Confidential

UK SKILLS Board
13.12.95
Paper 3
Annex A

Official report on the 33rd International Youth Skill Olympics, Lyon, 12 - 15 October 1995

1. Introduction

1.1 The 33rd International Youth Skill Olympics were held at Eurexpo, Lyon from 12 - 15 October 1995. A total of 504 competitors from 28 countries took part. The competition was organised by the Comité Français des Olympiades des Métiers. The detailed organisation of the event was the responsibility of the Association Rhône-Alpes pour les Olympiades des Métiers (AROM), specifically established for the task.

1.2 UK SKILLS entered a team of 26 competitors for 25 of the 35 official trades and for two demonstration trades (Appendix 1). The UK team was the seventh largest to take part. The competitors were supported by 24 technical experts and two team leaders. The Chairman of UK SKILLS and UK Official Delegate, Sir John Cassels, attended, as well as the Technical Delegate, Mr J D G Hammer, and there were two UK Official Observers - Mr G A Rowlands, Principal of Manchester College of Arts and Technology, and Miss P M Snell, Chief Executive of UK SKILLS.

1.3 The UK team won three gold medals, one silver medal, two bronze medals and seven diplomas of excellence (awarded to non-medal winning competitors whose overall mark reaches the agreed international standard of 500 points). Overall, the UK team was placed twelfth in terms of average score per competitor, the first time that the British average score has exceeded the international standard. (See Appendix 3 for overall results).

1.4 The following report based on observations, comments and suggestions from the Technical Delegate, the official observers, the technical experts, the team leaders and the competitors themselves, has been prepared for the confidential information of the Board.

1.5 In the interests of brevity the trades are sometimes referred to by the international skill number, the key to which is given in Appendix 1.

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SELECTION, PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

2. Competitor Selection

2.1 The basis of competitor selection remains uneven but has improved. Some, particularly for Hospitality and Information Technology and for some Construction and Electrical skills, emerged from national competitions following regional heats and possibly some local pre-selection. Others were selected from long established competitions, which nevertheless do not attract a truly national entry. In two cases, Mechatronics and Refrigeration Techniques, competitions were organised rather late in the day in order, in the first instance, to gain the experience in a crucial new skill, in the second, to participate in a demonstration trade, with the expectation of developing truly national competitions next time .

2.2 Very disappointing has been the shortsighted attitude of some employers in not encouraging participation by their employees (e.g. in Manufacturing Engineering, Engineering Drafting/CAD and Mechatronics) because they are not prepared to forego the competitors' time needed to train and compete. The UK was therefore unable to field a competitor truly representative of the country and has foregone the experience of competitions at the leading edge of emerging technology.

2.3 We are still not selecting the best in the UK for every trade, and this reinforces the importance of the policy of the UK SKILLS Board of actively promoting truly national competitions in every skill. Additionally, the Board also decided that competitors for the Lyon competition were required to be confirmed as capable of achieving the international standard. The Competitions Policy Committee, determined that, since some national competitions had already taken place, a certificate from competition organisers would be sought for each nominated competitor to this effect. In spite of the necessary certification, eleven competitors failed to achieve the diploma standard but, as previously stated, the team average score was above the necessary 500 points.

2.4 A UK SKILLS representative again participated in the final selection procedure for every trade. Their role was to assess the competitor's broader suitability as a team member and, if possible, their ability to stand up to competitive pressure as well as to assess employer and family support. The procedure was confirmed valuable and necessary, although the UK SKILLS representatives did not have occasion formally to raise objection to any selected finalist.

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2.5 The lessons for the future are:

2.5.1 continue to encourage a more supportive attitude among employers

2.5.2 through ensuring adherence to the UK SKILLS code of practice assure that competitors are selected from truly national competitions which meet an overall national standard

2.5.3 continue UK SKILLS participation in the selection of competitors.

2.5.4 develop a more effective system to ensure that competitors are only selected if they are capable of achieving the international diploma standard.

3. Competitors' Qualifications

Every competitor held a relevant and recognised qualification. The increasing trend towards NVQs was demonstrated by 17 out of 27 of the team holding an NVQ, with 14 of these at NVQ level 3 or above.

4. Competitor preparation and training

4.1 All experts were required, in conjunction with national competition organisers, to manage the training and preparation of their competitor from selection for the UK team until the international competition. In order to inform experts about their role and provide them with necessary information, an Experts' Development Day was held at MANCAT in February 1995 and further training was provided at the Team Briefing in May.

4.2 Experts were split into industry sectors, each with a Sector Representative (Production Engineering, Vehicle Engineering, Engineering Services, Construction, Consumer Services and Electrical and Electronics). All Sectors met at least once during the period of preparation for the Skill Olympics and these meetings were used to discuss concerns and issues relating to preparation of competitors. Sector Representatives kept in touch with their experts to varying degrees and although geographical factors were a limitation to frequent meetings, contact was maintained by telephone and letter. Splitting sector groups by geographical rather than industry lines has been put forward for discussion.

