



Foundation Apprenticeship Guidance Note

Recruitment

Introduction

Getting recruitment right for each Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) framework is vital both for the learner and the employers involved in supporting the delivery. A robust recruitment process is integral to the success of the programme and it is fundamental that recruitment considers those who would best benefit from the work based learning style and select those who have the potential to follow a career in each framework sector. FAs include a mixture of theoretical and practical learning at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6. They are designed for learners interested in combining work integrated learning experiences with classroom based activities.

Aim

The aim of this guidance is to share some of the best practice shown by Learning Providers to help support recruitment onto the FA programme. This guidance provides details on key aspects of the recruitment process including stakeholder involvement, recruitment timelines and selection methods.

Stakeholder Involvement

Prior to the recruitment process, relevant partners (schools, local authorities, learning providers) should meet to agree the recruitment timeline and activity. This will include involving decision makers from the local authority Director of Education (or similar post), representatives from local schools (HT/DHTs etc) Learning Provider staff and other key partners.

In addition to the above, other key influencers can also be brought in to the recruitment process. These are employers and FA ambassadors.

Employers are a key strategic partner in the FA programme and are very influential at all stages of the recruitment process. Instances where employers have been actively involved in the recruitment of learners has proven especially attractive to young people and parents. This approach supports the further development of parents' awareness of the world of work and helps raise awareness of specific sectors. Employers can also highlight the range of entry level occupations available and the opportunities for further career progression. Employers can be hugely influential in the following ways:

- They can provide a clear picture of the working environment of their industry;
- They can demonstrate how they recruit a diverse workforce;
- They can demonstrate the need for young people in the sector and the corresponding opportunities for progression and promotion within the industry.

Employers add value during selection and subject choice as well as during the induction phase.

Employers set expectations with FA learners about the codes of conduct necessary in the workplace and in any industry challenge based project activity.

FA Ambassadors will be young people who have already begun their FA programme and so are the best advocates of the benefits of an FA. They can be engaged at parents' evenings, information events, group talks and assemblies.

Recruitment Timeline

The recruitment process needs to include a recruitment strategy that takes into account key dates and events within the school year, such as exams and option choices timelines.

Learning Providers should work with each school management team to discuss the local FA opportunities and agree a timetable and method for disseminating information to school staff, learners and parents. Recruitment of learners will usually involve 2 stages: awareness raising and application and selection processes.

Throughout the year Skills Development Scotland (SDS) runs an FA Campaign to direct young people and parents to submit an expression of interest form to find out more about the FA opportunities available in their school. All EOIs will be sent to the Learning Provider named person for follow up. Often enquiries indicate a desire to learn more about the frameworks or to work on matching individual learner's abilities and interests with the right frameworks. Following up quickly with learners by direct telephone contact or through schools has been shown to generate the best return for an EOI.

The timeline detailed below is an example of how key activities/events relating to recruitment of the FA programme are aligned to the school term. These stages can be fluid in relation to local schools planning and academic calendar of events.

At a glance: Timetable of Recruitment Process

September to December:	Awareness raising stage
January to March:	Subject choice, selection process and place offer
June:	Post exams stage: inductions, continued recruitment, and retention to year 2
August:	Post results stage



1. September to December: Awareness raising stage

Learners, parents and school staff may well be unfamiliar with the concept of the FA as well as several of the sectors they represent. Therefore awareness raising needs to consider how to explain key elements of FAs:

- the qualification content of each framework including the technical level
- the nature of the learning
- the achievement of units rather than end-of-course exam
- the pathway opportunities they provide to young people after school. This should focus on progression into destinations such as: Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs), College, University and employment.

Effective awareness raising needs a multi-layered approach. This should include:

- Talks directly to senior phase learners in assemblies or classes – evidence shows this to be the most effective route, especially if FA ambassadors lead the discussions.
- Parents evenings
- Information evenings
- Open days
- Employer demonstration events – having employers meet prospective FA candidates can bring to life sectors that learners have not been aware of.

Experience shows that FA promotion is most effective when it is the sole focus of the event and not as part of wider school college collaborations.

EOI should be gathered at this stage from learners who want to find out more as applications open. The Learning Provider should begin a conversation with learners at this stage so that by subject choice time those learners are confident they understand what they are choosing. Feedback has indicated that pupils value detailed information about the FA course they are interested in. Some learners have found the FA courses to be more demanding than they first anticipated and have withdrawn as a result of this. It is therefore very important that each learner is made aware of the time and workload commitments required to successfully achieve the FA in order to manage their expectations throughout the programme.

