

Official report on the 35th World Skills Competition (Skill Olympics), Montreal, Canada, 11 – 15 November 1999

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 35th World Skills Competition (WSC and often still known as the Skill Olympics) was held at the Olympic Stadium, Montreal from 11 to 15 November 1999. A total of 607 competitors from 33 countries took part. The competition was organised by the Corporation du 35^e Mondial des Métiers with the support of the city of Montreal, the province of Quebec and the federal government of Canada and with sponsorship and materials support by companies and organisations throughout Canada.
- 1.2 UK SKILLS entered a team of 31 competitors in 30 trades (Appendix 1). The UK team was the seventh largest to take part. The competitors were supported by 30 technical experts and two team leaders. The Chairman of UK SKILLS and UK Official Delegate, Sir John Cassels CB, attended as well as the Technical Delegate, Mr Jim Hammer CB, and there were two UK official observers, Mr Neil Fountain, Chief Executive MIDAS (Manchester Investment & Development Agency Service), and Miss Patricia Snell OBE, Chief Executive of UK SKILLS.
- 1.3 The UK team was awarded one silver medal (Information Technology) and two bronze medals (Electronic Applications and Restaurant Service). In addition, the team members were awarded nine diplomas of excellence (awarded to non-medal winning competitors whose overall mark reaches the agreed international standard of 500 points). Whether they gained medals or not, the competitors gave their all and no more could have been expected of them, whether in terms of effort or determination particularly in the face of perhaps inevitable setbacks. In their enthusiastic and dedicated approach, they were excellent ambassadors for the UK. Overall, the UK team was placed 10th in the order of merit, based on a gold medal scoring 4 points, silver medal 3, bronze 2 and diploma of excellence 1 (see Appendix 2 for overall results).
- 1.4 It is encouraging to record that following the absence at the previous international competition of any UK competitors in the mainstream engineering trades and in men's or ladies' hairdressing (in which the UK has consistently won medals) the UK team included entries for Mechanical Engineering Drawing and Design CADD, CNC Milling and both hairdressing trades.

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- 1.5 The following report based on observations, comments and suggestions from the Technical Delegate, the official observers, the technical experts, the team leaders and competitors themselves has been prepared for the confidential information of the Board.
- 1.6 In the interests of brevity, the trades are sometimes referred to by the international skill number, the key to which is given in Appendix 2.

SELECTION, PREPARATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

2. Appointment and preparation of technical experts

- 2.1 The membership and terms of reference of the Skill Olympics National Committee (SONC) were updated in December 1997 in order for the committee to be able to concentrate more effectively on the selection, preparation and entry of the UK team for the Skill Olympics. The detailed planning was achieved by working groups consisting predominantly of committee members. The committee was also physically involved in conducting preparatory training and briefing events and in monitoring the preparation of the team.
- 2.2 Much effort was put into developing the preparation and training of technical experts. The bench-marking project, completed for UK SKILLS in 1994, had highlighted three major requirements, one being that for high grade experts. A draft set of competences was prepared in early 1998 as a discussion document for any new expert at both the nomination and interview stage and for use in existing experts' reviews. Personal review meetings, conducted by Jim Hammer, the UK Technical Delegate and Peter Neate, a consultant and former expert, provided, in the case of experienced experts, an opportunity to review their previous performance in relation to a joint audit of their strengths and weaknesses, to discuss any particular concerns and for UK SKILLS to reassure itself that they were able to undertake their role effectively. For the new experts, it was an opportunity to make contact, to describe their role, to answer concerns and questions and generally to assure them of UK SKILLS' help and support.
- 2.3 Nineteen of the 30 technical experts accepted re-appointment. At least 13 new experts were proposed by their competition organisers or trade bodies. Three (18, 26 and 30) were late appointees when those originally invited had to withdraw. Particular emphasis was placed at the review meetings on the importance of the experts undertaking a skill audit of his or her competitor's abilities, to make no assumptions and to base the training programme on that assessment of their skills or weaknesses. Half of those who commented, including most of the new experts, thought it a useful exercise, but others felt it excessively costly and demanding on their time and would have preferred more written information, technical group discussions or a telephone call. The value and format of these review meetings requires due consideration and they should perhaps be more selective.

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- 2.4 An experts' development conference took place over two days at the AA College, Widmerpool, near Nottingham, in October 1998. The first day provided new technical experts with detailed introductory briefings. Experienced experts arrived in the early evening and the remainder of the programme allowed all experts the opportunity to be updated and for the new experts to learn from the experience of the remainder, the accent being on the preparation of competitors for the Skill Olympics. It was intended that the team briefing would concentrate on the role of the expert at the Skill Olympics. The development conference proved a success but improvements have been proposed. These include a better system of presenting the mass of information necessary for new experts and also whether experienced experts would continue to benefit from attending such an event at this stage of the preparation cycle.
3. **Competitor selection**
- 3.1 The selection of competitors takes place through the National Framework of Skills Competitions covering a range of industry sectors throughout the United Kingdom. Competitions are supported by their industry sectors and all those nominating competitors to the WSC are required to hold a UK SKILLS National Seal of Approval.
- 3.2 Overall the standard of national skills competitions has risen and continues to rise in respect of the strength of industry support, funding, administration and publicity and the number of competitors entering. It is also true that skill competition organisers are looking increasingly closely at the way in which competitors for the WSC are selected and SkillBUILD in particular have introduced a new and complex selection process (see 3.9 below). However there is still a wide disparity between the standards of competitions in different sectors and the some are still in need much improvement.
- 3.3 A number of new skills competitions were developed feeding into the WSC. These included SkillFLORIST, the National CNC/Milling competition, SkillIT IT PC and Network Support, SkillTHERAPY and SkillHOSPITALITY's Pastry Chef. The SkillHAIR organisation was also revived after some years in abeyance and nominated competitors in Ladies' and Men's Hairdressing although by agreement with the UK SKILLS Board a full national competition was not run.
- 3.4 The majority of national competitions, such as SkillBUILD, SkillAUTO, SkillELECTRIC etc run a series of heats locally and regionally before their national final. An increasing number are no longer making the selection of their international competitors at the final event but taking two or more of the top competitors through a further, more focused, selection process – 13 trades in all.

