



*****PRESS RELEASE*****

EMPLOYERS SEE THE VALUE OF VOCATIONAL AND WORK-BASED QUALIFICATIONS

Recent reports in the press have highlighted criticism of so called 'non-courses' available at universities. These courses are ones which 'lend the respectability of scholarly qualifications to non-academic subjects' (The Taxpayers Alliance, The Non-Courses Report 2007).

During our Sector Skills Agreement consultations, employers have voiced their frustrations about the content and relevance of university courses to the active leisure and learning sector. Many sport and active leisure related job vacancies are advertised at graduate level, however most employers now place a higher value on relevant work experience and vocational qualifications that many academic degrees do not currently provide. Employers in the active leisure and learning sector see the value of work experience and vocational education over and above academic achievements as they're the skills they require of people doing the jobs. Jobs such as leisure centre managers and outdoor activity leaders are popular career paths and mainly require non-academic skills such as people management, communication skills and business acumen. Stephen Studd, SkillsActive chief executive said:

"SkillsActive is working closely with higher education institutions to clearly identify courses that are vocationally focused on the sector, with a focus of gearing new provision toward employer needs to ensure graduates enter the work market with the right skills needed to gain employment. We are involved in the development of the new 14-19 diploma and the Apprenticeships schemes which combine workplace and academic learning."

Once a graduate has entered into the sector, most employers will insist on continuing development and studying toward additional vocational qualifications.

Stephen Studd continued:

“In order for graduates to find the work they so desperately want and employers to have fully trained and qualified staff suitable for the job, the courses that are studied really need to lead to paid employment. This step needs a partnership. It needs graduates with the right attitude and a willingness to continue to learn and develop themselves once they are in work; and employers who are willing to support them in their development, recognising that their graduate skills are often a long-term investment that will pay dividends over time as they gain practical experience.”

However, for those under-graduates that want to continue onto higher education, and still want to start a career in the industry, there is a need for them, they just have to realise that practical skills are key. Courses that combine vocational and academic learning provide the foundations for entering work whilst at the same time providing intellectual stimulation.

For more information visit: www.skillsactive.com/careers

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the sport and fitness, playwork, the outdoors and caravan industries – known as the active leisure and learning sector.
2. SSCs are UK-wide, employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector. Twenty five SSCs make up the Skills for Business Network. The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) underpins the network and is responsible for funding, supporting and monitoring the SSCs.
3. SkillsActive’s Sector Skills Agreement defines the sector’s skills needs and forms an agreement between employers, government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years. Priorities identified as a result of the SSA process are:

improve the quality and range of services; improve recruitment and retention; professionalise and upskill the existing workforce; match supply to demand; redirect funding for training; increase sector investment in our people.

4. SkillsActive is *Shaping Skills for the Future*, through...
 - PEOPLE...
...ensuring all people in the sector are appropriately trained and qualified.
 - PRODUCTIVITY...
...ensuring better performance through the professional development of the sector.
 - PROVISION...
...ensuring the sector has accessible, relevant and funded training across the UK.
 - PROMOTION...
...ensuring the contributions of the sector are recognised at a governmental level.

5. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com