

**Response to Chapter 2 Question 1 of Consultation ref 19/13**

**08 March 2012**

The National Skills Academy for Power (Skills Academy) currently represents 14 metering organisations – including all of the big six energy suppliers. Since the launch of the Skills Academy in 2010, smart meter installer competence has been a major strategic deliverable within the metering network. Historically, the metering industry adheres to competency standards as detailed within the MOCOPA agreement. However, there are certain Distribution Network Operator (DNO) areas within Great Britain who insist any meter operator working in their regional territory will be required to attend a trade test/assessment. With the imminent smart meter 2013-2019 rollout, energy suppliers and their meter contractors have been seeking an industry standard approach for demonstrating meter competence – to be acknowledged by all DNOs and Meter Operators. The Skills Academy is making good progress with DNOs both individually and through the Energy Networks Association and via DECC's Customer Engagement and Rollout Group (CERG OI) to move away from regional trade testing of meter installers and move towards the Skills Academy proposed national approach to installer competence.

Indeed, the Skills Academy has made sound progress to influence major stakeholders and employers to include an employer-led accreditation process within both the draft SMICoP and to propose changes to have the same accreditation process within the MOCOPA agreement. Main reasons for employers to request an industry-agreed approach include:

- A common national assessment specification to be adhered to by all MOCOPA signatory companies
- A national database for capturing details of all smart meter installer competences
- A move away from local DNO trade testing and an avoidance of potential bottle necks for large numbers of installers requiring trade testing
- Increase in the quality of installers – particularly with the 6000+ new installers identified to ensure the rollout is completed by 2019

The Skills Academy acknowledges there are different delivery models required for both ensuring existing meter operatives meet a national standard for smart meter installation and for recruiting thousands of new staff. The proposed industry standard accreditation encourages employers with their own facilities to seek accreditation – we are also encouraging Skills Academy accredited facilities to offer both upskilling and new installer courses to the marketplace for those organisations that do not have training capacity – or may prefer to train people more locally to where they may be deployed. We are beginning to see these collaborative partnerships forming.

For non-Skills Academy member meter companies we have worked hard to ensure there are choices for other MOCOPA signatory companies to demonstrate their employees are safe, competent and smart installation 'ready':

- Their training facilities may still obtain NSAP accreditation – even if they do not wish to become members of the Academy
- Non NSAP members who are MOCOPA signatories can register their smart competent installers on the national database
- Other MOCOPA signatory organisations who have Skills Academy accreditation can train/assess non- member meter installation company staff and register them on the national database.

## **NSAP Response to the Ofgem Consultation on the Smart Meter Installation Code of Practice**

Version 5

There are, of course, reasonable charges for some of the activities listed above – but the focus on these activities is to enhance – and ultimately maintain – a high quality installation experience for the consumer.

The Skills Academy has not currently received any evidence of small suppliers being exposed to disproportionate costs when seeking access to training provision from other approved providers. Indeed The Skills Academy always anticipated collaborative arrangements between suppliers and accredited providers to assist with both local and national delivery needs involving upskilling, refresher and new smart metering installer programmes. The Skills Academy's accreditation process and national assessment specifications upskilling programmes have been purposefully designed to be as lean and cost efficient as possible. The Skills Academy will work with the nominated partners of small suppliers and support these providers in achieving the smart metering approved provider accreditation.

The Skills Academy also suggests micro-business smart meter installations (80-100A single phase or 80-100A multiphase service supplies) – if acknowledged by suppliers to be in scope to the smart meter rollout - shall be subject to the same installer competence requirements as for domestic installation.

Without an industry approved, national approach to installer competence there is a risk for commercially focused providers to flood the market with short duration programmes purporting to deliver smart meter gas, electricity and dual fuel installers. The industry is extremely keen to retain an enhanced mechanism of quality control to ensure the supply of quality installers will meet their demands. Without an agreed approach to installer competence (the Skills Academy's accreditation process), the industry will be more reliant than ever on DNO trade testing of high volumes of people – the metering industry wishes to ensure the workforce expansion for smart metering rollout actually improves the quality of staff and isn't left exposed to rogue delivery methods.

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