

Dear Parent/Carer and Foundation Apprentice

A Foundation Apprenticeship with Aberdeenshire Council – September Update

We hope you and those you care for are well.

You may remember that we wrote to you in June outlining details of the Foundation Apprenticeship qualification and how it would operate during lockdown. With the start of the new session, we wanted to give you an update about this and how it will be structured from now on.

A reminder that there are two parts to the qualification:

(1) School Based/Theory Element of Course (NPA)

National Progression Award (NPA) or National Certificate (NC) in the case of Engineering. This is being delivered in school by the relevant teacher or by one of Aberdeenshire Council's delivery partners (ie Shmu, Tullos, Quest etc). These providers issued information to you about their company and planned delivery last term. If you did not receive this, please email margaret.khan@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to let us know. These companies will generally also be providing the SVQ assessment element of the course.

Contingency Plans: If a further lockdown or closure was needed, delivery would move online. There are not final exams in this qualification, instead it uses continual assessment. Therefore there are no concerns or issues around completion whether under in-school, blended or on-line/home delivery.

(2) Work-Based Learning Element of Course (SVQ)

Students have already begun work towards the completion of this. From now on they will complete a blend of the following:

August – Late September/Early October: online tasks set by the SVQ assessor.

October-March: blocks of time split between:

- Online engagement with an employer
- External placement wherever possible
- Simulated workplace & Workplace Training

The exact nature and order of these will vary between frameworks and individuals and also on-going Covid guidance . We will be in touch with more details about this shortly.

We appreciate you may have further questions and we have created FAQs below.

1. Q - What do I do during the time allocated to work placement at the moment?

A – If you are studying any of the following frameworks, you will be aware that your SVQ time is already taken up with a simulated workplace run by your FA provider.

Accountancy (Mackie and Portlethen Academies) NPA or AAT tasks set by your Accounts' teacher.

Creative and Digital Media (Banff and Westhill Academies) simulation with SHMU.
Engineering (Portlethen and Westhill Academies) simulation with Tullos Training.
IT Software (Ellon and Portlethen Academies) simulation with SHMU.
IT Hardware (Aboyne Academy) simulation with Dundee and Angus College.

For all of the above, any questions about your SVQ activity should be directed to your NPA tutor. Our aim is that at some point in the year, wherever possible, you will have a period at an external placement as well. Further details of this will be given by your provider as we move through the session. **Please note that of the FAQs below, the only ones relevant to your frameworks are numbers 4, 5, 7-10 and 14.**

For all other frameworks (Children and Young People, Health and Social Care, Business Skills, Food and Drink Manufacture, Scientific Technologies), you are working online on the background knowledge which is part of the SVQ. This would normally be part of the delivery throughout the year, but given the restrictions as a result of Covid we will start with this so you do not have to do them later and more time can be allocated to the workplace then. You therefore need to complete the online tasks set you by the SVQ assessor or employer (if already arranged).

If you do not understand the tasks or are unsure of what they are at the moment, please contact your SVQ assessor directly to find out. If you are unsure of who to contact, please email Donna.Ross@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

2. Q - Where do I complete these online tasks?

A - Your school will discuss the best solution with you. It may be within school; it may be at home if appropriate.

3. Q – How will I be notified about who my online employer is, or about my placement?

A – Fraser.Mitchell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or Shona.Watts@aberdeenshire.gov.uk from the Council's Work Placement Unit will be in touch with you about what you are doing and who your employer link is.

4. Q - How do I know that I will get enough access to work placements or tasks to pass the qualification?

A – The FA qualification is secure and you can be reassured that you will gain the qualification if you carry out the appropriate tasks as directed by your tutors during the year. Tweaks have been made nationally to the qualification to ensure that whether you are working within a placement setting, entirely online, or a combination of both, you will still be able to pass.

5. Q - Are there Risk Assessments in place for the work placements?

A – Yes. These are currently being finalised by the Work Placement Unit.

If you are studying either the FA in Children and Young People or Health and Social Care, we are liaising further with both Early Years' settings and Adult Care or Health settings to ensure our Risk Assessments match expectations there.

6. Q - I have found my own placement. When can I start?

A – Once the Risk Assessment is complete, and a Health and Safety visit, if necessary, has been carried out, you will be able to start. We are working to make this as soon as possible. Until then you will be working on the online tasks mentioned previously.

7. Q - Will I still be able to complete the FA within one year?

A - If it is a one-year course (that is everything except Engineering), then yes, if you complete all the work set.

8. Q – How will the SVQ assessor know how well I am performing?

A – You should now know how to communicate with your SVQ assessor. Your performance is assessed through a variety of means. At the moment it is mainly by returning work to them online. As you move into online work with an employer, your assessor will observe your communications with employers via online methods (being part of the Teams’ Meeting etc). When you are in placement, they will visit you there, observe your work and speak to your employer.

9. Q - What should I do if I am finding the work difficult?

A - It is important that you communicate with your teachers and assessors. If you have difficulty completing tasks, please ask for help from your teacher, assessor or DHT as relevant. They can support you by breaking down tasks into manageable chunks of work.

10. Q - Do I have to complete a specific number of hours on my work placement?

A – Under the current circumstances, it is more accurate to see your SVQ element as depending upon completing tasks set rather than ‘hours’ in a certain workplace. Complete all work set and communicate regularly with your SVQ assessor. This will ensure you know what you have achieved and what still needs doing.

11. Q – Will I definitely get an external placement?

A – As you know, given the Covid-19 emergency, it is impossible to be certain how society will operate over the next few months. What you can be certain of is that you will experience work tasks which will enable you to complete the qualification. At the moment, placements are opening up increasingly week by week. In terms of allocating these we are operating by certain principles as outlined below:

- As many FAs as possible will get access to an external placement if they wish one.
- We will aim to maximise access to them by having shorter periods there so another FA can also have access for some of the year.
- We will create simulated work environments where possible to cover gaps created by reduced access to companies.

12. Q – How many different placements will I have?

A – This will vary depending upon your framework and location. You are likely to have experience of online work with an employer, some time at a placement and possibly some time at a simulation as well depending upon the framework. The arrangements

will be discussed with you in good time to ensure you are clear and comfortable about what you will be doing.

13. Q - Can I still find my own placement?

A – Yes. We would not advise contacting employers directly but if you have an existing link to a company or organisation and they can assist with an appropriate placement then please contact Fraser.Mitchell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or Shona.Watts@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

14. Q – There are particular concerns in my situation which need to be taken into consideration about any placement. What do I do?

A – If there are any aspects about your placement which you would like to discuss further then please contact Fraser.Mitchell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or Shona.Watts@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

We hope you found the answers to your questions above. Further communication specific to each framework will be sent over the next week or two. If there is something urgent in the meantime, please email Fraser.Mitchell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

We look forward to working together with you and your family to ensure you pass the qualification and develop the work skills which will ensure success in your future life.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Ritchie

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