4.3 A training programme was drawn up by each expert in co-operation with the competitor, his employer and relevant college authorities. The content and duration of these programmes varied and the time off the job ranged from a matter of days to several months. In general the standard of training programmes and the commitment of experts was high, use was made of outside agencies, other employers and local colleges for additional training and effort was made to ensure the competitors gained experience with relevant tools and materials.

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4.4 All experts were asked to produce a written training programme for their competitor and to submit a copy to UK SKILLS by 1 Jul - **of the 27 experts only 16 submitted their programme in advance of the deadline and several failed to submit a programme at all.** Laurie Croft has been invited by UK SKILLS to review the standard and content of all training programmes submitted with a view to drawing up recommendations for the future.

4.5 The majority of the team (71-88%) felt that they had received the necessary support and amount of time away from work from their employer and were happy with the assistance provided by their technical expert prior to the competition (73%).

4.6 However, in a minority of occasions, support from the technical expert appears to have been insufficient or he/she has not succeeded in impressing upon the competitors and his/her employer or college the level of commitment required to compete successfully. In at least one instance (Milling/CNC), this was discovered too late to reverse the situation (the competitor said that the level of time and commitment needed prior to the competition 'was not expressed strongly enough to my company - I was only given time to complete one test piece'). In the case of joinery, the expert expressed his concern some time in advance but unfortunately, even with intervention by UK SKILLS, the competitor went on to miss a diploma by one mark. An option for the future would be a visit by a representative of UK SKILLS to all competitors and their employers upon selection to the team.

4.7 Many competitors referred to the fact that, although technically very well trained, they felt unprepared for the stress and pressure of the international competition and the problem of communicating this to the team was well recognised by experts. One competitor said that to assist future competitors you must - 'make them realise what it's actually like to compete - **but you don't know what it's really like until you have done it'**.

4.8 Suggestions to overcome this problem include:

- ensure the national competition reflects the international as closely as possible in length, pressure and type of venue,
- if possible, enter the candidate for other competitions, particularly outside the UK,
- provide every competitor with the opportunity of an informal meeting with a past competitor in his trade,
- organise training outside the workplace and in a noisy or crowded environment to simulate competition conditions.

5. **Team Briefing**

5.1 Once again we are indebted to the generosity of the CITB in providing the opportunity to bring together the competitors and technical experts for an intensive training programme at their Training Centre in Bircham Newton in June.

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5.2 The programme was largely based on that of successful previous events and provided specialist briefings for both the competitors and experts on subjects such as developing learning skills, confidence building and stress management as well as joint sessions where competitors and experts were encouraged to work together.

5.3 The competitors arrived a full day in advance of the experts, were introduced to each other and the team leaders and took part in a programme of activities, designed and supervised by CITB staff to develop team spirit and encourage physical fitness. They were joined for part of the day by Fatima Whitbread, former Olympic medallist and Team Patron who gave an inspiring presentation on competition and self-development. A former medal winner also joined the sessions to give advice and past experience. A dinner for 100 including invited guests was held on the Friday night.

5.4 A new development for the Briefing was sessions on Work Process Management led by Dennis Knowles including a mock examination for competitors to demonstrate the need to concentrate on planning even when under pressure. For the experts, a role-playing exercise was introduced on the working of jury panels and a special session held for those nominated as Chief Experts.

5.5 The immediate feedback from competitors overall indicated that the briefing met its aims of bringing the competitors together as a team, giving them a clearer picture of what would be required of them at the Skill Olympics and giving them suggestions and methods which would enable them to perform better although there was less agreement that it brought experts and competitors together. It appears that a good balance in this programme has been achieved.

5.6 The most valuable part of the weekend for the competitors appears to be meeting other members of the team (mentioned by 75%) with WPM being singled out by 25% of the team and stress control by 17%. The two competitors who were unable to attend the briefing both commented that they would have benefitted from being there. Many members of the team expressed a wish to meet past competitors and it may be worth inviting an ex-competitor from each sector to future briefings.

5.7 The experts' response to the programme was less overwhelmingly positive than that of the competitors and suggests that this part of the programme needs refining. There is a need to balance the requirements of both experienced and new experts and ensure a balance of general sessions and sector groups.

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6. **Travel arrangements**

6.1 A group booking was made with British Airways for the two parties - the experts who departed on 5 October and the competitors who departed on 9 October - both groups returning on the morning of 19 October. The departure time for the team was dictated by the need to leave London after a breakfast reception on the morning of 9 October hosted by the Dorchester Hotel (employers of the competitor for Waiting). Overnight accommodation was arranged in central London for the night of 8 October, through travel agents Cantlie & Harvey, however this caused many last minute difficulties as the group booking was altered from hotel to hotel several times on the Friday before departure.

6.2 Travel within the UK was arranged by individuals apart from a coach to transport the team from the breakfast reception to the airport on 9 October. Individuals were able to claim for expenses incurred.

