

Damen Shipyards Cape Town receives award for pioneering Occupation Qualification apprentices



Damen Shipyards Cape Town (DSCT) has been honoured to receive an award from the higher education and training establishment Northlink College. The award is a certificate of appreciation recognising DSCT's role in committing to train some of the first 'occupation qualification' apprentices under what was then a new programme launched by the DHET (Department of Higher Education & Training) in January 2019.

Northlink commended DSCT for taking part in this programme from the beginning, when its future was still uncertain and its success yet to be demonstrated. DSCT was one of the first companies in South Africa to embrace this new apprenticeship scheme, the COS programme (Centres of Specialisation), at a time when it was still an unproven concept. Only recently has it become mainstream. Working in partnership with Northlink College, the first Damen apprentices successfully qualified in the COS Fitting & Turning programme, the first of its kind in South Africa. Each participant takes part in a three-to-four-year programme that ensures that, on completion, they are competent in their trade. 50% of their time is spent in the college and 50% in the workplace on a rotational basis. 36 individuals are currently in the programme, across eight trades. As well as fitting & turning, trades available include pipe fitting, welding, boiler making, plumbing, electrical, rigging and mechanical fitting. Over 90% of the trainees choose to accept full time jobs at DSCT once they have completed their courses. The college teaches the theoretical side of the roles and basic training in the underlying skills," explains Abdullah Galant, Technical Training Officer at DSCT,

"while DSCT provides the real-world exposure to applying those skills in the workplace as well as basic training in safety, firefighting and other essential procedures. New skills like carpentry are likely to be added over time. We now work with four colleges in total and many of the trainers are former employees of DSCT." With the COS programme now being accessed by companies all over South Africa, DSCT looks forward to training many more apprentices in occupation qualifications in partnership with Northlink College Cape Town and other centres of learning.