

Vocational Learning within the Forestry Sector



Forestry Commission

Introduction

The introduction of the curriculum for excellence introduces many learning and teaching opportunities for vocational learning and local business engagement with schools to enhance the learning experience for the pupils involved.

In 2007 the Scottish Qualifications Authority introduced a range of qualifications called Skills for Work one of which was Rural Skills (Intermediate 1), this further supported the Scottish Progression Award in Rural Skills (Intermediate 2) currently under revision, becoming a National Progression Award in 2009 (April) both qualifications can be offered in the context of Forestry and the following Case Studies look at how through School Partnerships these have been successfully developed and offered best practise examples of Rural Skills.

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The Qualifications

Skills for Work Rural Skills Int 1

Skills for Work Courses are different from other vocational provision because they focus on generic employability skills needed for success in the workplace. The courses offer opportunities for learners to acquire these critical generic employability skills through a variety of practical experiences that are linked to a particular vocational area such as rural skills.

The Specific aims of the course

- Introduce candidates to the various disciplines of the land-based sector
- Allow candidates to develop a basic knowledge of a selection of land-based industries and related job roles
- Allow candidates to experience an outdoor working environment
- Allow candidates to develop an understanding of the very flexible requirements of the individual who works with plants and/or animals
- Allow candidates to develop an awareness of H&S issues that are integral to a career in the land based industry
- Allow candidates to develop the technical knowledge, skills and understanding of some of the commonly used practical skills associated with land based industries at this level
- Introduce candidates to the technical knowledge, skills and understanding of some specific practical skills associated with a selection of land based industries at this level
- Prepare candidates for more focussed further learning opportunities, study and training for employment in land based industries

The Skill for Work framework is a 4 credit qualification: 2.5 credit Mandatory Units (Estate Maintenance, Land Based Industries and Employability Skills) with 2 Optional Strands (animal or crops) making up the additional 1.5 credit. The course is designed to be an introduction to the land based sector.

Mandatory Units

Estate Maintenance: An Introduction (Int 1, SCQF level 4)

Outcomes

1. Use tools and equipment commonly used in estate maintenance
2. Carry out a range of estate maintenance tasks

Land Based Industries: An Introduction (Int 1, SCQF level 4)

1. Contribute to a group investigation into the nature of a range of Land-based industries
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a selection of jobs available in a range of land-based industries

Employability Skills for Land-based Industries (Int 1, SCQF level 4)

1. Demonstrate work practices which enhance employability in land-based industries
2. Review and evaluate own skills developed in practical contexts.
3. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the requirements for a safe working environment in a land-based industry

Optional Units allowing Forestry input

Crop Production: An introduction (Int 1, SCQF level 4) (forestry tree nurseries)

1. Assist with preparing the site/growing medium and establishing a selected crop
2. Assist with maintaining healthy growth of a selected crop
3. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding in relation to selecting, establishing and maintaining a selected crop

Soft Landscaping: An Introduction (Int 1, SCQF level 4) (Tree (woodland, amenity) planting)

1. Assist with the establishment of a soft landscaped area
2. Assist with the maintenance of soft landscaped areas

National Progression Award Rural Skills Int 2 draft validation late March 09

The NPA Rural Skills framework will be a 3 credit qualification: 1 credit Mandatory Unit (Rural Business Investigation) with 8 Optional Strands (Specialist Legs each containing 2 units each worth 1 credit. The NPA award will prove attractive as a 1 year Course to both schools and colleges, allowing both direct entry and progression from the Skills for Work course. These specialist legs are Game keeping, Horticulture, Animal Care, Agriculture, Estate Skills, Equine, Fisheries Operations & **Forestry**.

The Forestry units and learning outcomes are detailed below: (3 credits)

Rural Business Investigation (SCQF Level 5)

OUTCOMES

- 1 Investigate the nature of a local rural business enterprise
- 2 Describe and explain the job roles within the rural business enterprise
- 3 Describe the main sustainable features of the local rural business
- 4 Investigate an alternative enterprise which the rural business could diversify into

Production & Care of Young Trees (SCQF Level 5)

OUTCOMES

- 1 Propagate woodland and forest trees
- 2 Conduct tree on-growing and planting out operations
- 3 Conduct establishment, care and maintenance operations on young trees

