



Skills
Development
Scotland

Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework

Self Assessment Guidance for
Modern Apprenticeship Provision
For Contracting Year 2023–2024

GE Aerospace Caledonian
Scottish Apprenticeship Awards
Large Employer Finalist



Billy Wotherspoon
Modern Apprentice
EGG Lighting

Context

This guidance has been designed as an aide memoire to support you, as a Skills Development Scotland contracted learning provider, to engage with the self-assessment process. It sets out questions aligned to the latest version of the quality assurance and improvement framework, that will help you complete your self-assessment on the mesma system and to think about the effectiveness of your approach to planning and delivering your skills provision. It has been tailored for providers of Modern Apprenticeship provision.

The guidance will help you focus on the key processes relevant to provision, and to illustrate the practices that a good provider and an excellent provider may adopt. The examples are not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to complete the self-assessment using real examples of work you are currently undertaking.

We have exemplified “good” and “excellent” practice in relation to each of the themes, but we expect any measures you implement will be proportionate to the nature and size of your SDS contract.

This document should be read and used in conjunction with the [Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework](#) which also explains SDS’ formal quality assurance visit arrangements.

SDS has a number of resources which may help you with your self-assessment process including effective practice examples; case studies; 2021-22 national thematic review report; and a detailed analysis of all formal quality reviews undertaken in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2021-22.

In addition, there are a range of e-learning modules which may be helpful for your staff to undertake prior to completing the self-assessment exercise. There are two dedicated modules covering Self Assessment and Quality Action Planning.

These resources are available at the [Improvement Hub](#) page of the SDS corporate website.

Various hyperlinks are included throughout this guidance and they are collated in a comprehensive list at the end of the document.

Context

Our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework is built on the principles of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Framework. At the heart of this is the notion that all businesses operate in an “ecosystem” and the concept that you, as a learning provider, are at the centre of the system. You should think about the needs of your customers and stakeholders primarily, but also consider what is going on in the wider training market, and finally consider all of that in relation to the national environment.

This should assist you in developing a **strategy**, which could be a simple document or a more complex plan including a SWOT or PESTLE analysis, for example. This could be part of a wider strategy and not necessarily a separate document. This may be particularly relevant for college, employer or local authority providers.

This ecosystem diagram attempts to demonstrate who/what you may need to consider when thinking about your strategy and the trends that may affect you both now and in the future.

Your strategy and delivery approach will be tailored to the nature and size of your business.



Context

In developing your strategy, you should consider:

- **WHY** (you are going to do something?);
- **WHAT** (is it you are going to do?); and
- **HOW** (is it you're going to do it?)

Some questions to consider may be:

- What are our apprentices and employers expectations now and in the future?
- What are implications of Scottish Government policy delivered through SDS? e.g., Equality Duty, Fair Work, Sustainability, Industry 4.0
- What effect might the current economic and political climate that co-delivery partners and sub-contractors face into have on us?, (e.g., schools, colleges, and employers)
- What is the demand now and in the future for our apprenticeship delivery services?
- What do we need to do to make apprentices and employers choose us rather than other providers? What is our unique selling point?
- How will new technologies affect our delivery in the future and how can we prepare for it?

- How will we cater for more diverse apprentices in the future?)

Effective self-assessment of planning and delivery of training happens where you have completed the process using evidence from four main lenses or viewpoints:

- That of yourselves; how well do you think you have performed and what hard evidence is provided by data such as achievement rates broken down to consider equality groups, age and different framework areas for example?
- That of the apprentice; what are their perceptions of the learning delivered by you?
- That of the employer/stakeholder; what are their perceptions of the learning delivered by you?
- That set out as 'best practice' in workplace learning literature or through other platforms where effective practice is shared.

You should plan to bring together relevant people across your organisation (a self-assessment (SA) team) to contribute to the self-assessment (SA) process. Setting aside adequate time for this is very valuable. How much time you spend and who you involve

will depend upon the nature and size of your SDS provision. Remember that this is all about the SDS funded provision and not about how you conduct your wider business, although the two map overlap. Consider the key performance indicators set by SDS but also indicators / targets you may wish to set yourself to enhance the quality of your delivery.

Gather information together including key results, employer and stakeholder feedback, apprentice feedback and notes of any team meetings. Share this guidance document with your team beforehand and ask them to think about and/or possibly jot down their thoughts against each of the indicators.



Context

The SA/QAP modules on the mesma system ask questions to help you describe and evaluate how you do things, and what you might do to enhance the service you offer. The questions should be thought about in relation to everything you deliver in your SDS contract.

A completed example of a Self-Assessment and Quality Action Plan is available on the Improvement Hub page of the SDS corporate website; within the Documents Store in mesma, and in the mesma Helpdesk.

Here are some top tips:

- Ensure your team understands the importance of not just describing what you do, but really thinking about how well things work across all of your provision.
- Use the stimulus questions on each theme in the guidance to lead the discussion at your SA session and complete the SA/QAP on mesma. This should relate to what you said in your MA bidding documentation and your responses should reflect this. Spend

more time discussing what works, and what you could enhance, and coming to a consensus judgement on this rather than simply describing what you do.

