

National Timetable Group

Briefing Paper 1

Realising Parity in the Senior Phase: Learner Pathways

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Background

This Briefing Paper follows from the first meeting of the National Timetable Group on 25th October 2022. It is based on the discussions in the following areas:

- approaches currently being taken to widen learner pathways by integrating Foundation Apprenticeships, College offers and Work Based Learning opportunities
- challenges facing schools in various contexts when integrating these into Senior Phase offers
- how schools and partners are responding to these challenges
- how effective local partnerships can support planning and delivery
- timetabling approaches that can support curriculum planning

The timetable group was established to support the recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future \(2021\)](#) [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#) . The work of the group is related, in particular, to recommendation 1.4: Continue building curricular capacity at various levels of the system. It will focus on innovative approaches to timetabling to support educational reform, building on the experience and expertise of members of the group.

At this first meeting of the group a workshop was delivered by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the College Development Network (CDN). This focused on exploring how schools, colleges and third party providers could collaborate more effectively to widen the curricular offer in the Senior Phase and seamlessly provide a wider range of pathways for learners.

For reference, the term 'work-based learning' will be used throughout this document. This term will cover college offers, vocational qualifications, Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) and work experience.

Introduction

Identifying practical approaches to integrating work based opportunities supports a key aspiration of Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DSYW):

- young people of all abilities have the opportunity to follow industry relevant vocational pathways alongside academic studies ([Education Working For All - Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Final Report \(www.gov.scot\)](#))

The Learner Journey 15-24 report ([The 15-24 Learner Journey Review \(www.gov.scot\)](#)) provides further guidance on how this can be achieved:

- Develop and better align schools, the third-sector, independent training providers, colleges and universities, informed by business to provide learners with meaningful choices, enabling progression and promoting the use of the [Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#).
- Co-create and co-deliver the senior-phase curriculum, aligning timetables, making maximum use of the technical expertise and (human and financial) resources across the combined estate to create the best place to learn and involving new ways of maximising work-based learning, digitalisation and employer engagement

There are often a number of competing priorities facing timetablers when implementing their curriculum offer. Where work based opportunities such as vocational qualifications, work experience / placements, industry certification and FA offers are prioritised in timetable and course choice processes, there can be significant benefits for learners and schools.

These opportunities can result in a much wider curriculum offer that support a range of pathways, thus meeting the needs and aspirations of a larger number of learners. Where schools have successfully integrated these offers there is also emerging evidence that this can have a significant impact on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Integrating work based options provides opportunities for learners to develop key skills and understanding, gain greater awareness and experience of the workplace, support more informed career choices as well as supporting transition into Further and Higher Education (FE/HE). A more relevant offer for learners can also result in improvements in engagement and attendance as well as higher levels of attainment. There are also strong correlations with development of the [four capacities](#).

Alignment of timetables and the school day across an authority (or cluster of schools) is one approach that can significantly enhance the ability to integrate work based opportunities. Collaboration between and across schools may be as significant as collaboration between schools and providers. Where large numbers of pupils in a school setting access these

partnership offers this can also free up school staff who would have been deployed for other provision. These staff could then be further utilised to, for example, widen the curriculum offer.

Greater collaboration between schools and external providers can also improve understanding of local labour markets and the requirements of employers. Additionally they can further awareness of alternative approaches to learning and teaching as well as modes of assessment, such as those used in the college sector.

However, schools can serve different communities and have significantly different contexts. Consequently there should also be flexibility to enable individual schools to build on these and organise additional provision to support the context of their own learners.

Alignment of timetables across schools and meeting the needs of individual schools were not seen by participants as mutually exclusive. For instance, alignment of columns or timetables across local schools can significantly increase the opportunities for individual schools to meet the needs of their own learners by creating structures that support further collaborative working. This approach can support partnership working, consortia working or work based learning opportunities (for instance work placements) as a consequence of creating an infrastructure to support, for instance, FA and college link programmes.

There are however a range of factors that may constrain and limit the capacity of schools to achieve this. Where effective practice was identified within the group it was clear there was a significant degree of flexibility required from all partners and providers with an understanding of the constraints facing schools. The group felt strongly that individual schools should have the capacity to innovate to meet their individual contexts and there were some risks that this could be constrained by standardisation across a local authority.

Specific Challenges

The group identified a number of specific challenges some schools may face when seeking to integrate work related opportunities into the Senior Phase.

Rural settings

Rural schools, or those with significant travel time between school and college campuses, face particular challenges integrating work related or college-based offers. These issues limit the scope to integrate provision with school column structures. In response, some schools have adopted a 'whole day extraction' model. This approach itself has a number of disadvantages (most notably the consequences of extracting pupils from other certificated programmes) and may contribute to low retention rates for FA programmes.

It may be that more flexible approaches, such as a hybrid digital delivery model or provision located within individual schools may be more effective. A campus/consortia model may also offer solutions, as schools within traveling distance of each other can align some of their columns and act as base schools for vocational programmes. This strategy appears to have had considerable success in Aberdeenshire.

Time allocation

A common approach is to set up an aligned column for college or work based options as a block of double periods at the end of the day across two afternoons. Learners can then (depending on the position of lunchtime in the school day) travel during part of lunchtime to get to the relevant location, or if there is a 3 period afternoon travel during the period before their placement starts (by timetabling core subjects for this period it may be possible to avoid extraction from other certificated courses). This may however impact on national entitlements for learners.

However, this normally leaves 1 or 2 periods spare (the remainder of a 5 or 6 period column structure). This time may be filled by private study. Alternatively, some schools have opted to fill this time by other awards (i.e. SQA Leadership Award) or digital options. It has also been suggested that these 'additional' periods in school be used as support periods for those who have selected options such as FAs. However, the likely benefit of this is minimal given the lack of support from a relevant specialist in these programmes.

Communication and sharing data

Information sharing (such as learner additional support needs, tracking of progress, monitoring attendance and reporting to parents) faces particular challenges where learners are working across school/college campuses or with third party providers. This can often involve the use of different data management systems. Challenges sharing this information can have significant consequences for attainment and achievement. In response, School College Partnerships who have prioritised this issue have developed digital information sharing systems to facilitate the sharing of this information, allowing timely responses to issues.

Effective partnership approaches also ensure timely communication and co-ordination of prelims, holidays etc. Joint evaluation and strategic planning can also ensure that these offers match the demand from learners and the levels that best meet their needs. A particular challenge highlighted was the repercussions of cancellation of college offers at short notice. If done out with existing school course choice timelines, learners may be at a serious disadvantage when seeking alternative options. This risks undermining confidence in college based options, in comparison to school based offers. Clarity on the places available and demand for work related options needs to be provided as soon as possible and either updated to schools/colleges directly or co-ordinated by central staff.

Structures of vocational qualifications

The two year structure of Foundation Apprenticeships appears to contribute to retention difficulties. This has been addressed in some areas through the offer of one year FA programmes (often by equating this to 2 choices for pupils on their course choice form). This requires aligning at least 2 columns to facilitate this. An additional advantage is it allows S6 pupils to start an FA option. On the other hand where schools have opted to integrate vocational offers within their column structures there was a risk that 'dead' periods may often be created.

Duplication of learning

Duplication of learning was also highlighted as a challenge. This was often due to a lack of understanding of, for instance, the theoretical content for Foundation Apprenticeships (e.g. NPA), for which a pupil may already have achieved an award. This also raised issues of recognition of prior learning.

Key Findings

Timetable models

No one specific model/approach will meet the needs of all schools. The most suitable approaches will depend on the context of individual schools and will include a range of practical considerations such as proximity to college campus, proximity to other schools and travel time. It was recognised that any approach will require collaboration and planning.