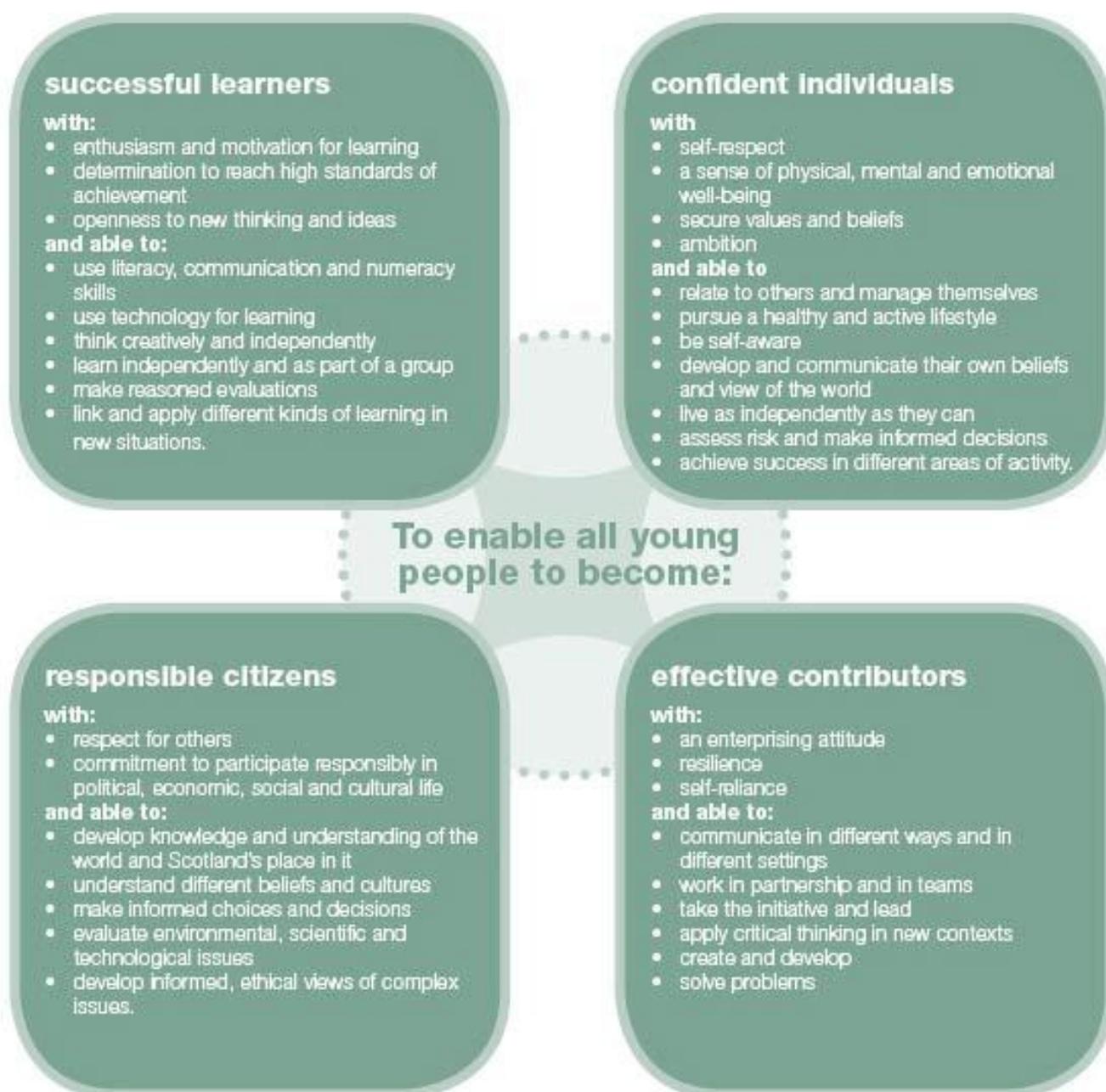
Forests & Woodlands: An Introduction (SCQF Level 5)

OUTCOMES

- 1 Identify common and commercially significant trees
- 2 Investigate commercial forest and woodland operations
- 3 Investigate leisure and conservation-based forest and woodland activities

Curriculum for Excellence

All Scottish secondary schools are now engaging in a curriculum for excellent the 4 capacities set out are detailed below. Both Skills for Work and the National Progression Award help pupils and school fulfil all capacities.



More information can be found on the Learning and Teaching Scotland Website
www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/index.asp

Community Partnership – Ardnamurchan High School, Lorne & Lochaber FD & Sunart Oakwoods

The partnership between Lorne & Lochaber Forest Districts (FCS) and Ardnamurchan High School through the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative has not only created an excellent learning partnership for Skills for Work Rural Skills, it has also created a learning facility for the wider community and extending both the secondary and primary vocational and enterprise learning opportunities through the curriculum for excellence.



After being approached by Ardnamurchan High School to support the school in the deliver of Rural Skills the Forest District (FD) identified a community project that they had already been approached to support. The community forester saw a clear way that the FD could support the projects whilst given added value to both projects.

With this in mind the Forest District (FD) has undertaken to create a small tree nursery on community land within the village of Strontian. Once established, this will provide an ongoing learning facility for schools as well as a community resource. The pupils have cleared the site, becoming familiar with the tools and various tasks required in putting up a fence. They will also landscape the site, putting in access paths, drainage requirements before planting trees.