- Don't forget to consider feedback from your Skills Investment Adviser (SIA) quality monitoring visits, formal SDS quality reviews and Education Scotland thematic reviews etc.
- Evaluate each theme and give yourself a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) using the following definitions. Note that this should be agreed by all those involved. This is your team's judgement of how well you think you are doing – it will not be used by SDS to judge how well you perform against the theme.

Red is an indication that the consensus is that there is a clear need to make improvements in this area, that will lead to improvements in the delivery of your SDS funded provision.

Amber is an indication that the consensus is that, although this is an area for improvement, it is done quite well and meets required standards.

Green is an indication that the consensus is that this is working well for your organisation and you will continue to maintain that high standard.

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- Any theme rated as red will result in an area for improvement for your QAP. You must identify clear timelines and ownership of the area for improvement.
- A theme rated as amber will result in an area for improvement for your QAP where you think it will benefit your delivery; or should be prioritised after red areas for improvement.
- In creating areas for improvement for your QAP, you should consider how many tasks you have. Ensure all your tasks are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound). QAP actions are not necessarily always about addressing weakness - you may wish to add a quality improvement action to further enhance something you are already doing well.
- Do you have a lot of areas for improvement that are, realistically, too much to complete over the next 12 months? If so, then prioritise using your RAG system and bearing in mind your contractual requirements. Any AFIs identified through our formal review process should be included in your QAP.

When you have completed your SA and QAP review them carefully and get agreement from your SA team before finalising the SAQAP on the mesma system by **30th April 2023**.



Julie-Ann Murray
Modern Apprentice
I&P Johnson

Quality Assurance Framework

Standard	Indicator	Theme(s)
 Service Delivery	1.1 Providers develop and prepare effective work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.1.1 Initial assessment and recruitment ■ 1.1.2 Induction ■ 1.1.3 Learning and assessment planning ■ 1.1.4 Equality groups ■ 1.1.5 Transferable skills ■ 1.1.6 Employer involvement
	1.2 Providers plan resources for effective delivery of work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.2.1 Resources
	1.3 Providers effectively deliver and manage work-based learning provision and ensure quality of delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.3.1 Learner goal setting and progress ■ 1.3.2 Quality assurance
	1.4 Providers manage partners and stakeholders to deliver outcomes for learners and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.4.1 Effective partnerships ■ 1.4.2 Management of sub-contractors
 Leadership and Quality Culture	2.1 The provider's work-based learning strategy is based on the current and future needs and expectations of stakeholders, employers and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2.1.1 Diverse recruitment to support youth/employment ■ 2.1.2 Future focused strategy underpinned by Labour Market Information (LMI)
	2.2 Leaders ensure appropriate staffing resources are in place to deliver the work-based learning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2.2.1 Management and support of staff
	2.3 Leaders ensure staff are appropriately skilled and motivated to deliver work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2.3.1 Staff development
	2.4 Leaders take ownership for the continuous improvement of quality and performance of work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2.4.1 Effective self-assessment and continuous improvement ■ 2.4.2 Innovation and change
 Outcomes and Impact	3.1 Providers achieve and maintain high levels of service delivery and outcomes for all work-based learning provision, ensuring all regulatory, statutory, equality and funding body requirements are met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3.1.1 Achievement and analysis of SDS KPIs ■ 3.1.2 SDS diverse recruitment ■ 3.1.3 Awarding body and industry body requirements
	3.2 Work based learning provision meets the needs of learners, employers and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 3.2.1 Systematic gathering, analysis and use of employer and stakeholder perception data ■ 3.2.2 Systematic gathering, analysis and use of learner perception data

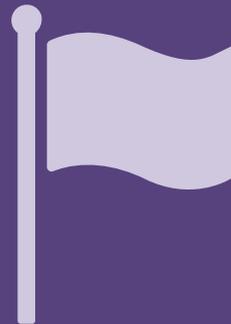
Service Delivery



This section is about the delivery of work-based learning.

Within this you need to consider not only how you do this but how effective it is and why.

Leadership and Quality Culture



This section is about how your leadership team manage and plan your delivery. It often (but not always) relates to the wider leadership and management of an organisation where work-based learning is not the only thing that happens in that organisation.

The important point is that you consider **how leadership and management is applied to SDS funded work-based learning provision.**

Outcomes and Impacts



This section is all about your results and how you analyse them and use them to inform improvements in future.

What you do to achieve these results should have been covered in the previous two sections.

Service Delivery

1.1 – Providers develop and prepare effective work-based learning provision

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Initial Assessment and Recruitment</p> <p>1.1.1: How effective are our processes for recruitment* and initial assessment of learners?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision and employer providers)</p>	<p>How effective is your recruitment process in attracting suitable apprentices to your MA programme?</p> <p>What do you do to find out about your apprentices to ensure that you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ plan for their individual needs, e.g., through diagnostic assessments; understand their motivations for being on the programme; ■ understand their ability to complete the qualification; ■ understand any additional support needs they may have; ■ identify any recognised prior learning they may have - including core skills; ■ identify information that needs to be shared with colleagues e.g., requirement for a dedicated room for religious observance; or that an individual has specific caring responsibilities; ■ plan for their meta-skills development; and ■ reduce barriers for those with protected characteristics and/or care experienced? <p>How do you ensure employers are involved in the initial assessment process and that workplace requirements can be matched to the correct programme?</p>	<p>Have in place appropriate initial assessment and recruitment processes and be able to provide examples of how effective these are for apprentices.</p>	<p>Demonstrate how the implementation of initial assessment and recruitment processes ensures that learning is tailored for every apprentice.</p> <p>Measure and review the impact of their initial assessment processes for all apprentices.</p>

Induction

1.1.2:

How effective are our processes for each learner's induction?

