



### **The Process Manufacturing Industry's Skills Challenge Skills Forum sees employers joining forces**

*Jon Mason, Chair, Science Industry Partnership Process Industries (SIPPI) sets out the role of this key Strategic Forum which has a focus on the skills interests of process manufacturing, especially those companies operating Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulated sites.*



The process and process manufacturing industries have long provided a high level of workforce development to meet sector needs for suitably skilled and qualified personnel; and of course to meet the stringent demands of health and safety regulation. It's a sector in which I am proud to have accomplished a long and interesting career.

The products of these sectors (including Chemicals, Food & Beverages, Bulk Pharmaceuticals, Consumer Goods and Downstream Petroleum) will be key to meeting our needs for decades to come and a healthy industry is needed to ensure future security of supply of these products in a new global operating environment.

Many sections of the industry are heavily regulated, often being top tier COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) sites and as such are required to demonstrate employee competence.

However what employers want is a continued national and transferable approach to skills and training – clear shared standards of competence for benchmarking across the sector, as well as the contractor workforce.

In order to drive this skills agenda a number of leading employers have formed the Science Industry Process Industries Group (SIPPI), which is a forum within the [Science Industry Partnership](#). Topics on their agenda include apprenticeships, process safety, engineering skills, competence management, and asset integrity.

We need an-up-to date understanding of skills gaps from increasing responsibility at management and technician level – to cope with continuing advances in technology and the devolvement of responsibility across our workforce.

Continued innovation around new products is also crucial if the UK is to meet new carbon targets. However, such innovation and improvement can only flow from the skills of employees at every level in the organisation.

Skills development at management level are also key, strong leadership is vital to an industry which is so dependent on high standards of safety and the management of its environmental impacts.

# Science Industry Partnership

## SIP Process Industries (SIPPI)



Another major challenge is recruitment and retention. Due to an ageing workforce there will be a high replacement demand over the next ten years within the sector, because of the total number of individuals retiring. The sector also requires new apprentices and graduates, particularly in areas such as Chemical Engineering and Process and Energy Engineering.

Also there is a continued lack of understanding about the process manufacturing industry and type of work available. This means we need to continue to present the industry as a positive career option with opportunities to progress. This includes working with schools and careers influencers.

### So what is SIPPI doing?

During 2020, SIPPI will:

- identify the key skills issues facing the process manufacturing industry and agree priorities
- provide the policy voice to government on skills and provide the skills input to the UK Industrial Strategy
- lead on the 'make agenda' and deliver the skills actions
- take a coordinating lead role for Competence, working with the COMAH Strategic Forum, Process Safety Forum and Chemical and Downstream Oil Industries Forum and the Medicines Manufacturing Industry Partnership (MMIP).
- monitor the relevant training standards and skills standards
- input into the Apprenticeship reform agenda and levy developments as well as connecting with the Trailblazer on Apprenticeship Standards
- take oversight of the development of the Engineering and Manufacturing T level
- support review of National Occupation Standards (NOS) in the Devolved Nations.
- work with Trade Associations to investigate how careers can be better promoted, making the most of the SIP Careers Ambassador programme

The critical role played by the industry will only be sustained if a skilled engineering and technical workforce of sufficient strength and range is available to it. The industry must compete for talent – including striving for diversity beyond the traditional pools of workers; it must nurture and train the current workforce and it must ensure top managers have the leadership skills to secure a successful future.

***SIPPI is led by employers to develop critical strategic projects aimed at ensuring the industry has the right people, with the right skills in the right place now and in the future.***

Importantly it also connects into the Science Industry Partnership main Board to provide a combined, stronger voice for the science based industries on UK skills policy.

If you are interesting in finding out more about SIPPI or becoming a member please get in touch with [craig.alexander@cogentskills.com](mailto:craig.alexander@cogentskills.com)