



# Moray College Hospitality Department

## Employer Engagement Skills Study



**June 2009**

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks are due to the businesses that assisted in the research for this report by contributing their valuable time.

The advice and support from People 1<sup>st</sup> and Highlands and Islands Enterprise was greatly appreciated.

## Moray College Employer Engagement

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## 1 Foreword and Scope

In late 2008 it was decided by Moray College that due to expansion and increased student numbers within the Hospitality department liaison with local businesses was required to guide the development of the department.

As a continuing feature of the department and for staff development purposes, Hospitality staff remain up to date with current industry procedures and trends. It became apparent however that the lecturing staff's time could not be spared in order to consistently raise awareness of the opportunities offered to industry by Moray College.

Therefore a temporary Employer Engagement post was created with the aim of liaising with key industry figures. Gathering research pertinent to development of the Hospitality provision at Moray College was one of the aims of the position and the research forms the basis of this report.

The report will focus on key areas relating to skills and qualifications within Moray Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism businesses. The information gathered was designed to supplement that of People 1<sup>st</sup> Scotland's research on skills levels within the Hospitality, Leisure, and Travel and Tourism sector. The aim was to provide detail related to the Moray area. The full Sector Skills Strategy report can be viewed on the People 1<sup>st</sup> website (see Appendix C for details).

Contact was made with over 180 establishments in Moray to identify skills gaps and the characteristics of future provision. Interviews and questionnaires were used to gain employer opinion regarding course content and how qualifications should sit alongside industry practice. If qualifications do not provide the skills required for industry, employers will find it more difficult to fill vacancies.

The findings of this report will help to identify areas which can be improved within current courses. The successful development of skills can then be transferred to industry in order to improve the standard and characteristics of the available workforce in Moray.

## 2 Hospitality in Scotland

Hospitality in Scotland contributes to a large part of the economy. Approximately 169,200 people work in core Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism occupations. These core occupations are based on specific skills, many of which are part of the curriculum for Hospitality Further and Higher Education courses. These main occupations include:

- Kitchen and Catering Assistants
- Waiting Staff
- Bar Staff
- Chefs and Cooks
- Restaurant and Catering Managers

The Leitch Report 2006 detailed the requirements for skills development in the coming years. The aim for industry being that by 2020, 40% of the workforce should be educated to SVQ Level 4 or above. Details of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework can be found in Appendix B.

Current skill levels are somewhat far from this target with 14% of HLTT employees being unqualified (People 1<sup>st</sup> Geographic Profile) and only 19% holding Level 4 or higher qualifications.

The Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism Sector comprises of 14 main industries:

- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Pubs/Nightclubs
- Contract Food Service Provision
- Hospitality Services
- Membership Clubs
- Travel Services
- Tourist Information Services
- Events

- Gambling
- Visitor Attractions
- Youth Hostels
- Holiday Parks
- Self Catering Accommodation

For the purposes of this study, certain industries were targeted:

- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Pubs/Nightclubs
- Membership Clubs

These four main industries tend to be the major college recruitment base for candidates studying Professional Cookery/Food and Drink service. They are also the industries in which most graduates will find employment.

While there are no legal requirements to be qualified to work in Hospitality, certain regulations have come into force over the last two years or so which necessitate specific job roles to be certified. These roles include:

- Doorpersons – required to hold SIA approved Door Supervision Certificate
- Bar workers/Managers – Personal Licence Holder Certificate

One exception to this rule is Food Hygiene and HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point) as they are recommended qualifications but the law only requires staff to be trained commensurate to their job role. For example supervisors should be qualified to Intermediate level in order to train staff at lower levels.

In order to compile a relevant survey of skills in Hospitality, I looked at the key areas found to be lacking across Scottish businesses –

1. Management and Leadership
2. Customer Service
3. Chef Skills

Employers were asked to identify any qualifications held on a professional or academic basis as part of the skills survey.

## 2.1 Hospitality in Moray

The Moray area is famed worldwide for its Whisky production, heritage sites and coastal scenery. This lends the region an excellent opportunity to provide quality accommodation and hospitality. In the past few years, the restaurant industry in Moray has expanded with new independent restaurants and franchises opening in the main towns. For the most part however, Moray is a region where trade is based on tourism. This means that a large percentage of food provision comes from hotels as opposed to stand alone restaurants.

Fine Dining is an expandable market for Moray as consumers become more aware of standards and quality. Recently, Boath House chef Charles Lockley was awarded a Michelin star. He is currently the only chef in the region to hold this accolade.

Nearby, Inverness has recently seen a sudden boom in the “eating out” scene. This could be attributed to the Inverness City of Culture drive. Moray should see the knock on impact of increased trade in Inverness-shire and has already seen several new businesses appear and others change hands or expand.