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision and employer providers)

Have you developed and prepared induction to give apprentices the best introduction into the programme?
This might include:

- familiarisation with the qualification and expectations for vocational, core skills and where pertinent, meta-skills requirements;
- workplace and off-the-job expectations for delivery and assessment including roles and responsibilities for all parties involved and expected behaviours; adherence with equality duty/policy such as consideration of bullying or harassment and health and safety;
- familiarisation with key contacts such as tutors, mentors, fellow apprentices and methods of communication; and
- reflective and confidence building activities.

Do employers take part and engage effectively in induction?

How do you know if apprentices/ employers value the induction activities?

Implement induction activities that clearly benefit all apprentices, and which give each apprentice the best chance of success.

Have in place an induction that clearly explains the programme/training to be undertaken and answers questions about the expectations of apprentices and employers.

Provide a thorough introduction for apprentices and employers or workplace partners.

Provide support to the supervisor in relation to coaching the apprentices.

Ensure that employers fulfil obligations in relation to induction to the workplace and demonstrate involvement in design and delivery of induction.

Use their knowledge of under-represented groups to ensure the induction is inclusive of all apprentices.

Learning and assessment planning

1.1.3:

How effective is our learning and assessment planning?

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision and employer providers)

Consider how well you have developed and prepared delivery and assessment processes for the apprentices.

Have you liaised/communicated with employers to ensure your learning and assessment planning integrates well with the employer led activity in the workplace and how you will work with employers to co-design / deliver apprenticeships?

Have you considered apprentices' work patterns and shifts?

Have you agreed with the apprentice and employer supervisor, a clear individual learning plan that is tailored to individual apprentice needs including additional support and reflects an agreed pace of delivery/learning and assessment?

Have you planned how to fill the gaps in training that will not be covered by the apprentice's normal job role?

Effectively develop, prepare and schedule where and how learning, teaching and assessment will take place for each area/ programme of delivery in line with the nature of their provision.

Have a good relationship with the employers they work with and an understanding that both parties are clear what their expectations are in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.

Have considered the practicalities of delivery for the apprentices.

Have a clear agreement with all their employers and have in place clear mechanisms for communication and monitoring which ensure that employers are delivering to the expected standard.

Clearly tailor and adapt their planned arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment for each individual. Fully engage apprentices and employers (where relevant) in this planning.

Provide each apprentice with a tailored individual learning and personal support plan which the apprentice 'owns' and understands, and which adds value to their learning experience.

<p>Equality groups</p> <p>1.1.4: How well have we designed and prepared our provision specifically to meet the needs of different equality groups?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>When developing your provision have you considered how your processes and approaches will impact on apprentices with protected characteristics and/or are care experienced to ensure that they work well and achieve the desired outcomes?</p> <p>To enable you to identify potential issues you might consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which can be shared with apprentices at induction and provide clarity on how they raise concerns ■ how you will make reasonable adjustments to your delivery or assessment approaches or provide support for learning for apprentices self-declaring a disability 	<p>Make clear and reasonable adjustments to their planning for delivery and assessment processes to meet the needs of individuals from specific equality groups to optimise their chances of success.</p> <p>Be able to exemplify / demonstrate / produce evidence of instances where they have actively planned this.</p>	<p>Demonstrate a clear and visible commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Show a detailed understanding of those with protected characteristics and/or equality considerations in contract area/sectors and have plans in place to support MAs from diverse backgrounds.</p>
<p>Transferable skills (core, meta, and career management skills)</p> <p>1.1.5: How well have we designed and prepared to deliver transferable skills?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Have you sought opportunity (or followed requirement), to support apprentices to reflect on their own meta-skill development e.g. through progress review process?</p> <p>Do you appropriately contextualise any core skill exemplars for the apprentice’s own situation?</p> <p>Have you sought opportunity (or followed requirement), to support apprentices to reflect on their own meta-skill development e.g. through progress review process?</p> <p>Do you add value to the experiences of apprentices and employers by considering career management skills (CMS) from induction and throughout the programme?</p>	<p>Design and prepare to deliver transferable skills to be in the context of each apprenticeship.</p> <p>Ensure that the best use is made of naturally occurring evidence (i.e., generated through work-related activities in a balanced way).</p>	<p>Design methods for delivery of transferable skills that clearly add value and contribute to the career progression and personal development of apprentices.</p> <p>Have gone beyond the minimum requirements of a qualification in order to support this.</p>

