

EXPLORING EMPLOYERS' SKILLS UPGRADING NEEDS AND LOCAL VET PROVISION IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UK

**Employment Research Institute at Napier University, Edinburgh
in partnership with
Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University
Business and Management Research Institute, University of Ulster**

The Employment Research Institute (ERI) at Napier University has been commissioned by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) to carry out research “Exploring employers’ skills upgrading needs and local VET provision in Scotland and Northern Ireland”. The research falls under the SSDA’s Research Prospectus Project on “Employers’ skills upgrading needs and whether local VET provision meets those needs in different parts of the UK” (with particular relevance to SSDA priorities on ‘understanding the demand for skills’ and ‘identifying and meeting skill needs’).

This project will investigate the nature of employers’ skills needs, and VET providers’ responses, in selected regions of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The research will identify lessons for the skills agenda in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, and compare the employer-VET provider interface across these two countries, and with reference to the broader UK policy context (i.e. where relevant, relating findings to existing practice in England and Wales). The aim will be to build upon, and compare findings with, existing research carried out elsewhere in the UK in order to explore the ability of VET to meet employers’ changing skill needs.

The research will involve an extensive telephone survey of employers in two key sectors in each of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Emerging issues will then be followed up through case study research highlighting good practice in employer-VET provider relations.

The final report will provide an overview of the interface between VET provision and employers’ changing skill needs in key sectors in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The report will compare experiences across countries and sectors, and draw lessons for employers, VET providers and other stakeholders in these countries and England (key themes emerging from the research will be discussed with reference to the earlier England-based research commissioned by SSDA). A ‘Lessons for Policy and Practice’ summary will discuss barriers to VET meeting the needs of employers in key sectors, and potential policy solutions.