In 2006, Moray was shown to have around 300 HLTT establishments which accounts for 10% of the establishments in the region. Compared to Highland Region’s 11% of total establishments and Aberdeenshire’s 6%, Moray has more HLTT establishments than expected in relation to its overall size.

This suggests that Moray has the potential to employ one of the largest Hospitality workforces in the country. It is therefore imperative that businesses work in conjunction with Hospitality and Tourism agencies and education facilities to train staff to be the best in the sector.

Through the research taken from this report it was hoped that any businesses planning to expand or improve their style of service could be identified. In order to map out clearly the thoughts of local proprietors, it was decided that the research would take the format of informal interviews and an online survey.

### 3 Introduction to Moray College

Moray College is host to over 7000 students, with courses ranging from full time Degree to short day courses.

The Main Campus is based in Elgin on Moray Street, with a Technology Centre at Linkwood. Moray College also has Learning Centres at Buckie, Forres, Nairn and Keith.

Hospitality forms an integral part of Moray College with facilities at Moray Street and Linkwood Campuses.

The Beechtree Training Restaurant at the Moray Street Campus offers one of the finest training environments for Professional Cookery and Food and Beverage Service students. Open every day from 10am until 3pm, the Beechtree offers:

From a counter service area staffed by students

- Snacks and Home Baking
- Sandwiches, Paninis and Baked Potatoes
- A choice of Fresh Homemade Soups
- Dishes of the Day/Dessert of the Day

Fine Dining - Table d'Hote lunches

Drinks Licence

At Moray College, students are encouraged to utilise their skills in Work Placements. In recent years students at SVQ Level 3 and HNC Professional Cookery have completed placement with

- Gordon Ramsay at Claridges
- Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles
- Boath House (recent Michelin award winner Charles Lockley)

### 3.1 Current Provision

At Moray College during 2008/2009 available Hospitality courses included:

**“Skills for Work”** – a schools/college partnership where S3 and S4 pupils come to College to learn the skills required to continue studying Hospitality or enter into the workplace.

**SVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3** – Available Full Time or as Day Release. Students are given the opportunity to learn Professional Cookery and Food and Drink Service at Levels 1 and 2 and Advanced Professional Cookery at Level 3.

**HNC Professional Cookery** – Available Full Time or Day Release. This is an advanced course for students progressing from Level 3 or for professionals entering Higher Education. Management techniques and skills are combined with advanced Professional Cookery methods.

Moray College also offers a range of short course options with a view to advancing professional development and meeting legislation. Some of the Hospitality based courses include:

- Elementary Food Hygiene
- Intermediate Food Hygiene
- SIA Approved Door Supervision Certificate
- Scottish Personal Licence Holders Certificate

### 3.2 Current Candidate Figures

Candidate numbers for 2008/2009 are strong with a high uptake for Level 1 and 2 Professional Cookery.

Level 1 Professional Cookery with Food and Drink Service FT	12
Level 2 Professional Cookery with Food and Drink Service FT	21
Level 2 Professional Cookery DR	14
Level 3 Professional Cookery FT	16
Level 3 Professional Cookery DR	2
HNC Professional Cookery FT	6
HNC Professional Cookery DR	4

### 3.3 Target Figures for 2009/2010

In session 2009/2010, there is expected to be an even higher number of applicants as a result of increased class sized in 2008/2009. The increased class sizes have resulted in an almost 100% progression across the 3 levels to which progression applies (SVQ 1, 2 and 3). Target numbers for 2009/2010 can be seen in the following table.

<u>Level of Study</u>	<u>Target for 2009/2010</u>
SVQ Level 1 FT	16
SVQ Level 2 FT	30
SVQ Level 3 FT	20
HNC Practical Cookery	12

## 4 Target Areas

For the purposes of this study, the Moray area includes towns from Nairn in the West to Banff in the East. Aberlour/Craigellachie was the most Southerly point visited but over 180 establishments were approached by letter or e-mail.

The bulk of the research was carried out by way of one to one interviews or using an Online Survey. A database was constructed from existing contacts and internet research. This database was used to send survey details and invite employers to discuss staff skills and opinions of current qualification provision.

### 4.1 Establishment Mix

The types of establishment included in the survey were decided by looking at the types of establishment in which past and present students aim to gain employment. The ultimate aim of the SVQ 1, 2 and 3 Professional Cookery courses is to provide students with a sound practical knowledge which they can effectively demonstrate in the workplace.