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- 3.5 Other competitions, such as SkillHOSPITALITY and SkillFLORIST operate in sectors where there is a strong network of existing skills competitions. They take the best-qualified competitors from these competitions and run a tailored selection event for the WSC.
- 3.6 Of the UK team, 14 trades were selected through 3 or more heats of competition, 13 through 2 heats and 3 through only one heats (heats here including paper selection, production of a test piece and success in a filter competition).
- 3.7 The pool of competitors from which a nominee is ultimately selected varies enormously. SkillIT – IT User competition has a series of local and regional competitions into which over a 1000 competitors entered whereas SkillFORM, had only about 30 entrants. Low levels of entry are occasionally due to low intake of apprentices in the sector and certainly some new competitions struggle at first to find entrants. Generally, however, it is an uphill struggle to obtain significant numbers of entrants.
- 3.8 The importance of ensuring competitors are subjected to a selection process which reflects the international in terms of duration, standards, public exposure etc has now been recognised and the majority of competitors came through a selection which took all these into account at some stage during the process.
- 3.9 In 1999 SkillBUILD made major changes to the process by which they selected competitors for nomination to the UK SKILLS team. The top three competitors of SkillBUILD 1997 and 1998 in each trade took part in a three-day selection test which included interviews and psychometric testing and enabled the technical experts to make a very good assessment of each competitor's skills.
- 3.10 UK SKILLS continued its process of undertaking one-to-one interviews with the finalists of all competitions feeding into the World Skills Competition. Interviews were undertaken by the team leaders or members of SONC. These interviews have proved extremely useful in highlighting areas of possible concern including health, employer support and motivation.

4. Competitors' qualifications

Every competitor held a relevant and recognised qualification. Out of the team of 31, 17 of these were at NVQ level 3 (equivalent to two A levels) or above. Three held a BTEC OND (equivalent to 2 A Levels), two held a BTEC ONC (equivalent to 2 A Levels), eight held an NVQ level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs Grade C+), one held an NVQ (equivalent to 4 GCSEs Grades D-G) and one held a GNVQ (equivalent to 4 GCSEs Grades D-G).

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Competitors' preparation and training

- 5.1 A draft document was prepared by members of SONC and UK SKILLS from which each expert produced a comprehensive preparation programme for competitors and for their employers, colleges and families. This document, with the competitors' manual, provided all necessary information and advice required in the preparation of the competitor. The standard of these programmes was generally satisfactory but it is intended to review the balance of material provided for the competitor and employer. UK SKILLS is to consider the production of the preparation programmes centrally with appropriate sections supplied by individual experts.
- 5.2 Experts also produced a training timetable in co-operation with the competitor, his employer and relevant college authorities. The content and duration of these timetables varied and the time off the job ranged from a fortnight to several months. In general the standard of the programmes and the commitment of experts was high, use was made of outside agencies, other employers and local colleges for additional training, and efforts were made to ensure that competitors gained experience with relevant tools and materials.
- 5.3 A skill audit, to consider how competitors manage the project and the pressures of national competitions, was completed by technical experts, the purpose being to provide a basis for training for the Skill Olympics. It assisted in making training more specific to the needs of the individual competitor.
- 5.4 The majority of employers are extremely supportive and generous in allowing time off for additional training and most of the team (80%) was highly satisfied. However, the competitor in Beauty Care was particularly unhappy with the support that she received and the Plasterer lost the necessary report on being made redundant. *Support*
- 5.5 Competitors were generally very happy with the assistance provided by their technical experts prior to the competition although those for Mechatronics and Floristry were dissatisfied.

6. Mentoring and monitoring

- 6.1 For the first time all new experts were provided with a mentor, where possible an expert in a related trade with the experience of one international competition. Seven of the new experts found this provided a valuable and informative contact. The arrangement should continue in the future.
- 6.2 Also for the first time members of SONC were appointed as monitors to each expert, their role being to make contact during April, July and September 1999 to check that the elements of the preparation programme, such as the skill audit, preparation of the training plan and contact with the support group had been completed, that training was going to plan and to identify any problems. Fifteen of the 26 who commented felt that this was useful, particularly so in

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the building trades where Barrie Roe, who was also closely involved in the organisation of SkillBUILD, was also able to deal with technical issues but doubts about the value of the processes were expressed by others. The value and format of the monitoring arrangements **require review.**

7. Team briefing

7.1 Yet again we are extremely grateful to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) in providing us with the facilities of their National Construction College at Bircham Newton, giving us the opportunity to bring together the competitors and technical experts for an intensive training programme in early June. The programme retained many successful elements from previous events but SONC and its working group were largely responsible for introducing some most successful new elements. It also took account of the outdoor team building weekend for competitors and which was to take place three months later. As a result, Bruce Robinson, the organiser of that subsequent weekend, was closely involved in the planning process and in many of the team building activities at Bircham Newton.

