

Margaret Gildea,

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Rolls-Royce plc

semta

The Sector Skills Council
for Science, Engineering and
Manufacturing Technologies



Championing the 14-19 Engineering Diploma

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The Engineering Diploma is an important qualification for 14-19 year olds designed to give young people a foundation in engineering principles. Developed by industry with support from employers and other stakeholders, the Diploma is a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application that will prepare young people for entry into work, apprenticeships or further study. It will be available at three levels: Level 1 equivalent in size to 4-5 GCSEs; Level 2 equivalent in size to 5-6 GCSEs; Level 3 equivalent in size to 3 A levels. Selected schools and colleges in England will begin delivering the Engineering Diploma from September 2008.

Among employers backing the Engineering Diploma at senior management level is Rolls-Royce plc. The company is also involved in the developmental stage of the diploma through Semta. Margaret Gildea, Executive Vice President of Human Resources – Operations and UK Employment and Skills Policy, is committed to the Diploma as a means of reaching more young people with clear messages about engineering, whilst allowing them to keep their options open. “It should help to bring a real awareness to young people of what engineering is about in a way that is not just vocational or academic but embraces both,” she says. “The Diploma is important because it gives people from age 14, whatever their ability,

a route they can take through engineering that will get them to where they might want to get: be that higher education or an apprenticeship and further education, it really doesn't matter at that stage. With 14-19 learning, keeping options open is absolutely essential.”

Recruitment

In addition to developing existing employees, Rolls-Royce has a regular intake of new entrants, including young people from age 16 to 20 plus. Engineering Diploma holders are likely to feed into the company's recruitment patterns in a number of ways. “People with diplomas will make a difference to recruitment,” says Head of Learning Services, Graham Schuhmacher, a member of the Employer Steering Group that has been leading the development of the Diploma with Semta. “If they can come along to an interview and show what they've achieved, demonstrate their knowledge, they will be ahead of people who can't. Does it get them an automatic offer? No – but it does give them a very good chance.”

Rolls-Royce's key strategy for recruiting apprentices at age 16 is through the Young Apprenticeship schemes the company has been

employer champion



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helping to deliver for 14-16 year olds. "Our experience is that Young Apprentices are hard workers and good achievers. Schools tell us that their motivation improves as they see the links between maths, science and communications and the world of work," says Graham. "I believe the Level 2 Diploma will do the same and enthuse young people about these subjects so our main plans for the 16-year-old cohort will be Young Apprentices and Level 2 Diploma holders side by side."

Similarly, the Level 3 Diploma, along with A Levels, will contribute to Rolls Royce's recruitment of those aged 18+ onto foundation degree courses and into technical staff roles. It will contain the academic rigour required to prepare people for higher education. "The Level 3 engineering content we've developed is a very strong one that will get people into a good university," Graham comments. Rolls-Royce also recruits the best engineering graduates from around the world. The fact that the Diploma should inspire students to higher engineering degrees at good universities will be very helpful, the company says.

Supporting education

Rolls-Royce engages with the world of education in many ways, including working with pupils as young as five years old – "to attract pupils at age 14 means we'll have had to do some work earlier with schools," Graham explains. Involvement with the Engineering Diploma is another strand of that engagement. "We want young people to make positive decisions based on data. The point about the Diploma is that it links theory learnt in school with practical activity. It gives us the opportunity to refocus our support for schools and education by supporting young people who are really interested in the STEM (science, engineering, technology and maths) subjects."

Margaret believes that time spent in the working

environment as part of the Diploma will provide a richer experience for students than the traditional work experience, since it is focussed around learning and the application of science, maths and communication. She says: "For some students it will be what brings those subjects to life – because they can see how they can be applied. I remember as a little girl when I did elementary arithmetic I pretended I was in a shop to make it feel real. There are people who feel better about things if they can see an application. The Diploma will be just as valid for those who want to do an engineering degree and don't need to understand that much about the world of work."

Experienced in the health and safety requirements when dealing with young people through its Young Apprenticeship delivery, the company envisages making its training workshops available as a safe, protected environment for Diploma students. Helping young people see what a clean and modern environment the company provides should help attract more young entrants – and a higher proportion of girls – it is hoped. Keeping close to teachers is also important, according to Margaret. "The more teachers understand the world of engineering by seeing how things really are, the more chance we have of them sharing their enthusiasm with students. We're looking for high ability: getting that message into schools and colleges is very valuable."

Overall, Margaret believes that employers throughout the sector will benefit greatly from the improved skills and education standards the Diploma will bring. "I hope, through Rolls-Royce's involvement in and contribution to the Diploma's development, we can ensure it will deliver on its potential for the sector, and employers of all sizes will have the chance to recognise the increased capacity for employing young people with a relevant grounding in the world of engineering."