The Beechtree Restaurant, a realistic working environment for students, provides experience of both informal and fine dining. Thus students aim mainly towards the fine dining end of the market when trying to find employment. This could be because they are exposed to a high level of production and service expectation from the outset of their course. Therefore when students are ready to find employment, they have a tendency to look for somewhere to expand on and progress the skills gained at College.

When looking toward which establishments should be the main target for skills research, the market in Moray provided a limited range of establishment types. The four main business types included in the survey were

- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Pubs with food provision
- Members Clubs

These were the most prevalent small to medium sized businesses that would employ staff at a variety of levels. These were selected in order to gain an informed picture of staff skills both in the kitchen and front of house.

## 5 Survey Findings

Out of the 180 or so businesses contacted, the survey received a response of 25. Some of the non responses could be attributed to the lack of updates on websites and databases to show businesses which have changed hands or ceased trading. Another common factor in the completion of the survey was time constraints. When contacted, a large number of employers responded that they were too busy to arrange a meeting or complete the survey.

The 25 businesses who completed the survey or arranged a meeting gave interesting and valuable information on their opinions of qualifications and skills as a whole.

The majority of the respondents were in the hotel business (48%) with restaurants being the next highest respondent (36%). These businesses all appeared in the small to medium range with the average number of employees being 15.

### **Staff numbers were taken from the following departments:**

- Front of House - including waiter/esses, bar-staff and receptionists
- Kitchen – including chefs, KP's, catering assistants
- Management – Head Chefs, General Managers, Duty Managers

Unsurprisingly, Front of House was the department with the most staff, with just over 50% of the workforce. Kitchen staff totalled 33% with Management staff at just 15%.

### 5.1 Qualification Results

When asked to identify skills held within the workforce, it became clear that Professional Qualifications outnumbered Academic. Only 16 establishments out of 25 responded that staff held Academic Qualifications with a total of 121 qualifications held. Professional qualifications rose to 22 of 25 establishments responding and a total of 189 professional qualifications held.

Of the professional qualifications, the highest number of awards was for Elementary Food Hygiene which is interesting considering the number of responses stating that Food Hygiene was an area in which up-skilling could

be beneficial. However, looking at the percentage of qualified Elementary Hygiene workers in relation to the overall number of workers – 21% - there is still a high proportion of staff untrained in basic hygiene.

Elementary Food Hygiene is a recommendation as opposed to a legal requirement for most staff. The high number of employers who said they would like staff to know more about Hygiene is encouraging as it shows that the industry has an awareness of the importance of due diligence.

With regard to academic qualifications, the mix of qualifications is fairly even. According to the survey results, SVQ Level 3 Professional Cookery is the qualification held by the most employees. This is an interesting result as Moray College aims to provide industrial work experience for all SVQ Level 3 students, with many retaining employment in the establishment. At least 5 of the 17 employees holding SVQ Level 3 Professional Cookery are current Moray College students.

The next most prevalent qualifications were SVQ Level 2 Food and Drink Service and SVQ Level 2 Professional Cookery. As these units come combined when offered at Moray College it was interesting to note that of the employees surveyed, 15% held both Level 2 Professional Cookery and Level 2 Food and Drink Service.

An omission from the survey (6 SVQ Level 3 Supervision qualifications) brings the total of 4 marked on the survey to 10 which equals the number of HND Hospitality Management qualifications. These qualifications are not currently offered at Moray College which gives the indication that higher levels of study in Front of House are valuable to employers. Employees are completing such qualifications elsewhere and are being employed within the sector they chose to study.

## 5.2 Skills Development

- **Management and Leadership** came out as one of the highest responses to the question “In which areas would skills development benefit the business?” with half of the employers who answered claiming that Management and Leadership skills could be improved with further training.
- **Practical Knowledge and Understanding** came out just ahead with 14 of 19 respondents stating that training in these areas could benefit staff.
- Closely following on was **Customer Care** with 13 of 19 respondents claiming a need for improvements to be made.

- **Technical Kitchen** skills were only mentioned by 7 of 19 respondents which can be interpreted to show that employers are generally happy with the level of skill their kitchen staff.

These results were reflected when looking at Question 15. Are there any qualifications or skills that you would like to see made available to your staff?

The majority of employers (66% in both cases) said that **Customer Service** and **Alcohol Service and Responsibility** were the areas in which they would appreciate some form of staff training. **Hygiene** and **Supervisory Skills** came in next with almost 40% of employers looking for upskilling in these areas. Again, knife skills were at the bottom of the list at 16% indicating that employers are generally less concerned about kitchen skills than they are those which affect Front of House staff.

On interviewing employers, it became clear that a good relationship with Moray College was to be encouraged by industry. I met with employers from 15 establishments, all of whom were kind enough to take the time to discuss their views on the level of skills and qualifications within their workforce.