Four general models (outlined in more detail in the case studies which follow) were identified:

1. Integration of work-based offers into school timetable and course choice column structures. This model normally also involves blocking of timetables and alignment of timetables across Local Authorities or clusters of schools
2. Whole day extraction from school
3. School based delivery models
4. Hybrid approaches involving digital delivery for some (or all) of the provision

Collaboration

Effective collaboration was viewed as an essential factor to ensure successful integration in school Senior Phase offers. This can be characterised by features such as:

- clear and shared expectation and understandings of the capacity and processes of all partners
- joint planning and co-design
- effective and regular communication, including establishing processes and structures to support this
- robust structures to support collaboration above school level
- alignments of accountability measures
- joint evaluations and regular review, including consideration of progression pathways

Planning

Planning (at both a strategic and operational level) was viewed as a key component of effective practice. This often had the following features:

- **Staff are identified with clear roles and responsibilities for liaison, communication and planning across settings and sectors.** In many areas there are either designated Local Authority Officers or nominated school based staff with responsibility for strategic planning with colleges, independent learning providers and third sector organisations. Where this also involves clear communication with individual schools, these curriculum planning partnerships can result in highly relevant work based offers for learners.

- **Planning takes account of the needs of individual schools.** This may include [local labour market information](#) and the aspirations of pupils to ensure a relevant offer that also supports their progression. This would include the effective use of data such as 16+ information.
- **Curriculum planning partnerships consider both strategic and operational aspects.** This helps ensure coherent offers which address the practicalities and finer details of implementation
- **Opportunities are planned within the Broad General Education (BGE) to increase awareness and understanding of vocational and work based qualifications.** In the absence of these, learners (and parents/carers) may limit their consideration of Senior Phase choices to those with which they are already familiar. Experiential sessions for learners in the BGE were viewed by the group particularly positively.
- **Processes are in place for reviewing and evaluating provision.** These should take account of the views of schools regarding the nature and quality of the work-based offer and the relevance for their learners. These should also take into account outcomes and attainment. This should inform and update planning for subsequent sessions.

Timelines & timescales

- **Timelines for recruitment to vocational and work based programmes should integrate fully with school course choice timelines.** Work-based timelines must integrate into schools course choices timelines and should not operate on different timescales. This should include alignment on decisions about the viability of courses to ensure that learners who opt for college based options are not disadvantaged if their preferred courses do not run.
- **Dates for the start of FA and college programmes should align with new school timetables.** ‘Dead-time’ between the start of new school timetables (May or June) and the commencement of college offers should be avoided This could be achieved by effective planning between schools and colleges

Communication & information sharing

- **Information on entry into work-based courses, the content of these courses and expectations of learners should be communicated clearly and timely.** This supports course choice guidance provided in school. Information should be shared with subject teachers as well as pastoral staff to ensure that accurate advice is provided, as both groups can influence decisions made by learners.
- **Wider messaging on the benefits of work based opportunities should be communicated to support learners and families make informed choices.** These should include not only the content and presentation of vocational course information, but also higher level messages on the nature of the senior phase, SCQF, skills acquisition, labour market information and progression pathways. In the absence of these, work-based learning opportunities risk being perceived as inferior to National Qualifications.

- **Systems are required to ensure communication between providers and schools regarding attendance and progress of learners.** These should ideally align with school reporting systems and deadlines. This was viewed as a significant feature of effective communication. In addition manageable mechanisms for sharing of information between schools and providers, such as additional support needs, were seen as particularly important. Authority wide digital solutions were highlighted as particularly effective, though compatibility of data sharing systems were identified as problematic.

Course choice process

Course choice processes should treat the full range of qualifications equally to promote parity. A number of schools still appear to require either ‘applications’ or ‘interviews’ for work-based learning offers (such as accessing Foundation Apprenticeships or college provision). This can send a signal to learners and parents that these are different to traditional NQ school offers and undermines attempts to promote pathways and parity of esteem. Recruitment processes ideally should be the same for all courses to promote equity. There are a number of examples where vocational and work based offers are fully integrated into course choice forms and not located in separate sections or on separate forms.

Systemic alignment

The successful integration of external offers with school timetables requires support and alignment with a range of other factors. For example, measures of school and Local Authority accountability must include recognition of achievement and the benefits of work-based offers. In the absence of these there is a disincentive for schools and local authorities to invest resources to support these developments, which can encourage an over reliance on National Qualifications. Concern was expressed at the potential impact of narrow measures used for stretch aims.

Case Study: Dundee and Angus School – College Partnerships

Dundee and Angus college have a well-established school-college partnership that provides diverse pathways for senior phase learners across our region. The college works closely with both Dundee City Council and Angus Council, as well as with two schools from Aberdeenshire, and the partnership covers 20 schools: 10 in Dundee, 8 in Angus and 2 in Aberdeenshire, with a mixed urban and rural catchment.

The number of pupils choosing a senior phase course has increased from 1092 enrolments in 18/19 to 2013 enrolments in 22/23, meaning around 28% of the total senior phase cohort in the region chose a college option in 22/23. This growth is partly attributable to collaborative work to align timetables across schools, maximising access for pupils and minimising any impact on school based provision.

Most courses are delivered on campus, (the 2 campuses in Dundee for Dundee pupils and the Arbroath campus in Angus for Angus and Aberdeenshire pupils), with additional flexibility for in-school delivery where the cohort is large enough and where it suits both the school and the college.

In Dundee, the main times for attending college are on Monday and Wednesday from 2 pm to 4 pm. To accommodate pupil demand additional classes in the highest demand areas and workshop-based subjects (Automotive Skills, Construction and Hair and Beauty) also run on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Dundee schools align 2 columns in S4-6 to support this.

In Angus, most courses run on Friday from 9 am to 1 pm, with two year Foundation Apprenticeships running on Tuesdays from 9 am to 4 pm, or on both of those days from 9 to 4 if a pupil is doing a one year Foundation Apprenticeship.

These times are unified across the respective local authorities, meaning all schools plan this into their column choices and timetables. All transport is organised centrally by the local authority.

In Dundee, the 2 pm afternoon start time means pupils use part of their lunch break to travel and are not missing out on classes in schools.

In Angus, where travel distances are greater than in Dundee, the 9 am start time means travel can be planned for the start of the day, from home to college as needed. As Angus schools finish the school day at 1.20 on Fridays there is no impact on school lessons from travel back from college. The alignment of timetables also allows the college to plan timetabling and staffing for full time students around these set times.

We have also worked particularly closely with schools and local authorities to align timelines and timescales, for example in opening and closing course choices, and starting college

delivery at school change of timetable rather than the college norm, which is after the summer break.

To enable effective sharing of information we have also created a data-share portal. This enables information about learner attendance and progress to be shared and accessed easily and in real time. We also use the portal for submitting course choice requests which has made the process easier and quicker.

This joint approach to planning and delivery is underpinned by regular meetings between the college, schools and the local authorities, with close working relationships between the designated points of contact in college and school.

The alignment of timetables has meant we have been able to overcome many logistical barriers in our region, allowing us, as a partnership to focus on enhancements in other areas such as curriculum and attainment. It also means there is greater equity of access to the diverse pathways the school – college partnership provides.

A Dundee Standard for the Senior Phase School College partnership has been created in partnership with Dundee and Angus College, Dundee City Council and representatives from Dundee schools through a short life working group. This Standard was agreed with Senior Leaders in Children and Families Service and Dundee and Angus College, and all levels and sectors were represented on the working group.

