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Fisheries Organisations and Training Providers Criticise Government's Downgrading of Vocational Training

Fisheries Organisations today joined forces to criticise the British Government's recent decision to downgrade vocational training from equivalence with GCSEs.

Vocational Courses such as the NVQ Level 2 In Fish Husbandry provide students with practical skills, technical ability and the academic knowledge that will make a real difference to economies and communities at home and in developing nations.

These courses require the knowledge and application of knowledge in maths, chemistry, biology, physics, english and geography to grow fish for markets and food in a world where food security is becoming more important. GCSEs alone in those subjects would not provide that practical knowledge and ability

Schools are unable to deliver such specialist courses and we are reliant on technical colleges who have the resources and expertise to provide them. Sparsholt College in Hampshire and Bishop Burton College near Hull are examples of those providing good quality Fish Husbandry and Fisheries Management courses.

David Bunt of the Institute of Fisheries Management said "I believe it is short-sighted for the government to have done this. Vocational courses prepare people for the real world where the application of academic knowledge and practical skills to make economies and communities work is more valuable than academic knowledge alone". Students may now be put off such courses and reduce the UK's ability to develop and deliver these much needed skills".

Caroline James of Sparsholt College said: "Irrespective of the subject, vocational courses provide the ideal learning path for young people who have either become disengaged with conventional classroom learning or those who have a natural aptitude for practical learning. These qualifications in fact provide an opportunity for young adults to acquire literacy, numeracy and science skills in a contextualised setting. This includes increased contact with employers and exposure to real-world working environments which enhance students' employability. Many of the students who complete Fishery studies courses here at Sparsholt have gone on to enjoy successful careers in this sector."

Notes to editors:

The Institute of Fisheries Management (IFM) is an international organisation of people sharing a common interest in the modern management of recreational and commercial fisheries. The IFM is dedicated to the advancement of sustainable fisheries management in all its forms. www.ifm.org.uk

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