School-College Partnerships

Colleges recognise the importance of supporting young people into positive destinations. We believe that it is vital that young people are given the opportunity to build their skills, abilities and play an active part in the labour market. Studying at college enables young people to gain skills, confidence, qualifications and access to vocational pathways that will help them become independent contributors to their community and to the Scottish economy.

Colleges are now focusing 70% of their provision on young people and continue to work pro-actively in partnership with schools, local authorities and universities to provide the best opportunities for young school leavers.

School-College partnerships introduce credible vocational experience to complement academic studies, whilst providing expertise which encourages and promotes the value and career opportunities that vocational education offers.

We embrace the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce, which establishes a series of positive and innovative recommendations to bridge the gap between young people’s education and their employment opportunities though improved vocational and technical learning opportunities.
Keyfacts

Every 16-19 year old is now guaranteed a place in education or training if they want one.

- Over 21,000 school pupils are involved in school-college partnerships.
- 78% of college leavers are under the age of 16.
- 11% of college learners are not in work or education.
- 53,000 young people are not in work or education.
- 1.9 million hours of learning are delivered to learners under the age of 16.
- 28% of school leavers go into further education.
- 50% of pupils don’t follow an academic pathway.

78% of Scottish employers recruiting college leavers found them prepared for work.
Preparing Young People

School-College partnerships provide credible vocational experience to complement academic studies. They are also vital to helping young people develop skills that are crucial to Scotland’s economy while exposing them to the more independent and self-reliant environment of college education.

One of the key benefits of this is pupils are able to access not just the resources but also the expertise and methodologies which engages, promotes and supports vocational parity whilst gaining recognised qualifications.

To raise aspirations, professionals working with young people need to be knowledgeable about the pathways and choices that the college sector has to offer. Employers also have a key role to play to help young people understand and value vocational routes to success.

As such, we fully support the call within the Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce report for enhanced careers guidance from professionals in schools and colleges that demonstrates a real understanding of vocational pathways towards work.
Enhancing Pathways

Colleges offer a highly successful post-school destination. Around 28% of Scottish school leavers each year move on to a further education course at college as their first destination. However, more can be done to simplify the pathways into vocational training and towards employment delivered to young people in school and those available post-school.

Vocational pathways should be an integral feature of the development and delivery of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence providing an ambitious agenda of choice and opportunity. This work should be informed by local, regional and national economic demands, with significant input from employers, ensuring there is a coherent pathway from school through college and into meaningful employment.

Combined with a national funding framework for School-College partnership provision and services, adjusted for regional and local needs, we believe partnerships could be significantly enhanced to deliver and develop knowledge and skills, which will allow young people to move seamlessly to college, university or industry, depending on their aspirations.
Connecting the Disconnected

Colleges already work in partnership with schools, local authorities and other agencies to provide highly effective ‘alternative curriculum’ provision for young people in schools at risk of disengaging and non-attenders. These include vocational taster experiences, programmes designed to develop core and personal skills and a variety of experiences that build relationships with disengaged young people and begin to bring the college environment, and learning itself, within their comfort zone.

For example, Perth College UHI has developed Youth Unlimited, a transitional support programme, which aims to make positive connections with training, education and work for young people who have dropped out of education.

Programmes such as this often have high levels of successful progression into ‘mainstream’ vocational education and training. To continue to support these opportunities, it is critical that vocational pathways, particularly those made available to young people of a school age, remain flexible enough to meet individual and employer needs.
Key Messages

Better prepare school leavers for the world of work

Investment in colleges must be enhanced to ensure the economy has a skilled, experienced workforce which can compete in local, regional, national and global economies.

Place vocational learning on a par with academic learning

Scotland’s skilled workforce requires a mix of vocational and academic education and the value of vocational skills and practical expertise must be recognised. This extends well beyond the field of education to public life and workplace cultures. Colleges are often seen as a second choice, despite college pathways leading to careers in some of the most highly paid and highly regarded careers available.

Enhancing pathways towards education and employment

Colleges play a vital role in providing meaningful vocational education to young people at school. Applied consistently, this enables young people to experience employment alongside their academic studies, exposing them to more post-school choices, and can set them off on a pathway to rewarding employment.
Increased interaction between schools and colleges

Pooling resources and expertise between schools and colleges has to continue to maximise what can be offered to young people. Having effective relationships and partners in place is essential to ensure that resources are deployed effectively and the provision offered is complementary.

Better alignment to key national sectors

School-College partnerships should continue to be aligned towards providing the long-term skills requirements for economic growth areas as identified in the Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce report. This should include more opportunities for work placements and encouraging increased partnerships across a wider range of sectors.

