

# Climbing the career ladder

A new initiative aims to incentivise the upskilling of existing electrical workers, who are currently without full electrician status, to the NVQ Level 3 standard. **ANDREW BRISTER** looks at TESP's Career Progression Programme and its plans to target experienced workers

**A**s the economy slows amid Brexit uncertainty, a number of electrical firms have struggled to take on apprentices in challenging market conditions. With many in the industry talking of skills shortages, any initiative designed to boost numbers of electricians is to be welcomed.

One route is to look at existing workers in the sector: "There are a number of individuals in the industry who have not had the opportunity, or have previously been unable to complete the recognised qualification requirements for grading as an electrician," points out Andy Reakes, employment and skills manager at the Joint Industry Board (JIB). He estimates that there are tens of thousands of people in the sector that could be upskilled to the NVQ Level 3 standard to become graded electricians and meet the requirements for an ECS Gold Card from the JIB.



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The JIB's Mature Candidate Assessment, which includes the AM2 test of competence, allows a route for recognition of existing industry experience and takes into account work undertaken on site (see box). However, the numbers coming through the scheme have not been as high as hoped. For this reason, a relaunched programme from The Electrotechnical Skills Partnership (TESP) aims to incentivise take-up and offer career progression for experienced workers.

TESP aims to bring an additional 1,000 fully-qualified electricians into the industry by providing them with subsidised access to an assessment of their capabilities. "The TESP Career Progression Programme is a way of subsidising the Mature Candidate Assessment, thereby encouraging people to go down that route," says Andy Reakes. "It's a way of filling in the gaps, recognising industry experience and underpinning qualifications which

**Editors note:**

Since this article was written, we are very sorry to advise readers that Andrew Brister has passed away. Andrew was a former editor of *Electrical & Mechanical Contractor*, the predecessor to *ECA Today*, and he was a prodigious and high quality journalist and author, writing for many engineering products and services titles. Andrew will be greatly missed by those who knew him, and who benefitted from his journalism and articles, across our industry.

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**The marks of maturity**

TESP's Career Progression Programme is underpinned by the JIB's Mature Candidate Assessment scheme. The assessment recognises existing industry experience and takes into account the work carried out to date. Successful candidates gain the industry Level 3 qualification, which meets the requirements for an ECS Gold Card application.

There are two approved Level 3 qualifications: either the City and Guilds 2356-99 Level 3 in Electrotechnical Services for the Experienced Worker or the EAL Level 3 Diploma in Electrotechnical Services Experienced Worker Assessment Route.

Workers will also need to pass the AM2 industry competency assessment.

With TESP's Career Progression Programme, if workers undertake the Mature Candidate Assessment with one of several approved training providers, they will get the following benefits:

- AM2 completion bonus – a £71 completion payment will be given on successful completion of the AM2 assessment
- An ECS Gold Card for free – a saving of up to £60
- Professional technician status – the first 100 successful candidates receive free professional registration for one year as an Engineering Technician (EngTech) through the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET). This represents a saving of £144.

TESP has partnered with several training providers that are approved to deliver the JIB's Mature Candidate Assessment, including: JTL (nationwide), DCET (Exeter and the South West) and Gower College (Swansea). Each of the providers offer further discounts and incentives on the typical cost of an assessment, with reductions of up to £500.

The scheme has been made possible due to funding from TESP partners ECA, JIB and National Electrotechnical Training (NET), together with the IET and Electrical Safety First. The programme is managed by the JIB.

may have already been completed so that workers can go on to achieve Level 3 and complete the AM2 assessment."

The programme has widespread industry backing. "The ECA is a core part of TESP and we are delighted that the programme is being relaunched so that we can help those people who may have been unable to complete or access an electrical apprenticeship," comments Carolyn Mason, head of education and training at the ECA.

In order to be considered for the Career Progression Programme, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- five years' experience working in the electrical industry
- currently working in industrial, commercial or domestic premises
- practical and technical knowledge of installing and maintaining electrical systems
- working knowledge of the current Wiring Regulations.

Candidates will be expected to provide written and



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verbal evidence of their experience and site visits will assess whether that work meets the required performance.

TESP hopes that the reduced costs (see box) will be enough of an incentive for increased take up of the programme. Certainly, there are many who may have missed the boat of apprenticeship funding, yet have valuable experience from working in the industry. The initiative offers a way for these people to progress their career, gain increasingly necessary qualifications to help them win new business and open doors to other working opportunities.

"There are many reasons why workers may not have considered this route in the past," explains Andy Reakes. "For some, the costs may have acted as a disincentive; for others perhaps they were not aware of the programme, or access to sites to demonstrate competence has been an issue. Certainly, TESP hopes that the financial incentive will help to increase numbers coming through." [ECAtoday](#)

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