

Hairdressing Diploma bites the dust

Exclusive
By Andrew Don

The **Diploma in Hairdressing and Beauty Studies** (DHBS) that was unveiled to the hairdressing industry amid huge fanfare three years ago has reached the end of its life.

Awarding bodies **VTCT** and **AQA-City & Guilds** are pulling the plug once the current cohort of students graduate.

Alan Goldsbro, chief executive of **Habia**, the government-appointed standards setting body for the hair, beauty, nails and spa sectors, confirmed to *SalonFocus*: "With the withdrawal of both VTCT and AQA-City & Guilds it would appear to be the end of the full DHBS programme as we know it."

The move has come as, in an unconnected development, the government decided in January to downgrade the value of more than 3,100 "GCSE-equivalent" vocational qualifications offered in schools, including courses in hairdressing and "nail technology services".

This does not necessarily mean schools will no longer run such courses but does mean they will not count towards their league table position, so meaning there will be much less incentive to offer them.

NHF president **Mark Coray** said downgrading such qualifications would not in itself be a disaster for salons, as many did not fully prepare young people for working on a salon floor anyway, as stylists these days need to have good basic literacy, numeracy, chemistry and biology, as well as cutting and styling skills.

"The bigger issue is the lack of good quality, targeted careers' advice for young people keen to come into our industry – advice on what qualifications they will need, what academic and behavioural skills are most valued by salon owners, how to go about gaining work experience and the value of options such as apprenticeships," he said.

"More often than not school-leavers end up drifting into hairdressing, sometimes because they have been 'written off' academically by

their schools, and only discover almost by accident what a rewarding and creative career it is," he added.

The demise of the Diploma is a long way from its optimistic launch in 2009, when **Habia** had confidently predicted Diplomas would eventually attract more participants than **National Vocational Qualifications** (*SalonFocus*, May-June 2009).

Even as recently as 2010, **Habia** had been insisting it retained "complete confidence" in the qualification.

Among salon owners, the DHBS was unlikely to be missed, emphasised Federation education committee chairman **John Armstrong**.

"It never really took off, unfortunately. The original concept was fine but then the academics got hold of it and it ended up as something not fit for purpose from an employer's point of view," he told *SalonFocus*.

VTCT has said it will continue to offer **Principal Learning in Hair and Beauty Studies** as a stand-alone qualification after it ceases all new DHBS registrations from the end of December.

AQA-City & Guilds, meanwhile, has decided not to take any new registrations or entries for Diploma or Principal Learning courses from September.

Gill Morris, the former **Habia** "employers' champion" who helped demystify what became an increasingly complicated qualification to *SalonFocus* readers, described the DHBS' demise as "a phenomenal disappointment for me, all the awarding bodies, **Habia** and all those that did so much work on it".

In a separate development, **Habia** has said it intends to develop a new skills "academy" for the hair and beauty sector with the support of VTCT.

The **Habia Skills Academy** will create a network of learning providers and training centres to increase the training offered in barbering, African-type hair, laser/IPL, hair extensions, scalp conditions and raising awareness of the early signs of skin cancer.



ALAN GOLDSBRO:
WITHDRAWAL



JOHN ARMSTRONG: LACK
OF SUPPORT



GILL MORRIS:
DISAPPOINTMENT