Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

College Foundation Apprenticeship places
AY 2023-24

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SUMMARY: Guidance for colleges on the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships in Academic Year 2023-24

FAO: Principals of Scotland's colleges, and the general public

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College Foundation Apprenticeship places: AY 2023-24

Introduction

1. I am writing to provide guidance on Foundation Apprenticeship provision for colleges in Academic Year (AY) 2023-24, including eligibility criteria and reporting requirements.

2. Since March 2022 the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has been accountable for the funding and delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) delivered directly through Scotland's colleges.

3. This document has been produced to assist colleges to deliver FAs at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels 4, 5 and 6 in AY 2023-24. The options include FA SCQF Level 6 Two Year Delivery Model or Shorter Duration Delivery Model (SDDM), and FA SCQF Level 4/5 One Year Delivery Model plus an additional one year for Additional Support Needs (ASN) if appropriate.

Background

4. FAs were first introduced in 2014-15 offering senior phase school pupils access to structured work-based learning to industry-recognised standards at SCQF Level 6. The model has evolved and delivery partners now include Local Authorities (LAs) and independent learning providers as lead partners. Pilot programmes have also been introduced at SCQF Level 4/5.

5. The aim of the programme is to create a high-quality work-based learning experience within S3 through to the senior phase of education (S4-S6) that:

   - Offers learners the opportunity to develop accredited skills and capability within a work-based context.

   - Enables employers to make a structured contribution to the learning of school age pupils by providing real-life work-based situations and projects.

   - Develops meta-skills within individuals that can contribute to work readiness and create high performing employees.

6. The SCQF Level 4/5 Pilots require a different model of delivery to FAs at Level 6 by focusing on:

   - Delivery in schools supported by expertise from employers, practitioners and other experts as required.

   - Project-based learning that can be related to the school curriculum.

   - Emphasis on the development of meta-skills for learners using work-based projects and situations.

Policy drivers

7. The key policy drivers for FAs are set out below.

Developing the Young Workforce

8. FAs support the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy (2014) which called for an improved relationship between employment and education, and a greater focus on vocational training and industry-recognised vocational qualifications. The strategy also calls for all pupils to have "work relevant educational experiences" that offer a rich blend of learning and which will seek to tackle "structural and recurring youth unemployment".

9. They also support the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee, by supporting more pathways and opportunities for pupils and school leavers.

National Outcomes and Regional Outcome Agreements

10. FAs support the delivery of SFC's strategic objective to invest in education that is accessible to learners from all backgrounds and throughout life; gives them a high-quality learning experience and supports them to succeed in their studies; provides opportunities to participate; and equips them to flourish in employment, further study and fulfilling lives. They also support the Scottish Government's strategic priority of high-quality learning in a system which is seamlessly connected for the learner. This includes learning which prepares people well for the world of work and successful long-term careers, prioritising provision that meets known skills gaps in the economy.

11. SFC is firmly committed to work-based learning as part of the wider curriculum offer and is supportive of FAs as a vehicle for increasing work-based learning pathways. Institutions, where appropriate, will outline their plans for future collaborations to deliver FAs in their Regional Outcome Agreements.

Delivering FAs

12. SFC and SDS will continue to work together to ensure consistency is maintained across all FA provision. Regional partnerships between colleges, LAs and employers are key to the delivery of a high-quality FA programme. The extensive expertise and experience of a multi-partnership approach has a strong role to play. It is recognised that each member of the multi-partnership approach will bring expertise which can support FAs and provide high quality delivery.

FAs funded through Local Authorities (LAs)

13. Colleges cannot claim credits for FA activity contracted through a LA. Annex B sets out the reporting arrangements and codes to utilise when recording LA funded FAs.

Eligibility criteria

14. To be eligible to participate in an approved FA framework, a student must satisfy the criteria set out below. Colleges shall use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that the student meets all the eligibility criteria as set out below.

15. A student must be domiciled in Scotland at their start date or be a student who is not domiciled in Scotland but whose S3 (for Level 4/5) or senior phase (for Level 4/5/6) of education is provided predominantly in Scotland.

16. A student studying a Level 6 FA must be in senior phase of education at the start of the course (i.e., S4-S6), and for Level 4 and Level 5 FA a student must be in either S3 or in the senior phase of education (i.e., S4-S6).

17. The proposed student must have demonstrated an appropriate ability to complete the selected FA framework whilst still participating in their S3/senior phase of education, whichever is appropriate to the SCQF level.

18. If, as a result of exceptional circumstances, any student has not completed their FA Level 6 framework prior to completing their senior phase of secondary education, the college should make every opportunity available to assist the student to complete the qualification. Further advice and support can be received through your SFC Outcome Agreement Manager.

Quality management

19. The Quality Standards that apply to FA Providers can be accessed in the SDS Learning Provider area of www.apprenticeships.scot. For colleges, through a Memorandum of Understanding, Education Scotland scrutinises college delivery of courses and programmes. However, this is not designed to go down to FA programmes and therefore colleges should ensure there are no gaps between Education Scotland's 'How Good is our College?' framework and the SDS's Work-Based Learning (WBL) Quality Assurance and Improvement standards.

