

Strengthening Technical Specialist Training for an Expanding Nuclear Power Programme in the UK

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Nuclear power plants require a highly-trained, multi-skilled, competent workforce with a range of technical skills, some of which are highly specialist and nuclear-specific. The anticipated expansion of nuclear power in the UK will significantly increase demand for such skills and it is therefore essential that utilities and training providers work together to provide education and training in the most effective and efficient manner.

In the UK, the development of technical staff has tended to follow one of two traditional routes. The academic route involves study at university (up to 4 years), usually followed by a work-based graduate development programme (2 years) in which personnel learn to apply their engineering knowledge to real problems within the industry. The vocational route usually involves a work-based engineering apprenticeship (4 years) which includes part-time study for nationally-recognised technical qualifications developed in a particular engineering discipline and therefore not usually nuclear-specific. Neither of these routes is necessarily the most efficient or effective way of developing a sustainable resource of advanced, technical-competent specialists with the blend of knowledge, skills and operational experience, combined with the behavioural traits and safety culture required by the industry.

Gen2 has worked closely with our major client and partner, Sellafield Ltd, to develop an alternative education and training programme for young, high-calibre, technically-motivated school-leavers which combines academic and vocational learning to provide an innovative, accelerated route to qualification as an advanced technician in nuclear-related operations.

This paper will describe the development and implementation of the Technical Specialist Trainee Scheme (TSTS) for Sellafield Ltd. While currently servicing the training requirements for a major nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, the paper will describe proposals to extend the scope of the programme to nuclear power plant operations.

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