

# Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework

Self Assessment Guidance for  
Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Levels 4-6

For Cohort 2021

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a white lab coat and safety goggles on her head, stands in a laboratory. In the background, there is a microscope and a yellow biohazard sign on the wall.

**Annabel Stewart,**  
Foundation Apprentice,  
Scientific Technologies



## Context

This guidance has been designed as an aide memoire to support you, as a Skills Development Scotland (SDS) contracted training 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 documentation and to think about the effectiveness of your approach to planning and delivering your skills provision. It has been tailored for providers of Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) provision.

The guidance contains examples to 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.

Undertaking the self-assessment process and completing your Self-Assessment (SA) and Quality Action Plan (QAP) on our online platform (InsightQ).

SDS has developed an online training module to help support you in undertaking the self-assessment and quality action planning process. This training module has been refreshed for 2021 and we would urge you and your staff to do the module before completing your documentation to gain maximum benefit from the process. It should take around half an hour to complete and can be accessed here – [Self-Assessment Module](#).

In describing and evaluating your provision, you should provide full but concise information. Please note that the 'Documents' folder of InsightQ can be used to upload supporting evidence to validate and/or provide more detailed information within relevant themes.

**Tafara Gopoza,**  
Foundation Apprentice,  
Civil Engineering

# Context

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 and equality group starts to back this up?
- That of the learner; what are their perceptions of the learning delivered by you?
- That of the employer; what are their perceptions of the learning delivered by you?
- That which is 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 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 may overlap.

Gather information together including key results, employer feedback, learner feedback and notes of any team meetings. To enable your team to create/ update their comments against each of the indicators on the online platform, your designated Development and Delivery Executive (DDE) will liaise with you to arrange system log-ins (dependant on planned user profiles). This guidance document should be used in support.

The SA/QAP asks questions to help you think about how you do things, how well they work and what you might do to develop them to improve the service you offer. The questions should be thought about in relation to everything you deliver in your SDS contract.



For example; you have documented an approach which says that you undertake initial assessment which includes identifying an individual's learning style and this is used to tailor the learning for each person. However, it becomes clear through your own reviews that only your hospitality staff tailor the learning and utilise the output of the learning style assessment. Your business administration learners are all assessed and learn through the same process.

**Action:**

You would update your Quality Action Plan with clear SMART action(s) to ensure all learners are experiencing a consistent approach to delivery and would monitor progress against achieving this action. Your SDS DDE will review your progress against this action.

# Context

## 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 online SA/QAP. Spend more time discussing what works, what doesn't work and coming to a consensus judgement on this rather than simply describing what you do.
- Don't forget to consider feedback from your DDE, Contract and Performance Adviser, and any other 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 definitions in the supporting table. 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.

- Any theme rated as red will result in an area for improvement (AFI) which should be transferred to your QAP. You must identify clear timelines and ownership of the action.
- A theme rated as amber will result in an AFI which should be transferred to your QAP where you think it will benefit your delivery; or should be prioritised after red AFIs.
- In transferring your AFIs to your QAP, you should consider how many actions you have. Are some of your actions things you need to do to fulfil SDS contract requirements? If so, they are a priority and **MUST** be included in your QAP. Ensure all your actions are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound).
- Do you have a lot of actions 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.

## COVID-19 Impact Note

COVID-19 has now impacted on the work of all organisations and it is of particular interest for providers and SDS to understand how practices may have changed in response to the pandemic:

- Use of digital resources, and approaches to overcome the challenges to the delivery of high quality FAs during the pandemic.
- Sustained and future planning of digital tools to improve the resilience of apprenticeship quality, deliverability and consistency.