20. The Quality Standards assess the extent to which each college maintains capacity and capability to successfully deliver quality provider services throughout the period of delivery.

Monitoring and reporting

21. In developing a joint delivery model for AY 2023-24, the ambition of both SFC and SDS was to streamline, simplify and reduce the administrative burden for colleges in the delivery and reporting of FAs. For AY 2023-24 we will achieve this by moving to a one system reporting method where colleges will input FA information to FE Statistics (FES) only. It will be SFC's responsibility to share the data with SDS when the appropriate Information Governance arrangements are in place.

22. SFC will monitor the uptake of activity through college reporting and FES returns. The requirements for reporting through FES can be found in the FES Guidance Notes for AY 2023-24 and in Annex B of this paper. SFC will continue to work with SDS to produce a FA annual report, facilitated through a joint data sharing agreement.

23. FA activity funded through LAs: If the Foundation Apprenticeship activity is contracted through a Local Authority, then the FA course must be coded as FES 1 Source of Finance code '05' SDS and credits cannot be claimed. The Qualification Aim at FES 1 and FES 2 should be code '40' Foundation Level Apprenticeship and the FES 2 Target Group should be code '2' Foundation Apprentice.'

Marketing and communications requirements

24. In promoting the FAs, colleges should take appropriate positive action in marketing to schools, pupils and parents, with a view to improving representation where there is clear imbalance in provision, targeting gender, disability, ethnicity and people who have been in care. A marketing toolkit which provides further guidance on promotion of FAs is available at www.apprenticeships.scot/resources.

Allocations and funding

25. The Final College Funding Allocations for AY 2023-24 identified that FAs remain a priority to meet the aspirations of Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy (2014) and Young Persons Guarantee by supporting more pathways and opportunities for pupils and school leavers.

26. For AY 2023-24 we have not identified separate FA credits, however, the expectation is that colleges will continue to deliver 2,500 opportunities across the sector.

27. Colleges can vire funding and credit activity between frameworks within their overall allocation, however in doing so they should be mindful of the overall provision and the relevance of that provision to the needs of the regional economy.

28. Colleges must notify any virement through the ongoing engagement process with the Skills team at SFC.

29. Colleges should work with LAs to meet demand within the region, up to the budget available. If colleges have capacity to deliver additional activity, and there is unmet demand within the LA, then colleges should aim to deliver that activity.

30. Colleges should draw down funding for FAs as they would for core funding and comply with SFC's Credit Guidance.

Learner travel expenses

31. SDS has reviewed FA learner travel expenses and has confirmed there is a change to entitlement in 2023-24. FA level 6 learners will no longer be funded where the free bus

pass is viable for use by the learner to get to their college / employer premises. However, where the free bus pass is not justifiably viable, travel claims up to a maximum of £1,000 per learner or £1,250 if the learner is eligible for a £250 rural uplift.

32. Colleges are expected to follow the new Travel Claim process as communicated by SDS. Colleges will be expected to draw this funding down at two annual travel payment points (October and February) based on confirmed FA in-training volumes, not on Learner Review Forms. For the two-year delivery model, if travel costs are only needed for the work placement starting in year 2, travel costs of up to £1,000 per learner can be claimed.

Conditions of funding

33. The following conditions apply:

- This funding has been allocated for the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships and must be used primarily for this activity. If colleges are unable to meet the recruitment targets agreed with SFC it may be possible to utilise the credits for other planned provision where there is greater demand. Colleges must notify SFC's Skills team (apprenticeships@sfc.ac.uk) at the earliest opportunity if there is a requirement to utilise the credits elsewhere. Use of funding must meet the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance.

- Any under-delivery or shortfall in activity may result in the recovery of funding.

- Colleges must provide data returns requested by SFC to the deadlines and standards specified, including FES reporting requirements.

- Colleges must provide updates on the funded activity as requested by SFC.

- In acknowledgement of SFC's funding contribution, our logo must be displayed on any publicity material relating to FAs (signage, posters, website, etc.). You will also be required to display other logos in recognition of FA delivery – full details are contained within the marketing toolkit on www.apprenticeships.scot/resources.

34. SFC is committed to processing any personal data fairly, transparently and in accordance with the law. SFC's privacy notice is available on our website. SFC will use the information submitted by colleges to provide regular updates to the Scottish Government on the current uptake and use of funding. (The Scottish Government's privacy notice is available on their website.)

Further information

35. In addition to this guidance document, the following annexes are also available to support this process:

- Annex A: Breakdown of college credits by framework AY 2023-24

- [Annex B: Reporting Requirements](#)

- [Annex C: FA Delivery Toolkit and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](#)

36. Any queries/requests for further information should be directed to Sharon Drysdale, Deputy Director, Work-based Learning & Skills, e-mail: sdrysdale@sfc.ac.uk.

Dr. Jacqui Brasted

Interim Director, Access, Learning & Outcomes

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Annex A

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FA frameworks

1. There are twelve different FA frameworks at SCQF Level 6. They are designed to provide a work-based learning qualification that meets minimum standards of competence as defined by licensed Sector Skills Councils and industry. Each SCQF Level 6 FA framework contains three key components: skills, knowledge and competence.

