

# CURRENT ROUTES TO A SKILLCARD

An update on recent and proposed developments from **Peter Rimmer**, HVCA head of employment affairs



Rimmer: Windows of opportunity

From the inception of Engineering Services SKILLCard – the personnel registration scheme for the hvac sector – it was acknowledged that many people working in a skilled capacity would have no formal qualifications – whether National or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQ/SVQs) or an earlier equivalent.

It was also recognised as important that such personnel should not be excluded from registering with SKILLCard.

A “window of opportunity” was therefore created to allow skilled personnel without formal qualifications to register for a SKILLCard on the basis of an employer’s endorsement – a process referred to as “industry accreditation”.

However, it was agreed that this window would remain open for a limited period only – and that those applying for a SKILLCard on this basis would be eligible for a *blue* card only.

## Experienced Worker

This window closed for personnel in industrial/commercial and ductwork occupations on 29 February 2004, and for personnel in domestic heating and plumbing services occupations on 31 December 2004.

Therefore, all SKILLCard applications received after these dates in respect of

industrial/commercial, ductwork and heating and plumbing services personnel with no formal trade or industry qualifications have had to satisfy the more demanding criteria of the Experienced Worker card.

Experienced Worker applicants must register for a Level 2 or Level 3 NVQ/SVQ and complete an NVQ/SVQ profile with an appropriate assessor.

Furthermore, SKILLCards issued on this basis are valid for three years only.

Therefore, SKILLCard applicants who receive an Experienced Worker card will have only three years in which to achieve the NVQ/SVQ appropriate to their trade – following which they will be eligible to apply for a five-year SKILLCard, colour-coded blue for a Level 2 and gold for a Level 3 qualification.

Guidance for Experienced Worker applicants and their employers has been published, along with details of how to register for an NVQ/SVQ, initial profiling, the fees payable and the financial assistance available.

Copies of the guidance leaflet and Experienced Worker application forms can be downloaded from the SKILLCard website at [www.skillcard.org.uk](http://www.skillcard.org.uk), or requested from the SKILLCard Helpline on 01768 860406.

Details of the centres which provide relevant mature worker assessment and training are also available from the same sources.

It should be noted that the arrangements outlined above apply only to those skilled personnel who lack formal trade qualifications. SKILLCard applicants with recognised qualifications – City & Guilds, apprenticeship, etc – can apply in the normal way.

Window-of-opportunity arrangements similar to those outlined above continue to exist for the other occupations covered by SKILLCard, as follows:

- ▲ *commissioning technicians/engineers until 30 June 2005;*
- ▲ *service and facilities personnel until 30 September 2005;*
- ▲ *supervisors and managers until 31 October 2005 (provisional);*
- ▲ *refrigeration and air conditioning operatives until 31 January 2006;*
- ▲ *sprinkler installers until 31 January 2006.*

In the meantime, employers are advised to consider registering their workforce now on the basis of employer endorsement/industry accreditation, before the Experienced Worker card also becomes mandatory for these occupations.

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Experienced Workers will receive a blue SKILLCard, as shown below

