

Automated CITB grant claims are now a reality

Finishes and interiors sector employers can now book details for operatives' NVQ qualifications online thanks to an initiative from FIS and a plan from CITB for payment to be sent directly to them on completion, without the need for additional paperwork. **Helen Yeulet**, FIS skills delivery director, explains in more detail.

The move to simplifying the payment process from CITB is a major step forward for the industry as a whole and positions FIS at the forefront of driving important change for its members in the skills agenda.

Initially, only NVQs booked and achieved through FIS Approved Training Providers via CourseSight will be included to enable CITB to manage the change and measure the success before it becomes available to everyone in April 2018, if approved by the wider industry during this year's consensus vote.

David Frise, chief executive of FIS, stated: "We launched CourseSight in co-operation with CITB to automate course finding, bookings and updating of the CSCS card, and it will now pay the CITB grant directly to the employer, so massively reducing

administrative burden."

Helen Tapper, of Tapper Interiors, agreed, commenting: "Sourcing and booking training courses is another drain on resources, adding substantially to overheads for smaller contractors. It also requires knowledge and experience to ascertain whether a course is grant recoverable or not.

"This is a very positive step for all those SMEs that cannot afford to take on or divert resource to do this."

The phase two launch of CourseSight, the online platform developed by FIS in partnership with Reference Point, happened last month. Among a wealth of additional features introduced in phase two, the ability for the CITB grant to be paid on the point of qualification completion has to be

the most significant for members, and the industry as a whole.

CITB has worked closely with FIS and Reference Point to ensure that the grant processing aspect is as seamless as possible, ensuring that this pilot within the sector is a success.

Mark Noonan, CITB's industry relations director, said: "We want to make sure as many firms as possible can access our grant funding to support their training needs. The plans we're consulting on this year include this proposal to overhaul the Grants Scheme and make it much easier to use. We're really pleased to work in partnership with FIS so that its members are now able to take advantage of this improved service and we can test it to make sure it's robust for all."

CourseSight is now open to the rest of the industry, and training providers working across all the sectors can use it as a vehicle to attract employers and encourage them to take advantage of the direct upload of all newly achieved qualifications onto CSCS cards. Once the sector has completed the pilot with CITB, the opportunity to claim CITB grant will be open to all, providing a simple and ready solution to one of the largest problems within the industry today, assuming industry approval of CITB's future offer.

Commenting on this, Tanya Morris, director at Reference Point, said: "We're delighted to add this functionality to this latest rollout to CourseSight. Enabling FIS Approved Training Providers to make it even easier for CITB-registered companies to claim achievement

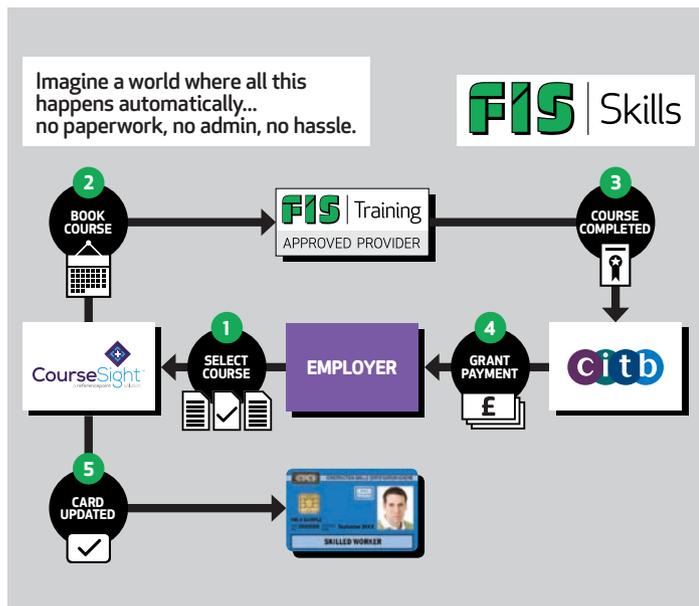
grant has been an extremely popular addition, and for CITB, we are now able to regulate which providers and companies may claim grant for eligible employees, so it's good news for everyone.

"We look forward to getting more feedback from all our stakeholders – whether CITB, industry bodies, trade associations, employers or training providers – on other welcome features they'd like to see on our training portal for the construction industry."

FIS is investing heavily in addressing the issues surrounding the well-publicised skills gap within the sector and this is the first step in ensuring that training is easier to gain access to – a major success for the Skills Delivery Board, chaired by FIS president Steve Coley.

"This is a huge leap forward and offers FIS members a real prospect to develop a solution to the skills shortage. At last we have something in place where levy payers can feel as though they will get value for their money by seeing a new generation of trainee that previously has been hampered by bureaucracy," commented Mr Coley.

FIS has taken the bold step to invest in delivering solutions for the benefit of the sector through this new innovative skills programme. However, it will only work if members and other sector stakeholders engage and, as the saying goes, become part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. We would therefore encourage all to get involved, be it through supporting the initiatives we are introducing such as providing work experience and taking on apprentices or by providing the statistical information we need to support our cause.



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