

SUBMISSION FROM OPITO

Background – OPITO Overview

OPITO represents the UK's Oil and Gas industry by taking a collective approach to skills, learning and workforce development, as well as ensuring the highest safety standards and workplace competencies are in place. Owned by industry, and not for profit, OPITO works closely with employers and the industry's representative bodies to understand the specific skills needs of the sector, and initiates and invests in a wide range of activities and projects to drive improvement. To effect continuous improvement and relevance, OPITO aims to match the demand for skills from the industry to the supply of skills from education and training providers. This requires strategic level engagement across all areas of the skills landscape. Globally, we export North Sea standards for workforce safety and competency into 30 countries, with 110,000 people worldwide trained to the OPITO standards.

Our operating model is unique, demonstrating how employers and trade unions can truly take collective ownership of their industry's skills and workforce development issues.

We achieve our goals by working in collaboration with our employers, academia, other learning providers and key government organisations such as Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

OPITO representative

Darah Zahran is OPITO's Policy Affairs Director and has been in post since January 2013. Prior to that she was with Skills Development Scotland where, over the course of 8 years, she worked closely with all of the Sector Skills Councils, spent 18 months on secondment as Energy & Utility Skills' Scottish Director and latterly worked within SDS' Industries Team as their Energy Partnerships Manager.

Current job opportunities in the sector

The UKCS (UK continental shelf) is currently experiencing exceptional investment in both its existing infrastructure and new developments. Government confidence in the longevity of the ongoing economic potential of the North Sea industry coupled with this industry investment has created a growth in job opportunities and intensified the need for a skilled and experienced workforce. It is estimated that 10,000 jobs will need to be filled across the industry in the next two years with a focus on the need to attract and recruit engineers (especially civil, marine, engineering, structural and mechanical), project managers, welders, turbine technicians and divers. In particular, the industry is keen to attract fully qualified individuals with 5 – 10 years' experience in these key disciplines. It is therefore critical that employers are able to tap into as wide a pool of talent as possible, a task made significantly more difficult if

the large proportion of females qualified in these disciplines cannot be enticed to enter or stay in the sector.

Women in the Oil and Gas Industry

OPITO asked Robert Gordon University to conduct a Labour Market Intelligence survey gathering quantitative employment and skills analysis for the oil and gas industry. The study was sponsored by Skills Development Scotland as part of a wider study to capture a demographic profile and skills ‘health check’ of the whole Energy Industry and was published in 2011. There were 144 companies who responded to the survey which represents one sixth of the UK oil and gas industry. The companies sampled showed a significant under-representation of females in the workforce in general and representing STEM subjects in particular.

Respondents were asked to consider a number of different occupational categories within their workforce and identify the proportion of their workers within these categories who are female.

Occupational Category	Mean % of Female Workers
Administration and Secretarial	52.0
Commercial and Marketing	18.1
Managerial	15.4
Project Support	12.1
IT Support	10.0
Operations and Production	7.7
Professional Engineering	4.8
Engineering	4.6
Technical	3.8
Professional Scientist	2.5
Crafts	1.0

The responses given by companies were placed into percentage bands and show clearly that with the exception of administrative and secretarial workers, in most companies female workers make up no more than 10% of the workforce. In the categories of professional science, professional engineering, engineering crafts, technical, operations & production and IT support, a majority of the respondent companies actually employ no female workers. This is illustrated more fully in Appendix 1.

In addition to the above information, OPITO gathered MIST (Minimum Industry Safety Training) data and found that female workers made up only 4 per cent of the total oil and gas offshore workforce. MIST is delivered in a classroom for inexperienced offshore workers or a shorter on-line version for experienced offshore personnel. Although not mandatory the majority of personnel going to work on North Sea installations undertake the training so the data is highly representative of the offshore workforce in the oil and gas sector.

OPITO's work with schools

There are a number of OPITO initiatives underway to attract future talent into the sector. While not targeted specifically at females they are designed with an awareness of the gender imbalance within the sector and the need to retain equal interest from male and female school pupils. Development of joint Education strategies to contextualise oil & gas in the school curriculum with local education authorities is a key focus area. In response to trends highlighted through the study of STEM subjects, OPITO has introduced a programme which ensures both an understanding of the routes into technician/ wider engineering roles, and which targets the traditionally low uptake of the pertinent subjects by girls in High School. SQA data currently shows the following subject results in Scotland:

- Maths Standard Grade 1-3: Boys ~13,000 Girls ~13,000
- Physics Standard Grade 1-3: Boys ~8,000 Girls ~3,500
- Tech. Studies Grade 1-3: Boys ~1,000 Girls = 74

Most entry requirements to technician apprenticeship programmes require the individual to have passes in Physics and or Technical Studies. These statistics clearly show that the female pool is significantly smaller than the male pool and is therefore naturally going to attract fewer female applicants.

OPITO is working with an Aberdeenshire secondary school to develop the resource 'Mechanics In Practice' for pupils in S1 or S2. Pupils will work in pairs, girls with girls and boys with boys, each pair building a series of basic mechanical systems & models with identified Lego kits. Along the way connections are being made to industry, careers and subject choices. 'Mechanics In Practice' ensures that every participant in that year group has personally built & understood basic mechanics. If they then choose not to do physics they will be conscious that they are ruling out certain careers. OPITO will carry out a 'before' and 'after' evaluation to gauge pupils' experiences. The programme will be piloted in May with all S2 pupils at Meldrum Academy, Aberdeenshire and with S1 pupils at Dyce Academy, Aberdeen. After this it will be made available to schools in other areas with the resources made available through both GLOW and the OPITO website. OPITO is currently working to identify other interested LEAs so that the kits can be made available for their schools.

With less than 4% of females currently employed in technical & engineering roles in the industry, the areas highlighting the most skills shortages, there is a need to attract a significantly higher proportion of females to consider these careers which requires an understanding of the necessary subjects to select at S2 or S3 and, in some schools, as early as S1.

STEM Qualifications

Large numbers of women now graduate from Scottish Universities with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). However, 73% of women graduates are lost from STEM compared with 48% of male graduates, with a corresponding loss of researchers. In academia, expensively trained women are lost in larger proportions than men at every step of the postgraduate ladder and are under-represented in top positions across the spectrum of business, public service and academia.

In the oil and gas industry this is clearly reflected as the most recent data has shown 3- 4% of the workforce is female with the significant proportion in catering or administration roles. The Oil and Gas UK demographics report for the UKCS, published in 2012, further demonstrates that male workers continue to dominate the UK oil and gas industry, accounting for 96.3% of all those travelling offshore.

Compared with the average workforce age (41.4 years), female workers remain weighted towards the younger age groups with their average age being 35.6 years, the same as in 2009. Retaining them past the age of 29 is a significant challenge, resulting in a significant loss of education, experience and skills. This helps to exacerbate the current crisis of mid-career skills shortages in the industry. The total number of female offshore workers saw a slight decrease in 2010 with catering still remaining the largest category providing work for 30% of the female offshore workers.

Darah Zahran
Policy Affairs Director
OPITO
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APPENDIX 1

Figure 15: Approximately what percentage of the following categories of your workforce is female?