		<p>Their delivery will ensure that apprentices value the development of transferable skills and do not just see it as requirement.</p> <p>Ensure that meta-skills development, where applicable, is underpinned by frequent dialogue and reflective practice.</p>	
<p>Employer involvement</p> <p>1.1.6: How effectively have we utilised the employer voice to inform the design and preparation of delivery?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision and note 2 for employer contract provision)</p>	<p>Have you considered in the design and preparation of delivery how you will meet the individual employer’s needs?</p> <p>For example, selecting the correct pathway, enhancements, and optional unit selection to aid progression of the apprentice and/or non- mandatory employer requested enhancements to training?</p> <p>How do you ensure that employers take ownership to support the breadth of skills development that apprentices need?</p> <p>Have you been flexible in offering day/block/twilight off-the-job learning where this is requested by an employer?</p> <p>How do you ensure that employers fulfil their obligations in skills development and delivery as highlighted in our MA Employer Guidance?</p>	<p>Demonstrate that they have involved employers and the employer voice in the design of their work-based learning provision.</p> <p>In addition, they can demonstrate one or two examples where programmes have been tailored to meet specific requests from individual employers.</p>	<p>Have clear evidence that the employer voice is integral to the design and delivery of all provision and clearly adds value to the delivery.</p>

1.2 – Providers plan resources for effective delivery of work-based learning provision

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Resources (delivery environment/ learning materials and technology)</p> <p>1.2.1: How well do we plan resources to support effective delivery of work-based learning?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Have you made appropriate provision to ensure that both on- and off-the-job delivery environments are suitable for every apprentice?</p> <p>Are there appropriate supervisors / mentors in the workplace?</p> <p>Have you considered any resourcing requirements to mitigate barriers that individual apprentices may experience?</p> <p>How effective are your delivery methods and use of technology to maximise accessibility for all your apprentices? For example, use of social media, online communication channels, e-portfolios and learning platforms.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that they have tailored their resources in the design of their work- based learning provision.</p> <p>Be able to provide examples and / or evidence of where tailoring and responding to individuals’ needs is making a difference.</p> <p>Ensure there are dedicated off-the-job study spaces available for apprentices where required.</p>	<p>Have clear evidence that tailoring of provision includes a wide range of high-quality learning and assessment materials/approaches that are integral to the design of provision.</p> <p>Demonstrate that tailoring of resources reflects feedback from staff / apprentices, is innovative and addresses industry developments and future requirements.</p>

1.3 – Providers effectively deliver and manage work-based learning provision and ensure quality of delivery

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Learner goal setting and progress</p> <p>1.3.1: How effective are our approaches to setting learner goals and monitoring learner progress?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Learner progress reviews should cover progress with qualification and also support well-being and include discussions on meta-skills / transferrable skills.</p> <p>Do progress reviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ happen at an appropriate frequency to keep the apprentice motivated and on track? ■ add value to the apprentice’s journey with input from the employer supervisor? ■ Where pertinent, reflect the metaskills development of the apprentice? <p>Examples of effective practice are included in the 2021 Apprentice Progress Review thematic report.</p>	<p>Have clear learning and assessment progress reviews with timeframes for specific learning tasks for all apprentices.</p> <p>Have approaches that clearly support tailored apprentice progression.</p> <p>Demonstrate that, for almost all:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ apprentice review is happening at least at the frequency required by SDS rules; ■ apprentices and employers value the process; and ■ apprentice review is contributing to progression and achievement of the apprentices. 	<p>Demonstrate they have effective/innovative approaches for meeting individuals’ goals and monitoring and reviewing progress that go beyond SDS ‘compliance’ requirements.</p>

Quality assurance of practice leading to improvement and enhancement of services

**1.3.2:
How well do we review our delivery to ensure its standard and quality?**

(See note 4 for sub-contracted provision)

Do tutors/assessors reflect on each individual learning/assessment intervention to inform improvements to delivery?

Do staff meet regularly to standardise assessment approaches and share practice in approaches to delivery and assessment?

Do staff effectively use Awarding Body, SDS, other quality body, and stakeholder feedback to inform improvements in service delivery?

Do you have an effective way of ensuring that all your tutors, assessors and/or delivery staff are delivering/assessing to an acceptable standard?

Demonstrate that their staff use reflection to inform improvements in their delivery.

Be able to evidence this with a few examples of changes which have been implemented because of reflective practice.

Demonstrate that reflection and sharing practice is integral to improving delivery. All staff will be able to provide examples of this.

The provider may, depending upon its size, have clear processes in place to facilitate this and benchmark themselves against other similar providers/businesses.

Clearly demonstrate that review of the standard and quality of delivery is integral to their service and has had an impact on improving delivery of training. This may include formally implemented policies for peer review, observation of practice or performance management.

1.4 – Providers manage partners and stakeholders to deliver outcomes for learners and employers

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Effectiveness of partnerships to support transitions and/or progression</p> <p>1.4.1: How well do we work with partners to support transition and/or progression of learners?</p> <p>(See note 4 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>How well do staff work with individual apprentices and through partners (other employers, colleges, other training institutions) to plan the steps required to support progression of apprentices?</p> <p>Do you have partnerships with schools, e.g., to recruit young people doing Foundation Apprenticeships?</p> <p>Do you engage with DYW regional partners to help inform your work- based learning provision?</p> <p>Do you use the SDS Equality Support Guide to access information and advice on who could help to support you in improving your provision for apprentices from under-represented groups or who face barriers to employment?</p> <p>Do you use the SDS CIAG (Career Information and Guidance) services, including digital services such as MyWOW or local Public Access Centres, as an additional resource to support apprentices with the transition in / out of training?</p>	<p>Use partners effectively to support apprentices who need extra/ specialist support and can evidence instances where this has happened.</p> <p>Support the transition of school pupils e.g., Foundation Apprentice to MA (where this is relevant),. Be able to evidence instances where this has happened.</p> <p>Use partners effectively to support the progression of their apprentices into the next stages of learning and/or new employment. Staff will be able to provide evidence that this has happened on a few occasions.</p>	<p>Pro-actively seek out partnerships and expect their staff to routinely support progression for their apprentices into, through and out of their provision. They will support all their apprentices in this way.</p> <p>Monitor and review the effectiveness of these relationships and the impact on progression and success for their apprentices.</p>

Management of sub- contractors

1.4.2: How effective are we at managing our sub-contracted delivery?