6.3 Travel insurance by means of a block policy was satisfactorily arranged.

7. **Toolkits**

7.1 Thanks to the generosity of Parcelforce (employers of the competitor for Heavy Automotive Mechanics) who agreed to transport all toolkits from their Birmingham depot to and from Lyon, toolkits were transported without charge to competitor organisers. This saved a substantial expense.

7.2 UK SKILLS briefed all experts on packing, labelling and paperwork and arrangements generally worked well. Particular thanks go to Mr Ray Prosser who managed the delivery and collection of toolkits at Eurexpo in Lyon and to the staff of Parcelforce's Birmingham depot, including the two drivers involved.

7.3 Toolkits arrived in good order although some minor damage was caused by handling by the local agents within Eurexpo. All the competitors reported that they had 'enough' or 'more than enough' tools and equipment.

8. **Funding**

8.1 Under the Code of Practice, skill competition organisers are responsible for meeting the full costs of sending their competitors and experts to the IYSO. These costs include travel, accommodation, subsistence and insurance; no charges were raised for the transportation of toolkits which were transported to and from Lyon by Parcelforce without charge. The threat of withdrawal of the competitor in the event of non-payment made an impression and all costs were paid to UK SKILLS before the team went to Lyon. In a few cases sponsorship was difficult to achieve and some skill competition organisers had to work hard to raise the necessary funding.

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8.2 The travel and accommodation costs for the UK team came to approximately £80,000, which has been recovered from skill competition organisers or directly from competitors' employers. UK SKILLS' costs (including staff time and contributions in kind) amounted to a further £70,0000. Total expenditure directly attributable to administration, travel and accommodation for the Lyon Skill Olympics was therefore in the region of £150,000.

8.3 This sum, however, takes no account of the costs incurred by industry in the organisation of national skills competitions from which competitors were selected, carrying out the preliminary training programmes and the competitors'/experts' wages during their absence. Information was requested from each sector and this has been calculated at **£4.27 million and it is this figure that properly demonstrates industry's commitment to IYSO.**

9. **Accommodation**

9.1 UK competitors were accommodated at the Hotel Campanile, situated between the city centre and Eurexpo. UK experts were accommodated at the Hotel Globe et Cecil in Lyon centre and all technical and official delegates and observers at the Hotel Concorde in the same area. Special efforts had been made to ensure the UK experts' hotel was in the vicinity of that of the official and technical delegates and this simplified communication through the week.

9.2 The team hotel was satisfactory but meals were provided at a separate location and were generally poor and on occasion totally inadequate. Despite requesting, and receiving, details of dietary requirements, no vegetarian options were provided by the French organisers. On a number of occasions the team leaders were forced to use UK SKILLS funds to purchase additional meals for the team. In future a float should be provided to team leaders to cover such eventualities.

9.3 The accommodation and subsistence provided for the experts and other delegates was satisfactory. A number of experts expressed dissatisfaction with the requirement to share a room during the competition particularly when as it was necessary to use their room to undertake work for the competition. Although it was possible to opt for a single room, they were required to pay the additional cost which was significant.

THE COMPETITION

10. **Jury Panels, including appointment or election of Chief experts**

10.1 This was the first competition in which each jury was not only overseen by a jury president (Technical Delegate) but in which the various trades were grouped under nine Senior Jury Presidents, who reported to the Chairman of the Technical Committee. Although it had originally been envisaged that only the Senior Jury Presidents would meet the chairman on a daily basis, it was decided that the difficulty of cascading accurate information was too great and all technical delegates, in fact, attended the daily briefing/trouble-shooting meetings of the technical committee. This arrangements seemed to work well.

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10.2 Mr Portway, the UK CNC/Turning expert, whose competitor was withdrawn from the competition because of injury in the UK, was appointed Jury resident for CNC/Milling where he carried out a most difficult task with considerable success.

10.3 For the second time, chief experts for most trades were selected in advance, the remainder being appointed or elected at Lyon. Four chief experts were appointed from the UK (trades 15, 20 , 25 and 27). In another trade (16) the UK expert was asked to act as deputy and had to take over management of the marking when the chief expert withdrew in the face of criticism.

10.4 In general, UK experts were content with the competence and fairness of chief experts although five trades (7, 9, 16, 29 and 30) were to a greater or lesser extent critical and one (9) made a formal submission to the technical committee that the chief expert not be re-appointed. UK experts' assessments of actual and putative chief experts have been recorded for use in making recommendations for future competitions.

10.5 In spite of the problems in some trades, most experts regarded the chief experts as competent and fair. The selection of chief experts in advance is certainly beneficial and interestingly enough, in the case of three out of the four trades with problems, no volunteer or nomination had been made in advance and appointments/elections were made at a very late stage. The lack of a strong chief expert was a major problem in the smooth running of many trades. In addition there was too little control of people coming on to the stand and, for some trades in particular, the press presence was extremely distracting.

10.6 Criticism had been received in respect of only one jury president but too late to enable anything to be done about it at the time. UK SKILLS is considering representations in respect of the unsatisfactory management of trades 29 and 30.

