

Media release – 20 March 2012

New tertiary science qualification launched

A collaboration between a West Coast polytechnic, high school and an international company has resulted in a new tertiary science programme being developed with potential for it to be delivered nationwide.

Eleven students from the world's largest inspection and verification company, SGS New Zealand, have just begun studying in Westport for Tai Poutini Polytechnic's (TPP) new National Certificate in Science (level 4).

TPP West Coast Co-ordinator Marja Kneepkens says it is the first tertiary programme specifically developed for those working in industrial science laboratories specialising in the coal and minerals industry.

"SGS (NZ) Ltd approached the polytechnic wanting training to upskill its local laboratory staff. Our research revealed that no other organisation in New Zealand delivered a science programme with a chemistry focus specific to industrial lab work for the coal and minerals industry," she says.

With support from Buller High School's science department TPP developed the new programme and gained NZQA accreditation to deliver it. The high school provides teaching expertise and access to their lab and equipment, the programme is delivered part time through block courses, evening classes and on-job tasks.

SGS's Business Manager Hugh McMillan says the company has been looking for a qualification like this for some years. "It is exciting to be involved in a project that could have benefits for the entire industry. We're going to have better trained people with a

better scientific understanding and that will benefit the company in many ways.” he says.

Buller High School provides resources and expertise. “We saw this as a great way of forging community links with local business and TPP. Ultimately it should also result in us being able to provide better facilities for our Buller High students,” says Science Head Steve Dorey.

“The students on this programme will expand the career pathway they can follow and SGS NZ Ltd gets better qualified staff. Already they are doing experiments that relate to their work and that is giving them more confidence in their day-to-day work,” says Mr Dorey.

While the initial focus is delivering the first year of the programme, TPP believes there is scope to expand the qualification out of Westport.

“We agreed to limit the first intake of students to West Coast SGS staff only, however there is potential to open up future programmes to lab staff from other organisations and to deliver the programme in different parts of the country,” says Marja Kneepkens.

The National Certificate in Science can be studied part time and is suited to those already working as field assistants, sample testers and quality control and lab technicians. Students will gain a sound basis of theoretical knowledge to underpin their day-to-day work and will gain the skills to grow in their role or move into further study.

ENDS

For more information contact:

Marja Kneepkens, TPP West Coast Co-ordinator

Phone : 03 789 5360

or

Hugh McMillan, New Zealand Business Manager SGS (NZ) Ltd

Phone : 03 7889122