



# Foundation Apprenticeship Guidance Note

## Employer Engagement

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# Introduction

Work-based learning means learning that is directly linked to skills and knowledge required to operate competently in a workplace. Within Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs), sector specific work-based learning is a major constituent of the programme and provides the first-hand experience for learners to acquire sector specific skills, apply knowledge and reflect on their learning. FAs are delivered via a partnership between Learning Provider, school and employer. The direct engagement of the employer throughout the learning experience is vital to the success of the programme.

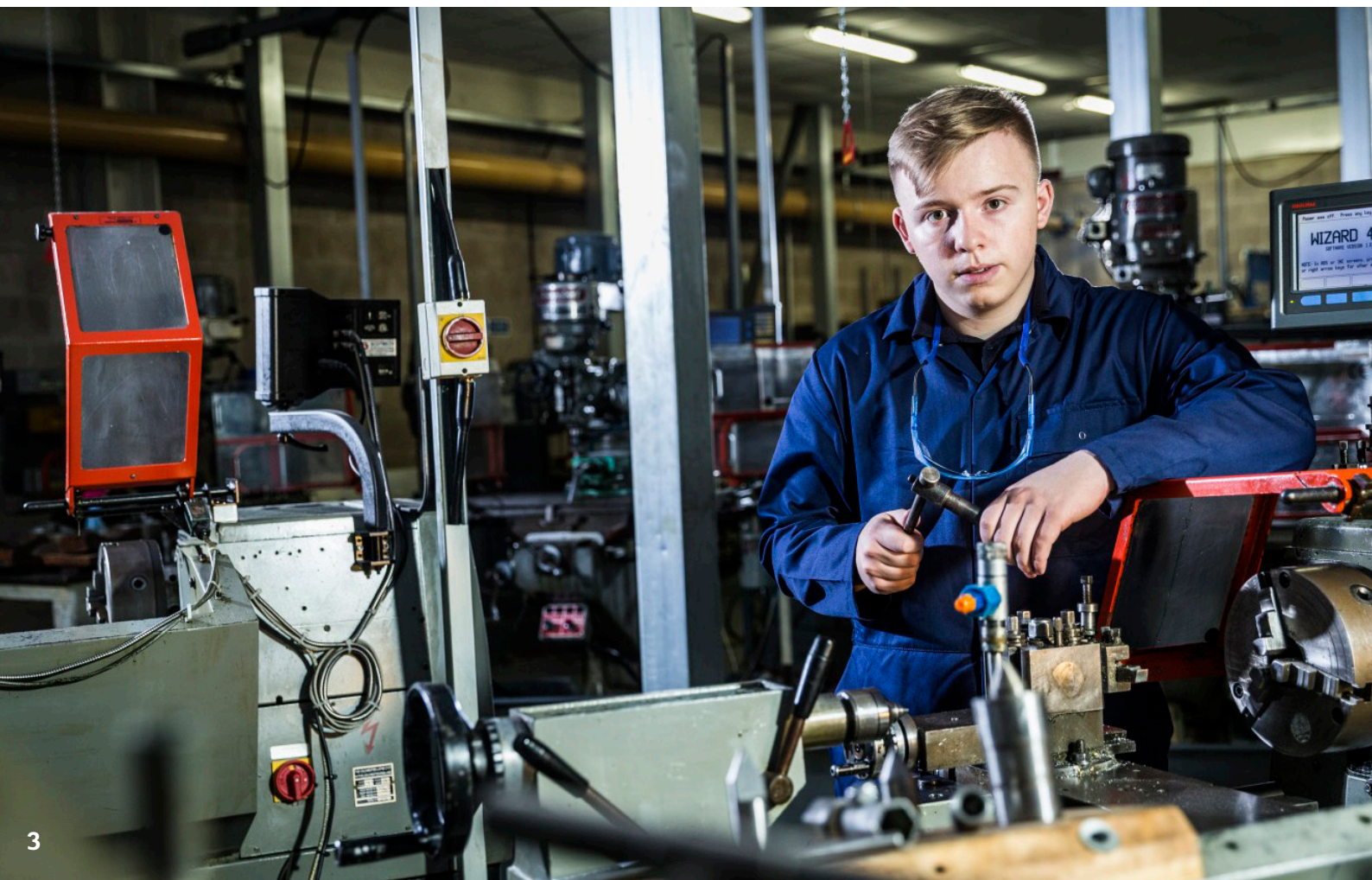
## Aim

The aim of this guidance is to share some best practice with Learning Providers to help support the delivery of the work-based element of FAs. This guidance provides details on how employers from all sectors and of all sizes can be involved in several different opportunities throughout the programme.