The key target audiences during this stage of recruitment are primarily learners in S3- S5, who are about to enter year groups S4-S6 where there are suitable FAs available for them, school staff and parents. Awareness raising can also start at earlier stages of learning, even in Primary school. Younger learners can benefit from such events which provide an earlier awareness of the work based learning pathway as an option within their senior phase of learning.

SDS has produced a range of materials to help partners in the promotion and marketing of apprenticeships, these materials are highly engaging and have proved effective in supporting learners to make effective choices when considering which FA is the right one for them.

developed an FA Schools toolkit to support awareness raising with **key influencers**. There are also useful assets/resources on our website for Learning Providers to utilise during the recruitment stage.

2. January to March: Subject choice and place offer

Subject Choice

The selection process should be agreed with strategic partners and shared in advance of applications. A key recruitment element to consider is finding a subject choice model which allows learners to access the FA as part of their core subjects. Evaluation of successful recruitment practices shows clearly that pupils are more likely to make an informed choice of an FA when they are presented as a mainstream school subject choice. FAs are often placed within the regular slot of school-college programme courses.

To achieve this:

- FAs should appear directly in subject choice columns and not as an add-on. Recruitment is best supported by FAs being a mainstream offer in the senior phase and placing them directly within subject choice forms.
- A schedule of dates for subject choice events should be shared between the Learning Provider and individual schools/ local authority so that the relevant Learning Provider can attend and contribute to these events. The FA enquiry should be placed alongside other school subjects.
- EOI gathered in the first phase should be revisited at this time with learners and schools.
- During this stage, parents' information sessions and focus groups can help answer questions and one-to-one discussions with learners can also help pupils to make the most appropriate subject choice. Schools should ensure that prospective FA candidates are aware of the support they can access from their Careers Adviser and use www.myworldofwork to help with their subject choice and career decisions. All the personalised support from teachers, careers advisers, employers and other career influencers can ensure that the learner make the most suitable choice and is confident in their selection.

Offering a place

It is vital that confirmation of places to learners takes place at the same time as other subjects are chosen this will ensure FA is timetabled for the new school year and allows re-coursing to take place where relevant.

(April to May: Exams)

3. June: Post exams stage

Inductions, continued recruitment and retention to year 2

Inductions for new learners. June is the ideal time for holding induction programmes for new learners. This allows the start of the course to align with school-based course starts and allows the learner to better understand what will be expected during the FA programme. It is often hard for learners to picture what they have chosen to do in an FA until they have seen the learning environment and talked to their tutor and employers. Inductions give Learning Providers the opportunity to detail the requirements and expectations of the course, complete paperwork and begin to introduce connected employers through talks, site visits and demonstration events.

Continued recruitment. When learners have completed their exams, it is worthwhile to have follow up discussions with those who are due to begin the programme in the new school term, some learners may wish to change the portfolio of qualifications they study as a consequence of their experience of exams. This may mean learners who had previously not considered FAs are now more attracted to the FA qualification. Enquiries about changes in subject choice are common at this time.

Year 2 retention. Follow up discussions with those learners completing year 1 of the programme will also support continued engagement and retention on the programme into their second year. Similarly, reporting on progress to parents and schools helps them understand where the learner is and what commitments and support will be required for the second year. Discussions around placement logistics are useful at this time if not already agreed. Often simple issues such as having a member of staff available as a contact point to support travel arrangements can make the difference to learner motivation if something goes wrong.

4. August: Post results stage

During this stage, there is potential for learners to be re-coursed, following their exam results and experience.

On occasion, the senior phase exam experience can demonstrate to some learners that a work-based approach is more beneficial for them. Those learners with the potential to achieve at SCQF 6 may find that the FA option will deliver a wider range of post-school options than attempting and potentially not achieving a Higher. It is, therefore, worth working with schools to identify those learners for August start.

Selection Methods

1. Suitability

Work based learning offers learners the opportunity to achieve a qualification at SCQF levels 4/5/6 in an environment which takes the focus away from exams and traditional classroom based learning. The traditional method of selecting a pupil for SCQF Level 6 qualification is to judge by previous exam grades. However, care must be taken with FA applicants that those who have the potential to thrive in a work-based learning environment are not excluded. The goal should be to allow recruitment of all learners who can thrive at the appropriate SCQF level, taking into consideration the style of learning and learning environment. One way to achieve this is by engagement with relevant school staff, to reach a shared understanding of the target audience for each FA subject. This should include Headteachers and Deputes and will likely extend to Guidance Tutors and subject teachers where relevant. Therefore, a meaningful balance needs to be found. In some frameworks, a level of maths ability is necessary to cope with aspects of the course. While passing the National 5 or Higher exam gives a good indication of ability, performance during class is as important – exams do not always reflect ability. If an exam result is lower, evidence and a reference from the learner's subject teacher should be sought to confirm day to day ability.