7.2 The competitors arrived the day before the experts and, on the first evening, were immediately involved in an exercise designed by CITB which proved highly successful in team building and highlighting the need for work planning. The following morning, a programme of activities took place, supervised by CITB staff to develop team spirit and encourage physical stamina. This was followed by a fascinating talk by the team patron, Tracy Edwards MBE, the round-the-world yachtswoman. Thereafter, background information briefings took place. At the same time, new and inexperienced experts spent the afternoon in technical briefings and advice, provided by Claire Patrick, a performance coach and founder of Inner Excellence, on personal relationships and handling stress. In the evening, following the arrival of the remaining experts, a dinner was held for nearly 100 people including a number of invited guests.

7.3 The following day's programme for competitors included competition management and handling stress and, for experts, further briefing on procedures and duties as a member of the international jury panel. A number of joint practical sessions took place, which were considered particularly valuable in helping to ensure that all competitors and experts worked together as a complete team. It is considered that such sessions are so useful that more such activities will be included in any **future programme.**

8. Team building weekend

8.1 Thanks to the generosity of the Brathay Hall Trust, a team building weekend for competitors and team leaders took place at Brathay Hall, Ambleside, Cumbria from 27 to 30 August. This was the first time that a UK team had benefited from the experience and it is hoped that future teams will be equally

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fortunate. It helped to focus individuals' minds on how they can assist, encourage and support others as well as receive assistance from others.

- 8.2 Different elements of Bruce Robinson's programme provided challenges in different ways and included public speaking and mental and physical challenges both as individuals and in groups or teams. He was ably assisted by his Brathay staff and by Claire Patrick, who developed ideas and strategy that she had initiated at the team briefing and who provided a great deal of advice both generally and individually. The relevance of the programme and activities to what competitors would undergo in Montreal became more evident as the programme progressed. In this, Gareth Humphreys, the one expert present, was a great help in highlighting and explaining this.
- 8.3 While a great success, the programme for any future similar venture must be more closely co-ordinated with that for the team briefing and some elements of one weekend transferred to the other and vice versa.

9. Travel arrangements

- 9.1 Group travel arrangements were made with Air Canada, the technical experts' group travelling from Heathrow to Montreal on 4 November and the remainder on 7 November. Both groups returned overnight arriving at Heathrow on the morning of 19 November.
- 9.2 A reception was held in London on the evening before the departure of the competitors hosted by Claridges, the hotel employing the competitors for Cookery and Confectioner/Pastry Chef. Overnight accommodation was arranged in central London through a travel agent. The selected hotel was changed at the last minute and, as both were very close to each other, no problems resulted. A coach took competitors to the reception and to Heathrow the following morning. Other travel within the UK was arranged by individuals. Travel insurance by means of a block policy was satisfactorily arranged.

10. Tool-boxes

Tool-boxes were transported via Schenker International Ltd who had been appointed as the official customs broker and freight forwarder for the 35th World Skills Competition by the organising committee. Experts/competitors were asked to send their toolboxes to the Birmingham depot. UK SKILLS briefed all experts on packing, labelling and paperwork, and arrangements generally worked well. However, deadline for delivery to the Birmingham depot was extended for trade 34 (Cookery) for which competitors were required to bring additional equipment to Canada at the last minute. Particular thanks go to Dave Kennedy of Schenkers, Fairs and Exhibitions Services, Brentwood depot.

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11. Uniforms, gifts and promotional items

- 11.1 Uniforms were provided for all experts and competitors. The type chosen was similar to that selected for the three previous competitions. Shoes were provided by Clarks International, shirts and T-shirts by Sherman Cooper and blazers and trousers and skirts by InCorporateWear, who agreed to provide items at cost.
- 11.2 The team fitting was carried out during the team briefing. Unfortunately, due to errors made, various items of uniform for either competitors or experts had to be returned and exchanged. Because uniforms were handmade and subsequently required a minimum of six weeks to make up (it was also later discovered that the company that InCorporateWear had contracted out to had run out of cloth) four experts and two competitors did not receive their uniform until a few days before departure to Montreal or indeed at the last minute.
- 11.3 Dealing with one supplier should have ensured that uniforms were delivered in good time. The fitting session should have ensured that uniforms fitted first time round. Errors either crept in at the fitting stage or at the production stage and this needs to be eliminated next time round. It should be noted that the errors resulted in the overall cost of supply being higher than the original estimate.
- 11.4 There was a general feeling that the design of both the uniform and tie needed to be modernised.
- 11.5 Union Jack badges and UK SKILLS key rings were provided for all competitors and experts. The badges, designed by Robin Kyte, UK Technical Expert for Jewellery, proved to be very popular and the demand was underestimated. Significantly more should be ordered in future.

12. Accommodation

- 12.1 UK technical experts and officials were accommodated in downtown Montreal at the Hotel Marriott Château Champlain, which proved very satisfactory. In the same hotel were the other official and technical delegates, IVTO officials and the experts from ten other countries. Daily travel to and from the competition venue was by Metro, a journey of about half an hour. All technical experts, competitors and other officially accredited members of the UK party received tickets for unlimited free travel on the Metro while in Montreal for the competition.
- 12.2 UK competitors and team leaders were accommodated at the Hotel Auberge Universel with competitors from ten other countries. It had the distinct advantage of being less than ten minutes walk from the Olympic Stadium. While the accommodation and general facilities were good, the choice and standard of meals left a good deal to be desired. It is not expected that such a

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situation will arise in the future but the team leaders should have some form of contingency funding for such an eventuality.

