



UK COMMISSION FOR  
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

# UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2011: Scotland Results

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# Executive Summary

The UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2011<sup>[1]</sup> is the key UK data source on employer demand for and investment in skills. This summary draws out the headline findings from the 2,500 interviews in Scotland which covered topics such as skill related recruitment difficulties, skills gaps, employer investment in training, product market strategy and the work-readiness of education leavers. Results are presented where possible by size and by sector.

## Work-readiness of those leaving education

In the last two to three years **27 per cent** of establishments have recruited a leaver of Scottish education. Establishments that had recruited education leavers generally found them well prepared for work; this perceived level of work-readiness increases with the amount of time recruits have spent in education with those recruited from university best prepared.

Among those who felt education leavers were poorly prepared, a lack of working life experience or maturity was the most commonly cited reason.

## Recruitment and skill shortages

At the time of fieldwork (March to July 2011) **13 per cent** of establishments had a total of **45,800** vacancies between them. This is consistent with the level seen in the 2010 Scottish Employer Skills Survey.

The labour market is largely able to meet the requirements of most establishments. **Four per cent** had a vacancy they considered to be 'hard-to-fill'; a total of **10,200** hard-to-fill vacancies equivalent to **22 per cent** of all vacancies.

**Three per cent** of establishments had a "skill shortage" vacancy - that is a vacancy that was hard-to-fill because candidates lacked the skills, qualifications or experience the employer was looking for. Skill shortages represented **17 per cent** of all vacancies. Almost all establishments experiencing hard-to-fill vacancies reported that it had some impact on their establishment, most commonly on the workload of their staff but also on their ability to develop new offerings and meet their current objectives.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The "Scottish Employer Skills Survey" series has been running in Scotland on an approximately biennial basis from 2002 to 2010. This report uses the surveys from 2006 onwards for time series comparison.

## **Internal Skills Mismatch**

Most establishments reported that their entire workforce was fully proficient at doing their job. However **17 per cent** reported at least one of their staff was not fully proficient, that is, they had a “skills gap”; this amounted to **122,400** employees or **five per cent** of the workforce as a whole.

Skills gaps are most commonly caused by transient factors such as staff being new to the role and training not being fully completed. For this reason they can be an inevitable part of bringing in new staff and developing new products, however they can become an issue when they start to impact on the establishment. Half of employers with skills gaps reported the workload of other staff members was impacted, and a quarter said they experienced increased operating costs and delays introducing new working practices.

## **Employer Investment in Training and Workforce Development**

Encouragingly **71 per cent** of employers had provided either on- or off-the-job training to at least one member of staff in the 12 months preceding the survey. A further **18 per cent** had given staff other more informal development such as shadowing those in higher positions or allowing them to go beyond their current job role to develop.

In total **1.4 million staff**, or **61 per cent** of the workforce, had received some training in the 12 months preceding the survey. Staff in Scotland overall had received an average of **4.2** days training each. This however means that **39 per cent** of staff are not receiving training, most commonly in Sales and Customer Services or Elementary occupations.

Executive Summaries present the key findings of the research produced by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. More detailed analytical results are presented in Evidence Reports.

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