The Standard aims to clearly outline roles and responsibilities within the partnership, and sets out the minimum expectations to ensure a consistent approach by all involved. The Standard will help partners have a clear framework for collaboration to ensure cohesive and progressive learner pathways that support attainment and sustained positive pathways and destinations. The Standard will also be used to help the partnership evaluate and continuously improve our planning and delivery of senior phase pathways into the future.

The Dundee Standard can be found here:

https://education.gov.scot/media/0kkn2bx5/school-college-partnership_april28.pdf

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School Example 1 : Brechin High School

Context

Brechin is situated in north Angus with a population of just under 7300 (12,500 in the wider catchment). The school catchment is classed as semi-rural. The school roll is approximately 550. Although situated adjacent to the A90 main north/south artery, public transport in Brechin is poor. The east end of Brechin is the second most deprived area in Angus and approximately 60% of the young people attending the school live in areas with SIMD ratings between 1 to 5.

The opening of Brechin Community Campus in February 2016 was intended to be an investment in the local community by Angus Council. The campus was designed to provide integrated services with open access to both public and school during the daytime. This has provided close community involvement and local business engagement creating excellent opportunities to develop partnership working.

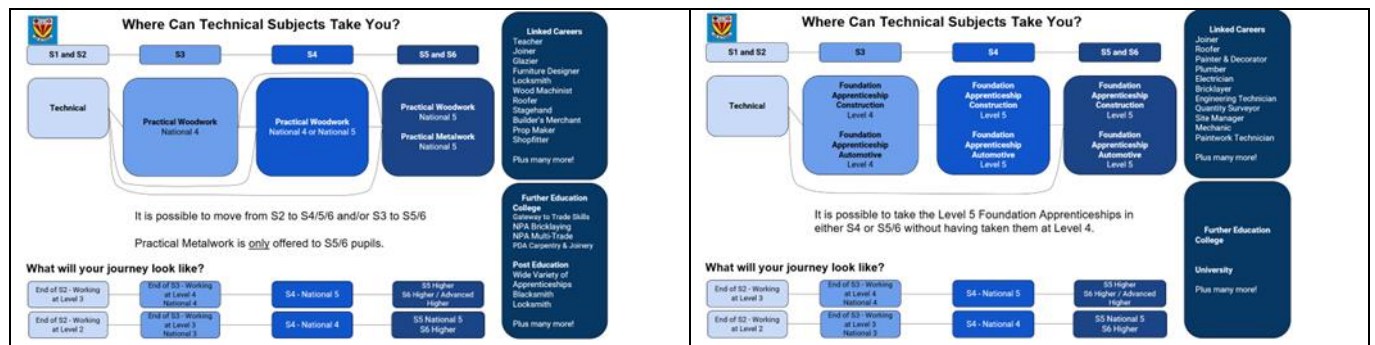
There was a well-established relationship between the school and Dundee & Angus College, with college staff delivering Skills for Work courses as part of the school's curricular offer. By 2016 however both engagement by learners and attainment were deteriorating. To address this school staff invited local employers to discuss employability skills and how they related to the vocational courses delivered by the college in school. Representatives of local construction companies, Forster Group and Pert Bruce attended, with senior leaders from Brechin High School and the Dundee & Angus Skills for Work lecturer. We agreed the courses were not meeting the needs of the young people or the employers. Representatives of Skills Development Scotland also began to attend the meetings.

The initial outcome was to arrange the delivery of a Level 6 FA in Civil Engineering in Brechin Community Campus (as part of the school curriculum) over two years by Dundee & Angus College. This was also offered to other secondary schools in North Angus with Brechin acting as a hub for delivery. It was also agreed to create a bespoke course in construction skills at level 4 (initially called Design and Build) delivered in S3. BHS technical teachers and Dundee and Angus college staff worked together to both create the course and deliver the learning. There was a strong emphasis placed on meta-skills, and integrating learning throughout the course with a product as the outcome, rather than the traditional pattern of unit by unit learning of Skills for Work. The course was treated as a pilot and supported and evaluated by SDS.

Following the successful implementation and delivery of the course a level 5 award was also created to allow progression. This was delivered in S4 by Dundee & Angus staff, with Brechin High School technical teachers delivering the level 4 in S3. This course has now developed into Foundation Apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5.

The level 6 Civil Engineering ran for two cohorts (S5 & S6 over two years) with almost all pupils successfully entering a link Abertay degree course with Dundee & Angus College. As the intake reduced the course moved to the Dundee & Angus College site in Arbroath for delivery. The

Level 4 & 5 FA courses are now embedded in the curricular offer at Brechin High School. Level 4 Construction Skills and Automotive are delivered by Technical teachers as part of the school curriculum. Level 5 Construction Skills is delivered at the campus by Dundee & Angus staff. Level 4 Hospitality is delivered as part of the school curriculum by Dundee & Angus staff, with the Level 5 also delivered as part of the Dundee & Angus offer at their Arbroath campus. Our intention is for our Home Economics staff to deliver the Level 4 Hospitality in S3 following a similar model to that of the construction course.



Timetabling & course choice

The Brechin High School curriculum is currently based on a 'free choice' model with columns created by pupil choice rather than columns dictating choices available to pupils. This provides enhanced progression pathways with strong links to the local labour market, encouraging community engagement.

Civil Engineering was included in the senior phase course choice and timetabled in partnership with the college. The course required a full day for delivery. The school adapted the timetables of those young people involved in the Civil Engineering course to accommodate the availability of D&A staff and ensure minimal disruption to young people's learning.

The level 4 courses are included in the pupil course choice and integrated into the school curriculum. The level 4 Hospitality delivered by college staff is timetabled to suit their availability, but matched against other options which prevent any reduction or disruption to the hospitality pupils own curricular offer. The level 5 course in Construction Skills and Hospitality are timetabled for a Friday which is the agreed day in Angus for Dundee & Angus courses to be delivered.

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School Example 2: Grove Academy

In Session 2016/17 Grove Academy commenced a significant development of its Senior Phase Curriculum. The school previously had a traditional Senior Phase model focusing mainly on National Qualifications which were supplemented by the city wide Dundee & Angus College offer.

Context

The City-wide offer provided a basic timetabling infrastructure for many of the developments the school subsequently implemented. This initially involved aligning a Senior Phase timetable column across all Dundee City secondary schools. This was then added to by schools in Dundee, aligning a second senior phase column to support a city wide Advanced Higher campus. Both supported the widening of the curriculum offer.

The location of schools within Dundee supported this alignment of timetables as all schools are within short travelling distance of one of the two Dundee & Angus College campuses. This initially involved blocking 4 periods from both columns into doubled periods on either Monday and Wednesday afternoons for the College offer (S4/5/6), or Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for the Advanced Higher campus (S5/6). Use was made of lunch breaks for travel to relevant venues. Out with the 4 aligned blocked periods in each column, schools had the discretion for placement of the remaining 2 periods (for S5/6) or 1 period (for S4). In Grove these were historically used for private study periods or for additional courses such as the SQA Leadership Award. Dundee schools operate an asynchronous timetable with 3 long days (Mon-Wed) and two short days (Thur-Fri).

Timetabling

As part of the development of its curriculum, the school built on this infrastructure to support a number of further initiatives involving partnership delivery of Senior Phase courses and experiences. This included;

- blocking of all periods for S5/6 for the two aligned columns.
- extending the blocking of Tuesday and Thursday afternoons into S4.
- introducing a blocked afternoon on a Friday to support an elective programme in S5/6
- relocating the additional periods to the first periods in mornings

S5/6 (5 columns of 6 periods)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1		A	B		
Period 2		A	B		
Period 3					
Period 4				B	Elective
Period 5				B	Elective
Period 6	A	B	A		
Period 7	A	B	A		

S4 (6 columns of 5 periods)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1		A	B		
Period 2					
Period 3					
Period 4				B	
Period 5				B	
Period 6	A	B	A		
Period 7	A	B	A		

These changes supported a number of changes in the curriculum. The introduction of blocked columns allowed the development of a range of additional options, co-designed and delivered with partners. This also meant that these programmes could be delivered at suitable venues without extracting pupils from their other courses.

