

Embedding Foundation Apprenticeships in the senior phase: Forth Valley College

Partners

Forth Valley College Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, all 18 secondary schools across Forth Valley

Focus

A rapid expansion of level 6 Foundation Apprenticeships since these were piloted in 2017. Participating schools have the programmes now firmly embedded in their Senior Phase curriculum plans to prepare learners for the next phase of their learner journey, and continuing study in the same sector as their FA.

Participating schools have the programmes now firmly embedded in their Senior Phase curriculum plans. FA delivery happens not only in the three FVC campuses but has also taken place in nine secondary schools across the three local authorities. Foundation Apprenticeships are a significant and important part of the Senior Phase offer within the overall School-College Partnership portfolio in Forth Valley.¹

Success factors:

- Delivery spans three local authority areas
- Pupils are given a wider choice of qualifications, beyond the qualifications that they are offered in school
- Enhances Senior Phase Curriculum choices
- Work placements
- Work experience is tailored and supported
- Local employer involvement
- Developing the Young Workforce and Skills Development Scotland

Former Larbert High School pupil Joely Reid (20), studied for a Foundation Apprenticeship in Financial Services at Forth Valley College. Now a Graduate Apprenticeship at Heriot-Watt University Joely hopes to complete her MA (Hons) Business Management Degree. She said:

“I chose to study the FA at FVC as this was a new and exciting opportunity to build on my work experience and knowledge, whilst being at school. I wasn't fully sure of what I wanted to do when I left school, therefore I decided that doing this would give me the opportunity to explore college and work-life whilst continuing with my studies and gaining more qualifications. Studying my FA has benefitted me a great deal in both my professional career and my personal qualities. I believe that completing my FA fully gave me the confidence that I have today with public speaking and day-to-day tasks within the workplace. I learned from an early age compulsory office etiquette, and I believe this has got me to where I am today.”

Impact

Since 2018 the number of FAs moving on to a MA at Forth Valley College has risen from three to 22, FAs moving on to full-time college courses has risen from 13 to 77 and this does not include all of the FAs taking up a place at university.

During the pandemic, dedication and determination from teenage Accountancy students (pictured above) claimed a Scottish first for Forth Valley College's Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) programme.

¹ The Foundation Apprenticeship provision covers all three SCQF levels, 4, 5 and 6, ensuring pupils studying at different levels within the senior phase are able to participate in a wide range of work-based learning activity.



Despite the impact of the pandemic lockdown cancelling exams and leading to a scenario where the senior school pupils would not be able to complete work placements and Association of Accountancy Technicians (AAT) qualifications, the nine strong group of students, supported by enthusiastic lecturers, worked through the summer holidays to get the desired results.

This outstanding collaboration led to six of the nine becoming Scotland's only full FA Accountancy graduates and three others achieving the National Progression Award and letters of recognition.

Lecturers set them tasks and study activities to complete over the summer period and they attended refresher workshops in August when the campus opened up safely again. Exams were set up and managed (in a socially distant format) and six learners were able to achieve the full FA Accountancy qualification, the only ones across Scotland who achieved the full FA Accountancy award.

Moving forward

Forth Valley College looks forward to a new year of FA delivery at Level 4, 5 and 6 with all of our secondary schools and to continue to work with their key university partners and employers to maximise the Apprenticeship Family offering to all of their young people.

St. Modan's High School Depute Head, Caradh Pert commented in the Skills Development Scotland Foundation Apprenticeships Progress Report, June 2021 (p.44):

“Since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and Developing the Young Workforce, schools have been charged with helping young people to articulate their skills. Foundation Apprenticeships allow schools to deliver this objective and St. Modan's is seeing huge benefits for our pupils as a result.

From the outset, providing Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 6 opened clear pathways for our young people as we recognised that Highers were not the only route to gain qualifications highly valued by employers.

However, we recognised that there were other pupils that would benefit from work-based learning but weren't able to meet the criteria of a qualification at SCQF Level 6.

So, when we were approached about introducing a work-based learning qualification at SCQF Level 4 and 5 we jumped at the chance because we had already witnessed the benefits in co-creating with employers. The school now offers the pilot Foundation Apprenticeship in construction at both SCQF levels. We work with Forth Valley College to provide 18 fourth year pupils with the qualification at Level 4 and the school delivers the Level 5 qualification in-house to 20 senior phase pupils.

At St. Modan's, our pupils tend to stay on until sixth year and we need a diverse and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of every young person.

The pilot was transformational for the pupils. All of them progressed on to positive destinations, including university or apprenticeships and most continued to pursue their careers within the construction sector.”