11. Project Selection

In general single projects were selected by ballot until a final "winner" emerged. In trades with multiple projects, proposals were taken from various countries. This was in spite of the instruction of the Technical Committee that for single projects balloting should be down to the best three to five viable projects, with the final choice by lot. This was intended to deter jury members from going for the easiest option or the one most likely to suit their competitor. Viable runners-up were nevertheless submitted to the Secretariat for banking and possible use in future competitions. (In one case (23) one expert "lost" his copy of the project selected, forcing the jury to take the runner-up project which was much easier - a UK gold medal nevertheless). A number of trades (7, 18, 33 and 38) had to radically adjust the projects to fit in with the equipment and materials available.

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12. **UK Projects**

UK projects were generally well received, two (18 and 27) accepted in toto with one (4) coming first but losing out at the final vote. Two (29 and 30) were largely UK, although reflecting similar projects from elsewhere and others (9 and 34) to a significant extent UK. The main reasons for rejecting UK projects was they were thought too difficult or not thought capable of completion in the time available. Where the UK was chief expert they felt somewhat inhibited in pressing their own projects, and the wish not to give excessive influence to one country might understandably have affected the voting. The UK is to suggest to IVTO that chief experts nominated in advance need not bring projects.

13. **Workshop conditions, equipment and materials**

13.1 The workshops were generally spacious and well laid out. Problems arose from noise and dust from the Stonemasonry stand which was badly sited next to Painting, IT and Electronics, the last two requiring considerable mental concentration. Some trades were also set out in long lines and therefore difficult for the chief expert to oversee. The hairdressing and cookery work stations were set too close to the barriers.

13.2 The adequacy of plant, equipment and materials varied widely according to the demands of the trade and generosity of the sponsor. After some problems in the run-up, the majority of trades were well satisfied with what was provided. Two trades however (18 and 38) had to modify the projects to fit the materials available. There was a major problem in trade 7 where only six CNC milling machines were provided and where three of the conventional milling machines were either out of true or broke down. The competition had to be run on a shift system. In trade 33 insufficient special and diagnostic tools and vehicles were provided to carry out the planned tasks and Trade 11 also had difficulties with insufficient equipment.

14. **Technical Assistance and Shop Masters**

Whilst a few trades (11, 18, 21, 29 and 30) suffered from individuals who were rude, incompetent, uncooperative or absent, the majority of shop masters were judged to be very good to excellent, or doing their very best in often difficult circumstances.

15. **Safety**

No serious injuries occurred although there were a few minor cuts and scratches. Plant and machinery was well protected and personal protective equipment was provided and used. The main problem arose from the number of trailing cables on the floors, the lack of effective exhaust trunking at the vehicle workstations and the delayed installation of local dust extraction at the woodworking machinery. Although ample fire exits existed, there were no evacuation instructions or specified assembly points. There was a well equipped first aid post with doctor and nurse in attendance but its location was not clearly indicated or pointed out to technical delegates and team leaders in advance.

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16. **Security**

Experts were generally satisfied with the provision and use of the lockable security cabinets provided although, inexplicably, not available for certain trades (9, 25 and 29). Trade 4 was concerned at the number of copies of the daily projects which appeared to be available in advance of the time they were to be undertaken. The extent to which interpreters are themselves experts is always impossible to control. The majority of UK experts believed that the security aspect was as well managed as is in practice possible, taking the view that in the end the competitor has actually to do the job. Several experts felt that security aspects were very dependent upon the quality of the chief expert.

17. **Overall arrangements**

17.1 Whilst it was apparent that the organisers were under significant financial constraints, the arrangements at Eurexpo were generally good, except where there were obvious problems with sponsorship funding (trade 6, 7, 18 and 38). There were continual problems with the coaches between the hotels and the exhibition centre since they either failed to arrive, arrived late or departed late. Although this was obviously a difficult matter to plan, experts and team leaders were not given sufficient accurate information in advance.

17.2 Team leaders considered that little attention had been given to the needs of competitors and, on their behalf the Austrian team leader attended a Technical Committee meeting specifically to express their concern about transport, the insufficient food at midday and the poor quality of the evening meal which meant that many competitors had to go out and buy additional meals. No provision was made for Asian cuisine nor for vegetarians. The UK competitors hotel was however judged very good. UK team leaders have made strong representations that the Swiss team leader be part of the organising committee at St Gallen and this proposal will be passed on to the IVTO.

17.3 The French organisers had combined the competition with a great vocational fair, with dozens of stands providing careers advice, attracting thousands of schoolchildren. Whilst highly commendable and imaginative, it did put additional pressure on the competitors from spectators chatting, photographing and filming up to 6 deep especially at the hairdressing and cooking stands. Perhaps more surprising was that the whole area was, if anything, even more crowded on the family days of Saturday and Sunday. From the point of view of the regional organisers the event must be counted a great success.

17.4 Whilst security controls were inevitable in view of recent terrorist activity and the French President's visit, the authorities did not appear to be particularly well organised for the task. The opening and closing ceremonies, never easy to manage, were beset by delays, disorganisation and a lack of control over the substantial press contingent.

