

Introduction

Against a background of an ageing work force, greater demands for higher quality work and more complex installations there will be few in the fire suppression industry that are not aware of the need for greater professionalism and a structured set of qualifications and relevant high quality training for operatives at all levels

BAFSA Skills & Development Committee

Recognising this, BAFSA's Council authorised the restructuring of its Training Committee into the Skills and Development Committee. The membership of this group has a wide range of skills and experience across the sector drawn from BAFSA membership. In addition the Group has membership from organisations with experience in the educational sector particularly Skills Development.

Remit of the Committee

In recognition of the relatively unstructured approach to training within the fire industry as a whole, and following the development of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Mechanical Fire Protection in 2012 the Committee has a core remit to:

'Develop vocational qualifications and training to ensure competency for persons working within the sector'

Recognising the need for change in this area has resulted in much discussion within the Committee, and with the National Occupational Standards now in place it was seen as an appropriate time to develop the Skills and Qualification Strategy. Focusing on the necessary development of skills and nationally recognised qualifications evidencing competence of the workforce is essential if BAFSA and the industry is to ensure that the workforce is fit for purpose and able to meet the challenges ahead.

BAFSA Skills and Qualification Strategy

During 2014 BAFSA commissioned independent research into the skills needs and current learning provision of the fire sprinkler installation sector. An analysis was then carried out to identify the gaps between identified skills need and existing provision. Accurate information about sector specific needs and requirements is fundamental to ensuring that the appropriate mix of provision (qualifications, training and other learning experiences) is available to learners. A number of issues were identified through the research;

- the need for clear entry routes into the sector and attracting a diverse workforce
- effective leadership and management – as a skills need and key driver for change
- training requirements
- credit based qualification frameworks

The information provided informed the strategy and will aid the development of future qualifications and learning. Employers were

encouraged to communicate their training and qualification needs at this point, to enable us to work with Awarding Bodies, and stakeholders to effectively meet those needs.

The main objectives of the Skills and Qualification Strategy and associated activities will be to :

- Raise the profile of the industry through BAFSA and the work it has been undertaking
- Develop skills and qualifications
- Review and enhance learning opportunities
- Work with stakeholders and partners to ensure the workforce is competent and fit for purpose

Qualification Development

BAFSA has agreed to work with Awarding Organisations to develop any new qualifications that are identified. Resulting qualifications will be in mapped to National Occupational Standards and meet Awarding Organisation regulatory requirements for all parts of the United Kingdom.

BAFSA has chosen Industry Qualifications (IQ) as its preferred Awarding Organisation (AO). IQ is a regulated awarding organisation founded on mutual principles.

The initial focus has been be on developing a Level 2 qualification. Much of the development activity has been funded by BAFSA. The IQ Level 2 Certificate in Fire Sprinkler Installation (QCF) is a qualification aimed at individuals employed in the Fire Sprinkler Industry. This qualification is intended for those new and recently employed in the sector installing fire sprinklers to develop the knowledge and competences necessary to meet the industry standards for the installation role. The framework of the qualification provides sufficient flexibility for the variations in different jobs and locations.

The main objective of this qualification is supporting a role in the workplace and it has two purposes; confirming occupational competence and confirming competence in an occupational role to the standards required by industry.

This qualification is approved for learners 18 plus. There are no formal entry requirements. However, learners should be able to work at level 2 or above. Learners must be able to work at heights.





Training Providers

In 2016 three BAFSA Preferred Training Providers are providing training towards the Level 2 Qualification, these are:

- Neath Port Talbot College, South Wales
- Llandrillo College, Rhos on Sea, North Wales
- The Manchester College

It is anticipated that in the future other colleges will provide training. The latest information will be available on the BAFSA website www.bafsa.org.uk/skills_qualifications.php

Upskilling Award

The Welsh Government Domestic Fire Safety (Wales) Bill 2011 introduced the requirement for sprinklers to be installed in all new residential and domestic premises. BAFSA recognised that this would result in a significant increase in the number of sprinkler installations with a resultant demand for appropriately trained installers.

In partnership with Neath Port Talbot College an upskilling award was developed with Agored Publications. The training was designed suitable for those already within the sprinkler industry and those who wish to upskill, change profession or for companies wishing to undertake CPD with their installers.

It is also suited to plumbing operatives already qualified to Level 3 to upskill in order to competently install sprinklers in domestic properties.



The course is also available to other parties with an influence over the industry such as: Building control, site foremen/women, fire officers, architects, designers and specifiers. This will provide them with the relevant information to identify good/poor installations and their compliance with Building Regulations.

The Award is currently delivered in Wales at two BAFSA preferred Training Providers:

Neath Port Talbot College

Llandrillo College

Future Developments

Skills Card

The Skills & Development Committee has approved the development of an IQ Skills Card. The card contains key information about the learner and is intended to act as a verifier of qualifications held by the learner, but it also includes a profile page of the learner that the learner could customise to include contact details and highlight skills.

The Skills Card Profile can be linked to LinkedIn and Twitter accounts, and email address, address, phone number, and website details can be stored to provide a simple, effective CV summary in addition to providing information about their verified skills.

The card will show the BAFSA qualification logo and the L2 Certificate in Fire Sprinkler Installation will be the qualification detailed.

Career Pathway

BAFSA has developed a Career Pathway to provide career development framework that aims to support career-long learning and professional development by recognising education and training undertaken. This framework will be available to those who already work within the mechanical fire industry i.e. fire sprinklers and to those considering a career in this varied sector

Latest Information on BAFSA Website

It is planned that the qualifications and training opportunities will continue to grow. This document outlines the current position at the time of publication, for the latest information please visit the BAFSA Skills and Development website at www.bafsa.org.uk/skills_qualifications.php

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