

SCIENCE BASED INDUSTRIES FACT SHEET – NORTHERN IRELAND

OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS



Cogent is the Sector Skills Council for Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals, Oil and Gas, Nuclear, Petroleum and Polymers industries. There are approximately 15,000 employees in the sector in NI (including forecourt retail).¹

Cogent industries include some of the most strategic, wealth-creating and pioneering employers in the UK. The four industries identifiable in Northern Ireland are Chemicals, Petroleum (mainly fuel distribution and retail sale of automotive fuel), Pharmaceuticals and Polymers (e.g. plastics etc.)

OCCUPATIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

Area	Examples of Typical Jobs	Total Employment 2005
Chemicals Manufacturing and Processing	Process Technician, Safety Officer, Senior Engineer	1,561
Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing	Production Operator, Laboratory Analyst, Quality Operations Manager	1,541
Polymers Manufacturing and Processing	Tool Maker, Quality Assurance Manager, Site Surveyor	7,258
Retail Sale of Automotive Fuel	Forecourt retail	4,602
Total		14,962

Source: Census of Employment 2005

The forecasts for the future of the sector have been positive and indicated a continued need to attract new workers. Re-skilling and upskilling of the current workforce to meet industry demand will also remain a priority.

The Cogent industries employ a wide range of occupations but most are based on science and technology functions. These include research scientists (Polymers and Pharmaceuticals), lab technicians, mechanical and electrical technicians, polymer apprentices and technicians, process operatives, supervisory and management staff, instrumentation technicians and general operatives.

More information on job roles and profiles can be found on the Career Pathway website at www.cogent-careers.com.

¹ Census of Employment 2005

SKILLS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The Cogent sector requires on entry qualifications related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. Entry qualifications range from basic skills for process operators in the manufacturing occupations, through to technician level qualifications such as NVQ and HNDs, to graduates in chemistry, polymer technology and other associated sciences.

Many companies have company specific process and management training schemes, professional development programmes and extensive health, safety and environmental training programmes, but in many cases these are developed and delivered in-house.

For details of job roles and the entry and training requirements go to www.cogent-careers.com.

CURRENT VACANCIES AND SKILL SHORTAGES

In 2005, 17% of establishments reported current vacancies. A tenth (10%) of establishments reported difficult to fill vacancies. Only 3% of establishments reported a skills shortage vacancy, which occurs when a vacancy is difficult to fill due to a lack of skills, qualifications or work experience.²

All organisations require new entrants at process, technician and graduate level to meet the normal demand from staff turnover. However, there are insufficient technicians entering the industries within the sector to meet forecast demand.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN NORTHERN IRELAND...

- the gross sales for chemicals, pharmaceuticals and polymers in 2005 was £1.3billion³
- 32% of the workforce is employed in Process Operator roles⁴
- 36% of the workforce is female³
- 100% of the workforce is employed on a permanent basis³
- 95% of the workforce is full-time.²

USEFUL LINKS

Careers Service NI	Provides an impartial all-age careers information, advice and guidance service: www.careersserviceni.com
Cogent	Cogent Sector Skills Council website: www.cogent-ssc.com
Cogent Career Pathways	A one stop information, advice and guidance service detailing careers and job profiles across the Cogent sector www.cogent-careers.com
Northern Ireland Polymers Association	Formed to represent and promote the various aspects of the Plastics and Rubber industry within Northern Ireland www.nipa.net/
JobCentre Online	Contains vacancies currently notified to Jobs and Benefit offices: www.jobcentreonline.com

Information in this fact sheet is provided by Cogent Sector Skills Council. Last updated March 2009. To check that this is the most up-to-date fact sheet go to www.careersserviceni.com.

² Northern Ireland Skills Monitoring Survey 2005, Department for Employment and Learning

³ National Statistics.

⁴ Labour Force Survey 2007