For example in S5/6:

- establishment of a fitness industry training programme (for S5/6) with pupils achieving industry standard accreditation in lifeguarding and as fitness instructors. This was located in Column B and supported travel to use the facilities at a nearby college campus as well as using school facilities. Double period blocks were also more suited to the practical nature of the learning experiences.
- introduction of SQA Coaching programme which enabled pupils to achieve SQA Coaching Badges and gain work experience. This was located in column A, supporting the use of facilities and again with blocks being more suited to the nature of the learning experiences. The afternoon blocks also supported work experience placements in local primary schools.
- introduction of work experience as part of the Senior Phase offer. The use of blocks supported placements which were integrated into the weekly timetable of participants and avoided extraction from other choices.
- the development of project based courses. The use of blocks enabled meaningful project based options in engineering and expressive arts for S5/6, supporting appropriate approaches to learning and teaching.

- the creation of co-designed and co-delivered programmes with colleges and employers. For instance, an S4 hospitality programme used the afternoon slots for both Column A and B to enable pupils to spend 2 afternoons at D&A College, to complete a hospitality SVQ, and two afternoons on placement with APEX Hotels. As part of these placements the participants completed APEX's internal training programme. The use of the 4 afternoons also supported an S4 plumbing and electrical programme which was co-designed with D&A college. Again these were fully integrated into pupils timetables with no extraction.

The relocation of the additional periods for column A and B also supported a flexible school day approach. For instance, as part of an agreement with Al Maktoum College of Higher Education, S5/6 pupils were able to choose an HNC in Leadership and Management in Column A. Pupils who selected this option attended Al-Maktoum from 2-5 pm on a Monday & Wednesday, and to make up for the additional time were not required to attend school during the remaining 2 periods of this column on a Tuesday morning. This ensured they had a full input from specialist staff as a result of this flexible arrangement.

The blocking of all S5/6 afternoons also enabled a pilot for the delivery of Foundations Apprenticeships that was subsequently extended across all Dundee schools. This further enabled the use of these afternoon blocks to support a 1 year Foundation Apprenticeship model which resulted in a significant uptake of these courses. This also supported a number of bespoke arrangements between the school and D&A college, which added to the vocational pathways provided through the city wide programme.

Blocking was also introduced in the remaining S5/6 columns with, in most cases, 4 of the 6 periods of each column delivered as double period blocks. Friday afternoons were also blocked for S5/6 to support a Health and Wellbeing elective programme. This approach was also replicated in S2 and S3 to support project based approaches and timetabled interdisciplinary learning (IDL)

The vocational options these timetable arrangements supported in S5/6 can be seen in the course choice forms below. The increasing collaboration between the school and a range of partners enabled a significant expansion of the curriculum at a time of local authority budget and staffing cuts.

S5/6 Column A

Choice 1 – choose 1 subject only from the options below			
Level 5/4	Foundation Apprenticeships (2 Year programs - Year 1 S5, Year 2 S6)	Foundation Apprenticeships (1 Year programs – S6 only)	Skills for work
Business Management (N5) Music Performing (N5) Mandarin (N4) French (N5) Physics (N5) Sociology (N5- S6) Social Science (NC 5- must also chose this option in choice 2 below)	Year 1 S5 Accounting (year 1 of 2) S5 Business Skills (year 1 of 2) S5 Social Services & Healthcare (year 1 of 2) S5 Social services, Children & Young People (year 1 of 2) S5 Creative and Digital Media (year 1 of 2) S5 Networking & Cybersecurity (year 1 of 2) S5 Software and Application Development (year 1 of 2) S5 Engineering (year 1 of 2) S5 Food and Drink Technology (year 1 of 2) S5 Scientific Technologies (year 1 of 2)	S6 Accounting (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Business Skills (1 year-must also chose this option in Choice 1) S6 Scientific Technologies (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Social services, Children & Young People (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Social services & Healthcare (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Creative and Digital Media (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Networking & Cybersecurity (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 2 below) S6 Software and Application Development (1 year must also chose this option in choice 2 below)	Automotive Skills (SFW N4) Early Education & Childcare (SFW N5/N4) Engineering skills (SFW N5/4) Health Sector (SFW N5) Hospitality (SFW N5) National Progression Awards NPA Scientific Technologies Level 6 NPA Digital Media Level 5 NPA Hospitality Level 5 NPA Hospitality Level 6 NPA Cybersecurity Level 5 NPA Construction Skills Level 5 NPA Criminology Level 5 NPA Criminology Level 6 NPA Web Design Level 5 NPA Photography Level 5 NPA Dance Level 5 NPA Business & Marketing Level 5 NPA Psychology Level 5 NPA Psychology Level 6 NPA Rural Skills- Horticulture Level 4
Level 6 Accounts (Higher) Biology (Higher) Business Management (Higher) Chemistry (Higher) Data Science (NPA Level 6) Engineering Science (Higher) Geography (Higher) French (Higher) History (Higher) Music Performing (Higher) Physics (Higher) Sociology (Higher- S6) Social Science (NC 6- must also chose this option in choice 2 below)	Year 2 S6 Accounting (year 2 of 2) S6 Business Skills (year 2 of 2) S6 Engineering (year 2 of 2) S6 Scientific Technologies (year 2 of 2) S6 Social Services & Healthcare (year 2 of 2) S6 Food and Drink Technology (year 2 of 2) S6 Networking & Cybersecurity (year 2 of 2) S6 Software and Application Development (year 2 of 2) S6 Creative and Digital Media (year 2 of 2)	Career Pathways Advanced Engineering Programme (S6 only) Advanced Community Events and Performance Programme (S6 only) Advanced Community Music Production and Technology Programme (S6 only) Coaching Academy (SFA) Hair & Beauty Skills (VTC level 1 equivalent to a national at Level 4) Hair & Beauty Skills (VTC level 2 equivalent to a national at Level 5) Sports & Fitness (NCFE Award 2 equivalent to a national at Level 5)	Professional Development Awards- S6 only PDA in Psychology Level 7 PDA in Management Accounting Level 7 PDA in Criminology Level 7 PDA in Information Technology in Business Level 7
Level 7 French (Advanced Higher) Biology (Advanced Higher) Music Tech (Advanced Higher) HNC Management & Leadership (S6 only) S5 HNC-Computer Networking and Ethical Hacking- year 1 of 2 S6 HNC-Computer Networking and Ethical Hacking- year 2 of 2			