(See notes 4 and 9 for sub-contracted provision)

If you work with sub-contractors we expect them to meet all of the standards outlined in our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework. It is your responsibility to effectively manage and monitor your sub-contractors and demonstrate this as the main contractor:

- How clearly do you set out service standards, define roles and responsibilities, and set clear performance indicators for your subcontractors?
- How often do you meet them to review performance?
- How good is your record keeping of quality monitoring and the performance of the subcontractors that you work with?
- How good is your data for managing the performance of each sub-contractor separately?
- Do you review external verification reports from awarding bodies and/or other quality reports for your sub-contractors?
- Do you share training opportunities, staff expertise and resources to improve the quality of subcontracted provision?

Have in place and effectively implement, appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the quality of delivery of sub-contracted provision.

Be able to demonstrate that their sub-contractors:

- comprehensively review provision in accordance with SDS quality standards; and
- implement improvements as required by the primary contractor

Demonstrate (as the primary contractor) that they are effectively reviewing and monitoring the quality of sub-contracted provision.

Leadership & Quality Culture

2.1 – The provider’s work-based learning strategy is based on the current and future needs and expectations of stakeholders, employers and learners

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Diverse recruitment to support youth / employment</p> <p>2.1.1: How well does our SDS contracted provision support the Scottish Government’s Young Person’s Guarantee initiative?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>What is your approach to, and effectiveness in recruiting, or supporting employers of, young disabled people, those who are care experienced, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and addressing gender segregation in apprenticeship frameworks where this exists?</p> <p>How well are you supporting apprentices who have been, or at risk of being, made redundant (e.g., using Apprentice Transition Plan or Adopt an Apprentice initiatives?)</p> <p>Do you use, or support your partner employer to use, targeted marketing opportunities to promote opportunities to under-represented groups or proactively ask your employer partners to consider recruiting a more diverse selection of young people onto apprenticeships?</p>	<p>Consider their performance in relation to results for under-represented groups and put in place at least one or two measures to improve equality outcomes (starts/achievement rates).</p> <p>Have equality monitoring of applications in place and examples of how they use or promote inclusive recruitment practices and the business case for a diverse workforce.</p>	<p>Pro-actively design their business model to improve recruitment and achievement of under-represented groups and those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Pro-actively recruit Foundation Apprentices through partnership arrangements in their MA contract where this is relevant.</p> <p>Use their equality monitoring data and sector figures to identify under representation or other areas for improvement which they then have plans to address.</p>

Future focused strategy underpinned by LMI

2.1.2:

How well do we consider our own ecosystem in developing and delivering our work-based learning strategy?

(See note 5 for apprenticeship employer contracts)

How do you gather and use information on wider industry needs to inform your delivery of apprenticeships and understand what provision employers are looking for now and in the future? (e.g., through own knowledge, local partner knowledge, Labour Market Information).

How do you consider your position in the training/skills market now and in the future? (e.g., what are your unique selling points compared to your competitors)

How does this intelligence inform your business strategy for Modern Apprenticeships?

Provide some examples of how they are adapting to the needs of their customers, the skills market and giving consideration to trends that affect skills delivery.

Reference to trusted sources such as:

- [RSA suite](#) (Infographic; Summary Report; and Data Matrix);
- [Skills Investment Plans](#); and
- Industry research reports.

Have a clear WBL strategy that considers changing needs of their customers, the market and the trends that affect them.

Be able to demonstrate how they challenge traditional approaches. (e.g., embracing digitalisation, addressing global warming/sustainability challenges in their delivery model).

2.2 – Leaders ensure appropriate staffing resources are in place to deliver the work-based learning strategy

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Management and support of staff</p> <p>2.2.1: How effective are we at managing our staff to deliver SDS funded provision?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>How do you ensure you have the right staff, in the right place with the relevant skills and experience to deliver SDS funded provision?</p> <p>Do you plan the workload of your staff and monitor it effectively to ensure SDS funded provision is delivered well?</p> <p>Do you have robust processes to ensure that staff understand the requirements of SDS contract delivery and the aims and objectives of the programmes that they are responsible for?</p> <p>Do you have a contingency plan to ensure continuity of the delivery of SDS programmes? :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What would you do if staff were unavailable for any reason? ■ How would you ensure you continue to deliver training to apprentices and continue to administer the programmes effectively? 	<p>Have sufficient staff with the required skill set available to deliver, proportionate to the size of their SDS contract, geographical spread etc.</p> <p>Be able to react to challenges such as staff illness, staff leaving to ensure apprentices are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>Have an appropriate and well-planned workload for each staff member to allow them to deliver good quality work- based learning and an effective way of monitoring staff.</p>	<p>Have a clear contingency strategy and plans in place for challenges such as loss of staff or a centre being out of operation, that can be implemented quickly and effectively.</p> <p>Demonstrate proactive and innovative measures in staff induction to showcase good practice in delivery of work- based learning including; preparing delivery, delivering to a high standard and embedding equality outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure that staff are empowered, and time set aside for them to inform future innovation in delivery.</p>