# Quality Assurance Framework

Standard	Indicator		Theme(s)
 <b>Service Delivery</b>	1.1	Providers develop and prepare effective work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1.1.1 Recruitment and Initial assessment</li> <li>■ 1.1.2 Induction</li> <li>■ 1.1.3 Learning and assessment planning</li> <li>■ 1.1.4 Equality groups</li> <li>■ 1.1.5 Transferable skills</li> <li>■ 1.1.6 Employer involvement</li> </ul>
	1.2	Providers plan resources for effective delivery of work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1.2.1 Resources</li> </ul>
	1.3	Providers effectively deliver and manage work-based learning provision and ensure quality of delivery (including sub-contracted provision)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1.3.1 Learner progress</li> <li>■ 1.3.2 Quality Assurance</li> </ul>
	1.4	Providers manage partners and stakeholders to deliver outcomes for learners and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1.4.1 Effective partnerships</li> <li>■ 1.4.2 Management of sub-contractors</li> </ul>
 <b>Leadership and Quality Culture</b>	2.1	The provider's work-based learning strategy is based on the needs and expectations of stakeholders, employers and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2.1.1 Diverse recruitment to support youth/employment</li> <li>■ 2.1.2 Use of Labour Market Information (LMI)</li> </ul>
	2.2	Leaders ensure appropriate staffing resources are in place to deliver the work-based learning strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2.2.1 Management and support of staff</li> </ul>
	2.3	Leaders ensure staff are appropriately skilled and motivated to deliver work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2.3.1 Staff development</li> </ul>
	2.4	Leaders take ownership for the continuous improvement of quality and performance of work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 2.4.1 Effective self-assessment and continuous improvement</li> <li>■ 2.4.2 Innovation and change</li> </ul>
 <b>Outcomes and Impact</b>	3.1	Providers achieve and maintain high levels of service delivery and outcomes for all work-based learning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3.1.1 Achievement and analysis of SDS Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</li> </ul>
	3.2	Work-based learning provision meets the needs of employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3.2.1 Systematic gathering, analysis and use of employer satisfaction data</li> </ul>
	3.3	Work-based learning provision meets the needs of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3.3.1 Systematic gathering, analysis and use of learner satisfaction data</li> </ul>
	3.4	Providers meet all statutory, equality and funding body requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3.4.1 SDS diverse recruitment</li> <li>■ 3.4.2 Awarding body and industry body requirements</li> </ul>

# 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 – how you gather them and how you analyse them.

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

	<b>Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts</b>	 <b>A good provider may...</b>	 <b>An excellent provider may also...</b>
<p><b>Recruitment and initial assessment: school-delivery partner communication</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1:</b> How effective are our processes for recruitment and initial assessment of learners and our communication with delivery partners</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>How effective is the recruitment process in profiling the FA programme and attracting suitable learners? How effective is the employer voice to understand the skills/ attributes they are looking for and support their engagement in the process?</p> <p>How well do school partners communicate with delivery partners to ensure there is a good match of learners to the right programme?</p> <p>How well are the needs of individual learners shared with delivery partners to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plans are made for their individual needs;</li> <li>■ Delivery partners understand the motivations for learners being on the programme;</li> <li>■ Delivery partners understand learners’ ability to achieve;</li> <li>■ Delivery partners understand any additional support needs (ASN) they may have;</li> <li>■ Delivery partners understand and recognise prior learning and information that needs to be shared with colleagues / employers is passed on (e.g., requirement for a dedicated room for religious observance)?</li> </ul> <p>How effective are these processes?</p>	<p>Have in place appropriate recruitment and initial assessment processes, in proportion to the size and nature of their SDS contract and their role in delivering workplace learning using a variety of methods. They will be able to provide examples of how effective recruitment and initial assessment processes and their communication to delivery partners are for learners.</p>	<p>Demonstrate how the implementation of recruitment and initial assessment processes ensures that learning is tailored for every learner through well-structured processes and strong communication with delivery partners. They will measure and review the impact of their recruitment and initial assessment processes for all learners.</p>

## Induction

### 11.2:

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

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)

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

- familiarisation with the programme e.g. introduction to training hub and the workplace /other realistic workplace environments as learning spaces, the nature of portfolio building and the assessment process for work-based learning;
- expectations for the workplace /other realistic workplace environments, delivery and assessment and health and safety.
- confidence building activities
- familiarisation with key contacts such as tutors, workplace and training hub based mentors, fellow learners, employers and methods of communication that will be used

Do employers understand what is expected of them for work experience elements? (see also employer involvement)

How much do learners value the induction activities and what impact have they made in relation to early retention and preparation for learning?

Is induction happening in a timeous fashion meaning a seamless progression onto the delivery phase?