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Marking and judging

18.1 The majority of UK experts were satisfied with the fairness and outcome of the marking in their trades. The Secretariat accepted the UK request for clear guidance in writing in future on the completion of the key marking form 6, which is individual to each trade.

18.2 In Fitting (1) an instrument was used to measure tolerances more accurately than was possible for the competitors themselves with the result that the gold medal went to a competitor with accurate key dimensions but whose model did not in fact work. The trade description clearly needs revision. More trades had turned their "subjective" elements into "objective" ones by breaking down these subjective judgements into quasi-objective elements, thus simplifying the marking process.

18.3 An increasing problem is the sheer number of experts, up to 20 in some trades, although this does make it possible to divide them into marking teams. Such allocation of judgements to teams generally worked well except in two trades (9 and 11) when the experts began to question the marking of their own competitor's job by another team.

18.4 After the results were announced the UK expert in Men's Hairdressing (30) expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the outcome, which did not accord with his perception of the way that the marking had been going. This matter is being followed up as a matter of serious concern for the future. Equally the UK expert in Ladies Hairdressing (29) found that her colleagues were equally astonished at the placing of the bronze medallist. Although on this occasion there was a new and wholly reliable senior jury president in charge of these and two other trades, the jury president himself was new to the task and both the chief experts were, as already indicated, last minute appointments. UK SKILLS will be making considered representations to the new Chairman of the Technical Committee about the management of these two trades in due course.

19. **UK competitors**

19.1 Those who won medals - gold (9, 23 and 34), silver (24) and bronze (15 and 21) as well as those who achieved diplomas (1, 16, 20 , 22, 29 and 30) did all that was expected of them. Two of the diploma winners (1 and 30) were particularly unfortunate not to make the medals.

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19.2 Of the rest one (37) withdrew on medical advice seemingly as a result of stress related back pain and three more (18, 27 and 33) could not cope with the stress of the competition and the press of spectators or were otherwise overawed by the event. A number (25 and 38) just did not come up to standard, in some cases performing less well than they were capable of. The expert for Tiling (12) commented "he did not use WPM, rushed at the job, performed below his abilities, gave excessive praise to other competitors, appeared to have low self-esteem and ended up very tired". Three (7, 11 and 26) had problems of delays or made serious errors on the first or second day which were either irrecoverable (26) or inclined them to cease competing (7). The Mechatronics team (4) had an early setback but continued "calm and focused" recovering their position somewhat but not in the end in contention. The Waiting competitor (35) apparently had a bad first day but, as he was without an expert there is no authoritative view of his performance although he seemed calm and confident.

19.3 Whilst the medal count and the fact that over half the UK team exceeded the diploma standard, many avowedly having applied and benefited from WPM, **it was disappointing that a number simply seemed to forget all about it and so many others could not stand the physical and mental pressure.** All competitors had been interviewed by one or other of the team leaders before final selection. Whilst it may be possible to identify those who have insufficient commitment or who have quite other priorities, it is much harder to diagnose those likely to fall victim to stress, and to be so sure of that judgement as to seek to deny the competitor a place in the team. Of the gold medal winners one was an extrovert, one a seeming introvert and the third a straightforward highly competent craftsman.

19.4 A number of competitors themselves commented on the fact that their national competition had in no way prepared them for the pressure and atmosphere of the international - even the gold medal winner in cookery asked for 'the same amount of pressure in your national competition .. my national lasted 2 hours, Lyon lasted 32'. However much additional competition it might have been possible to arrange, (and that in itself is difficult), nothing could have prepared them to face the noise, the press and the hubbub of 200,000 visitors over the four days. Choosing a shortlist of two or three competitors for intensive training with a play-off to select the final UK representative might weed out those unlikely to survive but it has very great cost implications.

19.5 When asked after the competition whether they felt taking part in the competition had been worthwhile - 100% of the competitors said yes.

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UK experts

20.1 One expert (35) had to withdraw owing to ill health before departure and could not be replaced and one (6) lost his competitor to an accident a week before the competition but did sterling work as jury president for trade 7.

20.2 For nine of the remaining experts (4, 9, 11, 22, 26, 30, 33, 38 and 45) this was their first Skill Olympics and all appeared to be technically highly competent, although several freely admitted they had learned a great deal about the process of negotiation, what to look for and when and how to be more assertive. Paul Turnbull (4) argued forcefully for his competitors on a matter of dispute but correctly and diplomatically accepted the final adjudication of the chief expert. He also learned a great deal about aspects of training to which to give greater emphasis in future. Another new expert, Mary Barker (9) had a hard competition in repeated dispute with the chief expert but her competitor came out with a gold medal. Reference has already been made to William Mackenzie (30) who was disappointed and concerned at the outcome of the competition, although this was not apparent during the competition despite continual contact.

