

**The Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) has introduced two changes related to academic qualifications and the green card.**



**Above:** Sample AQP card

CSCS now recognises a range of construction-related academic qualifications in addition to vocational qualifications including:

- degrees
- HNC and HND
- NEBOSH construction certificates and national diplomas
- CIOB certificates.

Applicants holding these academic qualifications who pass the managers and professionals' health, safety and environment (HS&E) test will be issued with an academically qualified person (AQP) card, which will be valid for five years and will be non-renewable. Holders of the AQP card will be expected to work towards membership of a recognised professional body or a relevant vocational qualification and then apply for the appropriate card when their AQP card expires.

In July 2014, CSCS re-launched the green card as the labourer's card following a pilot exercise. Anyone applying for the new entry level green card will be required to achieve the level one vocational qualification, health and safety in a construction environment, and pass the HS&E test, demonstrating their knowledge of the key issues affecting safe working practices on UK construction sites. The labourer's card will replace the existing construction site operative card, and green cards will no longer be issued to operatives working in other occupations.

It is estimated that the additional training required will cost £25 to £50 per person. However experienced green card holders may not need any or much additional training before sitting the test.

As the green card has to be renewed every five years, it will take until 2019 for the new scheme to be fully rolled out.

The changes were welcomed by the National Council for Specialist Contractors, whose chief executive Suzannah Nichol said: "The new AQP and labourer's cards will help the industry towards its target of a competent workforce with operatives holding the right cards for the jobs they are doing on site. The green card has traditionally been used as an easy way of gaining access to site and the new requirements should prevent operatives from obtaining it when there is a more appropriate card."

Construction union Ucatl is also supportive, saying that the reforms were necessary as the green card has been abused.

According to Ucatl, many workers who have additional skills and should have a more advanced card have only the green card. Often employers encourage workers just to apply for a green card to get them on to sites quickly and they then use the fact the worker only has a green card as an excuse to pay them a lower rate of pay, the union says.

General secretary Steve Murphy said: "We welcome the CSCS reform of the green card scheme. This will help to ensure that workers have the right card for the right job. This will be a major step forward in achieving a 100% qualified and competent workforce."

There will be an additional cost of undertaking the qualifications required to achieve the revised green card and UCATT believes that it must be the responsibility of employers to fund this training.

Mr Murphy, added: "Ensuring that workers are fully competent and have the right card for the work they are undertaking is a major factor in improving construction safety."