS and other research reports

Some of the scenarios described below are based on the situation some years ago and may well no longer be relevant – but we would like to hear if you think they are

improved. We have then split the questions around Further Education and Higher Education in two sections.

There has been increasing evidence of employer concern with technical, graduate and professional occupations, where an appropriate mix of formal education and practical experience is generally perceived to be important but not always delivered in many degree programmes.

Whilst there may be different perceptions and levels of understanding about academic, vocational and professional qualifications, some employers are also concerned that experienced staff could have acquired the necessary competence through experience, but remain ineligible for professional memberships due to a lack of formal education and training.

There are also questions about the assessment of competence in some specialist areas at HE level; an issue that is particularly relevant for the development of Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships.

There is evidence from previous CQS studies that whilst employers value the main competence-based qualifications, S/NVQs, it is also reported that '*Employers see N/SVQ assessment as not being fit-for-purpose or cost effective in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*'¹⁰. There were particular concerns about FE delivery of NVQs, with perceptions that they were:

Too narrow and failing to develop appropriate skills levels

Not underpinned by consistent assessment standards

Not underpinned by consistent training content

The previous CQS states that employers felt that 'Newly qualified workers are usually far from competent in most trades until a further two to three years work experience.'¹¹ There were also some concerns about the quality and consistency of On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT).¹²

i. Further Education

Provision at further education level is the bedrock of the supply of skilled and knowledgeable people for the Construction industry. Recent research indicates that the current balance is four times as many people doing FE construction related courses than are on Apprenticeships.

¹⁰ ConstructionSkills (2007) *Construction Qualifications Strategy*

¹¹ ConstructionSkills (2007) *ibid*, p. 19

¹² ConstructionSkills (2007) *ibid*, p. 20

The selected quotes below indicate some of the main concerns.

'Demand, however, for apprenticeships remain relatively high, with two thirds of employees agreeing that there are more people who want to become apprentices than there are positions available; the constraint being the lack of placements with firms'.

'It is this lack of placements which has changed the composition of further education training in recent years, with a massive shift in qualifications being undertaken.

'The Diploma in CBE Employer Group was recognised as having been a huge success and there was support for its continuation in some form'.

'Employers are unhappy with FE training because it is too quick and narrow due to funding, mapping to an NVQ, key skills, assessment and portfolio building. People may be 'qualified' but do not have the range of knowledge'.

'Newly qualified workers are usually far from competent in most trades until a further two to three years work experience. There are instances of people with NVQ levels 2 or 3, assessed by FE centres, incapable of doing the job'.

'Training content is highly variable between colleges. The content/curriculum of training programmes needs to be more clearly defined'.

19. How well do you think FE Construction courses meet the needs of the industry nationally/in your region?

Write your answer here:

There are well-documented continuing major shortages in heritage-related construction skills. IHBC is not aware of these being resolved through FE Construction courses.

20. A bottleneck for any expansion of the apprenticeship programme appears to be the lack of employer placements. How would you suggest this is resolved?

Write your answer here:

This is a vital issue. Some efforts have been made to secure training opportunities on grant-aided work, but with minimal impact on the overall problem.

21. Are there other barriers to apprenticeships preventing them being more

fully taken up by industry?

Write your answer here:

Not known, and this is clearly an area which requires more detailed research and understanding. The IHBC would be happy to contribute to any discussions developing such programmes.

22. Are there enough apprentices in the right skill areas? For example the highest enrolments to date have consistently been in the wood trades and bricklaying – is this needed for the future?

Write your answer here:

Not known. See 21 above.

23. What are your views on the teaching staff's currency of knowledge in construction subjects in FE establishments? What do you think can or needs to be done, if anything?

