

Smart Metering Implementation Programme version 1

1. Background

Energy suppliers, their meter operators and contractors are now beginning to develop significant plans for the imminent smart metering rollout. The National Skills Academy for Power (NSA(P)) is devising both an implementation strategy and series of development plans for gas, electricity and dual fuel installation. The recent introduction of a metering industry network is identifying a series of products and initiatives with our member companies. Several areas of the summer 2010 DECC/Ofgem prospectus (particularly around installation of communications, interoperability and customer service) will impact on installer skill sets and competence. The evolving NSA(P) strategy towards smart metering is, therefore, acknowledging these elements and will quickly seek to accommodate any new requirements within our skills frameworks, assessment strategies and delivery solutions.

2. Recognition of Smart Metering Competence

Question 17, 19

Figures provided by the National Skills Academy for Power development team indicate an existing meter installation workforce of over 2000 people. Recent discussions with both the Association of Meter Operators (AMO) and MOCOPA health & safety issues meeting have expressed interest in the introduction of a national registration scheme for both existing metering staff as they re-skill towards smart metering and for new entrants undertaking smart meter training and assessment programmes. Registrations categories can be introduced via a structured development/assessment programme for recognising current competence by offering members a block registration window (grandfather rights) for existing staff. These existing staff will also be required to have demonstrated an agreed communications/smart customer service assessment. New smart metering installers may follow a programme based upon national standards and related qualifications. Such programmes are designed to be eligible for LSC/SFA funding via initiatives such as apprenticeships or 'Train to Gain' – the National Skills Academy for power will work centrally with the Skills Funding Agency and other regional/devolved nations stakeholders to ensure smart metering may capitalise on such initiatives

3. Existing Meter Training Provision

Question 18

Energy suppliers, their major metering contractors and partner colleges may wish to deliver either in-house smart metering development programmes or seek our proposed NSA(P) 'Approved Smart Metering Provider' endorsement. NSA(P) are currently compiling a national list of existing metering training facilities. There are currently around 30 employer metering facilities which may be immediately utilised for smart meter training and assessment. The NSA(P) is seeking agreement by the member companies to share capacity at these facilities and, based upon the outcomes of the workforce planning project, identify any increase in training provision and indicate both how – and where – this increase in facilities will be provided. There is an increasing level of interest being shown from private training providers and further education colleges to deliver smart meter training. This provides the industry with a challenge to maintain quality of content, assessment and competence. Concerns have been expressed by contacts within the HSE, the ENA and the AMO on how much capacity will be needed for the rollout – and how safety and competence will be maintained with a significant increase in capacity.

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4.Training Delivery to Support Rollout**Question 18**

Work being undertaken to populate the Energy & Utility Skills workforce planning model with smart metering data, scenarios and resourcing projections. Outcomes from the exercise should provide a comprehensive series of installer requirements within each region/devolved nation to meet scenarios for either the 2020 target or any accelerated rollout timelines. A key element of an installer's route to competence is a period of consolidation, training and mentoring in the workplace. Employers have expressed concerns on the projected volumes of new trainees requiring such work placement and work experience. This is exacerbated by transport and logistical issues (meter installers are predominantly based from home and are paid on productivity). Any new training provision for smart metering will need to ensure reasonable work placement – electricity, gas and dual fuel mentoring is built into their development programmes. The National Skills Academy is, therefore, proposing to introduce a quality assurance scheme for endorsed employer/member facilities and to work with awarding bodies on any increase in their centre approvals with private providers and colleges.

5.Customer Experience: Smart Meter Training & Development**Question 3**

Both the proposed routes to installer competence incorporate customer service skills. Any acknowledgment of existing staff competence requires a declaration by their employer of customer service mapped against the national standards. The smart metering occupational standards and resulting qualifications include a module on customer service. This is currently being examined by employers and also by colleagues within the Energy Retail Association to see how any key smart metering customer issues can be incorporated within the qualifications. Interestingly, feedback from the major energy suppliers has highlighted customer service as an area they will be adding their own values/branding to the minimum national standard.

6.WAN Communications Module Installation**Question 17**

Gas sector consultation has highlighted challenges around any requirement for installation of electricity wiring for the WAN communications module. If the WAN supply is to be provided from the unmetered cutout, such work will require safe isolation and testing at the main fuse position (and will require the main seal to be removed and replaced). This will require DNO authorisation and may prejudice any separate, non-battery installed WAN module by gas-only smart meter installers. Employers mentioned this may lead them to considering re-skilling all of their current gas meter operatives to install electricity smart meters whilst installing any electricity powered communications modules. This adds a significant increase in workforce training and assessment projections

7.National Registration Scheme**Question 3,18**

Employers with existing meter operatives re-skilling towards smart meter installation – or new sector entrants who have demonstrated the necessary skills, experience and competence may consider registering with EUSR (Energy & Utility Skills Register) – a web enabled/card database. This will provide the industry with a central hub for ensuring competence in areas such as smart customer service, health and safety and smart meter specific competence etc. Numbers could be between 4000 and 10000 registrations during the rollout. Our current workforce planning modelling activities with employers are helping to produce accurate sector projections.

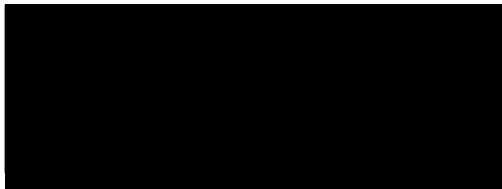
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Dual fuel installation may be more complex to register, as any gas competence has to be registered on the Gas Safe register. Presently, it can be assumed that employees will have to register their gas metering competence on Gas Safe in addition to any electricity sector registration scheme managed by Energy & Utility Skills/NSA(P).

8.Future Technology Training/Installer Updates

Question 3,17

As technology changes and additional functionality is added (smart appliances, enhanced use of embedded functional specification etc.), National Skills Academy for Power is considering any future technological developments which may influence installer competence and need to be embedded in training and assessment packages. Again, delivery mediums for future requirements may include webcasts, interactive online learning/assessment packages and local smart metering provider facilities.



National Skills Academy for Power