Implement/have in place induction activities that clearly benefit all learners, and which give each learner the best chance of success. (They are likely to cover all the areas in the guidance prompts and be timetabled/have time specifically allocated.)

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

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

Provide support to the supervisor in relation to coaching the learners when in the workplace and while undertaking other work-related learning.

Make sure that employers fulfil obligations in relation to induction to the workplace / other realistic workplace environments. Employers may also co-design and deliver learner induction programmes.

## Learning assessment and planning

### 1.1.3:

How effective is our learning and assessment planning – logistically and for each individual?

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)

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

Has there been effective communication between schools and delivery partners about creating a manageable timeslot to allow good quality learning to take place?

Have effective transportation plans for learners been prepared that allow the learning experience to run smoothly, giving adequate time for a good learning experience?

Has there been effective communication between training hub tutors and workplace assessors about plans for learning and assessment?

Has there been effective planning for the work experience element for each individual learner, including statutory elements such as Protecting Vulnerable Groups checks, safety, provision of personal protective equipment etc.? Does the work experience element reflect the individual's aspirations and match qualification requirements?

Is there an effective timetable and approach to monitoring the delivery of work experience?

Are there timetabled support sessions to give each learner the best chance to progress?

Is there agreed clear individualised learning plans for each learner that reflects the individual's needs? ►

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 FA requirements.

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

Have given consideration to the practicalities of delivery for the learners.

Have a partnership agreement or equivalent with all their delivery partners and employers and have in place clear mechanisms for communication and monitoring which ensures that all partners are delivering to the expected standard and communicating well.

Clearly tailor and adapt their planned arrangements for programme logistics, learning, teaching and assessment for each individual. Fully engage all delivery partners, learners and employers in this planning process.

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

	<p>For individuals with ASN, does this plan include the support/ personal goals for each person (e.g., a personal learning support plan)?</p>		
<p><b>Equality groups</b></p> <p><b>1.1.4:</b>  <b>How good is the design and preparation of our provision specifically to meet the needs of different equality groups?</b></p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Has there been consideration in the design of provision of specific barriers that people from under-represented groups might have? The groups to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ young disabled people;</li> <li>■ those who are care experienced;</li> <li>■ those from ethnic minority backgrounds; and</li> <li>■ gender segregated apprenticeship frameworks.</li> </ul> <p>Are there measures to ensure equality groups have the best chance of success? Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ adjustments to assessment;</li> <li>■ transport facilitation;</li> <li>■ planning for religious requirements;</li> <li>■ the need for preventing isolation;</li> <li>■ the need for additional resources; and</li> <li>■ the need for more intense mentoring.</li> </ul>	<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. They will be able to exemplify/ demonstrate/ produce evidence of, instances where they have actively planned this.</p>	<p>Develop an inclusive culture by building into their overall design and preparation for delivery, the flexibility to respond proactively to the needs of individuals in equality groups that face barriers, while ensuring those individuals are not singled out.</p> <p>They create a positive environment which encourages disclosure by learners, allowing the provider to shape and design delivery for each individual.</p>

## Transferable skills (core, meta, employability and career management skills)

### 1.1.5:

How well have we designed and prepared to deliver transferable skills?

(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)

Does the design of your FA provision prepare the learner effectively for the workplace and the next phase of their learner journey, e.g. a Modern Apprenticeship (MA), Further Education (FE) or Higher Education (HE)?

Does the learning programme build in the important skills, attributes and behaviours that employers are seeking and that support progression of the learner?

Is there effective workplace experience preparation through developing employability skills, required behaviours etc?

Have you considered how you can raise awareness of **meta-skills** and embed development of these into your delivery? These will be introduced as part of a Work-based Challenge Unit (WBCU), a mandatory element for new starts in all frameworks from 2021 onwards. The WBCU places emphasis on meta-skills development through a practical, work-based approach and encourages the acquisition of new skills through collaborative group working, problem solving activities and reflective practice.

Do you plan in effective activity to support learners near the end of their FA to consider their next phase of the journey , e.g. MA, FE or HE progression using Careers Information, Advice and Guidance tools/resources (e.g. MyWoW, apprenticeships.scot)?

Do you build relationships with potential employers and training providers to support progression to work?

