



Centre of Excellence

Leading a world-class skills system



Funded by
UK Government

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Foreword | 3 |
| Background | 5 |
| Creating a world-class skills system | 6 |
| 1. Provide learners with increased confidence and career aspiration | 7 |
| 2. Promote and advance technical learning | 8 |
| 3. Support educators | 9 |
| 4. Boost social mobility | 10 |
| 5. Grow the profile and positive reputation of NCFE | 11 |
| Impact and outcomes | 12 |
| Looking to the future | 14 |

WorldSkills UK is a four nations partnership between education, industry and UK governments. It is a world-class skills network acting as a catalyst for:

- raising standards, through international benchmarking and professional development
- championing future skills, through analysis of rapidly changing economic demand
- empowering young people, from all backgrounds, through competitions-based training and careers advocacy.

Foreword

At WorldSkills UK, we are working with our partners in governments, education and industry to set a new level of ambition for skills. Our Centre of Excellence and our partnership with NCFE is integral to achieving and embedding a world-class skills system in the UK.

This programme and valued partnership demonstrates a shared commitment to innovation which will create yet more opportunities for young people

Launching in 2020, the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence was a trailblazer, the first of its kind. Providing member institutions and educators with world-class quality improvement strategies, based on our unique insight into best practice techniques in global skills development. This has provided over 4,000 educators and through them nearly 60,000 students access to world class approaches to training, giving them the competitive edge, they and the UK needs.

We are excited to be building on this success and it is fantastic that, together with NCFE, we can now invite all FE Colleges, independent training providers and higher educational institutions to join. We also know that to achieve impact across the entire skills system, the programme must also deliver for employers. That is why this next stage of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence will have a strong focus on innovation and collaboration, creating opportunities for business and education to come together to achieve the shared ambition of a truly world-class technical education system.

In key growth sectors covering digital, net zero and advanced manufacturing, the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence will support the development and delivery of skills specific, industry led and internationally benchmarked training. Providing institutions with access to insights and learning from over 85 countries through our WorldSkills network. We will also work with this network to establish a global community for thought leadership to influence policy and practice.

If we are to strive for a world-class skills system it has to start with partnerships and collaboration which is why I want to thank NCFE for their continued valued partnership, and I welcome the Skills and Education Group and Autodesk who also join as investment partners. This support confirms the value and importance of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence. Working together, we can raise the prestige of apprenticeships and technical education to world-class, creating more opportunities for young people and helping to drive investment, job creation and economic growth for the UK.



Ben Blackledge
CEO, WorldSkills UK

Foreword

NCFE and WorldSkills UK share a passion for innovation and are both committed to creating a fairer and more inclusive society through the delivery of exceptional technical education.

If this is to be achieved, our educators need greater access to world-class teacher training, underpinned by global insights. That's how we unlock their potential, so they are able to deliver the highest quality education and training to our workforce of the future. Partnering with WorldSkills UK to deliver its Centre of Excellence enables us to deliver on this.

Underpinned by international insights gained from WorldSkills UK's role as the government representative at WorldSkills, the Centre of Excellence plays a vital role in boosting the standards in flagship qualifications including apprenticeships and T Levels. We are also looking forward to being part of the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence's global community and playing our role to use international insights to help influence policy and practice.

By extending the WorldSkills UK Centre of Excellence to benefit of even more institutions, we are enabling more educators to gain world-class, industry relevant skills that enhance their own career development and progression. This will have a direct impact on increasing learners' confidence and career aspirations, as well as boosting social mobility and changing the lives of people from all backgrounds.

Alongside WorldSkills UK, we want to develop a more motivated teaching workforce that embraces new techniques and practices from across the globe. We want people and institutions to act as catalysts for raising standards across technical education.

It's only through the development of world class educators that we can start to work towards world class technical education.

David Gallagher
CEO, NCFE



Background

At WorldSkills UK we have been benchmarking international skills development for over 70 years, through our membership to WorldSkills, the global hub of skills excellence. This access has given us a unique insight into skills development practices from the world's leading and emerging economies.

This access has
given us a unique
insight into skills
development
practices from the
world's leading
and emerging
economies

Yet, until now we have not systematically transferred this knowledge outside of the competition setting.

Observing China, India, South Korea, and Brazil transform their skills systems by using their membership of WorldSkills to mainstream global industry standards into their training confirmed that our insight could add value right across the UK skills systems.