Advantages:

- Raises awareness in the community, as the work is very visible.
- Increased respect from youths of the community.
- The location and size of the site makes it easily accessible for schools to use.
- Develops an ongoing learning site.
- Increases pupil's knowledge of local work & employment.

Disadvantages

- Partnership Complex due to 3 way community involvement (FCS, High School and Sunart Oakwoods)
- Risk Assessments complex due to community ground.

The community forester, David Robertson identifies the *'have a go attitude'* from the pupils, forestry staff and school as the most important part of making the vocational curriculum work.

'Pupils learn the practical skills very quickly by doing the job and not just observing'

More information on this project can be obtained from

David Robertson, Lorne Forest District, Morvern

david.j.robertson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk & www.sunartoakwoods.org.uk



Dornoch Forest District – Supporting Forest District Secondary Schools



Since 2007 Dornoch Forest District (FCS) has provided support to Skills for Work in 5 secondary schools all within the FD catchment area.

The majority of support is provided by forest crafts people, the Foreman and rangers all overseen by the district forester with responsibility for education.

The pupils work to carry out real and relevant jobs in small group's of 2-3 pupils. They work alongside the forest crafts staff to carry out real jobs that need to

be achieved by the FD.

Through the crop production unit pupils have worked on a planted ancient woodland site (PAWS) of overstood copse and are helping to restore the riparian woodland. The area also has considerable biodiversity interest being host to hoverflies and lichen, as well as being in close to the Falls of Shin Visitor Centre. Tasks undertaken include like clearing deadwood, and restoring low canopy, layering hazel and birch to generate new growth and clearing bracken to mention a few. The short turnover of the copse crop makes it ideal for schools projects. The 2 year course allows the pupils to see an area develop from new growth to harvesting as the site is established and worked in rotation.

The Soft Landscaping unit has allows the pupils to work on recreation areas including planning and planting of forestry car parks. The landscaping work has involved selection of trees, thinning, designing and installing interpretation boards as well as the ongoing maintenance of such sites. Pupils have taken part in planting activities, path maintenance, fence construction, insulation of water bars, and the use of wood chip/mulch for weed control.

The key to Skills for Work is really the real practical learning experience and the introduction to the world of work. Many tasks that are routinely carried out by Forestry Commission staff fulfil the learning outcomes and in doing these tasks it exposes the pupils to the real world of work and a true insight into the Land based sector.

Through Highland Council the Forestry Commission staff have all had the opportunity to work through Instructional Techniques training giving them a 'Lantra Award Certificate in Instruction' that is recognised for their own Continuing Professional Development.

More information on this project can be obtained from
Neil McInnes, Dornoch Forest District –
neil.mcinnnes@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Abriachan Forest Trust – Learning Facilities



Abriachan Forest Trust in 2005, alongside Glen Urquhart High School, established an ongoing and successful partnership to pilot the Scottish Progression Award in Rural Skills. This is complemented by links with Forestry Commission district staff, a local drystone dyker and relevant visits to larger-scale harvesting sites, tree nurseries, bio-diverse deciduous woodlands, saw and OSB mills enhance the learning opportunity for the pupils. The community managed forest is situated approximately 7 miles from Drumnadrochit. Pupils are timetabled for half a day per week and travel to Abriachan to take part in a range of activities which meet SPA learning outcomes and fit into the ongoing work and requirements of the Abriachan Forest Trust. It has been essential that a record of images is kept throughout the course. The

pupils can then use these when back in school to illustrate their personal logs, presentations and potentially provide a resource for the next year group to use.

Most of these tasks will ensure the participants can also achieve learning outcomes in the new NPA forestry units.

Forests and woodlands:

- LO1: Tree Identification – 16 locally relevant species.
- LO2: Working Forest - Beat up areas planted by previous RS classes. Utilise peer demonstration - share stewardship. Gather / use information from local forest development plans
- LO3: Forest as Amenity - Brush, open canopy to encourage flora/fauna, why leave standing wood, bio-piles...? Monitor/share results. Impact of operations and access for all? Mountain biking-trail trails-Interview relevant personnel.



Production and care of young trees:

- LO1: Collection of seeds, breaking dormancy, investigation into planting requirements, successful germination and striking cuttings, maintenance of seedlings and young trees.
- LO2: Tree planting – container grown and bare root .
- LO3: Protection of trees against weather, soil related setbacks, pests and adverse local conditions. So tube, spiral guard, stake, screef, weed, feed, try deer tufts..... every tree tells a story.



... and also achieve aspects of the core skills of communication, problem solving and working with others in a safe and healthy environment.



Abriachan Forest Trust also supports Charleston Academy and, on occasion, Inverness High School in their Skills for Work Rural Skills Courses.

More information on this project can be obtained from Suzann Barr
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