Has there been effective embedding of career management skills to help your learners understand how the labour market works, develop self-awareness, knowledge and the skills to make better career decisions and transitions into work?

Design and prepare to deliver transferable skills to be in the context of each programme.

Their delivery will ensure that learners value the development of transferable skills and do not just see it as requirement.

Prepare workplace challenge activity led by employers to support learners to plan, do and review their own contributions to project-based learning.

Design methods for delivery of transferable skills that clearly add value and contribute to the career progression and personal development of learners.

They will have gone beyond the minimum requirements of a qualification in order to support this.

Prepare and evaluate workplace challenge activity led by employers to support learners to plan, do and review their own contributions to project-based learning.

<p><b>Employer involvement</b></p> <p><b>1.1.6:</b> 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)</p>	<p>Is there an effective communication approach to listening to employers to identify what skills/attributes, certification and behaviours they are seeking to ensure the best chance of the learner progressing into employment? Is provision designed around this?</p> <p>Are employers effectively engaged with to ensure they are fully prepared for the learners and fully understand their role in providing a good quality work experience and leading WBCU projects?</p> <p>Have we involved employers in the delivery of the taught elements of the qualification to fully prepare for the work experience activity?</p>	<p>Demonstrate that they have involved employers and the employer voice in the design and delivery of their work-based learning provision.</p> <p>Is there effective preparation to support the development of acceptable work-based behaviours, e.g., employability skills for learners?</p>	<p>Have clear evidence that the employer voice is integral to the design, delivery and evaluation of all provision and clearly adds value to the delivery.</p>
--	---	---	--

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

	<b>Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts</b>	 <b>A good provider may...</b>	 <b>An excellent provider may also...</b>
<p><b>Resources (delivery environment/learning materials and technology)</b></p> <p><b>1.2.1:</b> 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 training hub, work placement and realistic workplace environments (in context of what learners will undertake, health and safety etc) are suitable for every learner?</p> <p>For example, is equipment up to date, are there appropriate supervisors/mentors in the workplace / realistic workplace environments, is there appropriate facility for gathering evidence/portfolio building and are any ASN appropriately planned for (working with other ASN experts if required)? ►</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>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>This tailoring of resources reflects feedback from staff, learners and employers, is innovative and addresses industry developments and future requirements.</p>

► Continues on next page

	<p>How well do our learning materials reflect the needs of a range of learners – e.g. different learning styles, ASN requirements?</p> <p>How effective is our use of technology? For example; social media channels and groups/messaging/online forums to provide ongoing support.</p>		
--	---	--	--

### 1.3 – Providers effectively deliver and manage work-based learning provision and ensure quality of delivery (including sub contracted provision)

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Learner progress</b></p> <p><b>1.3.1:</b> How effective are our approaches to setting learner goals and monitoring learner progress?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Do you effectively monitor and review each apprentice’s learning plan according to their pace of learning?</p> <p>Do you work with learners, delivery partners and employers to set clear timebound goals that help the learner to progress? e.g. consider upcoming tasks and when they must be achieved/completed.</p> <p>Do progress review discussions add value to the learner’s journey with input from delivery partners and employers (where relevant), giving constructive feedback on skills development and completed tasks, while setting out clear expectations for forthcoming activity?</p> <p>Do progress review discussions happen at an appropriate frequency to keep the learner motivated and on track?</p>	<p>Have clear learning and assessment progress reviews with timeframes for specific learning tasks for all learners.</p> <p>Have approaches that clearly support tailored learner progression.</p> <p>They will demonstrate that, for almost all:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ learners and employers value the process; and</li> <li>■ learner review is contributing to progression and achievement of the learners.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrate they have effective/innovative approaches for meeting individuals’ goals and monitoring and reviewing progress that go beyond SDS ‘compliance’ requirements.</p> <p>These approaches will ensure full involvement of the employer, and the learner.</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 2 for sub-contracted provision)

Do delivery staff reflect on each individual learning intervention to inform improvements to delivery?

Do staff/delivery partners meet regularly to standardise assessment approaches and share practice in approaches to deliver effective FAs, e.g. participating in communities of practice?