S5/6 Column B

Choice 2 – choose 1 subject only from the options below			
Level 5/4	Level 6	Level 7/8	Foundation Apprenticeships (2 Year programs - Year 1 S5, Year 2 S6)
Accounts (N5) Business Management (N5) Chemistry (N5) Computing (N5) German (N5) Mandarin (N5) Music Technology (N5) PE (N5) Personal development (L5) Physics (N5) RMPS NS Social Science (NC 5- must also chose this option in choice 1 above)	Biology (Higher) Business Management (Higher) Chemistry (Higher) Computing (Higher) Drama (Higher) Engineering Science (Higher) German (Higher) History (Higher) Modern Studies (Higher) Music Technology (Higher) PE (Higher) Physics (Higher) RMPS Higher Photography Higher Politics (Higher -S6 only) Social Science (NC 6- must also chose this option in choice 1 above)	Accountancy (Advanced Higher) Art (Advanced Higher) And/or Art Folio Chemistry (Advanced Higher) HNC Business (S6 only) Business Management (Advanced Higher) English (Advanced Higher) Drama (Advanced Higher) German (Advanced Higher) Modern Studies (Advanced Higher) Geography (Advanced Higher) History (PDA Level 7/8) PE (Advanced Higher) Computing (Advanced Higher) Spanish (Advanced Higher)	Year 1 S5 Civil Engineering Program (year 1 of 2) Year 2 S6 Civil Engineering FA Program (year 2 of 2) (1 Year programs – S6 only) S6 Accounting (must also chose this option in Choice 1) S6 Business Skills must also chose this option in Choice 1) S6 Social services, Children & Young People (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 1) S6 Social services & Healthcare (must also chose this option in choice 1) S6 Creative and Digital Media (must also chose this option in Choice 1) S6 Scientific Technologies (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 1) S6 Networking & Cybersecurity (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 1) S6 Software and Application Development (1 year- must also chose this option in choice 1)
		Career Pathways Fitness Industry Training Academy Hair & Beauty Skills (VTC level 1 equivalent to national at Level 4) Hair & Beauty Skills (VTC level 2 equivalent to national at Level 5) Construction Crafts & Technician (NPA level 4) Automotive Skills (SFW N4)	

Grove Academy had previously moved from a column structure for its option choices to a free choice model. To support the partnership delivery and work based opportunities the school moved to a hybrid approach, with columns A and B above being based on a columns structure and the remaining columns being based on a free choice model (see below). There was flexibility to move school based subjects in columns A and B after course choice returns if this supported pupils choices. Similar approaches were adopted for S4.

S5/6 Columns C/D/E

Choices 3, 4, 5- choose 3 subjects from the options below			
Level 5/4	Level 6	Level 7	Baccalaureate
Admin & IT (N5)	Admin & IT (Higher)	History (Advanced Higher)	Science Baccalaureate (S6 only)
Art & Design (N5)	Art & Design (Higher)	Maths (Advanced Higher)	Social Subject Baccalaureate (S6 only)
Application of Maths (N5)	Application of Maths (Higher)	Music Performing (Advanced Higher)	
Business Management (N5)	Business Management (Higher)	Physics (Advanced Higher)	
Chemistry (N5)	Biology (Higher)		
Creative Industries (NC level 5)	Chemistry (Higher)		
English (N5)	Criminology (NPA Level 6)		
Fashion & Textiles (N5)	Creative Industries (NC level 6)		
Graphic Communication (N5)	Computing Cyber Security or Computer		
Health Sector (biology) (N5)	Games Design (NPA level 6)		
Health & Food (N5)	Design & Manufacture (Higher)		
Hospitality Practical Cookery (N5)	English (Higher)		
Maths level 5/6 (N5)	Health and Food (Higher)		
Maths – Personal Finance and Numeracy- (Level 5/4)	Fashion & Textiles (Higher)		
Metalwork (N5)	Geography (Higher)		
Music Performing (N5)	Graphic Communication (Higher)		
Travel & tourism (N5/N4)	History (Higher)		
Physics (N5)	Human Biology (Higher)		
Practical Electronics (N5)	Maths level 5/6 (Higher)		
PE (N5)	Modern Studies (Higher)		
Practical Cake Craft (N5)	Music Performing (Higher)		
	Physics (Higher)		
	PE (Higher)		
	Social Services: Children & Young People (NPA Level 6)		

The alignment of columns across Dundee schools also supported the consortia arrangements between local schools. This again widened the curriculum for pupils across the schools involved without extracting pupils from existing course. This also helped reduce bi and multi-level classes, for example, as a result of an arrangement with St Pauls Academy in Dundee. For a number of years pupils opting for French or German attended Grove and pupils opting for Spanish attended St Pauls. As a result of planning across both schools, use was made of the afternoon blocks to ensure viable single level classes could be delivered for learners.

Course choice processes

In order to promote parity the school also revamped their course choice documentation and information. A key part of this was moving away from an emphasis on courses and allied information into a greater focus on pathways (see below) and longer term planning. This supported an integration of vocation and academic options and reinforced work taking place across the school, based on the development of skills framework and learner profiling.

As outlined in the course choice forms above there was no separate application process for college based options. This aligned with wider messaging that the senior phase would be an experience that could naturally happen in school, at college, in the workplace, online or at university. Dundee & Angus college supported this by removing the need for interviews or application forms for learners opting for senior phase vocation options. This was also supported by introducing new processes for sharing information on learners needs, attendance and progress.

ACCOUNTING PATHWAYS			
Potential Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Accountant Management Accountant Chartered Accountant Financial Adviser Public Finance Accountant Investment Banking Bank Manager Investment Analyst Economist Insurance Account Manager 		
Beyond	University Courses BA / Degree Accounting - with Maths, Business, Language Financial Economics	College Courses NC/NCVQ/ND Accounting Finance	Workplace Trainee Accountant Banking Finance Payroll Clerk Invoice Clerk
Senior Phase S5/6	Advanced Higher Accounting OR Alternative Higher Business Management Administration Higher Accounting	HNC Accounting & Management OR HNC Business Business Accounting 1 year option Chosen as 2 subjects on course or as a term	Business Accounting 2 year option Higher Accounting
Senior Phase S4	National 5 Accounting		
BGE S3	S3 Accounting		
BGE S1-2	Business Enterprise & IT		

Art & Design PATHWAYS			
Potential Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Administrator Graphic designer Freelance Photographer Illustrator Jewellery Designer Teacher Arts Creator Product Designer Fashion Designer Architect 		
Beyond	University Courses General Arts Course Product Design Photography Games Design & Production Fashion Communication	College Courses A&D Portfolio Course HNC 3D Design HND Computer Arts & Design HND Photography	Workplace Trainee Illustrator Architectural Technician
Senior Phase S5/6	FA Creative and Design 2-year option Art Art & Design 2-year option Courses in subject choice FA Foundation Advanced Creative 2-year option Courses in subject choice FA Foundation Advanced Creative 2-year option Courses in subject choice Higher Photography Higher Photography Higher Art & Design Higher Art & Design	Higher Art & Design NPA Level 5 Digital Media NPA Level 5 Photography National 5 Art & Design	
Senior Phase S4	National 5 Art & Design		National 4 Art & Design
BGE S3	Art & Design		
BGE S1-2	Art & Design		

Computing PATHWAYS			
Potential Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application analyst Forensic computer analyst Game designer Multimedia programmer Software Engineer Digital copywriter Systems analyst IT trainer Cyber security Network engineer 		
Beyond	University Courses Computing Science BSc (Hons) Applied Computing BSc (Hons) Business Computing BSc (Hons) Computer Games BSc (Hons)	College Courses HNC/HND Computing Science HNC/HND Cyber Security HNC/HND Computer Games	Workplace IT Support Level 2 Developer Developer IT Technicians
Senior Phase S5/6	S5/S6 Foundation Apprenticeship Creative & Digital Media OR Networking & Cyber Security OR Software & Application Development OR HNC Computer Networking & Email Marketing 2 year option	Advanced Higher Computing Higher Computing	Multimedia Apprenticeship Creative & Digital Media OR Networking & Cyber Security OR Software & Application Development OR HNC Computer Networking & Email Marketing 2 year option NPA Level 6 Creative & Digital Media OR Networking & Cyber Security OR Software & Application Development OR HNC Computer Networking & Email Marketing 2 year option NPA Level 5 Cyber Security OR Digital Media NPA Level 5 Cyber Security OR Computer Games Design
Senior Phase S4	National 5 Computing		National 5 Cyber Security
BGE S3	S3 Computing & Creative Media		
BGE S1-2	Computing		