## Managing Employers' Expectations

It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to manage the expectations of the employer throughout their entire involvement in the learner(s) journey. This will begin with an introductory meeting with the employer to discuss the key benefits of being involved in the programme, such as:

- Reduce recruitment costs by accessing a brand-new talent pipeline of skills for your business and raise the profile of your business to emerging talent
- Retain skills by enabling succession planning for an ageing workforce
- Support staff opportunities and Continuous Professional Development
- Gain new skills and fresh thinking by accessing a new generation of fresh talent
- Fast-track your talent development. Young people get to know your business so if you chose to recruit, they can come in with a useful working knowledge and complete their Modern Apprenticeship faster
- Provide the first step for a young person towards a career in your industry



# Working in Partnership

Some of the most successful FA programmes have involved employers on a partnership basis prior to delivery. This can involve, for example:

- Agreeing a target cohort size
- Working together with schools and the employer(s) to agree an appropriate timetable for placement activity
- Helping an employer understand how the FA programme can support recruitment into other workforce development activity e.g. Modern Apprenticeship (MA), Graduate Apprenticeship (GA)
- Where multiple employers are involved, it can help to agree in advance what roles each will take

## Employer Introduction to Programme

The Learning Provider will support employers throughout their journey on the programme. They must ensure all employers are provided with a comprehensive Induction to the programme prior to any engagement with learners. This induction should clearly outline the respective roles and responsibilities, and ensure regular input into the review of each learners' work placement progress is agreed at the start.

**A best practice Induction would include as a minimum some of the following detail:**

- Discussing the Programme Delivery Model e.g. attendance patterns etc
- Explaining Employer Involvement Opportunities
- Work Placement Roles and Responsibilities
- Support from Partners
- Confirming SDS requirements

## Programme Delivery

FAs are typically delivered over two years through S5 and S6 (some one-year models are available in some regions for selected frameworks). Over the first few years of delivery, learners attend college for one day a week (either on two afternoons or one full day as agreed with the local authority). In year one, learners study a National Progression Award (NPA) or a National Certificate (NC) at SCQF level 6. In year two, focus then moves to developing practical skills and competencies in the workplace for the Vocational Qualification (VQ) units, where learners attend an employer placement for approximately one full day per week.

An analysis of delivery models has identified that a blended approach of academic and work-based learning throughout the entire duration of the programme has a positive impact on retention and progression of learners. This can take the form of block activity e.g. college block followed by employer block in year one and year two, or a weekly blended approach.

As well as fitting around employers' needs, school timetabling must be taken into account by the Learning Provider when organising the employer placement, ensuring time allocated is adequate to meet work placement requirements. In some sectors, it may be necessary for learners to extend their normal school day to accommodate placement attendance, or attend on block placement. It is worth noting that some employers have identified that day release placements are more suitable than having learners attend one day per week.

# Employer Involvement Opportunities

Employers can engage with learners throughout their learner journey at key stages, with varying levels of involvement as detailed below. The key aspect being the work placement activity.

Type of engagement	Activity	Level of Commitment
Recruitment Support	Learning Providers will engage with schools to recruit learners to the programme for the specific frameworks they are contracted to deliver. Target audiences during this time are S4 learners along with school staff and parents. This engagement is supported by a recruitment process where employers are invited to attend events with key target groups and support the application, selection and interview process.	1-2 hours per recruitment event
Industry Talks	Industry is invited in to talk to learners on key aspects of their course linked to unit learning outcomes. This helps raise awareness of the industry overall and contextualise learners' learning through 'real life' experience.	1-2 hours per recruitment event
Workplace Visits	Learning Providers arrange visits to employers to support learners' understanding of learning in the practical working environment.	1-2 hours per recruitment event
Employer Events	To increase capacity and expansion of the programme the employer base must grow. Employer Engagement events are planned to showcase current involvement and gain support from peers.	2 hours per event
Setting 'real life' Industry Challenges/Projects	Industry Challenges support the development of learners' soft skills such as teambuilding, planning, communication and problem solving as well as allowing them to apply their technical skills and knowledge in a practical context. Industry provide a work-related challenge to learners who work individually or in teams to seek solutions. The Learning Provider manages this aspect of delivery, however employers can offer mentoring support throughout the project.	Varies in line with challenge set
Coaching and Mentoring	A workplace mentor should be identified to act as the point of contact for learners when they are in the work placement.	Varies in line with tasks
Work Placement	The work-based element of the programme is typically between 240-300 hours (dependant on framework) and approximately one full day per week over 30 weeks. This will increase in relation to one year delivery models. During placement, learners must be assigned real work activities to support the achievement of their vocational units for assessment. The Learning Provider is responsible for managing the assessment process via regular visits to the workplace to meet the learners and employer.	Varies in line with the VQ unit size. Typically, approximately 30 full days
Additional Engagement	Employer feedback regarding the continued development of the FA model is welcomed. Employers are asked to support local and national events with Learning Providers, SDS and other partners to endorse the support of the programme.	2 half days per year