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

Do you have an effective way of ensuring that all your tutors, assessors and/or delivery partners are delivering/assessing to an acceptable standard? For example, do you undertake live observations of their practice, have peer delivery approaches or, in larger providers, a performance management approach?

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.

Have a process (in proportion to the size and nature of their SDS contract) of ensuring the standards of delivery of all their staff. This may be formal or informal. They should be able to show that this has led to improvements in delivery.

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/ organisations.

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

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<b>Effectiveness of partnerships to support transitions and/or progression</b> <b>1.4.1:</b> How well do we work with partners to support transition and/or progression of learners?	How well do you work with individual learners and through partners (schools, employers, other training institutions/ colleges) to plan the steps required to support progression of learners? For example, do you have access to information and/or contacts which enables you to signpost and support learners to progress on from your provision? ►	Use partners effectively to support learners who need extra/specialist support and can evidence instances where this has happened.  Support the transition of Foundation Apprentices to an MA or Graduate Apprenticeship / HE (where this is relevant). Be able to evidence instances where this has happened. ►	Proactively seek out partnerships and expect their staff to routinely support progression for their learners into, through and out of their provision. They will support all their learners in this way. ►

► Continues on next page

<p>(see note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>How do you identify partners that will help to inform your provision? e.g. in a small organisation by having internal discussions about who to target or in a large organisation, by having a full stakeholder engagement plan.</p> <p>Do you use partners to provide specialist support for apprentices who face potential barriers to progressing, to improve their chances of success?</p>	<p>Use partners effectively to support the progression of their learners into the next stages of learning and/or employment. Staff will be able to provide evidence that this has happened on a few occasions.</p>	<p>Monitor and review the effectiveness of these relationships and the impact on progression and success for their learners.</p>
<p><b>Management of sub-contractors</b></p> <p><b>1.4.2:</b></p> <p><b>How effective are we at managing our sub-contracted delivery?</b></p> <p>(See notes 2 and 6 for sub-contracted delivery)</p>	<p>If you use sub-contractors: how well do you manage and monitor your sub-contractors to ensure that their delivery takes account of all SDS requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How often do you meet them to review performance?</li> <li>■ How clearly do you set out service standards, define roles and responsibilities, and set clear performance indicators for your sub-contractors?</li> <li>■ How good is your internal expertise and resources (including tools) to monitor your sub-contractors effectively?</li> <li>■ Do you share training opportunities, staff expertise and resources to improve the quality of sub-contracted provision?</li> <li>■ How good is your record keeping of quality monitoring and the performance of the sub-contractors that you work with? ►</li> </ul>	<p>Have in place and effectively implement appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the quality of delivery of sub-contracted provision.</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate that their sub-contractors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ comprehensively review provision in accordance with SDS quality standards; and</li> <li>■ implement improvements as required by the primary contractor.</li> </ul> <p>Demonstrate (as the primary contractor) that they are effectively reviewing and monitoring the quality of sub-contracted provision.</p>

- How good is your data for managing the performance of each sub-contractor separately rather than aggregating the data for each area of learning?
- Do you review external verification (EV) reports from awarding bodies for your sub-contractors?
- How well do you engage sub-contractors in the self-assessment process so that you have evidence for the current performance and improvement plans of each sub-contractor?

# Leadership & Quality Culture

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

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	👍 A good provider may...	👍🌟 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Diverse recruitment to support youth/employment</b></p> <p><b>2.1.1:</b> How well does our SDS contracted provision support the Scottish Government’s <u>Youth Employment Strategy</u> (Developing the Young Workforce)?</p> <p>(See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>What is your approach to, and effectiveness in recruiting, or supporting recruitment 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>Do you use targeted marketing to promote opportunities to under-represented groups or proactively ask your employers to consider recruiting a more diverse selection of young people onto apprenticeships?</p> <p>How effectively do you market and communicate with employers, potential learners and industry partners to make choices about the programmes you are going to run and their content? e.g. reviewing your networks and having formal meetings and/or using other channels (email/newsletter/discussion forums) to communicate with employers and learners. ▶</p>	<p>Have demonstrated success in recruiting school pupils into the FA route as a result of proactive measures.</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 etc)</p> <p>Measures implemented should be proportionate to the nature and size of their SDS contract.</p>	<p>Proactively design their business model to improve recruitment and achievement for Foundation Apprentices from under-represented groups.</p> <p>They may also proactively recruit Foundation Apprentices through partnership arrangements in their MA contract where this is relevant.</p>