13. Funding

- 13.1 Under the code of practice, skills competition organisers are responsible for meeting the full costs of sending their competitors and experts to the Skill Olympics. These costs include travel, accommodation, subsistence and insurance. 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 Montreal.
- 13.2 The costs for the UK team came to approximately £130,000, which has been recovered from skills competition organisers. UK SKILLS' costs (including staff time and contributions in kind) amounted to a further £165,000. Total expenditure directly attributable to the Montreal Skill Olympics was therefore in the region of £295,000.
- 13.3 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. This has been calculated at over £5 million and it is this figure that properly demonstrates industry's commitment to the WSC.

THE COMPETITION

14. Jury panels (including chief experts)

- 14.1 Member organisations were invited to propose chief experts at the April meeting of the international Technical Committee and the final decision was made by the committee on the basis of reputation, experience and linguistic ability and took account of members' objections and the views of the jury presidents at the previous competitions.
- 14.2 One UK expert was appointed as chief expert (16). Half the UK experts were satisfied with the work of their jury presidents. The most common criticism of the chief experts was their lack of leadership skills, lack of preparation, poor communication or weakness in dealing with infringements. As before, UK experts have been invited to record those whom they regard as unacceptable.
- 14.3 At the first meeting of the international Technical Committee the Irish delegate proposed that the experts should themselves elect the chief expert for the next competition in Seoul plus two reserves. This was immediately agreed. Since the question was not on the report form, it will be necessary to write to experts to enquire about the outcome of these elections, but it is known that a number of UK experts have been nominated in first place (16, 17, 22, 28, 36 and 43).

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14.4 The majority of UK experts believed that their competition had been run fairly, and that there was no evidence of illegal communication between experts and competitor. The proliferation of mobile telephones and electronic equipment, however, makes control increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, in the end, the competitor has to perform on the day.

14.5 In one trade (9) translation was required to be provided to competitors' questions in writing so that the answers could, if necessary, be checked independently.

14.6 In two trades (12, 21) the experts allowed one extra hour to enable at least some competitors to complete. This is contrary to the rules and, if requested as required, would not have been permitted. Otherwise, extra time was only allowed for equipment failures, lack of materials or first aid.

15. Project selection for Montreal

15.1 The international Technical Committee had decided that wherever possible projects should be in modular form so that interim results could be assessed and published next day. The intention was to increase media interest in the event. In view of later concerns that full publication could be demotivating to competitors it was agreed only to publicise the first five places.

15.2 The majority of projects were drawn from or based upon those 'banked' in St Gallen and selected mainly by Canada. Some (16, 18, 20, 25) had to be redrawn, either to correct or to expand the project, and five (12, 13, 18, 23, 25) proved to be too long and would not seem to have been time-tested. Some trades, mainly in the IT sector, have special arrangements to share the labour and this again worked well.

15.3 In four trades (29, 30, 34, 35) the projects were notified three months in advance and this worked well. Twenty two of the experts judged the projects to reflect current practice and the same number agreed that it pushed their competitors to the limits. Two (15, 23) considered the projects not entirely relevant to current practice and others (9, 11, 12, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33) that parts of the projects were insufficiently demanding.

15.4 Trades new to modules (5, 7, 9, 16, 17) felt it worked well but one (36) successfully contested that it would distort normal industrial practice and it was agreed to abandon the modular approach. This may also be true of other trades (25?).

15.5 The daily publication of results did not work particularly well, either because the marking could not be completed quickly enough at the end of the day or because the experts declined to display the results. The UK experts in trades 29 and 30 seemed unaware that the results had been displayed daily with bar chart presentation. As a matter of interest, the UK competitors were virtually unanimously opposed to the practice. It is not known whether it increased media interest and the Technical Committee will be reviewing the innovation.

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Workshop conditions and equipment

- 16.1 Since the Olympic Stadium was not an exhibition centre with integral services, the organisers had to install great lengths of cabling, compressed air, water pipes and drainage. Those trades not in the stadium itself were accommodated in a large undercroft area or in a vast garage. Brave efforts had been made with additional lighting, sponsored enclosures and a pseudo-street and carpeting to make these less bleak. It was of the order of half a mile from the entrance to the furthest trade, a distance which significantly reduced the time for relaxation during lunch breaks.
- 16.2 Some 22 experts however judged the conditions adequate or better. The principal dissatisfactions concerned trailing cables, exposed piping, poor dust and fume extraction and initially inadequate local lighting. As to the equipment, most experts were again satisfied but the organisers had had to make a last minute plea to experts in cookery to bring a whole range of pots, pans and equipment which caused the Technical Expert considerable work and embarrassment, generously circumvented by various UK supporters. In some electronic trades (11, 17, 18) the equipment was old or the PC's old and slow. Unfortunately some of the transformers brought from the UK were of insufficient capacity and burned out (29, 30).
- 16.3 Whilst most materials were satisfactory, fresh produce such as food (34) and flowers (28) was initially quite unacceptable, although there was later some improvement. It would seem that in some trades there were either budgetary or sponsorship problems.

17. Technical assistance and shop masters

With very few reservations the shop masters were judged excellent and the technical assistance highly professional, in some cases exceptional eg working from 11.00pm to 2.00am to prepare the next day's tasks (45).

18. Safety

- 18.1 The fact that the venue was not geared to such events meant that there were many cable and pipe runs and changes of level which could cause a hazard. Arrangements for the exhaust of dust and fumes left something to be desired. Local lighting was eventually adequate. Anti-static arrangements (45) were considered unsatisfactory. There were no serious accidents and, apart from a few cut fingers, no injuries to UK competitors.
- 18.2 It has subsequently become apparent that in spite of the Canadian emphasis on safety standards and the attendance of a local inspector, the guarding of woodworking machines such as routers, vertical spindle moulders and some circular saws was non-existent or inadequate by UK and, one would therefore imagine, by European standards.