In 2019, we commissioned Oxford University to explore our thinking in more detail. Its report 'Good People in a Flawed System: the challenges of mainstreaming excellence in technical education' identified that the current skills systems are geared towards competence not excellence and highlighted the missed opportunity of learning from international best practice to raise standards.

As a result, we developed our strategy to lead a world-class skills system through a Centre of Excellence.

Since the launch in 2020, the pilot has established itself as prestigious programme, cited as good practice in the Skills for Jobs white paper, with ministerial support from across the UK and significant coverage in national press and media. In 2021, WorldSkills UK and NCFE were jointly awarded 'Collaboration of the Year Award' by the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

With the successful pilot ending in Summer 2023, having exceeded all targets, we reflect in the key achievements and look forward to the implementation of the Centre of Excellence 2.0, widening the scope and accessibility of the programme in order to make world-class skills development achievable for all.



Creating a world-class skills system

Drawing on international best practice, underpinned by ground breaking research into UK and international TVET systems, the Centre of Excellence programme, has supported educators to embed world-class techniques into their practice for the last three years.

In 2020 we set ambitious targets to engage 1,000 educators and influence the learning for 42,000 young people through the Centre of Excellence programme. Enrolling 48 institutions onto the workforce development programme and supporting over 100 additional providers through workshops and high-quality digital learning assets, the programme has now reached over **4,000** educators and influenced the learning of over **64,000** young people.

Through our partnership with NCFE, the pilot set out to achieve five key objectives to mainstream excellence and world class practices in the UK skills system.

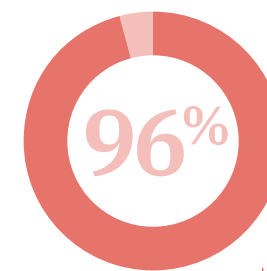


1.

Provide learners with increased confidence and career aspiration and springboard for transition in FE and careers providing employers a more highly qualified and performing young workforce which will support higher business productivity.

The Centre of Excellence is now firmly established as a pioneering programme at the forefront of developing a world-class skills network and system that provides learners from all backgrounds with the competitive edge that employers are seeking.

22k
the number
by which we
exceeded the
initial target



of learners
felt that the
programme
had a positive
impact on their
future career
aspirations

- Since its launch in 2020 over 64,000 learners have benefitted from teaching practices influenced by the pedagogical techniques pioneered by the Centre of Excellence, exceeding an initial target of 42,000 learners.
- Techniques rooted in international best practice, such as 'pressure testing' and 'mindset development' have now become embedded into programmes of study across the UK, allowing learners to develop core skills and attributes that support their successful transition into the life of work.
- 99% of learners who were surveyed stated they would be able to apply the skills and techniques learnt to their future education and work with 92% of learners rating the session as very good or excellent.
- 96% of learners felt that the programme had a positive impact on their future career aspirations, with 95% commenting the session had a positive impact on both their technical skills and their wider interpersonal and employability skills.
- 98% of learners reported the session(s) attended had a positive influence on their motivation to continue their programme of study.
- Learners were provided with access to technical masterclasses and mindset development programmes developed by our team of international experts.

Over
150
institutions have
engaged with the
Centre of Excellence
programme over
the three years of
the pilot

More than
4000
educators
developing world-
class practices
through Centre of
Excellence activity

2. Promote and advance technical learning so that teaching quality is higher, and staff and learners performance is raised

Drawing on 70 years of international experience, supported by a leading insights programme, we have equipped educators from all regions and nations of the UK to embed international best practice into their delivery, raising the standards so world-class skills development is accessible to thousands of learners.

- In addition to the 48 organisations who completed the full programme, over 100 additional institutions have engaged with the Centre of Excellence, with further education colleges, universities, independent training providers and institutes of technology all accessing material to support the embedding of international best practice.
- With over 4,000 educators developing world-class practices through Centre of Excellence activity, we have supported over double the target number of educators.
- Over 90% of the educators engaging in the programme reported a positive change to the quality of their teaching practice.
- Throughout the programme the team of High-Performance Coaches have worked to support NCFE across a number of additional project areas, including contributing to the Innovation in Assessment programme.
- The wider group of skills experts from WorldSkills UK have supported in the development of T-Level qualifications in Craft and Design and Beauty Therapy, demonstrating the support we can offer in the development and delivery of future qualifications.
- The partnership has also facilitated the completion of research into TVET drivers and practices both nationally and internationally:
 - the [‘Drivers of technical excellence’](#) report published in 2021 drew on examples of best practice from the likes of France, Japan and South Korea
 - the [‘Ingredients for success’](#) report focussed on UK TVET delivery, establishing the factors required to allow excellence to flourish within the UK TVET system.

