

Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, including Food Manufacturing and related Industrial Chemistry



Launch of Degree to Enhance Performance

28th January 2009

Responding to industrial requirements for curriculum in Casting Technology.

The Institute of Cast Metal Engineers (ICME) recently hosted the National Industry Launch of the Foundation Degree in Casting Technology on Wednesday 28th January 2009 at its headquarters in the National Metalforming Centre.

The new Foundation Degree in Castings Technology which was supported by the WYLLN is aimed at giving the students, who will be already employed in the industry and taught on a part-time basis, the technical understanding that they will need to allow them and the industry to compete and thrive into the future.



It has been developed by Bradford College, ICME and AEMFC Sector Officer Paul Denton, in conjunction with industry representatives from foundries including Newby Foundries Limited, Goodwin Steel Castings Limited and Chamberlin Plc as well and companies that supply the industry, to ensure that the content of the programme serves the industry's requirements.

Dr Pam Murrell, ICME Operations Director, commented: "The lack of any specialist educational programmes for the industry in the UK and hence the shortage of younger, skilled technicians is of major concern and risks holding back development of the UK industry."

"We hope that this new qualification, which will be delivered on a part-time, flexible basis by Bradford College, with significant work-based projects, will begin to address these concerns", she further added.

Many of ICME's members, who tend to be those individuals from the industry with higher qualifications, are now over 50, and this will have serious implications for the future competitiveness of the UK's industry. The industry in the UK has contracted over recent years (from over 600 foundries in 2004 to just over 400 now) and this has meant that it has been easy to recruit from the pool of qualified and experienced individuals.

However these qualified individuals are now reaching retirement age and, for the industry to thrive and remain competitive higher qualifications need to be available to help educate and develop the next generation of industry leaders.

Globally the castings industry produced more than 90 million tonnes of castings in 2006, a 7% increase on 2005, and the industry continues to grow year on year so there are significant opportunities for those companies that can innovate and offer a high quality service to customers.



The new Foundation Degree qualification will include modules on casting processes, methoding and design for casting, casting simulation and rapid prototyping and casting metallurgy and will also include subjects that will enable it to meet national standards for engineering including an element of maths and also materials' science.

Those completing the qualification will be able to register as Engineering Technicians on the Engineering Council's register of Professional Engineers and endorsement has already been received from SEMTA, the Sector Skills Council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies in the UK.

The launch event attracted over 60 attendees, including guests from the industry as well as from all of the major industry associations. Additional keynote speakers comprised: Nick Newby, Director of Newby Foundries and Chairman of ICME Education and Training Committee; David Critchley from the Cast Metals Federation; David Smith Dean of Higher Education (HE) at Bradford College; and Charles Pickford of Foundation Degree Forward.

"The most important element of the event was the real and tangible desire of the delegates for this type of course to be provided", commented Paul Denton (pictured on the right of Bradford College's Project Leader Richard Brown and ICME's Operations Director Pam Murrell).



With financial support and assistance to be provided to enrolled students by the Tor Lodge Charitable Trust and an expansion of the course Industrial Support Group planned, the development of the qualification is going from strength to strength. Attendees at the event commented:

"I think this is one of the most important developments in our industry for a few years", Robert Radford, BAS Castings Limited.

"Yesterday's launch answered lots of questions as well as getting an excellent response from our industry so a very well done to you all", Barry Wingfield, Vesuvius Foundry Products.

"I think this is an excellent initiative and the industry should congratulate those who have worked hard to put it together", Will Savage, ALFED (Aluminium Federation Limited).