Connecting the disconnected

To continue to support those at risk of disengaging and/or non-attending, it is critical that vocational pathways remain flexible enough in terms of entry points, pace of progression and mode of delivery, to meet their individual needs.
Dumfries & Galloway College has established a strong partnership with schools within the region and through funding from the Scottish Funding Council is piloting a project to provide advanced vocational qualifications that pupils can undertake alongside their academic programmes of study.

The college is offering Higher National Certificates (HNCs) to pupils across five high schools in Social Sciences; Early Education and Childcare; Electrical Engineering; Fitness, Health and Exercise, delivered through a blended learning model. Once the pilot has been completed and evaluated, it is planned to roll this offer out to all secondary schools in the region.

Over time the college plans to extend the range of provision and make this available to all schools in Dumfries and Galloway, and potentially to other regions. Longer term the project has the potential to shorten the learner journey by leading to direct entry to year two of a degree course.

The innovative flexible delivery model improves efficiency by using the shared existing resources of school and college and offers a sustainable, flexible model which expands choice for the individual and gives them more responsibility for learning in line with the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.
West College Scotland is offering senior pupils at a Clydebank school the chance to gain an HNC in Engineering while still at school.

In an innovative new scheme – the first of its type in the west of Scotland – the college is partnering St Peter the Apostle High School. Fourteen S6 pupils split their time between school and college, with the teenagers being bussed from Clydebank to West College Scotland’s Paisley campus two days a week.

If successful, the college will guarantee them a place on its HND course for session 2015/16, before offering progression to a third year degree course at university, the college having established articulation agreements with a range of universities.

It means that, within just two years of leaving school, these students could have earned a degree.

This particular HNC is specific to the kind of advanced manufacturing work that Scotland is renowned for and wants to build on. The scheme will provide academic and employment opportunities but also vital skills for life, learning and work.
Streamlining Senior Phase Curriculum for Excellence

Forming a partnership with a number of local authorities (Glasgow City, East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire Councils) and a host of Glasgow secondary schools, Glasgow Kelvin College established a Senior Phase Strategy for S5 and S6 pupils, which saw the college develop an innovative programme that provides employability and vocational skills to the SQA Skills for Work qualifications in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

Extensive liaison with partners achieved a harmonisation of timetables to accommodate the invaluable Skills for Work element of students’ learning experience. This has enabled the college to deliver market relevant skills in a range of sectors.

This successful programme of school links is innovative and stimulating for the learners. It provides school pupils with practical experience of workplace-based skills, helping them manage their expectations and equipping them for future employment.

Many students have progressed to further and higher education, whilst others can approach employment with qualifications and confidence.

The college is already developing further the employer input to the programmes in order that these young learners have an increasingly realistic approach to progression and a greater opportunity to experience the world of work first-hand.
Computing and Engineering Systems

An innovative partnership between West Lothian Council, West Lothian schools and West Lothian College is helping to improve opportunities for young people.

Last year, two groups of S5 pupils from across West Lothian commenced study for Higher National Certificates (HNC) in Computing and Engineering Systems at West Lothian College, two afternoons per week for two years, as part of their school curriculum.

This unique partnership will see local pupils attain a level of qualification which very few young people across the country will have achieved by their school leaving date.

Computing and Engineering Systems courses were chosen due to demand for skilled workers in these areas, with an HNC qualification both attractive to employers and a clear pathway on to higher education, such as degree courses. A wider variety of HNC courses will be made available in the future for school pupils.
School Online Highers Programme

Inverness College UHI works in close partnership with Highland Council and local secondary schools in the region to offer a range of Highers for school pupils to study online as part of their curriculum. The Highers offered are in subjects that are often not available in local schools and therefore help to extend the range of subjects that pupils can choose in their senior phase. As well as enabling access to these subjects, the mode of delivery also supports pupils to develop independent learning skills, which help transition into higher level study.

Each year, the suite of subjects on offer is decided through consultation with the council and this year the college offered Highers in Psychology, Sociology, Media, Childcare & Development and Human Biology.

Each course is delivered online through the college’s virtual learning environment with ongoing support from college lecturing staff and school mentors. Pupils are expected to dedicate six hours of study per week to each course, including reading course materials, undertaking online exercises and posting responses to exercises on the discussion board. Students are also required to attend regular Saturday workshops for group work, tutorials and assessments.

