

Broadsheet

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Unified System now universal

With the signing of new agreements with Regional Advisory Councils in the North West (NWRAC) and in the East Midlands (EMFEC), the Unified System of City and Guilds working in partnership with the regions of England and Wales is now comprehensive.

The agreements with NWRAC and EMFEC follow the general pattern of other

agreements in providing for the regional body to monitor assessments, advise on regional curriculum and staff development needs and contribute to national developments. C&G provides central examinations administration, national tests and certification and sponsors national development.

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C&G at the Skill Olympics

C&G is pleased to have played a significant part in the success of the 1989 International Youth Skill Olympics held in Birmingham at the end of August. Some 400 young trainees – all under 22 – from over 20 countries competed in 34 separate competitions in a range of occupational skills. The event, held at the National Exhibition Centre, attracted thousands of visitors, including many from overseas, and national and international media, from Finland to Korea. All nine UK medal winners have C&G qualifications – as did most of the 34-strong UK team. Nicholas Williams-Cammack, winner of the men's hairdressing competition, was presented with his gold medal by the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, who was guest of honour at the closing ceremony. The UK team also won four silver medals (automotive mechanics, bricklaying, ladies' hairdressing, ladies' dressmaking) and four bronzes (house wiring, industrial wiring, agricultural mechanics, wood patternmaking), finishing joint fifth overall. The President of the International Youth Skill Olympics, Mr Albert Vidal, presented the silver medals, while Sir John Egan, Chairman and Chief Executive of Jaguar plc, and President of the '89 Skill Olympics, presented the bronzes. The UK also won gold and silver medals for information technology, a skill which may be included in future competitions.

Smile of success ... Nicholas Williams-Cammack with his gold medal for men's hairdressing. Nicholas, 19, who has C&G Hairdressing certificates, also won the Best of Nation award.

C&G, one of the main sponsors of the '89 Skill Olympics, extends its congratulations not only to the members of the UK team but also to the organisers, Skill-UK, who worked so hard to make it a success.

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Top award ... Robert Wilcox, Production Director of British Aerospace, received the Prince Philip Medal, C&G's most prestigious award, for his outstanding achievements in the aerospace industry. The award was presented at Buckingham Palace by HRH Prince Philip, President of City and Guilds and Patron of the '89 Skill Olympics.

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Unified – at last

It was a pleasure in June to be able to participate in the signing of the agreements with the remaining two regions (NWRAC and EMFEC – see page 1) which has transformed the unified system from theory to reality. Now all of the regions of the country through their regional advisory councils (RACs) are firmly committed to a joint endeavour to deliver competence-based qualifications, and they are sharing in the task of their development, production and delivery. The Ferryside Agreement, signed in a small Welsh town in 1978, has now become a reality. Although it appears to be a long time since 1978, the discussions on this subject go back even further. They have successively involved the following:

- The Standing Conference of Regional Examining Unions (SCREU), founded in 1932 but with which C&G became associated in 1953. (These arrangements superseded the 'Concordat' agreed in as far back as 1933, which defined the relationship between C&G and Regional Examining Bodies in providing intermediate examinations.)
- The Council of Technical Examining Bodies – an association of C&G and Regional Examining Bodies, set up in 1962 as a successor to SCREU.
- The participants in the Concordat of 1966, which began to formalise the relationship between C&G and the Regions.
- The Department of Education and Science, which led to the publication of Administrative Memorandum 25/1967 on the Joint Planning of Industrial Training and Further Education and which set up joint advisory committees between C&G and the regions.
- The Standing Conference of Regional Advisory Councils, which, after it was set up, encouraged the merger of the regional examining bodies with the regional advisory councils and led to the pressure for non-examining regions to be included in the system.
- The Ferryside Agreement itself, which provided for the creation of unified national awards, the acceptance of the national character and authority of the National Advisory Committees and the Policy Committee for Education and Training, and the involvement, as a right, of the Regions in the affairs of C&G.

Even in 1978, the process of integration was not completed and it has taken until now to reach the point where, through firm-binding agreements, the regions and C&G are bound together in a common endeavour.

Now that the prime objective has been achieved and, in the process, the British obsession with allowing the institutional developments to take place on an evolutionary basis is so clearly exemplified, the task is to build on the system so established as quickly as possible.

The advantages of the unified system are evident. Since the developments through the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) are proceeding satisfactorily, they can be used to provide a clear national focus for improved standards through national certification. The unified system is unique in that it has a strong central base – C&G – and a country-wide regional network – the RACs. At present, this system has over 550 000 candidate entries per year but it is capable of considerable expansion.

C&G is responsible for implementing the central policies which are usually approved by the Policy Committee for Education and Training, for test development and research, and for data processing, including certification.

The regional network can provide for a significant range of schemes which will be progressively extended. The network has many advantages. Firstly, it provides a range of accessible country-wide offices for the distribution of information and advice staffed by people who know their



Derek Brown, NWRAC Secretary (right), and John Barnes, C&G Director-General, signing the collaborative agreement, in the presence of Gerry Warr, NWRAC Deputy Secretary (standing, left) and Roger Fox, C&G Director of Operations

own regions well and have direct contact with educationalists, trainers, industrialists and representatives of public bodies. Secondly, it provides a mechanism which enables industry and providers of training and further education to participate fully on a regional basis, both in the development and assessment of national schemes and in assisting to define local or regional requirements for consideration at national level. Thirdly, it operates a system of approval of centres, courses and local assessors which, as an independent monitoring service, provides continuous quality assurance. Fourthly, it has an established and tried practice for selecting, appointing, training, deploying and monitoring assessors and verifiers – this procedure is linked to national specifications with a national monitoring system already in place. Fifthly, the regional bodies are emerging as important centres for staff development providing training and informing staff at centres, whether they are industry or education based. Sixthly, the regions make a professional contribution to scheme and assessment development, co-ordinated nationally to avoid duplication and with the possibility of acting as sub-contractors for work on behalf of the unified system.

If you add to this City and Guilds, which centrally provides its established name, status and reputation derived from the size and range of its activities, its accumulated expertise and its substantial professional and administrative resource, the combination is a formidable system.

This linkage of regional and national has considerable scope for development and it provides a clear role for at least one aspect of the work of RACs which provides their staff with a secure long-term future. The resources and expertise available are considerable and the linking together of people working towards a common end at local, regional and national level guards against the problems which can be created by excessive centralisation. Now that competition between C&G and the regions has ceased the joint resources for setting and maintaining standards are available to be used by the new structures being created under the umbrella of NCVQ. The achievement of the objective of delivering an improved and extended system of standards which can be used by the education and training system of the country moves closer.

John A Barnes

**John Barnes
Director-General**