	<p>What you do will be proportionate to the size and nature of your SDS contract (large providers may have relationship management executive teams/small organisations may plan to call on local employers).</p>		
<p><b>Use of Labour Market Intelligence to inform service delivery</b></p> <p><b>2.1.2:</b> How well do we use labour market and economic intelligence to plan what provision we are going to offer?</p>	<p>Do you gather and use information on wider industry needs to inform your delivery of FAs and understand what provision employers are looking for? e.g. through own knowledge, local partner knowledge, Labour Market Information (LMI).</p> <p>How do you use this information to inform the planning and development of the provision you offer?</p> <p>How do you use available LMI alongside other information you gather to inform planning and development of your provision?</p> <p>What you do will be proportionate to the size and nature of your SDS contract.</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate an awareness of relevant industry needs through considering own knowledge and local partner knowledge and how that influences the apprenticeships offered.</p> <p>Be able to demonstrate knowledge/ awareness of LMI and indicate how this informs their provision.</p> <p>Reference to trusted sources such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">RSA suite</a> (Infographic; Summary Report; and Data Matrix);</li> <li>■ <a href="#">Skills Investment Plans</a>; and</li> <li>■ Industry research reports.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrate that individuals undertaking apprenticeships are aware of and prepared for the relevant industry needs i.e. understand the connection between their role and local LMI.</p> <p>Demonstrate examples of direct engagement with local employers to understand industry/local labour market needs.</p> <p>Demonstrate awareness and use of SDS published LMI or other trusted sources with respect to the provision they offer.</p> <p>Demonstrate that regular review of LMI underpins their SDS bid and their delivery responds to market requirements.</p> <p>Demonstrate examples of direct engagement with employers and/or industry stakeholders to understand industry/local labour market needs.</p>

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

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	👍 A good provider may...	👍👍 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Management and support of staff</b></p> <p><b>2.2.1:</b> 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 have a contingency plan to ensure continuity of the delivery of SDS programmes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What would you do if staff were unavailable for any reason?</li> <li>■ What would you do if your centre was out of operation?</li> <li>■ How would you ensure you continue to deliver training to learners and continue to administer the programmes effectively?</li> <li>■ Do you plan the workload of your staff and monitor it effectively to ensure SDS funded provision is delivered well?</li> <li>■ Do you have an appropriate staff Induction process to ensure that they understand the requirements of SDS contract delivery and the aims and objectives of the programmes that they are responsible for?</li> </ul>	<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 or premises issues to ensure learners 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>Provide staff with a tailored induction programme that ensures they fully understand the expectations of the SDS contract.</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

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Staff Development</b></p> <p><b>2.3.1:</b> 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/ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff that match their own development needs?</p> <p>Have all staff had equality CPD/training and is information about training cascaded to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for learners that face barriers? Disability, care experienced and ethnic groups are particularly important as well as all protected groups set out in <a href="#">The Equality Act</a>.</p> <p>How empowered are your staff to make improvements to support learners and employers?</p>	<p>Ensure that all staff undertake mandatory CPD 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> <p>Ensure all relevant staff have undertaken equality and other mandatory CPD that informs how they deliver work-based learning provision.</p>