Write your answer here:

Not known. See 21 above.

ii. Higher Education

The government response to the **Browne review of Higher Education** ([see link 3](#)) has led to the development and implementation of proposals to dramatically change funding mechanisms for those taking first degrees:

The tuition fee ceiling is being raised to £9000 a year

Courses will have to be funded directly by the tuition fee, with the teaching block grant being reduced by 80%

A new system of income-contingent loans (ICLs) will provide upfront funding for students' tuition fees and maintenance

Current institutional caps on students numbers will be relaxed: an increasing number of student places will be made contestable (open to competitive recruitment by institutions), with institutions being able to recruit as many top-achieving students as they are able¹³

All these – and other developments – are likely to have a significant impact on construction education, particularly in HE. Many small and part-time courses are perceived to be vulnerable in the new student-driven, marketised environment, due

¹³ BIS (2011) *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*.

Your responses will help us with the drafting of a new 'Construction Skills Strategy' for 2012-2017.
Consultation closing date: Friday 28th October 2011

to possible reductions in student numbers as a result of the fee increases and the high resource cost of some construction courses ([see link 4](#))¹⁴

A similar system of ICLs is being introduced to support adults to take Level 3 and 4 qualifications, with potentially significant implications for the demand for provision at these levels.¹⁵

It is clear that higher education could change radically, given recent, post 2010 election policy decisions, as explained earlier, but its future shape is still emerging. It is very likely however that tuition fees for undergraduate courses will increase in England.

There will be some considerable focus on those subjects that appear to be high cost delivery, one such example could be built environment subjects (excepting those that fit under the definition of STEM).

According to recent research at CITB Construction Skills and for the work of the Built Environment Skills Alliance¹⁶ (BESA), employers and those now or recently studying in higher education say change is needed in construction higher education – in terms of content and delivery. As potential evidence of this the research noted striking differences between patterns of employer use of higher education in 2007 as compared with early 2011.

Another finding notes that fewer employers are sponsoring full-time students from year one of undergraduate degrees. Instead, employers seem to be acquiring graduate talent from placements (particularly in year three of four-year degrees), and/or 'growing their own'; for example from an Apprenticeship. A new graduate without work experience is likely to be highly disadvantaged in the construction jobs market. At the same time work experience as a part of full-time undergraduate degrees continues to decline partly due to HEIs favouring those courses without the added cost of placements.

Against this back-drop work is on-going to review the need for, and composition of, (in terms of qualifications) an Advanced Technical Apprenticeship (Level 3) and Higher Apprenticeships (Levels 4 & 5) in England and an Apprenticeship (Level 3) and Higher Apprenticeship (Levels 4 and above) in Wales.

Previous research and feedback from employers seems to indicate concern that young people may possess an over-optimistic view of the prospects for jobs in the sector when they apply for higher-level built environment subjects.

¹⁴ BESA (2011) *Submission to BIS Committee on the Future of Higher Education*, p.3.

¹⁵ ConstructionSkills (2011) *Levy and Loans*

¹⁶ BESA represents the wider sector skills councils. ConstructionSkills has channelled much of the strategic work on HE through BESA covering skills needs, recruitment, curriculum, provision and delivery .

24. Whilst fee-loans have been a tradition in Higher Education for full time students, the move to include fee-ICLs to part-time HE students (to cover the entire cost of provision) is a new feature, what impact do you envisage these income contingent loans having on 1) full-time and 2) part time students enrolling on construction-related degrees?

Write your answer here:

IHBC is concerned that ICLs will act as a further deterrent to students on construction-related degrees. IHBC is particularly concerned at the implications for career-changers and others undertaking a second degree, as is often the case for building conservation. The combination of very expensive courses and uncertainty regarding future job opportunities will be a severe obstacle to the provision of badly-needed skills.

25. What would you say needs to be done as a priority about the supply of higher level recruits to the industry (bearing in mind the problems of relatively low intakes for some courses, the expense of some courses and the difficulty of providing adequate work experience)?

Write your answer here:

IHBC has been seriously concerned for many years at the turnover of Conservation Courses (see http://www.ihbc.org.uk/ed_training_courses.htm for IHBC recognised courses, and http://www.ihbc.org.uk/events_coursesprof.html for IHBC recognised CPD providers). This is due primarily to inadequate employer and student demand to sustain supply, aggravated by limited and/or erratic support from the many of the host organisations. Urgent action is needed to create sustained demand through set standards and skills requirements, which will in turn create employer demand so making courses sustainable.