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- 18.3 In such circumstances the UK competitor is not only put at risk but is unprepared to work in this way. Safe working at a vertical spindle moulder may involve the manufacture of a special jig – itself a time-consuming activity. Quite apart from the serious consequences of injury for the UK competitor there are major implication in terms of civil and criminal liability for UK SKILLS and others concerned.
- 18.4 Apparently in some trades the experts permitted competitors to work without even such protection as was provided. The risk assessment undertaken by UK SKILLS prior to departure assumed that the ‘professional risks’ to competitors would be as at home and therefore already provided for in his or her training. Especially in view of the Canadian emphasis on stringent standards the possibility of non-availability of protection was not envisaged, the Joinery expert having taken the trouble to obtain the Canadian standards.
- 18.5 When similar problems arose in the 1993 competition in Taiwan it was agreed that whilst the competitors of the objecting members would set the cutters, stops etc, the shopmaster would carry out the actual machining under the competitor’s ‘guidance’.
- 18.6 Whilst UK SKILLS must have a clear policy on this matter the first step is to submit a paper for discussion by World Skills.

19. Security

Only one instance of a possible breach of security came to notice in that the Chief Expert (33) took his laptop back to the hotel, contrary to what the experts had agreed. Since this was a fault-finding operation in which all the other experts were only aware of those they were setting and judging themselves, this was a potentially serious matter. It was reported to the Jury President as a result of which the Chief Expert gave an explanation and justification to the other experts. The Technical Delegate is to request a review of procedures in respect of faultfinding tasks.

20. Marking and judging

- 20.1 In the last two competitions judging has been done by teams of three or four and, provided these groups each mark the same total value of marks and the groups contain a good geographical mix, this reduces the ability of any one expert to unduly influence the final outcome. Blind marking, where the marking teams are excluded from the competition area and where this is possible, works well in some trades (28, 29, 30) and is being proposed for cookery.
- 20.2 Notably in trade 29 this resulted in two of the three medals going to the competitors of experts who had only administered and not marked at all. In Jewellery the numbering of the pieces was secretly switched by the chief expert and jury president to the evident astonishment of the experts when the identity of the pieces was revealed.

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- 20.3 Twenty-two of the UK experts were wholly satisfied with the marking process, three were dissatisfied (15, 23, 36), three concerned about low marking (34, 42, 43) and three about uneven performance (12, 30) or inappropriate groupings (22).

21. UK competitors

- 21.1 Eighteen of the competitors were considered to have been tenacious throughout. Some made a poor start (5, 13, 18, 29, 24), some tailed off on days three and four (4, 22, 45) and two never got going (12, 23).
- 21.2 Fourteen competitors were considered to have planned their work well throughout but six did not (12, 13, 22, 23, 30, 45) one expert finding subsequently that his competitor's trainers had told him to ignore the guidance.
- 21.3 Whilst the silver medal winner and five of those who received diplomas had come through regional as well as national competitions, the other winners had had relatively little competition experience.
- 21.4 At the same time there were very disappointing performances from several of those who had received intensive training over many months (eg 16) and were regarded as serious contenders. Whilst all could doubtless have benefited from even more training, we do need to address again the issue of how to give competitors more competition experience.

22. UK experts

- 22.1 It is evident that nearly all the experts put an enormous amount of personal time, trouble and commitment into their role, drafting and following through well-developed training plans, establishing a rapport with their competitors and his or her supporters and preparing themselves for the job ahead. However much advice is given, first time experts have real difficulties in appreciating the scale of the event, the technical, negotiating and emotional challenges to be faced and the skill levels of the opposition.
- 22.2 Every one of them was determined to do their best for their competitor whilst being equally committed to operating within the rules and spirit of the competition. One (23), in arguing against what he judged as unfair marking of a Japanese competitor, reached such an impasse that he withdrew from the competition. The technical delegate did not however press for a formal hearing as he considered the cause unwinnable.
- 22.3 Many UK experts were able to assist the chief experts or jury presidents in following the correct procedure or in assisting the chief experts in other ways.
- 22.4 While individually naturally disappointed if their competitor did not do well, there has been no suggestion by any expert that the results did not reflect their

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competitor's actual performance. Whilst the majority of competitors were highly appreciative of the training and support they received from their experts, those in two trades (4, 28) considered that they had been insufficiently trained and supported or sufficiently prepared as to what to expect.

- 22.5 The experts' views on how to improve the UK's performance are given later in this report.
- 22.6 One issue worth consideration is whether experts have been too 'softly, softly' encouraging and unwilling to condemn poor performance or lack of progress. As one (17) said, 'one needs to be encouraging but also speak frankly and honestly'. Several admitted they had not been hard enough in criticising their competitors during training. For their part several competitors acknowledge that they had not been pushed hard enough. Whether experts need to be harder depends on the personalities of each and the interpersonal chemistry. Any specialist trainers should be asked to be hard in their judgements. All experts were advised during training to set tasks which the competitor would find impossible to complete in time. National competition organisers should include this aspect in the selection process.

23. UK team leaders

- 23.1 The work of the team leaders was deeply appreciated and warmly commended by all competitors. They worked well with the experts and with fellow team leaders. UK SKILLS was particularly grateful to Ford Motor Company in supporting Ian Wyatt, Apprentice Training Manager, in his role as Team Leader.
- 23.2 A number of proposals have been made for the development of the Team Leaders' role in the future including splitting the roles between administrative and pastoral care and appointing a full time team leader. There is support for appointing a female team leader in the future as well as considering the appointment of a previous competitor/expert.