History PATHWAYS			
Potential Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archivist Museum Curator Journalist Teacher/Lecturer Lawyer Archaeologist CWGC careers Anthropologist Politician Civil Service 		
Beyond	University Courses History Genealogy Law Archaeology	College Courses HNC Social Sciences HND Social Sciences	Workplace CWGC jobs Tour guide Librarian Historic Scotland job
Senior Phase S5/6	Advanced Higher History Personal Development Award Level 7/8 History Higher History National Certificate in Social Sciences Level 6	Higher History National Certificate in Social Sciences Level 5	
Senior Phase S4	National 5 History		National 4 Social Subjects
BGE S3	History		
BGE S1-2	History		

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Case Study: Aberdeenshire Council – Foundation Apprenticeships

Aberdeenshire Council has developed a very extensive and successful Foundation Apprenticeship programme in our schools. This programme has had a real and sustainable impact on a number of Scottish Government key priorities, such as Raising Attainment and Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap, development of skills (meta-skills), curriculum development, labour market opportunities and planning, GIRFEC, equity and promotion of equalities, sustainability and reduction in carbon emissions and employer engagement.

Working with SDS and other key partners FAs have had a very positive, and significant transformational impact on the outcomes, opportunities and life chances for our young people.

Context

A review of Aberdeenshire FA Delivery in the summer of 2018 concluded that the FA delivery model was not working for young people in Aberdeenshire. FA uptake was well below the national average and falling. The model being delivered was through the local college and pupils were transported to a central college location for delivery. School leaders identified a number of barriers to overcome:

- **geography:** Aberdeenshire is a large rural authority with very distinct and varied local communities
- **transport:** due to the rural nature and the delivery model being at a central location, pupils spent a great deal of time travelling
- **timetabling:** the central delivery model meant that FA pupils were likely to miss significant learning in school while they were attending college. Aligning school timetables to accommodate this had proved a very challenging task over many years. Primarily this was due to the rurality but also the diverse nature of the region
- **disruption to individual learning:** as a result of the central college delivery model and the rural timetabling challenges, there was considerable disruption to the learning of pupils who chose the FA. Two sessions at college generally equated to two days out of school for many. Teachers and parents saw FAs as an unviable option.
- **2-year model:** head teachers felt strongly that the 2-year model of delivery was simply not working in the Aberdeenshire context. As well as the disruption to learning, pupils were often choosing not to return for year two (for a variety of different reasons) which meant potential Higher pupils were achieving only a NPA pass at best. This was impacting on attainment and hence both the pupil and the school were underperforming in relation to attainment.

Aberdeenshire FA Model and Delivery

The principles underpinning the Aberdeenshire Council FA delivery model include ensuring the FA has parity of esteem with Highers at Level 6 and Nationals at Level 4/5. FAs are timetabled in school alongside other senior phase courses and are a universal subject choice offer. The FAs are timetabled as a school would timetable any other Higher or senior phase course. All frameworks are delivered as a one-year FA model apart from the Engineering FA which is a two-year model. Where schools have a small number of pupils wishing to undertake an FA, arrangements are made for them to attend via another school, either in person or on-line. In addition, FAs continue to be delivered in some Aberdeenshire schools by the college.

Timetabling principles

The most common timetable structure in Aberdeenshire Structure is the 32+1 period week, or variations of this model. The timetabling of the FA is generally two double periods plus one single for the NPA class delivery. Almost all schools operate a 'wider achievement' slot, either a half day or whole day and this is where the work placement SVQ part of the course is delivered.

The schools timetable to suit their local circumstances and needs and then the central FA Team timetables the FA delivery across the schools, working with the schools where there may be flexibility and innovation required.

Benefits of this timetabling model

This model of timetabling has allowed the FA to flourish as well as delivering better outcomes for learners. It also takes pressure off schools to 'align' timetables which can be very problematic in a large rural area, especially where a school may have on going significant staffing shortages.

School leaders are best placed to know and plan what timetabling and curriculum model best suits the needs of their school communities. Therefore, we give schools the freedom when timetabling the FAs. While there are invariably issues to overcome, our experience is that timetablers are willing to work creatively and innovatively to make the FAs work. We also offer support on timetabling and curriculum planning from the central officer team.

We have looked at a number of different timetabling solutions, including the 'aligning' of timetabling across the authority as well as among a smaller cluster of schools. While we continue to look at ways of aligning school timetables wherever possible, we have found this to have limitations in relation to FAs. An aligned FA/work based learning timetable model may work in a city/urban context but does not work effectively in a more rural authority. For example, if everyone is looking for work placements, SVQ assessors and NPA delivery at the same time in the week, this places a ceiling on the number of FAs or other work based learning which can be delivered. This would undermine the principle of universality and equality of opportunity.

If the current review of Scottish education means there is likely to be more work based learning and other vocational curriculum offers, there may also be a need for more SVQ and industry standard assessors. The Aberdeenshire FA delivery model allows for an up-scaling of the FA/work-based learning offer. This is because the specialist teachers, tutors, providers and SVQ

assessors can spread their work throughout the week. Our concern with the 'aligned' timetabling approach for FA delivery is that it will create 'bottle necks' at certain times of the week.

Sustainable Model Option – by timetabling the FA delivery in school this is undoubtedly reducing carbon emissions and transport costs, while also keeping disruption across the wider school curriculum to a minimum. This approach is seen as a 'best value' option.

Emerging practice - outcomes and key strengths

- FA delivery growth and increased resourcing - now over 800 FAs being delivered at SCQF Level 6 and 4/5.
- enhanced curriculum opportunities with minimal disruption to learning, has increased personalisation and choice for young people within their home school or within clustering arrangements. Where young people have joined groups in other schools, it has allowed smaller cohorts to become viable. Due to the multiple cohorts on offer a 'best fit' timetable option can be chosen.
- the Aberdeenshire FA model is enabling and demonstrating a different type of pedagogy and assessment in our schools. This has benefits in terms of staff CLPL and curricular thinking. In essence it embeds DYW in learning and establishes a pedagogy more based on experience and skills than knowledge. It also aligns our curriculum delivery more closely with learners experience in further and higher education.
- curriculum alignment with LMI and Regional Skills shortages - stronger links with communities and key sectors to meet labour market projections. Workforce development – identified as a [Best Value Audit of Aberdeenshire Council](#) Case Study (Items 75 & 76)
- enhanced DYW and work based learning outcomes including significant improvement in skills development through meta-skills
- very successful and positive FA retention and full FA completion rates of around 80%
- Improved Performance - raising attainment and positive stakeholder feedback. There is on average a 42% increase in attainment for those who undertake the FA compared with the average pupil attainment in Aberdeenshire.
- increased pupil engagement and confidence
- increase in positive destinations and enhanced career pathways. 100% of FA leavers achieved a positive destination
- enhanced employer engagement and partnership working
- improved and enhanced equity and equalities performance - increased opportunities for all including targeted vulnerable groups
- improved staffing and staff leadership development opportunities
- resilient and innovative delivery and sustained outcomes

For further information please contact :

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School Example 3: Portlethen Academy

In session 22/23, Portlethen Academy had 62 young people (31.4% of S5 and S6 pupils) embarking on an SCQF Level 6 Foundation Apprenticeship course. The addition of seven young people in S5 and S6 studying the SCQF Level 4 and Level 5 frameworks means that 34.8% of S5 and S6 pupils in the school are currently studying a Foundation Apprenticeship qualification across the three SCQF levels.