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

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Effective self-assessment and continuous improvement</b></p> <p><b>2.4.1:</b> How effective are our approaches towards self-assessment and continuous improvement?</p> <p>(See note 3 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 learners, your stakeholders (e.g. delivery partners, schools) and your employers? (One person filling in a self-assessment document without taking into consideration the opinion/lenses and feedback/evidence of others in the organisation, is not the most effective way of identifying where improvements are needed.)</p> <p>Do you also reflect on wider good or effective practice? Depending on the nature and size of your SDS contract; for example, do you hold staff away days to consider how well they are doing? Do teams get together to input to improvement plans, using a structured approach where they reach consensus as to why they have improvement actions, and they are clear about what those actions should achieve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ If you are a small organisation do you have dedicated time for your team to think about improvements in practice?</li> <li>■ If you are a large multi-functional organisation, do you sufficiently break down process and performance in relation to SDS funded provision? ►</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the views of all interested parties (staff, learners, 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>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>Can you identify what difference has been made to your service delivery based on implementing improvements reached through undertaking self-assessment?</p>		
<p><b>Innovation and Change</b>  <b>2.4.2:</b>  <b>How well do we seek innovation and ideas to enhance our provision?</b>    (See note 1 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>How do you find out about new innovations/ideas in your sector(s) and seek to embed this in your provision? e.g. Do you actively gather information on new delivery practices for work-based learning, attend conferences and then discuss how it can be used in your own business depending upon the size and scale of your organisation?</p> <p>Do you attend Education Scotland/ College Development Network/ SDS/ Scottish Training Federation sharing practice events, local employability forums etc or utilise SDS shared resources?</p>	<p>Provide examples of how they seek out innovation and ideas and how these have been incorporated into provision.</p> <p>Measures implemented should be proportionate to the nature and size of their SDS contract.</p>	<p>Have a policy of actively seeking out best practice, innovation and new ideas and incorporating them into their provision.</p> <p>Provide clear evidence of several examples of where this has been done.</p>

# Outcomes and Impact

## 3.1 – Providers achieve and maintain high levels of service delivery and outcomes for all work-based learning (WBL) provision

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	👍 A good provider may...	👍🌟 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Achievement and analysis of SDS Key Performance Indicators</b></p> <p><b>3.1.1:</b> How well are we performing and analysing our performance in relation to SDS key requirements?</p>	<p>You will detail FA achievement rates for three cohorts (or results to date if three cohorts have not yet been delivered).</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Are your achievement rate trends positive or negative?</li> <li>■ how does your performance compare to the national average overall and to the national averages for the frameworks you deliver?</li> <li>■ 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 sector averages?</li> <li>■ how well you celebrate success and recognise achievement?</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that you separate out sub-contracted provision and analyse accordingly.</p>	<p>Meet the benchmark (average) level of SDS KPIs in almost all of their SDS funded provision including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ starts;</li> <li>■ outcomes;</li> <li>■ qualifications benchmark levels;</li> <li>■ achievement rates for that programme/framework as set out in the current year’s contracting strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>Exceed the benchmark (average) level of SDS KPIs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ starts;</li> <li>■ outcomes;</li> <li>■ qualifications benchmark levels;</li> <li>■ achievement rates for that programme/ framework as set out in the current year’s contracting strategy.</li> </ul> <p>Have clearly demonstrated that they analyse and utilise the data to inform continuous improvement</p>

## 3.2 – Work-based learning provision meets the needs of employers

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Systematic gathering, analysis, and use of employer satisfaction data</b></p> <p><b>3.2.1:</b> How satisfied are our employers with our service and relationship?</p> <p>(See note 4 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Depending upon the nature of your business you may undertake an electronic survey of employers or, if you only have a small contract, rely upon SDS monitoring of employers and analysing this feedback.</p> <p>You will detail employer satisfaction rates for three cohorts (or results to date if three cohorts have not yet been delivered).</p> <p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ clearly analyse these results, highlighting strengths and AFIs.</li> <li>■ compare to any previous results or a baseline of satisfaction.</li> <li>■ consider how you set targets to increase both the volume of respondents and overall satisfaction levels.</li> </ul> <p>Satisfaction rates should measure how much value you add to the employer’s business and how successful you are in tailoring your delivery to meet the needs of their workplace.</p> <p>When you survey employers do you ask the right questions to get information relating to the services you provide?</p>	<p>Demonstrate regular gathering of evidence of how satisfied employers are with their training provision.</p> <p>Measures taken will be proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS 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 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.</p> <p>Set themselves targets which fit with the size and nature of their SDS contract.</p> <p>Have feedback from employer(s) 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>