Since the online Highers programme started five years ago the numbers of pupils participating has more than doubled. In session 2013/14, 127 pupils were enrolled. Of the 85 pupils that sat the exam, 23% achieved A grades, 17% B grades and 28% C grades. These results are comparable with those achieved in Highers delivered at school.
Established in 2013 in partnership with Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh and Borders Colleges and four local authorities (City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and Scottish Borders), this pioneering model is designed to inspire young people, widen their industry participation and support the development of one of Scotland’s growth industries.

The Academy runs for two years and provides a unique learning environment for S5 and S6 pupils within partner local authorities. Pupils, who are enrolled as association students in QMU and one of the partner colleges, attend weekly classes at these institutions so that they gain experience of these different learning environments while still in school.

In addition to studying in school, the pupils are furthering their qualifications by studying for the practical-based National Progression Award in Laboratory Science in year one and the HNC in Applied Sciences in year two through the partner colleges and university.

The pupils are also involved in awareness raising sessions on the wide range and diverse nature of the food and drink industry, its economic importance to Scotland and the career opportunities which exist within the industry for suitably qualified scientists through interaction with industry professionals and visits to workplaces.
School-College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) Programme

An innovative programme is proving successful in encouraging high school pupils to consider applying to college.

The one year School-College Opportunities to Succeed (SCOTS) Programme is primarily aimed at fourth year pupils and was piloted in session 2013/14. It was developed by Forth Valley College and Falkirk Council to give pupils a taster of different subject areas and introduce them to the college environment. Pupils on the programme attend college one afternoon per week and experience eight different subjects including construction; hair and beauty; engineering; business administration and tourism; care; fitness, health and exercise; creative industries; and science. They also work towards the Falkirk Employability Award throughout the course.

Within their schools, the young people involved also work with teachers to improve their skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. They also develop employability skills such as researching for jobs, creating a CV, preparing for interviews and also learning more about the ‘taster’ subjects they were undertaking within Forth Valley College.

The initial pilot was a huge hit with 106 pupils successfully completing the programme and 84 subsequently applying to a college course. 118 pupils from the Falkirk Council area have already signed up for session 2014/15 and the programme has now been launched with Stirling Council.
Through funding from the Scottish Funding Council, and in partnership with Abertay University, Dundee & Angus College has embarked on the Dundee Academy of Sport.

The project has three main aims: to use sport as a vehicle for engaging young people in education at school, to further develop the region’s workforce in the sport industry and to establish more seamless articulation between the two institutions resulting in a single provider of sport education in Tayside which will become known as the Dundee Academy of Sport.

The Academy’s work in schools uses sport as a context for learning across the curriculum engaging students in education by exploiting links between sport and a wide range of academic subjects, from maths to history and nutrition to literature.

Its goal is a pathway for learning that allows for seamless transition from school to college, college to university with lifelong learning opportunities for all available throughout the pathway.

The first year of operation has seen activity in 20 primary schools and four secondary schools in the city.

- 200 attendees at 14 CPD events
- 300 attendees for summer camps
- Increased numbers of Higher National students articulating to degree programmes.

The overall target is to raise the numbers of articulating students to 100 from a baseline of 22 within three years.
Every year, North East Scotland College runs a ‘Skills for Work – Energy’ course as part of an initiative to encourage female school pupils aged between 14 and 17 to consider Engineering as a potential career path.

The all-female energy course is sponsored by a number of industry partners including ACE Winches, Score Europe, Shell UK and Schlumberger. This year the participating Academies include: Banff; Ellon; Hazelhead; The Gordon Schools – Huntly; Meldrum; Mintlaw; Peterhead and Turriff.

The course is designed to build skills around science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and to open young women’s eyes to the energy industry’s wealth of career options. Many of the pupils who have previously taken part in the scheme have gone on to study Highers in STEM related subjects and/or have successful careers within the engineering sector.

Jennifer Conlan, fifth year pupil at Mintlaw Academy said: ‘I really enjoyed getting to pilot an ROV at Subsea 7 – I really like the technical stuff.

And my favourite part about being an ‘energy girl’ was probably the work placement I got to do at Shell in Tullos, Aberdeen. There were four of us there for two weeks last summer. We also got to talk to loads of people from different departments, including drilling and subsea.

I’ve applied to the Shell Engineering Scheme at North East Scotland College. I definitely want to work in oil and gas. I never realised how many jobs there were in the industry.

Before I started the scheme I wanted to be a vet, but being part of this and going on placement really changed my mind’.
Offering Unique Solutions for the Young Workforce

Colleges:

• Prepare young people for work
• Start and build careers
• Support young people into positive destinations
• Offer credible vocational experience to complement academic study
• Support young people to achieve a higher education
• Directly partner with employers to meet their needs
• Deliver skills at every level for every community
• Deliver strong economic returns across the country.