

Welcome to the second edition of Business Focus, written specifically for OCVC's employer customers. In this issue we will concentrate on a couple of national issues associated with training; changes to the funding eligibility requirements for Train to Gain; and the introduction of a new performance assessment system for the FE sector, *Framework for Excellence*. Added to this will be a range of news items associated with training delivered to employer customers over the last few months and some new training solutions which could be of interest.

Choosing Training Providers with Confidence

In recent years NHS hospitals have been subject to a process for rating their service, delivery and quality. Whilst the introduction of this type of measurement process is itself open to significant debate, it certainly has the effect of galvanising organisations to continually improve themselves, especially as the results are visible to the public and provide a direct comparison with other service providers.

Framework for Excellence, which launches this autumn, is a national performance assessment process which aims to further increase training standards. Designed in consultation with providers and government organisations, including Ofsted, Framework for Excellence will aim to help individual learners and employers make informed choices on which provider is best suited to its needs.

Framework for Excellence is based on a range of criteria which aggregate up to a graded score much like that already in place for schools and colleges. The criteria include standards of performance (success rates), learner and employer satisfaction and financial robustness. OCVC has itself participated in the development of this programme, being one of the providers used in the programme pilot in 2007.

As this programme now moves into its first full year, employer customers of the college will be invited to participate in the employer satisfaction survey, where their employees have been undertaking courses or training which has been supported by LSC funding. This should include all apprenticeships, Train to Gain and Distance Learning customers and some part-time courses.

The employer satisfaction process will be undertaken during the last quarter of this calendar year and if your organisation is in scope for this programme, we will contact you shortly with details of the process. We will also advise you of the scoring criteria and how this can be aligned to your consideration of receiving either a satisfactory, good or outstanding service from OCVC.

Further information on Framework for Excellence is available at the following web address:
<http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/ffe/>

STOP PRESS!

OCVC is pleased to announce that additional apprenticeship programmes are being made available for new learners, commencing in January 2009. These are for:

Laboratory Technicians

– Advanced Apprenticeship

Business Administration

– Advanced Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship

Plumbing – Apprenticeship

These programmes are open for employer staff of all ages. Fees will be payable to supplement LSC funding for all those aged 19 and over.

For more information concerning enrolment and entry criteria please contact the Employer Hot-Line on **01865 551015**.

Train to Gain relaxes eligibility conditions for Level 2 funding

If you've already participated in the Learning & Skills Council's (LSC) Train to Gain programme, you'll know that full funding for Level 2 qualifications has previously required certain learner eligibility conditions to be met. These have included the need for learners to be employed and aged 19 years old or over and have been resident in the European Union for the last 3 years. Crucially it has also meant that learners could only gain full funding if they had not already achieved a Level 2 qualification or above. In practice OCVC has found that some learners have missed out on training opportunities, where employers have been unable or unwilling to contribute towards the cost for those who were ineligible due to previously achieving higher qualifications.

Now the good news! The LSC has recently amended the funding criteria such that those learners studying

for a second or even third qualification at Level 2 will be eligible for full funding under the programme. However, this general funding relaxation will apply for this financial year only (starting August 1st 2008). Moving forward the LSC and Sector Skills Councils will identify selected qualifications which aim to bridge certain skills deficits in the local economy and only these will benefit from this improved level of funding. So now is definitely the time to register your staff onto the Train to Gain programme and utilise the additional funding available.

For more details, please call the Employer Services Hot-Line on 01865 551015.



Advances in IT training at OCVC

We are pleased to announce the launch of the OCVC Microsoft Academy, one of the most prestigious IT training programmes in the world, developing skills from the Office applications through to Technical Qualifications for Networking, System Support and Programming.

The Academy's approach is flexible, ranging from a highly developed online ELearning system through to more traditional classroom delivery depending on student and employers needs.

Taking part in the Academy can lead to some of the most sought after industry qualifications such as the **MOS** (Microsoft Office Specialist - Office 2003), **MCAS** (Microsoft Office 2007) and the **MCSE/MCSD** (Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer) for the technical side of networks.

In the initial instance OCVC will be running The Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) programme, which is achieved by online examination and supported by Foundation and Intermediate one day training courses. To find out the dates for these 1 day courses (at £99 per person) leading up to Christmas, please contact Employer Services through the hot-line on 01865 551015.