24. UK officials, UK SKILLS staff and communications

- 24.1 The UK official party included Sir John Cassels CB (Official Delegate), Jim Hammer CB (Technical Delegate), Patricia Snell OBE and Neil Fountain (Official Observers). UK SKILLS staff in attendance were Hilary Jennings, Charles Turner (Team Leader), Basil Henson, Jonathan Freeman and Heidi Agbenyo.
- 24.2 The composition, roles and responsibilities of the team were laid out in a document a copy of which is attached at appendix 4.
- 24.3 Communications within the entire UK team were facilitated through use of mobile phones, an official UK stand at the venue and a UK office provided by

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the organisers. Much valued support in communication between the experts was provided by Peter Neate and Ray Coyle. This was somewhat disrupted when Peter Neate was nominated to support the IVTO in the adjudication of results.

- 24.4 Some concern was expressed that the team of experts appeared more fragmented than in previous years. Reasons for this included the more formal style of the accommodation, the increased number of experts and also the long hours which many experts had to undertake due to modular marking.
- 24.5 There was a perception, amongst some of the team of competitors and experts, that UK SKILLS appeared distant both as individuals and as an organisation. The reasons for this may lie in the practical issues involved in dealing with an extended network but the matter will be given serious consideration for the future.

25. Overall arrangements

- 25.1 Mention has already been made of the practical disadvantages of the otherwise striking venue of the Olympic Stadium. Although not overtly mentioned, it would seem that by the time of the competition the organisers were under financial pressure, apparent when during the competition itself they exercised extremely strict control over any additional expenditure. There would also seem to have been problems with sponsorship and therefore the provision of equipment and materials in a few trades.
- 25.2 The opening and closing ceremonies were adequate, although the sight lines were poor. Refreshments on the stands were basic and some regarded the food provided at lunchtime as repetitive.
- 25.3 Overall however, the organisers had gone to immense trouble in spite of the obvious difficulties they faced. They made every effort to respond to reasonable (and some unreasonable) requests and received sometimes unnecessarily petulant criticism with professional detachment and good humour.
- 25.4 The whole event was in effect carried by four or five extremely hard working individuals, one of whom gave birth to a son the day after the competition finished.

26. Use of work planning

- 26.1 The requirement for specialised work planning training for international competitors was identified by UK SKILLS as early as 1994 and has been the subject of much developmental work since that time. The principle is now generally accepted by the team of technical experts as central to the preparation of competitors. In the run-up to Montreal a simplified format was drawn up by Laurie Croft in response to concern that it was over-complicated and off-putting to competitors.

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- 26.2 The majority of technical experts implemented work planning in their training programmes, adapting it to the requirements of their trades. Following the competition in Montreal the majority of experts commented that the application of work planning by competitors had been good or excellent and the majority of competitors felt that their training had adequately prepared them in this respect.
- 26.3 There were, however, a number of exceptions. In some trades planning was unavoidably hampered by setbacks and equipment failures (22 and 36). In one case the competitor was recommended by his employer to ignore the expert's advice on planning (30) and in one trade the expert felt that there was limited requirement due to the nature of the competition (4).
- 26.4 Of most concern were a small number of trades (12, 13 and 23) where experts comments on competitor performance included 'no evidence of a plan, tended to follow others', and 'did not do well; if he did, it did not show'. This, coupled with a lack of evidence in written training programmes of any work planning training, indicates a lack of appreciation on the part of the expert.
- 26.5 It is significant that in all but one trade where planning was not well implemented, whatever the cause, the competitor failed to achieve a diploma. In conclusion it appears that the principle of work planning is increasingly embedded in competitors' training but pressure should be maintained to ensure this applies across the board.
27. **Dealing with stress**
- 27.1 Seventeen competitors coped well with the stress throughout and others had highs and lows. Generally competitors require either more competition experience or exposure to working in a stressful environment, under pressure and with distractions.
- 27.2 In particular a number of experts commented that felt they had not sufficiently exposed their competitors to the type of pressure and stress which they might experience during the competition.
28. **Lessons from other countries**
- 28.1 Government support for skills competitions and funding, not only to pay the costs of longer training but also to recompense competitors and employers for loss of earnings or earning capacity during training.
- 28.2 Financial incentives.
- 28.3 A larger pool from which to draw competitors.
- 28.4 Commitment to practical and rigorous skill training and an appreciation of the valuable effect of competition.

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28.5 Daily expert team meetings.

28.6 Four trades (11, 20, 21, 26) mentioned technical lessons.

29. Visitors

29.1 Over 100 visitors from the UK visited the competition including Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Education and Employment, Ms Sara Donaldson, Director, Millennium Challenge, Mr Tom Shebbeare, Chief Executive, The Princes Trust, Mr Paul Sedgwick, Personnel Director, BAe Military Aircraft & Aerostructures and Mr Bill McGuinness, Chairman, Training & Employment Agency. Members of the Manpower National Skills Festival 2000 team and Capital Media also visited the competition to see how it was set-up and run. Prior to the competition all visitors known to UK SKILLS received details of the UK SKILLS stand, an outline timetable for the competition and an invitation to the UK SKILLS reception.

29.2 UK SKILLS engaged *America as you like it*, a specialist in holidays to Canada, to make travel arrangements for British visitors. They were also able to provide tickets for the opening and/or closing ceremony. This arrangement worked well.

29.3 The UK SKILLS stand was sponsored by The Link Group and North London TEC. Many of those who visited the UK SKILLS stand enquired about NVQs, apprenticeship systems and the organisational structure of/environment in which UK SKILLS operates. In the future we should consider taking a wider variety of material which could answer general questions of this nature as well as some tourist-orientated material.

