

# SKILLS FOR WORK

## Delivery and Regional Quality Assurance




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**Skills for Work** offers secondary school pupils from S3 and above opportunities to prepare themselves for the world of work by developing generic employability skills related to a particular vocational area, such as 'Sport and Recreation' or 'Rural Skills'. These skills are gained through experiential learning, which in Highland Region is offered through real work with partner employers.

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Highland Council has taken an innovative approach to providing equal opportunities for pupils to access Skills for Work courses and ensure Quality Assurance in delivery throughout the area. Since 2007 successful delivery by schools has depended on close working partnerships with local businesses, organisations and Highland Council.

### Rationale

When the first Skills for Work courses appeared, FE provision in Highland was limited and did not extend to all 29 secondary and three special schools. Where pupils could attend local colleges, many were travelling long distances, and in all cases having to be out of school for a whole day each week.

In our pilot phase of delivery of Skills for Work by schools, we focused initially on Rural Skills, which was not then offered by any college in Highland, where the land based sector is a key industry. With the support of additional funding from the Scottish Government, a Schools Liaison Officer for Rural Skills was appointed in February 2007. The main purpose of this role was to help schools implement sustainable Rural Skills courses, both the Scottish Progression Award and Skills for Work, using local business partners to deliver the subject expertise. The success of this project was confirmed in two independent evaluation reports.

### Development

Increasingly, even those schools with access to college wished to offer Skills for Work in their own timetable. This meant that there was a need to extend the role of the Liaison Officer to support a wider range of subjects. Since then, there has been rapid development. In session 2010-11, all Highland secondary schools will offer Skills for Work courses through college or school. 26 will offer 18 Skills for Work courses through partnerships with business. Some schools are offering as many as four subjects. All available Skills for Work courses can now be delivered by schools through business partnerships.

### Quality Assurance

The rapid expansion of school-business delivery meant that there was a need for Highland Council to quality assure pupils' experiences, and to minimise schools' workload by standardising all verification procedures. SQA had taken a keen interest in Highland's development of Skills for Work from the outset, and now offered to work closely with us to create a robust and appropriate model for Quality Assurance. An added benefit for SQA was that Regional Quality Assurance would ensure a national standard was applied and met consistently throughout schools across Highland.

All Quality Assurance issues are now managed centrally through Deskspace and all centres are using standard and approved paperwork. In service training and regular opportunities to network are a valuable feature of the processes in place to enable Highland Council and SQA to maintain standards.



Highland Council continues to build on the success of the model to date, and to develop it in the following ways:

- Self approving Rural Skills, Construction Crafts, Hospitality & Sport & Recreation
- Supporting and monitoring all other approvals before they are submitted to SQA
- Ensuring pupils outwith mainstream education also have opportunities for SFW
- Making use of SQA Desk Space to cut paperwork and increase access for validation purposes
- Support for schools to enable them to continue and extend their SFW provision with additional subjects and new partnerships



### Benefits

This model of Skills for Work delivery, with its robust QA processes, has provided many benefits to Pupils, Staff and Partners. Highland Council has been enabled to make vocational options available to all pupils. Schools can deliver the requirements of Building the Curriculum 4, and embed Skills for Work in their timetable structures. Pupils have gained employability skills, and had valuable experiences in team working, self esteem and confidence in new learning environments. Through their direct experience of real working practices, they have also gained a greater understanding of the wider world and life long learning, thus enhancing their future career paths. Partners have developed their staff, had good working relationships with their local school and opportunities to find and trial new staff who already have experience of the workplace.

The delivery of SfW in Highland schools has enabled 254 pupils to gain a SfW qualification in August 2010. Several candidates have secured employment or training with a business partner they worked with throughout the course. This number continues to increase.

SQA, while continuing to support RQA as a pilot, now see it as offering a model of working to support verification of the new national qualifications, as Curriculum for Excellence begins to be implemented in the Senior Phase.



### For further information contact

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