

Public and personal safety

Major C N D Capel, Chairman, SSB for EMSO, gives an overview of the standards for people working with explosives...

The Standards Setting Body (SSB) for Explosives, Munitions & Search Occupations (EMSO) was originally established in early 2000 to develop National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQs) for use in Mmunition Clearance¹ and Search² Occupations (MCSO). This sector was – and to some extent still is – predominantly the preserve of the Armed Forces and other government agencies, although non-governmental and commercial organisations are increasingly involved in this field, often working alongside, or in tandem with, their military counterparts.

The MCSO standards project commenced in September 2000 with rigorous research to describe the industry – civilian and military – and to identify the training and skills issues needing to be met by the proposed standards and qualifications. Conducted by specialists in consultation with search and munition clearance managers and operatives from across the industry, this preliminary work enabled the production of a detailed occupational map, a narrative description of the purpose, scale and scope of the industry and its training and accreditation mechanisms, along with analysis of current trends, needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The next stage, standards development, began with the definition of a Key Purpose Statement, outlining the common aims of the industry. Then, the myriad functions that need to be carried out across the industry in order to achieve this



purpose were defined. Simultaneously, experts from the Army, Navy and Royal Air Force, along with representatives of civilian de-mining companies and the Defence Science & Technology Laboratories, collaborated with qualifications specialists to develop National Occupational Standards in MCSO. Subsequently, these Standards were field tested prior to the drafting of N/SVQs for each discrete role within the industry. These draft N/SVQs were then subjected to rigorous scrutiny by practitioners and trainers serving the industry prior to submission for accreditation by the regulatory authorities. Accreditation was granted in 2002 and the N/SVQs were launched at the National Army Museum in London on 21st October 2003.

In late 2003, at the request of the MOD's Defence Ordnance Safety Group (DOSG), the SSB for EMSO undertook to repeat this process for the whole of the Explosives Substances & Articles (ESA) sector, including safety management, research and development, test and evaluation, manufacture, maintenance, procurement, storage, transport,



disposal, and civil applications (eg. special effects, oil and gas exploration, mining and quarrying).

Since March 2004, the SSB's Occupational Working Group (OWG) for ESA has held meetings and workshops at which managers and practitioners volunteered by interested parties have assisted the SSB's Expert Adviser, Denise Clarke, in:

- Mapping the scope and size of the sector
- Defining its overarching function (or mission)
- Analysing the sector's key roles and functions
- Drafting NOS

Once the NOS have been validated and endorsed by the OWG for ESA in early to mid-2005, they will be submitted to the appropriate authorities for accreditation. After that, the OWG will work with Awards UK Ltd, its awarding body partner, and the Science Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (SEMTA), the Sector Skills Council concerned, to:

- Develop N/SVQs for people working at different levels (from operator to operational manager) based on the NOS;

- Evidence specifications, assessment guidance, centre and candidate guidance and model portfolios;
- Develop technical certificates for external examination;
- Devise fundable apprenticeship frameworks.

It is hoped that the N/SVQs for ESA will become available by spring 2006.

It is also likely that the OWG will collaborate with institutes of further and higher education to develop degree level qualifications in ESA.

The SSB for EMSO has benefited from the involvement of many governmental, commercial and other organisations involved in ESA, but would welcome still wider participation. Even limited involvement ensures that an organisation has the opportunity to influence the design of the NOS (which will be the UK's specification for Best Practice by the explosives sector) and, ultimately, the qualifications that are designed. In addition to such involvement in workshops, trials and planning meetings, the SSB has also benefited from statements of support for its work, permission to use logos in promotional campaigns, and donations of £50,000 towards the cost of the project – which is likely to exceed £150,000.

Organisations that are, or have been, involved include:

Army	Health & Safety Commission
Atomic Weapons Establishment plc	Institute of Demolition Engineers
Awards UK Ltd	Institute of Explosives Engineers
BAE Systems	Institute of Munition Clearance & Search Engineers
British Pyrotechnics' Association	Insys Ltd
Chemring Countermeasures	Leahed Engineering Ltd
Cogent (Chemical Manufacturing and Processing National Training Organisation (NTO))	Management Standards Centre (NTO)
Controlled Commission Group Ltd	MIRA Missile Systems UK Ltd
Coventry University of Warwick	MUII Defence Packaging (Group)
Defence Logistics Organisation	NO Defence
HOULET Westwood Qualifications Trust Ltd	Royal Air Force
Defence Munitions Corporate Business Unit	Royal Engineers Vocational Education & Training Trust
Defence Ordnance Safety Group	Royal Navy
Defence Procurement Agency	Science, Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies Alliance Sector Skills Council (SEM)
Defence Science & Technology Laboratory	Skills for Logistics (NTO)
Defence Storage & Distribution Agency	Skills for Logistics (NTO)
Employment NTO	Skills (Audio Visual Industries (NTO))
Epac (Extractives & Mineral Processing Industries (NTO))	Special Operations and Education Academy
Exchem Defence Systems Ltd	Train to Protect International

Fig. 1

¹ Essentially, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD).

² The location of explosive ordnance or specified targets such as contraband, fugitives and missing persons.

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