30. Publicity, public relations and video

See Appendix 3

31. Work of the international Technical Committee

31.1 At this competition the detailed management was handled expeditiously by daily meetings of the jury presidents. The full Technical Committee met three times. Principal issues agreed were:

- The training of chief experts
- Experts in each trade to make recommendations for the chief expert in Seoul plus two reserves
- Only to publish daily the leading five members in modular trades
- To publish the final results in alphabetical order without ranking
- To note:
 - ZA Afro-hairdressing demonstration
 - NZ proposal for electronic security
 - AU proposal for Integrated Manufacturing Challenge

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- Special arrangements to assist a dyslexic DK competitor
- Names and addresses of technical delegates and nominated chief experts to be put on the Internet
- A group of younger technical delegates to be set up to review the whole pattern of existing trades and make recommendations
- To note the United Arab Emirates offer to host the competition in 2003
- Juries to select only the best three projects for the bank.

31.2 At the final meeting after the announcement of the results, there was warmly appreciative applause for Peter Neate's work as scrutineer and for his comprehensive and penetrating report, now distributed.

32. **Revision of technical descriptions**

- 32.1 UK experts contributed widely to the revision of technical descriptions and many reported satisfactory agreements. In practice only six were able to provide copies for UK SKILLS because of delays in completing translations or shortage of photocopying facilities.
- 32.2 Mechatronics proposed adopting the common maximum age of 23. Trade 13 and 15 proposed pre-notification of projects. The revision of trade 27 only exists in German and was not signed. When printed copies are received from the secretariat they will be sent to UK experts for checking that they represent the agreements reached in Montreal.
- 32.3 World Skills should ensure that technical descriptions are revised, translated and signed and that facilities are available to make them immediately available to all experts.

33. **Selection of projects for Seoul and the bank**

Chief experts were required to complete revisions of technical descriptions before selecting three projects in order of preference for Seoul. Two trades have set up working parties to prepare pre-notified projects, trade 13 (AU, NZ, UK) and 34 (AU, DE, NO, UK). Although the intention was that only one copy of draft projects be produced, one chief expert (21) allowed photographs of the submitted drawings etc to be taken. In trade 23 the projects were selected before the technical description was amended and this existed in German only and was not signed, at least before the UK expert withdrew. In one trade (25) none of the projects was modular and doubt was therefore cast on their acceptability.

34. **Demonstration trades**

- 34.1 Pastry cook (42) was attractive to spectators and is likely to attract further members. A fuller technical description and a better understanding of the tools and techniques are required and should benefit future competitors. Eight members expressed interest in participating in Seoul.

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- 34.2 Beauty Care (43) was provided with impeccable facilities but was an unhappy competition because of the aggressive CA chief expert and her insistence on the adoption of Canadian hygiene standards and practices. A jury president was not appointed until the second day. Without any explanation, the competition was not very interesting for spectators and there are doubts whether sufficient members will sign up for Seoul, possibly only six at this stage.
- 34.3 IT PC and Network Support (45) was a well-prepared and well-managed demonstration, although with no spectator interest. Eight members expressed interest in participating in Seoul.
- 34.4 UK did not participate in Graphic Design (41) or Landscape Gardening (44) but there appears to be (and should be) future support for trade 41 which is likely to attract nine members in Seoul.

THE FUTURE

35. Effectiveness of the international project selection procedure

- 35.1 For the first time, some projects were pre-notified (29, 30, 34, 35) and the arrangement worked well, as did those with well-established special arrangements (4, 5, 9, 16, 17, 33). In trades where modules could be drawn from various different projects (6, 7, 10) there remained an element of surprise. Canada was asked to select many of the projects from the bank but their tally of two bronze medals and nine diplomas does not suggest that there was any dishonesty. In some cases projects in the bank (18, 20, 24), or redrawn on the basis of banked projects (22, 25) contained inaccuracies and in the latter case led by a majority vote to the use of an alternative AT project. Those prepared externally, eg 11 and 12, worked well, although the latter had not been tested and was too long.
- 35.2 There is increasing appreciation of the difficulty of maintaining the secrecy of projects. Where final selection of say four modules from a bank of 12 or more is possible (6 and 7) there is still an element of surprise. Prior knowledge of complex single jobs does however put planning skills at a discount and enables the well-resourced members to practice more purposefully. Clearly faultfinding has to remain secret and better systems need to be designed to ensure this (eg by the use of independent experts).
- 35.3 In the electronic skills there is a necessary sharing of the task of creating projects but no concern that this unfairly advantaged any competitors, not least perhaps because last-minute changes can readily be introduced.
- 35.4 In short the arrangements for each trade have to be considered individually and the UK will contribute to any debate on how to improve arrangements.

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36. Lessons for the future – World Skills

- 36.1 Interpreters should be required to answer any question from an interpreter in writing (as in trade 9) so that the responses are capable of being independently checked as not giving advice.
- 36.2 Independent interpreters should be selected and appointed by World Skills but paid for by the requesting member.
- 36.3 Commissioned projects should be tested as to time and the adequacy of drawings.
- 36.4 Improved office support should be provided for jury work especially personal computers, CAD facilities and photocopiers.
- 36.5 Improve the arrangements for security in relation to projects which include faultfinding.
- 36.6 Implement the recommendations of Peter Neate's audit report.
- 36.7 Require organisers, in co-operation with chief experts, to provide full explanations, photography, models, isometric drawings and large screen presentations of what the competitors are working on and trying to achieve.
- 36.8 Review the outcome of the experimental presentation of modular results.
- 36.9 Accelerate the review of the range of trades with a view to amalgamating or revising the existing trades (especially engineering) and introducing new trades.