2.3 – Leaders ensure staff are appropriately skilled and motivated to deliver work-based learning provision

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Staff development</p> <p>2.3.1: How effective is our staff development to support successful delivery of SDS funded provision?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Do you have planned programmes of training / Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for staff that match their development needs? How have you ensured your staff had the required digital skills to be able to support apprentices remotely?</p> <p>Do staff undertake regular and relevant training to better understand the issues for those with protected characteristics and care experienced young people in training and employment including where they find themselves to be a minority in a workplace or training environment?</p> <p>How empowered are your staff to make improvements to support apprentices and employers?</p>	<p>Ensure that all staff undertake CPD, as required, according to the assessment strategy for the apprenticeship(s) they are delivering; and develop their staff in accordance with each individual's development needs.</p> <p>Be able to provide examples of how staff CPD has improved their work-based learning provision.</p>	<p>Have a methodical and proportionate approach to identifying staff CPD needs, and to cascading and measuring the impact of staff CPD.</p>

2.4 – Leaders take ownership for the continuous improvement of quality and performance of work-based learning provision

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Effective self-assessment and continuous improvement</p> <p>2.4.1: How effective are our approaches towards self-assessment and continuous improvement?</p> <p>(See note 6 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Do you have a planned approach to self-assessment that allows evidence to be reviewed and evaluated using the lenses (using feedback and considering the views) of your own organisation, your apprentices, partners, and employers?</p> <p>Do you also reflect on wider good or effective practice?</p> <p>Are you giving staff regular opportunities to talk about the progress of your quality action plan?</p> <p>Can you identify what difference has been made to your service delivery based on implementing improvements reached through undertaking self-assessment and quality action planning?</p> <p>Have you set yourself appropriate targets or KPIs for improvement actions?</p>	<p>Ensure that the views of all interested parties (staff, apprentices, partners, employers) that are involved in the SDS contract contribute to the self-assessment process.</p> <p>Ensure their approach to self-assessment captures the views of all those with a vested interest in the delivery.</p> <p>Will proactively use the feedback received from apprentices and employers to improve their delivery.</p>	<p>Dedicate time to self-assessment on a regular and routine basis.</p> <p>Clearly identify the additional value of undertaking self-assessment and show how it contributes to improvement of their provision.</p> <p>Demonstrate the value of all staff being involved in regular self-assessment activity.</p> <p>Communicate to stakeholders the enhancements made as a result of self-assessment.</p>

Innovation and change

2.4.2:

How well do we seek innovation and ideas to enhance our provision?

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)

How do you find out about new innovations/ideas in your sector(s) and seek to embed this in your provision?

Do you attend Community of Practice events for example, Awarding Body; SDS; or Scottish Training Federation (STF) events or utilise SDS shared resources?

How have you used new innovations to support your delivery? e.g., investment in digital technology

How do you ensure resources are used in a sustainable way to minimise the adverse effects on the environment?

Provide examples of how they seek out innovation and ideas and how these have been incorporated into provision.

Have a policy of actively seeking out best practice, innovation and new ideas and incorporating them into their provision.

Be able to demonstrate a culture of dedication to continuous improvement with several examples to evidence this.

Outcomes and Impact

3.1 – Providers achieve and maintain high levels of service delivery and outcomes for all work-based learning provision, ensuring all regulatory, statutory, equality and funding body requirements are met

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Achievement and analysis of SDS Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>3.1.1: How well are we performing and analysing our performance in relation to SDS key requirements?</p>	<p>Within the mesma system, SDS have provided your results for four years (or results to date if four years have not been achieved) including overall achievement rate and a breakdown by framework.</p> <p>What are these results telling you about your strengths and areas for enhancement according to your analysis, comparison of previous results and against targets you may have set?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How does your performance for each apprenticeship framework compare to the achievement rate benchmark, taking account of previous performance? ■ Is there a positive or negative trend? ■ How do you use the results to address declining or poor performance? ■ How do your achievement rates for apprentices from equality groups compare to your own overall performance? Are they better or worse? How do they compare to framework averages? ■ How does your performance for the three age categories compare to national performance? ■ How do you probe into all of your results to understand what the exact areas for improvement might be? 	<p>Meet the benchmark level of SDS KPIs in almost all their SDS funded provision for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall national MA achievement ■ National achievement rate for the framework(s) that you offer (available in the MA Supplementary Tables published quarterly) 	<p>Exceed the benchmark level of SDS KPIs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall national MA achievement ■ National achievement rate for the framework(s) that you offer (available in the MA Supplementary Tables published quarterly) <p>Have clearly demonstrated that they analyse and utilise the data to inform continuous improvement.</p>