3. Support educators to gain high performing and industry relevant skills that enhance their career development and progression

Beyond the initial design of working with a select group of organisations, the partnership between WorldSkills UK and NCFE has allowed us to ambitiously expand the benefits of the programme to a wider range of institutions, providing opportunities for more educators and learners to benefit from world-class skills development.

- Developed our online learning platform and launched the ‘WorldSkills UK Learning Lab’ providing online content and digital resources to support educators in establishing and embedding world-class practices.
- Over 500 educators have accessed and completed activities endorsed by NCFE on the WorldSkills UK Learning Lab, supporting the embedding of world-class practices into institutions beyond those enrolled on the programme.
- Educators were supported by our team of coaches to design and implement models of cascade, delivering CPD to peers from across their institutions, with 92% of attendees rating the cascaded activity as good to excellent.
- We supported educators from across the UK to attend an international masterclass in Industry 4.0, providing opportunities for educators to engage with experts and develop an understanding of the world-class techniques and standards associate with an emerging skill area.
- We facilitated a group of STEM based educators to attend the Dutch national skills competition finals in Amsterdam, during which the educators shared their experiences of the WorldSkills UK and NCFE Centre of Excellence with representatives from Belgium, France, Sweden and the Netherlands, whilst increasing their own understanding of international standards of excellence.

Over
500
educators have
accessed and
completed
activities endorsed
by NCFE on the
WorldSkills UK
Learning Lab



4.

Boost social mobility to change the lives of learners of all backgrounds

Throughout the delivery of the pilot programme, we have stayed true to the vision of excellence for all. Engaging educators and learners from all areas of the UK, seeking to support learners from all backgrounds to achieve their true potential and close attainment gaps.

- 15 of the core 48 institutions in the programme are in areas of high deprivation, with 31 situated in regions deemed by UK governments as being a 'priority' due to low levels of formal qualification attainment in these areas*
- Over 300 learners from disadvantaged backgrounds reported that direct engagement with the programme had significantly improved their career aspirations and motivation to succeed in their programmes of study.
- We have supported institutions on their quality improvement journeys by directly engaging with Ofsted on behalf of 3 institutions who have undergone inspection activity, with many aspects of the programme reflected in the summary reports.
- We have seen Weston College who joined the programme in year two continue to embed the techniques developed into their prison education programme, supporting over 50 young women to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to succeed in the workplace.

* from the government's Levelling Up fund index of priority places

Over
300
learners from disadvantaged backgrounds reported that direct engagement with the programme had significantly improved their career aspirations and motivation

5.

Grow the profile and positive reputation of NCFE and increase both NCFE's and WorldSkills UK's reach and impact across technical education

The success of the pilot programme in mainstreaming excellence and supporting learners to achieve world-class standards has continued to gather interest both nationally and internationally.

- We have seen an estimated media circulation of over 31m since the start of the programme, including an authored article featured in the Guardian Education Supplement highlighting how the programme is supporting the vision of the Levelling Up agenda.
- The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education celebrated the importance of the programme during his address at our International Skills Summit. Highlighting how our work supports learners to aspire to achieve the skills required by employers to contribute to a skills economy.
- The Centre of Excellence model has been a key area of interest across the wider WorldSkills International network. With representatives from the Netherlands, France, Kenya, Belgium, Finland and Australia all requesting additional details and support in how to replicate the process of mainstreaming international best practice in TVET systems.

31
million
estimated media circulation since the start of the programme

The Centre of Excellence model has been a key area of interest across the wider WorldSkills International network



Impact and outcomes

Since beginning the programme we have engaged an external evaluation partner to assess the impact of the programme on institutions, educators and learners.

The programme has supported institutions to embed a culture of high performance, driven by international best practice

Over 55% of organisations have reported making changes to course content as a result of engaging in the programme, amending assessment practices and revisiting schemes of work to promote excellence at all levels of delivery.