Most employers were keen to forge new links with the Hospitality Department at Moray College as they had experience of former or current students. Awareness of qualifications and skills seemed to be high on the list of priorities for employers, which shows dedication to the business and staff development. The main point made by employers regarding training and development for staff was that in the most part, training was done on site and by senior staff members. The majority of these employers also stated that training was an ongoing process which could involve different types of training with different timescales.

Despite the training for most roles being ongoing, many of the comments regarding training schemes surrounded induction and operational training. Further, varied knowledge in a different environment was considered by most establishments to be of benefit if set in the context of a day course or short course.

Possibly the most interesting finding from the interviews was the willingness of most companies to accept work experience students. Speaking to a college representative made many employers reconsider their views of further education. Not everyone interviewed knew the extent of the facilities or content of the courses available. At Moray College, vocational courses are aimed at students in the workplace or with the aim to provide a well trained graduate with a realistic knowledge of industry. This was impressed upon

employers as all courses should be industry led to maintain standards and remain up to date.

## 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

At the conclusion of this short project, a good start has been made with regard to forging links with local industry. As always, time is of the essence when developing links and relationships with other businesses. This project activity could have a long future providing a vital link between college and industry. Many employers were interested in being updated regarding the training facilities in Moray College and how this could benefit their businesses. Moray College is keen to ensure that the courses meet the emerging requirements of industry. More visits and events such as employer lunches would help to forge stronger links.

From the results of the survey, it is clear that certain areas of operations could be improved across the industry. Customer Care, Management and Leadership skills and Alcohol Service and Responsibility seem to be the three main areas in which training could be beneficial. These are all skills aimed in the most part at Front of House workers. Currently, Moray College does not run stand alone courses in Customer Service, Wines and Spirits or Management and Leadership. This appears to be a significant gap in the local provision as nationwide concepts such as Welcome Host (withdrawn customer service short course) held little bearing with employers due to their lack of in depth content.

Many of the employers interviewed suggested that customer service knowledge was one of the most vital skills to their Front of House staff which meets the recommendations of People 1<sup>st</sup>. In the Sector Skills Agreement for Scotland, the information provided nationwide mirrors the information received in Moray – that staff are not trained in customer service to a consistently high standard for business.

A standardised, comprehensive customer service course could benefit many businesses in Moray who value and encourage staff development. The main benefits of good customer service are return custom, word of mouth advertising and increased spend, all of which are key aims for the business involved with the study. In such a small geographical area, “bad press” cannot be afforded as competition in the same market increases.

Overall, many of the responses from the employers interviewed reflected the results of the People 1<sup>st</sup> Scotland Sector Skills survey. The main issue regarding Hospitality provision was lack of industrial knowledge about the type of course offered at Moray College and the standard of students completing. Establishing contact with local businesses has been beneficial to

the development of realistic industrial targets for Hospitality courses. This flow of information must continue for courses to remain relevant and to establish work experience links with industry.

# Appendix A

**Questionnaire**

**Survey comments  
(please see email attachments)**

# **Appendix B**

## **The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework**

## The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The SCQF covers all the major qualifications in Scotland from school to Doctorate and including work-based Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

SCQF Level	Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SQA Higher National and National Units, Courses and Group Awards	SVQs
12	Doctoral Degrees (Minimum 540 SCQF credits)		
11	Masters Degrees (Minimum 180 SCQF credits) Post Graduate Diploma (Minimum 120 SCQF Credits)		SVQ 5
10	Bachelors Degree with Honours (Minimum 480 SCQF credits)  Graduate Diplomas and Certificates		
9	9 Bachelors Degree (Minimum 360 SCQF credits)  Graduate Diplomas and Certificates		
8	Diploma of Higher Education (Minimum 240 SCQF credits)	Higher National Diploma	SVQ 4

7	Certificate of Higher Education (Minimum 120 SCQF credits)	Advanced Higher Higher National Certificate	
6		Higher	SVQ 3
5		Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade	SVQ 2
4		Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade	SVQ 1
3		Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade	
2		Access 2	
1		Access 1	

## Appendix C

- [www.people1st.co.uk](http://www.people1st.co.uk)
- People 1<sup>st</sup> "The Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism Sector in Scotland – Geographical Profile" 2008
- People 1<sup>st</sup> "The Sector Skills Agreement for Scotland" 2008

- People 1<sup>st</sup> “Food and Drink Service Proposed Qualifications”
- People 1<sup>st</sup> “Food Preparation and Cooking – Fine Dining Restaurants Proposed Qualifications”
- The Leitch Report 2006