The offer has evolved and grown over time. To support this the school has deployed a number of approaches including:

- Delivery alongside other classes. Examples of these are: offering the Business Skills Foundation Apprenticeship alongside the Business Management Higher course; timetabling our IT Software Development cohorts in the same class as Advanced Higher Computing Science
- Coordinated and supported by Aberdeenshire Council's Central Foundation Apprenticeship team. Supporting young people to attend cohorts in other schools as well as allowing young people from other neighbouring schools to join our cohorts.

These courses have been delivered by internal school staff, internal Aberdeenshire staff, external providers and on occasions a combination of internal and external staff.

Promoting Foundation Apprenticeships offers

Given the desire to offer as many of the frameworks as possible at Portlethen Academy, the school took the early decision to ensure that all frameworks appeared on the main option form. In addition Portlethen has adopted a number of different strategies to promote FA's, including:

- generation of a Foundation Apprenticeship section on the school's curricular website ([PortySubjectChoice - Foundation Apprenticeships and Worked Based Learning Options \(google.com\)](#))
- recordings of young people who have successfully completed an FA discussing their experience of their course
- posters of young people who have successfully completed an FA detailing the positive aspects of their experience
- promoting at Curricular Information Evenings
- Foundation Apprenticeship Q and A Session for Parents / Carers
- targeting young people based on their career aspirations
- e-mailing the parent / carer body to share information relating to Foundation Apprenticeship courses
- 1-1 conversations discussing the benefits of Foundation Apprenticeship courses vs SQA Courses (i.e. Business Skills FA vs Business Management Higher, Creative and Digital Media FA vs Media Studies Higher and so on)
- 1-1 conversations with parents / carers discussing the benefits of Foundation Apprenticeship vs SQA Courses (Engineering FA vs Engineering Higher)

- sharing the experience of Foundation Apprentices on social media platforms
- celebrating the achievements on successful Foundation Apprenticeship pupils on social media

A key element of promoting the Foundation Apprenticeship courses has been to ensure that guidance staff in the school are knowledgeable of the courses and their benefits to our young people.

Timetabling for success – Foundation Apprenticeships in the school timetable

When the model of in-house delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships was first mooted, it was identified by Aberdeenshire Council's Central team that blocked periods of time would be required. Particularly where external delivery was going to be required. The minimum time required for delivery was set as the equivalent of two double periods.

At Portlethen Academy the senior phase timetable consists of six columns. For pupils in S5 and S6, five of these columns are devoted to what would be deemed as their main subject choices. The sixth column is allocated to PSE, a wider achievement period and three periods of enrichment.

As Portlethen Academy operates on a thirty period week, each of these columns has five periods allocated to it. Each column is typically timetabled as two double periods and one single period. Overall, it is felt by the school that this structure lends itself to timetabling Foundation Apprenticeships into the curriculum successfully.

All Foundation Apprenticeships are offered as an option in the same way as any other subjects. The only difference is that the school insist that any young person picking up a Foundation Apprenticeship course must select Foundation Apprenticeship Work Experience as their Enrichment option.

Each column featuring a Foundation Apprenticeship is timetabled to two double periods, with the other period set aside for further study. The Enrichment column is then timetabled the same way, but to two afternoons a week. Typically this has been a Monday and Wednesday. This allowed for the young people to have their work experience allocated on either or both of those afternoons as appropriate.

The school has been able to extend the length of time a young person can spend out on work experience on either of those days by timetabling the single period of a column where some Foundation Apprenticeships feature before lunch on those days.

The example below highlights how this worked during the 2019 / 2020 academic session.

The 2019 / 2020 column structure

	P1	P2	DCT	P3	P4	P5	P6
Monday	C	C		B	E	F	F
Tuesday	A	A		D	D	B	B
Wednesday	E	E		C	D	F	F
Thursday	C	C		A	A	D	D
Friday	A	F		B	B	E	E

Foundation Apprenticeship Work Experience was timetabled in the Enrichment Column (Column F).

In session 2019 / 2020, the Children and Young People Foundation Apprenticeship was timetabled in Column D and the Health and Social Care Foundation Apprenticeship was timetabled in Column E.

This meant the following:

The 2019 / 2020 column structure

	P1	P2	DCT	P3	P4	P5	P6
Monday	C	C		B	HSC FA STUDY	FA WE	FA WE
Tuesday	A	A		CYP FA	CYP FA	B	B
Wednesday	HSC FA	HSC FA		C	CYP FA STUDY	FA WE	FA WE
Thursday	C	C		A	A	CYP FA	CYP FA
Friday	A	F		B	B	HSC FA	HSC FA

This resulted in each framework having two double periods for in class theory based learning, with the opportunity to use the classes study period to lengthen their work placement time on either a Monday or a Wednesday afternoon. This meant there was no negative impact for a young person picking one of these Foundation Apprenticeships. The information below details the evolution of the offer and success rates.

Session 2019 / 2020

Academic Session	Course	Successful Completions	Total Completions
2019 / 2020	Accountancy	8	40 SCQF L6
	Children and Young People	12	
	Health and Social Care	20	

Session 2020 / 2021

Academic Session	Course	Successful Completions	Total Completions
2020 / 2021	Automotive	0 (Units only due to Covid)	12 SCQF L5
	Construction	7	24 SCQF L6
	Hospitality	5	
	Accountancy	4	
	Business Skills	5	
	Children and Young People	4	
	Engineering Year 1	7/8 continued on to Year 2	
	IT Software Development	4	
	Scientific Technologies	1	
	Health and Social Care	6	

Session 2021 / 2022

Academic Session	Course	Successful Completions	Total Completions
2021 / 2022	Automotive	4	4 SCQF L4
	Construction	4	7 SCQF L5
	Hospitality	3	46 SCQF L6
	Business Skills	3	
	Children and Young People	13	
	Creative and Digital Media	12	
	Engineering Year 2	7	
	Food and Drink Technologies	3	
	Health and Social Care	2	
	IT Software Development	6	

Session 2022 / 2023

Academic Session	Course	Successful Completions	Total Completions
2021 / 2022	Automotive	Potentially 6	6 SCQF L4
	Hospitality	Potentially 10	10 SCQF L5
	Business Skills	Potentially 12	62 SCQF L6
	Children and Young People	Potentially 5	
	Creative and Digital Media	Potentially 8	
	Engineering Year 1	4 hoping to progress	
	Engineering Year 2	Potentially 7	
	Food and Drink Technologies	Potentially 8	
	Health and Social Care	Potentially 14	
	IT Software Development	Potentially 4	
	Scientific Technologies	Potentially 4	

Success stories & pupil feedback

This increased uptake of FA's has resulted in improvements in attainment and a number of other benefits. Young people, through their work-related learning and their industry experience are able to identify and talk about the skills and qualities they have developed.

Feedback from some young people has suggested that their success in securing places at University or full time employment is a result of their experiences in the work place. Pupils who have been through these courses often highlight that, although these courses are challenging, they enjoy the fact that the course is continually assessed as opposed to having a high stakes final examination at the end of the course. The links below provide feedback from learners who have selected FA options:

Pupil Initials	Framework	Link to video
CB	Children and Young People	CB FA Experience
AH	Children and Young People	AH FA Experience
RH	Children and Young People	RH FA Experience
AJ	Children and Young People	AJ FA Experience
TM	Children and Young People	TM FA Experience
JT	Creative and Digital Media Pilot	JT FA Experience
SA	Health and Social Care	SA FA Experience
RW	Health and Social Care	RW FA Experience
AW	Health and Social Care	AW FA Experience
AW	Health and Social Care	AW FA Experience 2
KD	IT Software	KD FA Experience
LM	Scientific Technologies	LM FA Experience

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Case Study: Foundation Apprenticeship & Highland Council Virtual School

Highland Council in conjunction with the four colleges in its catchment area -Inverness College, North Highland College, West Highland College, and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig - offers a consistent timetable across the Highland region, delivered online and called The Virtual School. The Virtual School to a large extent is the domain of West Highland College UHI, with a range of subjects offered throughout the week. This includes Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) which are timetabled in the same column choices as the Advanced Highers across four 40 minute periods, plus any work placement activity.