This engagement should be supported by a recruitment process where employers are invited to attend events with key target groups to support the application and selection process.

2. Identification by teachers and careers staff

It is important to involve those professionals who know the learner best. Learners may not fully understand the FA qualification and it is guidance teachers, subject teachers and careers staff who can help to consider whether an FA is the most appropriate subject choice for any individual learner.

Group discussions, one-to-one discussions, PSE classes and careers events can be used to identify suitable learners. At this stage, employers can be a useful source of information about the kind of recruit they would want to work with and the skills and qualities required for their sector.

3. Application

It is important that all selection processes are completed at the same time as subject choices this enables schools to finalise timetable options and reduces uncertainty for learners, and reduces the risk of learners not starting their FA.

Application forms should ideally be on-line and easily accessible e.g. via Learning Provider website. It is vital that learners are not disadvantaged in their application and that all reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that application processes cater for any disabilities and additional support for learning needs. The application form should be user friendly and cover key aspects required in the overall recruitment process. Both Equalities and GDPR regulations must be adhered to and unnecessary data must not be gathered. Application forms may not be necessary where recruitment is done via the options choice process and recommendations from relevant school staff.

Selection Tests These should be used with great care. The FA is designed to accommodate all learners, including those for whom exams are not their best assessment method. If selection tests are used it is very important to check with school pastoral care staff to ensure no learner is discounted on the basis of one test.

4. A note about Interviews

Learning Providers may or may not include an interview in their recruitment process. Interviews have both benefits and downsides, however, a balance needs to be struck to make sure that they will support selection of the most suitable learner, taking into consideration the limitations and weaknesses of the method. The FA is a school programme, not a post-school course. Learners do not normally go through an interview to get access to a school subject in their timetable so using an interview process is both time-consuming and sets the FA apart from other mainstream courses. Consideration can also be given to less formal methods of interviews where used to support applicants.

Benefits of Interviewing

Conversation style interviews allow the Learning Provider to meet the learner and hear their motivation for choosing the FA. It also allows the learner to demonstrate their enthusiasm and understanding of the sector they are applying to. If a learner has experience of, for example, developing applications or programming, the interview will allow an applicant for Software Development the chance to show their level of skills and knowledge in that area, even if they do not have a National 5 qualification in a relevant subject. This can be helpful in bringing young people to the qualifications without the burden of achieving in classroom style learning and assessment.

Downside of Interviewing

Formal interviews can be daunting for many learners who do not thrive in this situation. Others may have had no previous experience of interview structures and not know how to respond. Communication skills are core elements being taught during the FAs but care must be taken not to disadvantage learners for whom the interview is not a strong skill before the course has started. Interviews can also be time consuming for the recruitment stage and therefore consideration must be given to these timescales where numbers are scaling up and take account of the resources required.

5. Offer of place

Following the selection process, a communication must be sent to all successful learners and their schools detailing confirmation of their place. Details of their start date, time, location and contact person should be included. Offers must be confirmed in sufficient time to ensure learners have the FA embedded within their new timetable at the same time as their other subject choices in school are confirmed. Late offers should be handled quickly and applicants and schools kept informed of the progress of their application. It is important to note that the FA is a school subject and not a post-school course so it needs to be processed as a school subject.

Recruitment and Programme Delivery

It is important that during the recruitment process, learners, their parents and their schools are clear about the requirements and structure of the FA. A clear agreement between schools and Learning Providers will support learners to access elements of the qualification which do not align with traditional classroom learning structures. These include access to transport, understanding that some learning may take place outside of school hours, potentially accessing some teaching of their other subjects outside of allocated timetable slots as well as other variations in learning.

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. 'classroom' block followed by employer block in year one and year two or weekly blended approach.

Schools' timetabling must be taken in to account by the Learning Provider when recruiting, ensuring that realistic workloads are developed. In some sectors, it may be necessary for learners to extend their normal school day to accommodate placement attendance, or attend on block placement. If this is the case, it is important that formal agreement is reached with schools, learners and parents before placements are allocated. These aspects should all be raised during recruitment so that applicants are fully aware of the commitments required by the FA qualification.

Support from Partners

The Learning Provider will supply a key contact to all schools for on-going communication and to ensure appropriate recruitment mechanisms are in place. Regular discussions should take place between schools and Learning Providers to support identification of suitable learners and to set up access to learners and parents to help raise awareness of the courses and the pathways and opportunities the FA opens up for learners.

SDS requirements

SDS require all applicants to the FA programme to have equal opportunities to access the qualifications in line with Equalities legislation. Application processes must adhere to GDPRs. Learning Providers can access all required documentation and support guidance at:

<https://www.apprenticeships.scot/training-provider/foundation-apprenticeships/>