As noted under Q4 above, if requirements for recognised accreditation or licensing were set for all work on listed or other protected buildings, these would provide a massive boost to skill levels, and to the courses needed to deliver them.

26. How well are HE courses in terms of content and delivery matched to the changing needs of the industry? And, how should HE be encouraged to work with the built environment sectors in the future?

Write your answer here:

Mainstream architecture courses are almost exclusively focused on new

work. It is only at Part 3 Level that architecture students focus more generally on existing buildings. This is the consequence of teachers trained on and focusing on new work, and does not reflect the reality of the professional.

For building conservation, distance learning has been a positive development, but has to be combined with practical experience. Further development of modular courses may enable individual students to “pick and mix” to suit their, or their chosen profession’s, specific needs.

27. How can the issue of 'lack of work-experience' and subsequent impact on graduates' employment prospects be tackled. What are your views on this?

Write your answer here:

This issue could not be more serious – the “Catch-22” of not being able to get a job without experience, or experience without a job. Many IHBC members or would-be members have direct or indirect experience of this problem, which will become even more serious with reduced employment and/or placement opportunities in the public sector. While English Heritage has provided some very limited opportunities to suit the needs of its own workforce, IHBC is considering how to tackle this challenge on a broader front.

28. Work is on-going looking at Advanced Technical and Higher Level Apprenticeships – what are your views on their applicability, potential demand and eventual take-up?

Write your answer here:

IHBC strongly supports these Apprenticeships, in both public and private sectors. Current public sector cuts are leading to major losses of mature skills, with little possibility of knowledge transfer. A coherent programme to ensure Skills for the Future, through Higher Level Apprenticeships, could bring a new generation forward and provide for skills and knowledge transfer.

F. CAREERS

Clearly the supply of adequate numbers of high quality young people into the industry depends to a large extent on the awareness and understanding of it by those young people.

And, importantly, promoting and further increasing the diversity of the industry workforce continues to be an important issue for the industry as a whole.

29. What would you suggest is done to improve careers awareness of the industry among school-age and other young people?

Write your answer here:

Continuing effort to get young people to meet and see young skilled workers in action. Raising the profile of, and need for, self-directed personal development is a crucial first step. In the heritage industry in particular, the attraction of the subject – historic buildings – and the charitable background to much of the sector – with a strong tradition of voluntary input - can be seen as excuses for low pay or poor support for general professional standards and development. The IHBC's open and flexible approach to skills development of its members reflects the sector within which they work. However a presumption remains prevalent that academic learning is a pre-requisite for a professional career in the conservation. This is not the case for IHBC membership.

30. To what extent do you think that teachers and lecturers need greater awareness and understanding of the industry - and, how would you suggest that need is met?

Write your answer here:

More emphasis on working on existing buildings, as well as new ones. In our experience the key training routes for conservation, for example those provided by our recognised CPD providers (web reference), are led by teachers and lecturers that are wholly conversant with the needs of the heritage and traditional-build sectors. However they remain a small, specialist and under-appreciated resource within the industry, and it is essential that the mainstream educators enhance their skills in these key areas. (see comments under 26 above).

31. Is enough information about the prospects for jobs being provided to

help 'new entrants' and graduates enter the industry? What else could be done?

Write your answer here:

Information needs to include career paths working on existing buildings.

32. 'Career changers' – could be an important future resource. Is this an opportunity to ensure supply meets demand? Is this an area of focus for CITB Construction Skills? Does re-skilling need to be made more attainable and attractive?

Write your answer here:

Career-changers are vital to Building Conservation, but have very little support. This is despite the fact that, in line with the conservation and interdisciplinary skills which the IHBC sees as underpinning sustainable development, they tend to have just the sort of 'soft skills' referred to above, and so can prove extremely valuable in raising these skills among co-workers.

It is essential that CITB ConstructionSkills lends its weight to making career-changes, and particularly the second degrees required, more feasible and less of a financial burden.