# Work Placement Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	Employer	Learning Provider
Learner Induction to the Workplace	The employer should ensure the learner induction takes place once placement commences.	It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to ensure that the employer has carried out an induction with the learner within the working environment.
Health and Safety/Risk Assessment	The employer will agree a pre-arranged date with the Learning Provider to assess the working environment prior to the work placement starting.	It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to ensure a mandatory Health & Safety/ Risk Assessment check is carried out prior to commencement of work placement. This check will assess the environment that the learner will be working within and the tasks to be conducted by the individual. The visit will be conducted on a pre-arranged date in consultation with the employer.
Work Placement Activity	The employer will provide structured work placement activity for the learner that is aligned to the vocational outcomes of the FA programme.	It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to discuss work placement activity with the employer and ensure that this develops the learners' practical competency in a real-life environment aligned to the vocational outcomes. All activity must be structured and planned in line with the learners' Individual Learning Plan (a document completed by the Learning Provider and learner, outlining structure of programme delivery).
Learner Expenses	The employer will provide details of learner costs required prior to commencement of placement such as PVG checks and PPE.	SDS is responsible for payment of learner expenses incurred during their time on the programme. It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to manage these costs. The Learning Provider will ensure appropriate travel arrangements and costs incurred to and from the employer placement are met. Other costs incurred in programme activity such as PVG checks and PPE will also be managed by the Learning Provider and in place prior to commencement of placement.

## Work Placement Roles and Responsibilities (Cont..)

Activity	Employer	Learning Provider
Performance Monitoring: Attendance	<p>The employer will agree the work placement attendance structure prior to commencement.</p> <p>Employers will be encouraged to be proactive in approach to attendance monitoring.</p> <p>Employers should contact the Learning Provider to inform of any learner non-attendance, considering the health and well-being of the learner.</p>	<p>Work Placement attendance must be structured in days/hours/times and agreed with employer to meet requirements of work-based learning element of programme.</p> <p>The process for monitoring attendance will be explained by the Learning Provider to employer. An example of best practice would include: employer contacts Learning Provider by e-mail on day(s) of agreed attendance, providing update on learner attendance, timekeeping etc.</p>
Performance Monitoring: Assessment	<p>The employer will meet with the Learning Provider staff member at review meetings and provide feedback on learner(s) and areas for continuous improvement in the programme.</p>	<p>The process for assessing learners against the vocational outcomes will be explained to the employer by the Learning Provider. The Learning Provider assessor will meet with the employer to go through the learner assessment plan and identify the employer role in the process in terms of the provision of activities to support the learning outcomes to be assessed.</p>
Performance Monitoring: Review	<p>The employer will meet with the Learning Provider staff member at review meetings and provide feedback on learner(s) and areas for continuous improvement in the programme.</p>	<p>The Learning Provider will allocate a member of staff to each employer to liaise with at regular periods over the duration of the work placement, over and above the role of the assessor staff. This process is to support feedback from both learner and employer to take forward continuous improvement in the programme. A best practice review process is holding quarterly meetings.</p>
Termination of Work: Placement	<p>The employer will agree the process for work placement termination with the Learning Provider.</p>	<p>It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to develop a fair and robust process where work placements can be terminated by either employer or Learning Provider.</p>
Employer Confirmation	<p>The employer will confirm with the Learning Provider that they understand their role and responsibilities within the programme.</p>	<p>Prior to any work placement, the Learning Provider will ensure a process is in place to seek confirmation from employer that they understand relevant guidance etc.</p>

# Support from Partners

The Learning Provider will supply a key contact to all employers for on-going communication with the Learning Provider and to ensure appropriate support mechanisms are in place.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) currently offer support to employers through our Relationship Management approach. SDS will also ensure support for employers throughout their involvement in the programme and engage with them via the FA contract management process. Employer visits are planned by SDS over the duration of the programme, giving employers a mechanism to provide feedback into the operational delivery and learner engagement.

In situations where employers are not able to become involved in the FA programme at that time but would however like more information on MAs or GAs, please signpost back to SDS.

## SDS Requirements

SDS require all learners on the FA programme to have an identified employer by the end of March in the first year of their programme for their work placement element. Learning Providers will ensure employers are aware of the timescales and will work closely with them to agree timeframes and tasks to be covered while the learner is on the placement and complete a Work Based Learning Declaration form for each learner. It is the responsibility of the Learning Provider to ensure all associated documentation is fully completed and sent to SDS within the timescales set. Learning Providers can access all required documentation and support guidance at:

[www.apprenticeships.scot/training-provider/foundation-apprenticeships](http://www.apprenticeships.scot/training-provider/foundation-apprenticeships)