37. Lessons for the future - UK SKILLS

The following are extracted from suggestions made by technical experts in their reports:

37.1 Selection and training of experts

- Review expert appointments.
- Review mentoring and monitoring arrangements especially to ensure that there has been close enough personal oversight of the training by the expert.
- Use the experts' development conference to get authoritative experts to teach and lead discussions on the technique of training competitors for competition, especially in obtaining the correct balance between criticism, encouragement and praise and in the handling of interpersonal relations.

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- Improve expert training on marking schemes and the marking process using practical examples.
- Where an expert has indicated that this will be his or her last competition, try to appoint a deputy expert to shadow the current expert for a complete cycle of the competition.

37.2 Preparation and training of competitors

- Obtain increased Government funding to enable all competitors to experience at least 6-12 weeks intensive training with appropriate compensation for the loss of earnings and possibly the loss to the employer.
- Obtain signed commitment by employers to release/assist his competitor and where relevant provide (access to) equipment.
- Withdraw competitors who fail to reach an adequate standard during training or whose employers do not allow adequate time for training.
- Further involve past competitors in the training process.
- Harden mental and psychological skills by enabling competitors to get experience in other regional, national or international competitions. In particular explore the possibility of competing in national competitions in Ireland or The Netherlands.
- Institute or obtain sponsorship for cash prizes for winners eg gold £5,000, silver £2,500, bronze £1,000, diploma £500. This year this would have cost a sponsor just £8,500. National honour is of course a reward but 22 year olds also need cash. (St. Gallen would have cost £15,500).
- Acknowledge the contribution of teachers and lecturers who get results.

37.3 Team-building, motivation and morale

- Appoint a female team leader.
- Arrange for sponsorship of more distinctive and stylish uniforms and casual dress for both competitors and experts together with sports bag with logos etc.
- Commission appropriate quality gifts for UK experts to distribute at the competition.
- Further develop the approach to team building including possibly daily team meetings for experts and for competitors.

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- Arrange for competitors to arrive earlier at the competition where there is a significant time zone change.

38. Conclusions

- 38.1 Whilst UK SKILLS' encouragement of skills competitions generally and the hard work of competition organisers has resulted in some increase in the pool of talent, in too many trades the numbers are woefully small in relation to the great number of working people. There is a numbing lack of employer interest in certain trades.
- 38.2 Government funding of compensation for loss of earnings to enable the release of sufficient competitors for sufficiently long is essential, and cash prizes for winners might also provoke more interest.
- 38.3 Good as most of the experts are, it would be a great advantage for UK SKILLS to be able to make a choice but suitable volunteers are hard to find. The technical experts' preparation and briefing was further refined and generally found satisfactory but some improvements are planned.
- 38.4 The mentoring arrangements are appreciated but the monitoring procedure requires review. Most training programmes, based on the framework provided by SONC and UK SKILLS were impressively detailed and involved specialist sessions with particular experts. In some cases however the expert was let down by such specialist trainers or himself or herself who failed to identify shortcomings. In a few cases competitors were not released for sufficient time. Only three or four competitors considered their experts had provided insufficient training or support.
- 38.5 The general opinion of the team briefing, the programme for which had been further refined, was generally positive, although competitors thought that there could have been more assistance in dealing with stress and techniques of relaxation.
- 38.6 The competitors' team building weekend was enthusiastically appreciated and must become a fixture but the programme must be more closely co-ordinated with the team briefing.
- 38.7 The administrative arrangements for travel and accommodation were extremely effectively organised, both by UK SKILLS and the Montreal organisers. The venue was impressive, if not ideal in terms of services and layout.
- 38.8 Workshops, equipment and materials were generally adequate or better except in a few trades where there were problems, which were only resolved as the event progressed. The technical support was first class and the shop masters and organisers unfailingly responsive.

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- 38.9 The projects were generally judged to reflect current practice and to have stretched competitors' abilities. The majority of experts believed their competition to have been run fairly and there were no disciplinary hearings. With two exceptions (not affecting UK competitors) the marking and judging was regarded as fair with the appropriate winners emerging.
- 38.10 In spite of their tenacity and generally good application of work planning skills, the overall performance of the UK team was disappointing. Some never got started, others tailed off for no apparent reason and a few made a storming finish. Some of those upon whom much training had been lavished came nowhere. The medal winners had all come through national and regional heats.
- 38.11 Overall it is fair to say that the UK's position of 10th= with 15 points, very much in the middle rank of members, and well below Ireland in 8th position with 26 points, no more than reflects the UK's actual position in respect of vocational training and commitment to skills, relative to its European competitors, such as Switzerland, Austria, France and Germany.
- 38.12 The level of interest from the media is very encouraging although there remains some scepticism among some national newspapers, whose coverage was disappointing. Regional media, however, (particularly radio and newspapers) show a strong interest and are keen to follow the fortunes of their local competitor. The specialist sector-based journals also continue to be loyal ambassadors for the competition and many featured successive articles about their competitor as he/she prepared for the event.
- 38.13 As to the future, UK SKILLS will be following up the revision of technical descriptions and other concerns with World Skills and through SONC and the Board, reviewing the conclusions of this report and considering any comments received.

Appendices:

1. List of skills, competitors and experts
2. Results
3. Publicity, public relations and video
4. Composition, roles and responsibilities of the UK team

Have already raised some issues with the
WSO Executive & draft paper on H&S well
advanced for discussion & action.