33. Increasing the diversity of the industry is a necessary activity when considering the needs of the future. What do you suggest can be done to help encourage this further?

Write your answer here:

This is a very important issue. IHBC can boast a unique presence in the construction sector for its impressive gender balance – approximately 50-50 – but is all too aware that its membership is almost exclusively white and middle class. Reaching out to different communities is vital, and this needs to include both new work and conservation. Enhancing more diverse awareness, understanding and ownership of our historic places among younger people is a crucial first step. At the same time integrating conservation skills, jobs and interests into the construction sector more effectively would help break down the barriers between the different parts of the wider industry.

CONSTRUCTIONSKILLS' ROLE

Key roles for CITB ConstructionSkills and Construction Skills include the following:

Skills: maintaining National Occupational Standards; supporting apprenticeships; helping to deliver skills as well as qualifications; guiding the work of awarding bodies; and developing and informing about qualifications and progression pathways.

Curriculum support: support to providers in the form of materials, structured programmes etc that facilitate teacher delivery.

Image: promoting the sector as vibrant and rewarding.

Information: making available accurate and easily understood information about careers.

Demand & Supply: collecting, analysing and publishing accurate supply and demand data and then working to remedy any disparities

Distribution of grant aid

34. What are your views on these roles?

Write your answer here:

These are all valid roles for CITB ConstructionSkills, BUT:

CITB ConstructionSkills (with its focus on the needs of large new-build firms) does not appear fully representative of the whole industry. The needs and concerns of the smaller and more specialist contractors involved in Conservation Repairs and Maintenance need much greater recognition.

CITB ConstructionSkills has to recognise that up to 25% of the building stock is made up of historic and traditional buildings, which are inherently sustainable provided that appropriate methods, materials, and skills are used - and which can provide very interesting and satisfying work experiences and career paths.

CITB ConstructionSkills, needs, urgently, to recognise that historic and traditional buildings require a very different approach, and different skills and understanding, to that being promoted by the draft PAS 2030 to deliver the Green Deal. Urgent and effective intervention is needed.

BESA is a welcome initiative in bringing together some of the Sector Skills Councils, but a new initiative is needed to focus on

Conservation, Repairs, Maintenance and Climate Change Adaptation; Creative and Cultural Skills should form part of any such initiative, together with SSCs involved in training and supply of traditional materials, and IHBC is keen to play its part.

The National Heritage Training Group needs further support and development.

The research role is vital; a new series of national surveys of Craft and Professional Skills is urgently needed to provide a post-financial crash picture

In this context it is important that CITB Construction Skills takes on a more ambassadorial and networking-role than it has been capable of to date, to ensure that it helps the core sector integrate with its wider stakeholder, community and professional interests.

35. One use being made of the grant distributed by CITB Construction Skills is to contribute towards funding Apprenticeships. Assuming these continue to be partly subsidised by the public purse – is there a case for change?

Write your answer here:

Given the current state of the public purse, it seems highly desirable that skills for traditional construction be given a special priority.

36. How can small/medium sized employers be involved in influencing and taking part in school and training provision – is this better undertaken nationally, regionally or locally?

Write your answer here:

This is a top priority. Needs national funding , but delivered locally? Strong regional support through the National Heritage Training Group, with support from professional bodies such as IHBC, would start to reflect the wide-ranging needs and character of construction across the UK.

37. Given these different areas discussed in the consultation document what do you believe the priorities for CITB Construction Skills should be?

Write your answer here:

Greater priority needs to be given to Conservation, Repairs and Maintenance, to Climate Change adaptation, and to the needs of small and general contractors.

38. Are there any other issues relating to competence, skills and training that have not been mentioned and which you feel are equally or more important than these mentioned so far?

Write your answer here:

Overall, there needs to be a much better balance between training for new build and work on existing buildings. There needs to be specific recognition of the need for different skills for working on pre-1919 and Traditional buildings, not in terms of a “niche” heritage specialism, but as the bread and butter of many small contractors, and as a major part of the industry as a whole.

Thank you again for your time and interest.