	<p>What are your results for any sub-contracted provision and how do sub-contractors compare to your overall provision or to other subcontracted provision?</p> <p>National MA performance statistics for comparison can be accessed here. However you should not rely solely on SDS information but aim to find relevant data for analysis and comparison suitable to the subject area(s) you deliver.</p>		<p>Monitor performance of those from protected groups and take action to address any issues identified.</p>
<p>SDS diverse recruitment 3.1.2: How well are we improving the representation of specific equality groups in our SDS funded provision?</p> <p>(See note 8 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Within the mesma system, have provided details of your MA start rates for four years (or to date if four years have not yet been delivered) relating to ethnicity, disability, care experience and gender (further detail on the national targets can be found on page 30).</p> <p>What are your results telling you about your strengths and areas for enhancement according to your analysis, comparison of previous results and against targets you may have set?:</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How do your participation rates compare to the national average for the different equality groups? ■ How does your gender ratio compare to national averages and is it improving for frameworks which are traditionally gender segregated? ■ Your participation trends over four years (or results to date if four years data is not available)? <p>National average data is included in the Quarter 4 statistics report and can be accessed here.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that they have reviewed their performance relating to key equality groups and can demonstrate some improvement for at least one equality group as a result of action that they have taken.</p> <p>Analyse their performance in relation to equality groups and use that intelligence to inform improvements for the future.</p>	<p>Set appropriate equality recruitment targets and demonstrate a clear commitment to recruiting a more diverse range of apprentices.</p> <p>Demonstrate clear improvements in representation of equality groups through targeted action.</p> <p>Demonstrate improvements in success rates for these groups on their programmes.</p>

		<p>Be able to identify examples of improvement actions that they take to support positive action in recruiting from under-represented groups as well as actions that they take to support the success of these groups. This will always be proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate their strategic commitment to the consideration of addressing the challenges for under-represented groups in their SDS provision. It will be clear that equality outcomes are at the forefront of their service and embedded fully in all their processes and activity.</p>
<p>Awarding Body and Industry Body Requirements</p> <p>3.1.3: How well are we meeting the requirements of Awarding Bodies and Industry Bodies?</p> <p>(See note 9 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Detail results from your awarding body/ies and external verifiers over the last three years. You may wish to highlight good practice and the number of actions or recommendations.</p> <p>What performance measures from industry bodies demonstrate that you are meeting their requirements, where relevant?</p> <p>How well are you meeting the regulatory requirements of SDS funded provision?</p> <p>Have you made clear to apprentices the name of the individual they should contact if any safeguarding concern arises (either within your organisation or within their employer)?</p>	<p>Have few or only minor awarding body compliance breaches requiring action.</p> <p>Demonstrate that they are considering external verification visit reports and their required actions/ recommendations to inform improvements in their provision.</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate that EV recommendations inform enhancements to practice.</p> <p>Have areas where good practice has been identified.</p>

3.2 – Work-based learning provision meets the needs of learners, employers, and stakeholders

	Points for consideration	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p>Systematic gathering, analysis, and use of employer and stakeholder perception data</p> <p>3.2.1: How satisfied are employers and stakeholders with our service and relationship?</p> <p>(See note 7 for sub-contracted provision and employer providers)</p>	<p>What are your results and external recognition (for example quality or diversity awards), telling you about your strengths and areas for enhancement according to your analysis, comparison of previous results and against targets you may have set?</p> <p>For example, a stakeholder could be a charity; college; local authority group or business that you work with in partnership, to support your apprentices.</p> <p>Have you set yourself improvement targets for employer satisfaction levels?</p>	<p>Demonstrate regular gathering, and use of, evidence of how satisfied employers and stakeholders are with their training provision.</p> <p>Source feedback which may be explicitly sought through the provider's own formal processes, or it may come from SDS monitoring or other sources, but it has been gathered, quantified and analysed.</p> <p>Have feedback which demonstrates employers and stakeholders are largely satisfied with their relationship with, and delivery of training/ assessment by, the provider and that they see additional value for their business in the provider's activity.</p>	<p>Take proactive steps to systematically gather and analyse feedback on satisfaction of provision to inform improvements against self set targets.</p> <p>Have feedback from employer(s) and stakeholders which demonstrates that all, or almost all, are satisfied with the delivery of training and assessment by the provider and employers see additional value for their business in the provider's activity.</p> <p>Have feedback which demonstrates that employers' views contribute to training improvement.</p>

Systematic gathering, analysis, and use of learner perception data

3.2.2:

How satisfied are learners with our provision?

(See note 7 for sub-contracted provision and employer providers)

What are your results telling you about your strengths and areas for enhancement according to your analysis, comparison of previous results and against targets you may have set?

Have you set yourself improvement targets for apprentice satisfaction levels?

Be able to demonstrate regular gathering of evidence of apprentice satisfaction in their training provision.

Source feedback which may be explicitly sought through the provider's own formal processes, or it may come from SDS monitoring or other sources, but it has been gathered, quantified and analysed.

Have feedback which demonstrates apprentices are largely satisfied with their relationship with, and delivery of training/ assessment and support from, the provider.

Apprentices believe this has contributed to their skills development beyond the workplace role itself (i.e., that the provider has added value).

Take proactive steps to systematically gather and analyse feedback on satisfaction in provision to inform improvements against self set targets.

Have feedback from apprentices which demonstrates that all or almost all are satisfied with the provider's service and they recognise that the provider has added value to their skills development in the workplace.