The team of High-Performance Coaches who facilitated the programme were integral to the success

Their approach to delivering the modules in a supportive and enthusiastic manner was particularly valued by educators. The sessions were reported to have been well-organised and delivered effectively with appropriate examples provided and ample opportunities for discussion with other educators. This was also supported by materials and resources which were reported to have been of a high quality.

The programme has exceeded its target for cascading the programme learning

Institutions valued and supported the process and sought to mainstream techniques beyond expectation

The programme has exceeded its target for cascading the programme learning. There was a strong commitment among providers to cascade the training across their organisations. The median number of educators that the training has been cascaded to is nine (*per train the trainer participant*). This exceeds programme expectations of a planned cascade to two educators *per participant*.

The programme has made lasting change to participants

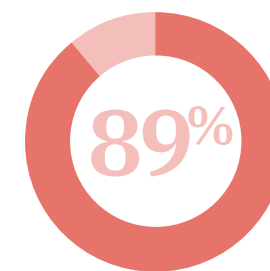
The follow up evaluations with educators demonstrate positive results for programme learning being sustained some 12-24 months following their involvement. Findings show that 89% of these educators had made at least some change to their teaching, of which half reported a high level of impact on their teaching.

Feedback from learners engaging in the programme has been positive

There has also been positive feedback from learners through evaluations and focus groups. Learners have reported enjoying doing the pressure testing activities and generally being pushed to do the best they can.

The programme has achieved its intended outcome

Overall, the Centre of Excellence programme has successfully addressed a gap in educator knowledge through a well-designed and delivered training programme. There has been a range of impacts to educators, learners, and providers. There was strong feedback from educators to suggest improvements in their knowledge about improving standards from competence to excellence and how they were improving their practice. Educators reported how the programme has been an eye-opener.



of educators had made at least some change to their teaching

Educators reported how the programme has been an eye-opener



Looking to the future

As the pilot programme draws to a close, it is clear that, not only have NCFE and WorldSkills UK succeeded in our aim of helping to accelerate the establishment of a world-class skills system, but we have forged a successful partnership recognised by the skills sector as raising standards, mainstreaming excellence, championing policy, and aligning with government objectives.

Following the success of the programme in achieving its ambitious aims, we are now excited to be able to continue our journey towards mainstreaming world-class practices and excellence.

In addition to making the pedagogical training pioneered through the programme open to all Further and Higher Education institutions across the UK, we are expanding the Centre of Excellence offer to further support institutions, educators and learners in raising standards.

Learners not only focus on the practical skills, but are far more aware of the softer skills which they also need to practice, improve and excel at to be able to become 'work ready'

Carl Parrish Lecturer in Fabrication & Welding



Learners who have been exposed to the WorldSkills UK methodologies have found they have been able to secure employment against other applicants largely due to the fact that they can handle the pressure of the interview and trade test allowing them to showcase excellence

Sir Paul Philips Principal and Chief Executive, Weston College

The impact has been a re-energising of Teaching & Learning. Educators have more of a willingness to reflect on what they do and take chances

Rona Griffiths Learner Experience & Enterprise Manager, Coleg Cambria

By joining the Centre of Excellence, institutions will have access to a range of fully funded professional development and network opportunities, all driven by international best practice:

Global Community for Thought Leadership

Connecting leaders from across education and industry, leading the latest research and global trends in skills development, benchmarking the UK with other countries to champion the demand for a world-class skills economy.

Network for Innovation

The third space that will connect education, industry and international partners to exchange and collaborate fostering development and innovation in teaching excellence and embed a culture of high performance driven by international best practice. To include three communities of practice in key growth sectors (Digital, Net Zero, Advanced Manufacturing), to explore future demand for skills, enhance technical expertise with industry led training and diagnostic action learning and research with coaching and mentoring rooted in its core.

World-Class Teacher Training

Building on the success of the pilot, the innovative techniques pioneered by the programme will be available for all, through a calendar of hybrid events, providing an unrivalled accessibility to world-class practice. Expanding to cover both pedagogical and skills specific technical skills training for both educators and learners.

Find out more about the Centre of Excellence [here](#)





WorldSkills UK is registered at
332 Third Floor
25 Wilton Road
London SW1V 1LW

T: 0800 612 0742
E: getintouch@worldskillsuk.org
W: worldskillsuk.org



Charity number 1001586, Company number 02535199
VAT registration number GB945610716



**Funded by
UK Government**