

THREE-YEAR SKILLS PLAN TO DELIVER WORLD-CLASS WORKFORCE IN FASHION AND TEXTILES SECTOR

A new £24.5million three-year agreement between Government and the fashion and textiles industries to help beat skills shortages and build a world-class workforce, has been announced by Skills Minister Lord Young.

The deal was agreed by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Skillfast-UK, the Sector Skills Council for fashion and textiles, which represents that sector's 79,000 businesses on skills issues.

The fashion and textiles sector, which contributes around £10 billion to the UK economy each year, needs to recruit an estimated 34,000 new workers over the next five years. It must also develop the skills of its existing workforce if it is to continue to compete successfully in profitable niche markets such as luxury branded apparel and accessories and technical textile development. The new agreement is designed to support the industry in developing craft and technical skills to underpin that competitive edge.

Through the sector compact, Skillfast-UK has focussed the support and funding available through Train to Gain to support the priorities set out in its new skills strategy for the fashion and textiles sector. This Strategy was developed by fifty of the sector's leading employers, draws on in-depth research, with a further 2,000 companies, into the skills and training issues faced by industry's businesses.

The agreement commits DIUS, the LSC and Skillfast-UK to working closely on improving access to Train to Gain and the National Apprenticeship service.

Anticipated outputs from the new agreement include:

- Helping at least 1500 businesses to utilise Government funding for skills through the Train to Gain service
- More than 10,000 employees gaining a recognised vocational qualification, in a sector where the number of people holding formal qualifications is low
- 500 apprenticeships including from areas not currently covered in the sector – more than five times the existing number

Discover HE database developed as part of the NW Higher Level Skills Partnership offers a free, easy to use and powerful tool for accessing sector-specific information on higher level courses in the North West. It brings together more than 8,000 courses from 15 Higher Education Institutions and 29 Further Education Colleges in the region. It offers a starting point to explore provision for industry sectors from various providers in one single place and will direct you to individual institutional websites to find out more details. Please follow the link to view the **Discover HE** database <http://www.nwua.ac.uk/discoverHE> and find the course you are interested