Have feedback which demonstrates that apprentices are listened to and their input contributes to the continuous improvement of the provider's service.

Equality

SDS aim to support the development of fairer and more diverse workplaces that deliver the very best outcomes for every individual. We are committed to equality of opportunity within Modern Apprenticeships; a commitment that is driven by our firm organisational belief in the values of inclusion and improving equality and diversity outcomes for people in Scotland.

We are focussing activity in support of the Scottish Government’s Young Person’s Guarantee (published November 2020).

The ambition of the Young Person’s Guarantee is that within two years, every person aged between 16 and 24 will have the opportunity, depending on their circumstances, to study; take up an apprenticeship; job or work experience; or participate in formal volunteering.

The Guarantee is crucial, considering the immediate impacts of the pandemic on young people's prospects, but it must be enduring and sustainable. The long-term aim is to ensure that young people in Scotland are supported to make that connection to work and access valuable opportunities for years to come.

SDS/Scottish Government’s ambition is to improve performance on the key equality indicators on an on-going basis. The most recent national annual performance data (2021-22) is included in the table below:

Target	
13.3%	Percentage of MA starts with a self-identified impairment, health condition or learning difficulty
72% (70 of 97 frameworks)	Percentage of MA frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or worse
3.1%	Percentage of MA starts self-identified being from a Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group
2.0%	Percentage of care experienced individuals who successfully take up an MA

In your self-assessment you should evaluate the activities you undertake to support increased participation from these specific equality groups and the impact of these activities in terms of results/ statistics. You should then give yourself a RAG rating using the definitions on page 5.

Early evidence suggests that people in identified equality groups are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic and we encourage you to consider this within your self-assessment and identify relevant, suitable actions where appropriate in your quality action plan.

All providers should have at least one equality action in their quality action plan.

Note – due to the timing of publication of national MA data the most recently available data for you to use in your Self-Assessment will be for 2021-22. Please note however, that for formal quality assurance reviews in 2023-24 we will use data from 2022-23 for comparison purposes

Notes

Note 1:

In the case where you sub-contract provision you should have clear sight/understanding of the processes that your sub-contractor(s) use for these activities and have clear sight and evaluation of the effectiveness of those processes.

In the case of employer contracts for apprenticeships, read “employer” here as supervisor/mentor of the apprentice within the workplace environment rather than the employer in context of the strategic leaders e.g. senior management or HR department.

Note 2:

The employer involvement, in the context of an employer-only apprenticeship contract, means how trainers have listened to the supervisors/mentors of apprentices to inform which units etc. are to be undertaken.

Note 3:

In this context employer providers with apprenticeships should consider who they need to work with to support the next steps of the apprentice. Do you support them to move on to another role in your organisation, or work with other employers in your network to support them into another opportunity if a long-term contract does not exist in your organisation?

Note 4:

Sub- contracted delivery means any part of delivery that you subcontract out or pay other providers to deliver. As primary contractor, you are fully responsible for ensuring that sub-contracted provision meets the SDS quality standards.

Note 5:

Employer apprenticeship contracts should consider here whether the individuals undertaking apprenticeships are being prepared for the relevant industry needs.

Note 6:

Your self-assessment/evaluation should include review of all of your sub-contractors’ performance and approaches.

Note 7:

Where you sub-contract provision, you should ensure sub-contractors have processes in place to gather feedback. You should request and analyse feedback from your sub-contractors in relation to employer and apprentice satisfaction.

For employer providers and local authorities with employer contracts, feedback from internal customers e.g. the supervisor/mentor should be considered for apprenticeships.

Note 8:

Ensure that you separate out sub-contracted provision and analyse accordingly, setting similar targets for sub-contractors where they are responsible for supporting recruitment.

Note 9:

You should require a report on awarding body external verification from any sub-contracted provision.

Links to Useful Resources

Link	Description
<u>SDS Quality Assurance Improvement Hub</u>	This section of the SDS website is our Hub which contains information and resources to enhance quality in the delivery of Apprenticeship programmes.
<u>Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework</u>	Main document which sets out SDS quality assurance and improvement arrangements to enhance delivery of apprenticeships.
<u>MA Employer Guidance</u>	Useful information and guidance for employers which provider staff may also find informative.
<u>SDS Equality Guides and Resources</u>	Guidance on supporting a wide range of customer groups on to apprenticeships, including information about relevant funding and tools which will help you do this.
<u>RSA suite</u>	The Regional Skills Assessment suite contains RSA's which provide a coherent evidence base to inform future investment in skills, built up from existing data sets and forecasts. The Suite also contains the Data Matrix which is an interactive tool offering data from a variety of sources in a visually engaging format. It covers three themes – Skills Supply / Skills Demand / Skills Mismatches.
<u>Skills Investment Plans</u>	Skills Investment Plans describe the skills challenges and opportunities across Scotland's key sectors.
<u>The Equality Act</u>	UK government legislation which protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society.
<u>National MA Performance Statistics</u>	Published quarterly, the MA Official Statistics contain a main report and supplementary tables giving breakdowns by age, framework, local authority, redundancies and various combinations of these.

Skills Development Scotland

1st Floor, Monteith House
11 George Square
Glasgow G2 1DY

www.sds.co.uk