The timetable takes a similar form to traditional delivery for two main reasons:

- to allow pupils to slot options in with other school subjects, and
- to avoid overload of time allocated to online sessions

Within the local authority, all applications are submitted by Highland pupils by the end of March. Opportunities are then opened to pupils from out with the geographical area if there is interest. The College does not typically promote out with its catchment area. However, they have had pupils from other regions such as the Western Isles and Argyll and Bute taking up opportunities offered.

The timetabling is seamless, but because of its nature, learning requires a discipline from the pupil's perspective and a different range of skills from the lecturer. Hence, provision is in place to permit access to catch up materials on the college's virtual learning environment (VLE).

The Foundation Apprenticeship in Software Development has been delivered this way by West Highland College since the inception of FA provision, but it is not alone, as five frameworks in total are delivered by this means. Software Development pupils will already have gained valuable experience with this approach, as National 5 and Higher Computing are also offered through the virtual school. The FA in Software Development also has a track record of progression onto Graduate Apprenticeships, again utilising a similar study and engagement pattern.

Employer sessions fit into the timetable in the same way as lecturing staff do. Employers regard the online aspect of engagement as realistic, reflecting their own preferred method of working. Tasks set by the employer are project based, and timetabled sessions may involve pupils, employers and tutors in attendance at the same time.

On Friday afternoons, schools finish early, so potentially pupils might be required to attend further work placement activity, to meet deadlines set by the employer.

Fundamentally the virtual school was set up to support rural, remote schools where numbers might be low, but where the collective ensures viability. To date, this delivery method and

timetable arrangement has served its pupils extremely well, to the extent that FE full time and part time are moving more and more towards virtual delivery.

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School Example 4: Highland Schools

Highland Council & West Highland have worked collaboratively to implement common days/times which schools could mirror for their own individualised timetables. This approach is more viable for West Highland as face to face courses faced barriers due to travel and viable numbers.

In school we used the Google Classroom platform which schools and pupils were already familiar with. This model gave equity to all our schools (irrespective of location) to study courses not available in school or offered locally by colleges. With an expansion of FA delivery by private trainers, where suitable this approach allowed them to offer their courses to a wider audience, providing flexibility to adapt to suit their needs.

North Highland now deliver some courses following this or an adapted timetable using UHI Brightspace platform. The experiences and learning from lockdown allowed us to adapt and deliver courses including those traditionally delivered face to face. We were able to set these up fairly quickly and this saw little teaching time lost.

Our virtual delivery model won the TES FE Awards in 2021 for Outstanding use of Technology in Delivering Remote Teaching & Learning. In the same year we also won the CDN Digital Learning Award in the “Virtual Schools, Virtual Anywhere” category.

Schools Programme 2023– 2024

Virtual Delivery Timetable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8.50-9.40	9.40 - 10.30	10.30- 11.20	11.35- 12.25	12.25- 1.15	2.00-2.50	2.50-3.40
MON				H	H	Nat 5	AH/FA
TUE		AH/FA		Nat 5	Nat 5		
WED	Nat 5			H	AH/FA		
THU	H			AH/FA	AH/FA		
FRI		H	Nat 5				

Where a course is shown as “virtual” for the delivery model, teaching will be on either Google Classrooms or UHI Brightspace.

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Developing practice

Wider policy developments

Given the complexity of the education system, a range of interdependencies currently exist and may be further affected by wider education reform. [OECD recommendations](#), [the Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape](#) and the [Hayward Review of Qualifications & Assessment](#) have potentially significant implications for curriculum architecture and timetabling.

There will also be significant implications from plans to reduce teacher contact time. As part of consideration of the impact of this, schools and local authorities have identified enhanced partnership working as a possible solution to the challenge of additional non-contact time.

These wider policy developments provide a further impetus for schools to review and evaluate approaches to integrating vocational and work-based opportunities into the senior phase. This also highlighted the need for further professional learning and support for timetabling and curriculum design.

Reframing the nature of senior phase

If the aspirations of DYW and The Learner Journey are to be realised then this may necessitate a reframing of the nature of the senior phase itself. Some schools have already embarked on this and moved away from a perception of the senior phase as a predominantly school based option, to one where learning can take place in school, at college, in the workplace, at university or online.

This approach appears to have had a significant impact on perceptions of the value of vocational qualifications, awards and experiences and enhanced the parity of work-based learning opportunities in relation to academic awards. Where this is both communicated explicitly to parents/carers and learners, and supported by appropriate course choice processes, this can have a significant impact on uptake for these options. For instance, some schools do not distinguish between settings for different awards on their pupil choice forms and/or make use of the SCQF framework to label/categorise all offers.

Flexible school day

Some schools are adopting a flexible school day approach to support the full integration of work based learning opportunities. This can involve learners attending college across two afternoons for longer than the traditional school day. By timetabling the remaining period(s) in this column at the start of an alternative day, pupils can start school later to compensate for their extended hours at college.

Overall learning time remains consistent with others following entirely school based programmes, with no impact on other certificated courses. This has the added advantage of additional time for

learners with the relevant vocational specialists. Where this slot is used for work placement, this also may be more suitable as employers appear to prefer extended blocks of time for placements. This can also support a perception of parity of esteem as these courses are allocated the same overall time as other school based /courses.

Working across geographical boundaries

Some schools, colleges and other providers are currently working across geographical boundaries. This can offer a number of advantages. For instance, it may be that a college provider in a neighbouring local authority area is nearer than the 'home' college. As a result it may be more practical for pupils to attend this college campus and align their columns with this institution due to shortened travel time etc. Existing arrangements or territorial aspects should be secondary to meeting the needs of learners.

There may be scope for neighbouring schools to also work across local authority boundaries. This could involve schools acting as hubs for in school provision such as Foundation Apprenticeships. This could also extend to schools developing particular specialisms in specific areas that could also support greater efficiencies in the allocation of resources.

Supporting collaborative timetabling

Some Local Authorities, though not all, support collaborative timetabling by physically bringing together timetablers from across their areas. This can enhance communication, planning and sharing of challenges and solutions. It can also support proactive consortia arrangements. During group discussions it was felt that Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC) could further facilitate this.

Introducing a four day teaching week

In response to exploratory work linked to potential contact time changes, a number of participants raised the concept of a four day teaching week. This is an approach being considered in some other education systems. This notion builds on, and further develops, existing practice, for instance where schools already have a four long day/ one short day model or arrangements such as North Lanarkshire's 'Future Friday' programme. This idea may offer solutions to both the challenges of integrating work based experiences and also of implementing a possible reduction in contact time. This may also provide more coherent time for professional learning and collegiate planning and moderation activities.

Summary

Timetabling approaches will differ based on the contexts of schools.

Parity can be promoted by equitable treatment in course choice processes and procedures.

Communication and data sharing are essential features of effective partnerships between schools and external providers.

Effective planning considers strategic and operational aspects and should be co-constructed and evaluated based on shared understandings with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Parity can be promoted by the alignment of timelines for external provision with school timetables. This may require co-ordination across schools.

Collaboration should be promoted at both local authority and school levels to support innovation and empowerment.

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