However, if you are looking to provide your staff with a **bespoke IT course on a single Microsoft application delivered within the workplace**, OCVC has significant experience of this method of delivery. Recent customers have included a large regional builder, looking to introduce Microsoft Outlook across all its building sites and head office; and a local NHS Trust aiming to raise its Word and Excel skills. These "bite sized" sessions are normally delivered over a 3 hour timeframe, to groups of between 6 to 8 people. And if your organisation is moving to Office 2007 software, you'll be surprised just how different this version actually is!!

Prices are based upon the number of sessions booked and the subject content will be agreed in advance in line with your requirements. Please contact Employer Services for more information.

Microsoft | IT Academy Programme

Harrods calls on OCVC again

Synonymous the world over for high quality exclusive goods, Harrods has returned to Rycotewood Furniture, part of OCVC, to support the training of their furniture team. 15 staff, involved with sales and purchasing have been chosen by the famous store to undergo a seven module bespoke programme covering traditional to modern furniture design, furniture history and furniture manufacturing and finishes.

Rycotewood Furniture has a long history of training furniture craftspeople and the experience of its staff is helping Harrods provide an improved sales service for its discerning customers.



Assessor Academy Launches

With the government's drive to increase the number of employees achieving vocational qualifications through the Train to Gain programme, many training providers have struggled to recruit staff suitably qualified to assess candidates. To help minimise the time taken to train vocationally competent employees achieve their A1 or V1 awards, OCVC has set up an Assessor Academy following a successful bid for funds from the Learning & Skills Council. The Academy will aim to ensure candidates successfully achieve their awards within 3 – 6 months.

Whilst the focus will be on training existing or future employees of the eleven FE colleges across the Thames Valley, this operation will be available on a commercial basis to any organisation wishing for members of its staff to be able to assess or internally verify NVQ candidates within its own organisation.

To obtain further details of training course dates and costs, please contact Emily Watts, who is managing this programme, initially by email: ewatts@ocvc.ac.uk.

NVQ Delivery for all

OCVC has been delivering NVQ's in Performing Manufacturing Operations (PMO) at both Level 1 and 2 for Clarity Employment for Blind People since 2003. This organisation, which manufactures perfumes, toiletries and house hold products, has been in existence since 1854, previously known as the General Welfare for the Blind. The organisation, which is based in London, employs both blind staff and those with other disabilities.

So far to date, 35 employees have successfully achieved their qualifications, all of them delivered by Alan Floy, OCVC's most experienced PMO assessor.

The photograph shows the latest group of successful achievers, with Chief Executive Jeremy Robinson, who presented the certificates on behalf of the college. Mr Robinson commented on the achievements of the candidates with pride and remarked that "that this training



cannot be underestimated as it ensures continuous improvement, guaranteeing the quality of the products to which our customers have come to expect".

Deaf Awareness

– adding value to your business service

OCVC has for some time offered a Distance Learning course on Equality and Diversity, but is now able to offer additional training support specifically for Deaf Awareness.

If your organisation has a regular flow of customers onto your premises, it might be appropriate to have some staff skilled in basic sign language techniques and use of communications tactics for deaf people. OCVC has

successfully provided short 3 hour sessions for groups of staff to understand the basics of sign language, delivered within the workplace. More in depth British Sign Language courses can also be delivered, which may be most appropriate for health service, education or public authority bodies.

To find out more, simply call the Employer Services Hot Line on 01865 551015.

Safeguarding Children & Young People

– New Distance Learning Course

OCVC is pleased to announce that the new Distance Learning qualification for Safeguarding Children & Young People has just been released by NCFE, the awarding body. This course is ideal for staff working in an environment where there is direct contact with children and young people, including schools, nurseries, hospitals and local authorities. A Level 2 certificate is available for successful completion and will support the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff working within this area. A course information sheet is available on OCVC's web site (www.ocvc.ac.uk/distance-learning).

The course is available fully funded this year and is free of charge. In line with all other Distance learning courses, to obtain funding learners must be over 19 years old and been a resident in the European Union for the last three years. Learners must also live within Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire or Milton Keynes.



If you would like to book on to this or any other Distance Learning course, please email your enquiry to employer-enquiries@ocvc.ac.uk.

Have Your Say!

We'd really like to provide you with the opportunity to raise any issues with the team here at OCVC, either specifically concerning your experience with OCVC or if you wish to raise any general comments concerning training. Simply email your comments directly to the Employer Services Hot Line (employer-enquiries@ocvc.ac.uk). We're happy to publish the general enquiries here in the next edition of Business Focus, with our reply.