2. There are three SCQF Level 4 and two SCQF Level 5 customised awards, each designed to provide a work-based learning qualification. Each Level 4/5 qualification contains two key components: a work-based learning project and a National Progression Award/Skills for Work qualification. The customised awards are as follows:

   - Construction Level 4 & Level 5.

   - Automotive Level 4.

   - Hospitality Level 4 & Level 5.

Breakdown of College Credits by Framework: AY 2023-24

FA Framework	Price group	Credits
Level 6: One-Year Delivery Programmes		
Accounting	1	14.0
Business Skills	1	12.5
Civil Engineering	3	17.0
Creative & Digital Media	2	14.7
Engineering	3	26.0
Financial Services	1	13.0
Food & Drink Operations	2	13.0
IT: Hardware & System Support	2	12.8
IT: Software Development	2	13.0
Scientific Technologies	2	12.0
Social Services & Healthcare	2	13.2
Social Services (Children & Young People)	2	13
Level 6: Two-Year Delivery Programmes		
Accounting	1	7.0
Business Skills	1	6.25
Civil Engineering	3	8.5
Creative & Digital Media	2	7.35
Engineering	3	13.0
Financial Services	1	6.5

FA Framework	Price group	Credits
Food & Drink Operations	2	6.5
IT: Hardware & System Support	2	6.4
IT: Software Development	2	6.5
Scientific Technologies	2	6.0
Social Services & Healthcare	2	6.6
Social Services (Children & Young People)	2	6.5
Level 4: One-Year Programmes		
Automotive	3	7.0
Construction	3	7.0
Hospitality	3	7.0
Level 5: One-Year Programmes		
Construction	3	7.0
Hospitality	3	7.0

Annex B

College-Funded FA FES Reporting Requirements

Reporting Requirement	Evidence Requirement	Evidence Source	Comment
Enrolments	Student data entered into FES	FES Q1 Collection 3 November 2023	
	Qualification Name		
	Qualification Aim		Qualification Aim at FES Q1 and Q2 should be code '40'
	Type of Programme – school link		
	Year of course		
	Length of course		
	SQA Entry Group Award		
	Duration of Programme		
	Number of planned credits		
	Group Award		
	Student e-mail address	FES Q2 Collection 2 February 2024	
	Disability		
	Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)	SFC requires assurance that colleges will continue to develop ILPs, aligned to the college procedure, for all learners as part of quality processes	In previous years Colleges were asked to retain ILPs for audit purpose as part of SDS contract requirements. As part of changed accountabilities SFC will require assurance that ILPs are in place for FA learners. This assurance will be

Reporting Requirement	Evidence Requirement	Evidence Source	Comment
			secured through engagement with SFC Skills Team, OAMs, and engagement with Education Scotland HMIE's.
Learner Progress	Learner Review Forms	SFC requires assurance that colleges are engaging with LAs and providing updates on learner progress via the learner review approach. There is no requirement for colleges to provide SFC with samples of the Learner Review form.	Learner Review Forms were previously required to drawdown travel funding – this is not applicable in AY2023-24. Assurance will be secured through engagement with SFC's Skills Team and OAM's FA learners should have an opportunity to provide feedback on their FA through the colleges formal progress review process.
Employer Engagement	Employer contact name Employer street name Employer city	FES Q2 Collection 2 February 2024	Employer WBL declaration is no longer required by SDS for travel payments. However, SFC will seek assurance that the college continues to engage with employers to ensure they are committed to support the delivery of FA's including provision of work

Reporting Requirement	Evidence Requirement	Evidence Source	Comment
			placements for learners. SFC assurance will be secured through engagement with SFC's Skills Team, OAM's and engagement with Education Scotland HMIE's.
	Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code		
	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code		
Equality		FES Q2 Collection 2 February 2024	
Achievement	Programme Element Result	FES Q3 Collection 28 June 2024	
Travel Funding	Volume of in training level 6 students		SFC will provide data transfer for in training learners to SDS to enable payment of travel funding.

FAs funded through Local Authorities (LAs)

3. If FA activity is contracted through an LA then the FA must be coded as FES 1 Source of Finance code '05' SDS. Credits cannot be claimed for this activity. The Qualification Aim at FES 1 and FES 2 should be code '40' Foundation Level Apprenticeships and the FES Target Group should be code '2' Foundation Apprentice.

4. Colleges must also comply with the following SFC conditions/guidance for AY 2023-24:

   - Conditions of College Funding (Annex A).

   - Credit Guidance for Colleges.

- Outcome Agreement Guidance.

- FES Guidance notes.

5. In partnership with SFC, SDS will evaluate the achievements of each provider by assessing the achieved performance levels, therefore you are required to make evidence available for performance management purposes.

Annex C

FA delivery toolkit and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

6.   The Foundation Apprenticeship delivery toolkit has been updated which colleges may find helpful. The toolkit includes some new resources including: a mentor guide, equalities information, and a summary which collates all the relevant links into one place for quick access.

7.   Here is the link to FA FAQs which are updated as required.