20.3 Four out of the seven "old stagers" (15, 20 , 21, 24. 25. 27 and 31) acted as chief experts and between them got three medals and two diplomas. For the remainder it was their second or third (1, 7, 12, 16, 18, 23 and 29) competition and several showed a marked improvement in confidence and competence since Taiwan, not least with a gold for Simon Watkins' competitor (23). Peter Griffiths (34) is quite outstanding in his expertise, quiet confidence and alert perceptiveness which were appropriately rewarded. The contribution of Jason Bridge (7) was limited by his work commitments and, indeed, only representations at the highest level secured his release for Lyon. Concern was expressed as to whether Brian Musson (12) had the ability/confidence to inspire his competitor who once again did very badly. Ronnie Geary (18) was bitterly disappointed at his competitor's failure to apply WPM and to identify the high mark areas in spite of the great amount of time and money that had been expended on his training.

20.4 One of those who acted as a chief expert, successfully managing some 17 experts, commented that it was "the hardest task he had ever undertaken". Nevertheless, he and another UK chief expert were asked by their teams if they could be reappointed as chief experts if available for St Gallen as they had both run such good competitions (15 and 20).

20.5 Generally speaking the UK experts were a credit to the country, both in the knowledge and ability they displayed and in their demeanour. They were generally seen as positive and actively participatory, though not as bumptious as some and generally fair in their judgements. The Technical Delegate received only one request to intervene with a UK expert over an issue in which the expert was in fact technically in the right.

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21. Visitors

21.1 Given the venue for the competition, considerable efforts were made to encourage visitors from the UK and a large number were anticipated. Those intending to visit were asked to advise UK SKILLS in order that they could be assisted in their plans, be looked after and be given advice on a range of matters including competition rules concerning contact with competitors. Kirker Travel Ltd, a specialist in short breaks to European cities was appointed the accredited travel agent for visitors.

21.2 Over 150 visitors are known to have visited the competition from the UK. The Employment Minister, Mr James Paice MP, was present from 12 to 15 October. Lord Trefgarne, Chairman of the Engineering Training Authority and President of Mechanical & Metal Trades Confederation, spent two days in Lyon. Other visitors included six members of the UK SKILLS Board, members of the Competitions Policy Committee and the Skill Olympics National Committee, employers, trade union representatives, training providers, college principals and lecturers, parents, skills competition organisers and committee members.

21.3 It had been hoped to establish a UK information centre to act as a general point of contact for the UK party as well as an information centre for visitors. This was frustrated by the French organisers' decision to charge an entrance fee of FF30 per day. In order to save registered British visitors having to pay this charge, UK SKILLS had to provide someone at the entrance of Eurexpo throughout the competition. In spite of the welcome assistance of a number of visitors in this task, it proved impossible to man an information point as well. Such a facility needs to be arranged for the next competition and if an entrance charge is to levied in future, arrangements should be made by the organisers to issue free tickets well in advance for accredited national visitors.

21.4 The organisers were unable to guarantee tickets for visitors to the opening and closing ceremonies in advance. This was the cause of a great deal of concern and uncertainty, affecting visitors' overall travel plans. In the event, there were more than enough tickets but considerable time, effort and expense were involved in distribution to the substantial number of widely-dispersed visitors' hotels. UK SKILLS must press for the allocation and distribution of tickets well in advance of the competition.

21.5 The very considerable efforts of the French organisers to publicise the competition resulted in over 200 000 visitors overall. While most important in raising the profile of skills competitions in general, their number contributed to the distractions and uncomfortable environment in which competitors had to work.

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22. **Publicity and public relations**

See Appendix 3.

23. **Examples of good training practice**

23.1 Experts commented that in Agricultural Mechanics (37) he would investigate the Swiss training system, in Carpentry that he would look onto the use of specialist setting out tools, jigs and holding devices, although in fact that he believed that the trade description should be radically modified.

23.2 In Wall and Floor Tiling the expert noted the need for UK competitors to be trained in basic bricklaying techniques, the rendering of background and floor screeding, processes not usually done by tilers in the UK but necessary for the competition.

23.3 In Ladies' Hairdressing the expert commented that in the Netherlands training included all aspects of the tasks undertaken at the competition, whilst in the pursuit of NVQs most hairdressers did not train their staff in certain basic skills such as finger waving, long hair and setting work and that the UK will therefore find it increasingly difficult to find competitors experienced in these techniques.

24. **The introduction and effectiveness of WPM**

24.1 Following the Skill Olympics in Taiwan, a study was commissioned by UK SKILLS to investigate the differences in performance between our national competitors at the IYSO and those of other leading industrial nations. One of the main findings of the resulting report was the critical part played in performance by Work Process Management (WPM) - a phrase used to describe what a worker should do by way of planning, preparation and review in order to accomplish a given task - the UK had appeared to concentrate on technical and manual skills to the neglect of planning and work process skills.

24.2 On the basis of these findings, the UK SKILLS Board decided that an element of WPM should be integrated into the training of the whole team for the 33rd IYSO and Dennis Knowles was appointed to mastermind the project. Dennis attended meetings of all Sectors to brief experts on WPM, held sessions at the Team Briefing for competitors and experts and attended Lyon to report on the effectiveness of implementation at the competition.