### 3.3 – Work-based learning provision meets the needs of learners

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>Systematic gathering, analysis, and use of learner satisfaction data</b></p> <p><b>3.3.1:</b> How satisfied are learners with our provision?</p> <p>(See note 4 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Depending upon the nature of your business you may e.g. undertake an electronic survey of learners, seek feedback after learning activities etc. Very small providers may rely upon SDS monitoring of learners and analyse this feedback.</p> <p>You will detail learner satisfaction rates for three cohorts (or results to date if three cohorts have not yet been delivered).</p> <p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ clearly analyse these results, highlighting strengths and AFIs.</li> <li>■ compare to any previous results or a baseline of satisfaction.</li> <li>■ consider how you set targets to increase both the volume of respondents and overall satisfaction levels.</li> </ul> <p>Satisfaction rates should measure how much value you add to learners' development and how well you respond to their specific needs.</p> <p>When you survey learners do you ask the right questions to get information relating to the services you provide?</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate regular gathering of evidence of learner satisfaction in their training provision.</p> <p>Measures taken will be proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.</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 learners are largely satisfied with their relationship with, and delivery of training/assessment and support from, the provider. Learners believe this has contributed to their skills development beyond the qualification and workplace role (i.e. that the provider has added value).</p>	<p>Take proactive steps to systematically gather and analyse feedback on satisfaction in provision to inform improvements.</p> <p>Set themselves appropriate targets which are proportionate to the size and nature of their SDS contract.</p> <p>Have feedback from learners 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/ realistic workplace environments.</p> <p>Have feedback which demonstrates that learners are listened to and their input contributes to the continuous improvement of the provider's service.</p>

### 3.4 – Providers meet all statutory, equality and funding body requirements

	Foundation Apprenticeships – key prompts	 A good provider may...	 An excellent provider may also...
<p><b>SDS diverse recruitment</b></p> <p><b>3.4.1:</b> How well are we improving the representation of specific equality groups in our SDS funded provision?</p> <p>(See note 5 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>You will detail FA start rates for three cohorts (or results to date if three cohorts have not yet been delivered) relating to ethnicity, disability, care experience and gender.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ how your participation rates compare to the national average for the different equality groups as detailed in our <a href="#">FA Progress Report – March 2020</a>.</li> <li>■ how does your gender ratio compare to national averages and is it improving for frameworks which are traditionally gender segregated?</li> <li>■ your participation trends over three cohorts (or results to date if three cohorts data is not available)?</li> </ul>	<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 learners.</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><b>Awarding Body and Industry Body requirements</b></p> <p><b>3.4.2:</b> How well are we meeting the requirements of Awarding Bodies and Industry Bodies?</p> <p>(See note 6 for sub-contracted provision)</p>	<p>Do you have EV reports from awarding bodies? If not, are there other relevant bodies' requirements or standards that you have to meet?</p> <p>How have you performed and how quickly have you acted upon recommendations?</p>	<p>Have few or only minor awarding body compliance breeches requiring action.</p> <p>Demonstrate that they are considering EV visit reports and their required actions/ recommendations to inform improvements in their provision.</p>	<p>Have no actions required by awarding bodies in their reports and few or no recommendations to be acted upon from reviews undertaken. They may also have areas where good practice has been identified.</p>

# Equality

SDS aims 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 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. Further information is available in the [FA Progress Report – March20](#).

In our formal assessment process, we will award providers an overall RAG rating in relation to their commitment to improving equality outcomes for under-represented groups in their provision. While there are specific equality related themes within the framework, this aspect of delivery is implicit across most of the framework.

The following points are guidance to what we are looking for in relation to a good and excellent provider for equality. **All providers should have at least one equality action in their quality action plan.**

## **A good provider may:**

Review their performance in relation to equality outcomes and compare themselves with other providers, the relevant population and their own previous performance. They will 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.

**An excellent provider may ALSO:** 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.

# Notes

## **Note 1:**

In the case where a provider sub-contracts provision they should have clear sight/understanding of the mechanisms that their sub-contractor(s) use(s) for these activities and have clear sight and evaluation of the effectiveness of those mechanisms.

## **Note 2:**

Sub-contracted delivery means any part of delivery that you sub-contract 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 3:**

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

## **Note 4:**

Where the provider sub-contracts provision, they should ensure sub-contractors have processes in place to gather feedback. Providers should request and analyse feedback from their sub-contractors in relation to employer and learner satisfaction.

## **Note 5:**

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 6:**

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