24.3 All experts were asked to produce a report on the application of WPM within their trade by the end of July 1995 - **despite a number of verbal and written reminders to experts, several missed the deadline and seven failed to respond at all**. The responses received varied considerably however most of those responding appeared to understand the process and how it could be applied to their trade.

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24.4 Following the competition 73% of competitors said that their WPM training had helped them during the competition. Except in one instance, all competitors claimed that they did take time to read the instructions and plan at the start of the competition - however six admitted to abandoning the plan when problems were encountered. Certainly the three competitors who achieved the highest marks in the UK team appear to have been well trained in WPM by their experts and to have applied the principles during the competition. Conversely, those scoring the lowest marks included competitors who appeared to have been poorly briefed in WPM or to have failed to apply it on the day (the competitor for Wall and Floor Tiling, who said prior to the competition that WPM meant nothing to him and that its application would be of little use, was unable to complete his project and achieved the lowest mark in his trade).

24.5 Strong evidence has therefore been obtained regarding the value of WPM to competitors and the principle of WPM has gained general acceptance - a number of experts commented that its application should be strengthened and improved in the future and that it should be applied to training programmes from the word go. However, there is clearly still room for improvement. The full commitment of all experts must be assured in future and the system must be strengthened and improved for the training of competitors for St Gallen in 1997.

25. **Lessons for the future - UK SKILLS**

25.1 Most of the experts' comments emphasised the need to select competitors from a bigger pool (which is of course already UK SKILLS policy), to select earlier so as to lengthen training time but reduce the impact on employment and to find ways of compensating employers for loss of key workers during longer and more intensive training. One expert called for greater government funding and several more commented on the need for longer training with the cabinet maker comparing three months full time training for the Taiwanese competitor compared to two weeks (plus supporting training), for the UK competitor. Training was a matter not only of increasing quality and accuracy but also speed of working (16). Several mentioned the need to use past international projects for training purposes and many experts commented positively on the value of WPM and its use by their competitors, one mentioning the need to link this with time management generally and the possible use of videos during training to enable trainees to see how they performed.

25.2 On the psychological side there was concern at the failure of several competitors to cope with the stress involved and one expressed surprise that the UK should fare so badly here in comparison with competitors from countries where there was much greater pressure on them to excel. One expert (20) asked whether policy should be only to take those competitors with a realistic chance of doing very well. Whilst the UK SKILLS policy is already only to accept competitors who are certified by their expert as capable of reaching diploma standard, it is clearly difficult to identify in advance those who will not come up to scratch on the day. In fact a competitor over whom serious doubts were raised late in his training went on to miss the diploma standard by only one mark.

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25.3 Mention has already been made of the desirability of the national finals selecting a short list of two or three who then play off for the UK place after a certain amount of training and further appraisal. This would be excellent if it could be afforded and is an option which UK SKILLS and competition organisers should consider for the future.

25.4 It was also frequently suggested that the team leaders should in future operate separately during the competition in order to increase their availability, whilst meeting up regularly to exchange information. Communication between team leaders, members of UK SKILLS staff and experts was generally difficult, hampered by the large area to be covered and the huge crowds. Solutions for the future include the use of walkie-talkies and the establishment of a central UK meeting point with regular rendezvous times during the day.

25.5 It was suggested that, for experts, there might be 'regular counselling/unwinding sessions at the end of the day as a team'. The Technical Delegate made himself available to the experts each day on their return to their hotel to deal with any issues of concern, to console and to encourage, but it was apparent that not all of them felt the need for a team get together and preferred to rest or relax either alone or with one or two friends. These daily informal get-togethers together with the pre-competition meeting for all experts and the review session on the last marking day seemed adequate to maintain team morale. Additionally, however, a plan is required for regular set times throughout the competition to be agreed to allow UK officials and staff to meet and resolve any matters that might have arisen.

25.6 One or two competitors were concerned by comments from an expert that they should have won a medal or that their success had been prejudiced in some other way. **It must be impressed upon all experts that such concerns must not be expressed to competitors but handled through the correct channels.**

25.7 Some problems with alcohol misuse and discipline involving two of the team arose between the end of the competition and the closing ceremony. To prevent recurrence the team leaders recommend that a binding code of conduct for the competitors on misuse of alcohol be established (a voluntary code currently exists) and that the co-operation of the experts be sought in this matter. These were, however, isolated incidents and the behaviour of the competitors as representatives of their country was, in general, exemplary.

25.8 One expert and several visitors commented with some justification adversely on UK SKILLS' social reception which was at an inappropriate venue, cramped, noisy, inconvenient and no great credit to the organisation.

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26. **Lessons for the future - IVTO**

26.1 Matters of technical detail or marking are best dealt with through amendments to the trade description which should have been submitted by each trade in Lyon. There are however a number of issues (such as the fact that measurement of tolerances should not be to a greater degree of accuracy than the competitor is able himself/herself to measure) to which a general ruling should be given. Equally, tolerances should preferably not be in excess of the normal demands of the trade, which appears to occur in Plumbing. In Welding it is suggested that the practice be introduced of disabling some technological aids on equipment during certain tests in order to be able better to judge the skill of the welder and to meet the criticism that it must not become a machine competition but be a skill competition. The test pieces used for Carpentry are in practice only used in a few countries and this trade description needs radical revision to make it more universally applicable to the trade. The approach to IT projects is to be revised to make it less language dependent and avoid having to translate 60 pages of text into Korean.

26.2 Whilst the increasing number of experts (up to 20 in some trades) undoubtedly causes problems of overcrowding and complicates the management of the competition and marking process, it is not proposed to suggest reversion to the 60% rule. This is a former rule under which a country is only allowed to bring a number of experts equal to 60% of the number of its competitors. Not only does this leave the competitor without a friendly (if non communicating) face and someone to be alert to his or her as well as to others' interests, but **statistically a competitor without an expert has been shown to be disadvantaged**. In addition, the participating country has no way of briefing itself on how the trade is developing and requirements for appropriate training and is able to make no contribution to the development of the trade or amendment of the trade description.

26.3 There is certainly a need to give clearer guidance in writing on the recording of the marking process and the IVTO secretariat's acceptance of this will be followed up.

26.4 A major issue for the IVTO to face is how far it should still seek to preserve the secrecy of the projects in advance of the competition. The Secretariat appeared to accept the impossibility of this, particularly as it moves towards banking of projects (which may eventually be accessible on the internet). Whilst final selection could be left to a late stage, competitors could be aware of, and indeed able to practice, those from which the final selection was to be made. This would not only remove a source of suspicion but also enable the host country more easily to prepare the materials actually needed, or at least to identify the sources of what might be required. It would also reduce the length of time during which the experts are required to attend the competition. The fact is that, however much practised, the competitor still has to perform under pressure on the day. In many trades it would also be possible to introduce larger or smaller changes relatively simply by using CAD.

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26.5 The role of chief expert is thought to be much more demanding than seems to be realised by the IVTO and it is proposed to put forward the suggestion that chief experts nominated in advance not be required to submit projects. The strongest possible recommendation should also be made that chief experts do not mark but concentrate on the efficient management of the competition and the recording of total marks.

26.6 The IVTO should certainly seek to raise standards by enforcing its instruction that final project selection should be by ballot in order to give a better chance to viable but difficult projects.

26.7 UK SKILLS will continue to press for the end of the "half CNC, half conventional machine" split in milling and turning and urge the adoption of three new trades - CNC Milling, CNC Turning and general machining combining both conventional milling and turning. This proposal was strongly supported by all the experts in trades 6 and 7 in Lyon but any discussion was side-tracked and deferred by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the technical committee.

26.8 UK SKILLS is also considering urging that trade descriptions be less concerned simply with production and more with testing analytical skills, working on creative solutions and fault finding which are the skills which craftsmen at this level increasingly need.

27. **Other general comments**

27.1 Die Making for Plastics, which had been accepted as a trade demonstration due to efforts by the UK, only attracted three other entries and the French sponsors pulled out.

27.2 Heavy Automotive Mechanics (45) also encouraged by the UK, only attracted three other participating countries which was a considerable disappointment in view of the use world wide of a relatively limited number of designs.

27.3 The UK's absence from the new Welding trade was noted with surprise, not least because BOC in fact gives considerable support to the Irish, who in fact won gold in both Welding and Constructional Steelwork.

27.4 **The failure to enter a competitor in CAD is also difficult to justify when the UK had done so much to encourage the introduction of this trade.**

27.5 There was a demonstration of Telematics, a proposed new two person team trade bringing together communications software and hardware installation (details available)

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27.6 There was a most interesting demonstration of Floristry but whether it takes off as a trade will depend very much on whether agreement can be achieved on style and marking criteria. The competition may otherwise be seen as disadvantaging non-European competitors.

27.7 The demonstration trade Car Spraying, held at a separate location attracted only some 6 entries but could be a possible for UK participation in the future.

27.8 During the competition the Australians ran, quite independently, a Global Multi-media Challenge involving 6 teams (Australia, Finland, Malaysia, Sweden, UK and USA)each with two members in the home country and two in Lyon. The competition involved providing real-time multimedia broadcasts of the Skill Olympics on the Internet and teams were judged on the accuracy and attractiveness of their coverage. International judges awarded the prize to Finland. The UK entered a team from Edge Hill College.

27.9 Whilst some experts commented that the period set aside for competitors to visit other stands was a waste of time as most of the competitors were too stressed to make use of it, it is surely absurd that they should travel to and participate in such a wide ranging competition without the opportunity to see what others are doing. It might be preferable for the time to be allotted following an early finish on day two or day three rather than during the middle of the day and this will be put to the IVTO for consideration.

Appendices:

1. List of skills, competitors and experts.
2. Results.
3. Publicity and public relations.