



Skills for Scotland

Industry-led and people-focused

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The case for change

Global pressures: crisis and shock

From Covid-19 to Brexit, and the war in Ukraine, our economy has undergone huge shocks in recent years. Inflation, labour shortages, and disruptions in global supply chains have affected governments across the world.

While the pace of these changes could not have been predicted, challenges existed before the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. The need to tackle climate change, rapid technological advancements, and demographic challenges will continue to be features of Scotland's economy.

These pressures, alongside relative global population decline mean that labour is a precious commodity and must be treated as such. Technology and investment can help improve productivity, but our people are our most important asset. For too many, including disabled people, women, and BAME communities, the labour market simply perpetuates inequalities. We must do more to ensure that everyone can reach their potential, feel empowered and is equipped to contribute to the economy, society, and their community.

Scotland: demographic change and government inertia

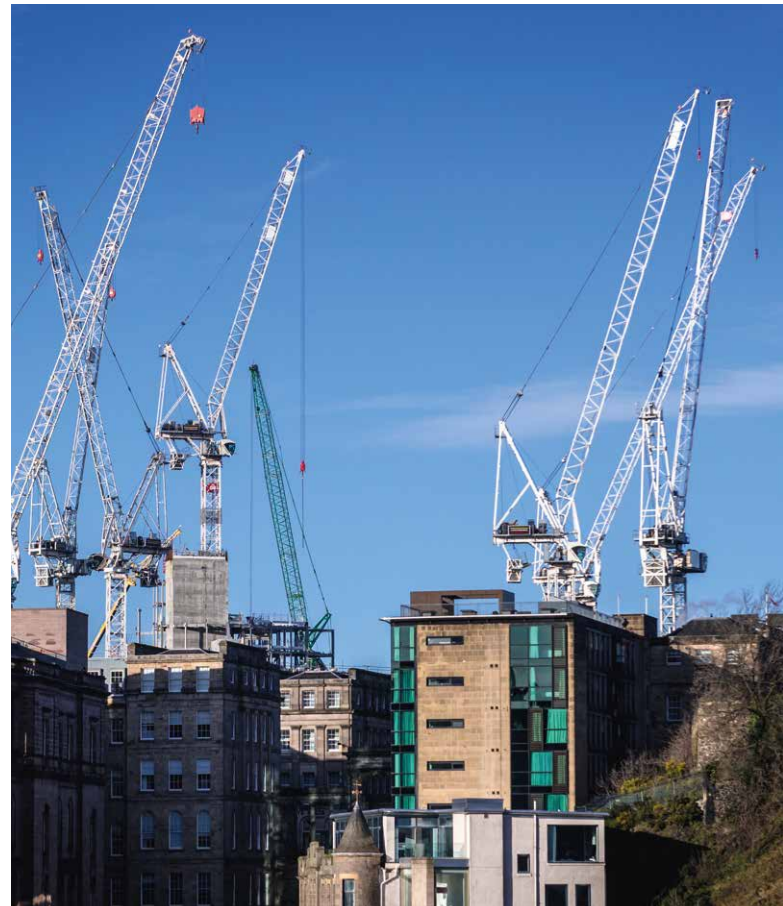
The 2024 Open University Business Barometer Report stated that 56% of Scottish businesses are experiencing skills shortages. Of these, 77% said that these shortages increased the workload on other staff. 49% reported reduced output, profitability, or growth because of skills shortages.¹ Indeed, Audit Scotland's report on Scottish Government infrastructure spending highlighted skills shortages as a factor in delayed projects and rising costs.²

The SNP's failure to grow Scotland's economy has implications for living standards and the incomes of working people across Scotland, as well as for the funding of our public services. The Scottish Fiscal Commission estimates that slower Scottish economic growth will result in £839 million less in income tax receipts in 2025–26.³

Our demographic challenge is also acute. The number of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase by around a third of a million people over the 25 years to mid-2047, while the population growth is entirely driven by inward migration (of which Scotland has much less than other parts of the UK).⁴

As Scotland continues to change, the need for reskilling and upskilling both in-role and to change careers will only increase. We must build a skills system that is agile and responsive to new technology and the changing needs of Scotland's economy.

The opportunity is clear: get the skills system right and we can spread opportunity for all, making Scotland a world leader in the new green economy and in technological innovation, and creating well paid jobs across the country. Continuing with the status quo will mean further gaps in key areas of the workforce, including in the public sector, low growth, low productivity, and risking emulating the worst aspects of 1980s deindustrialisation.



1 <https://business.open.ac.uk/business-barometer-2024>
 2 https://audit.scot/uploads/docs/report/2023/briefing_230928_scotlands_infrastructure.pdf
 3 <https://fiscalcommission.scot/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Scotlands-Economic-And-Fiscal-Forecasts-December-2024.pdf>
 4 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/projected-population-of-scotland-2022-based/#:~:text=Scotland's%20population%20is%20projected%20to%20age,by%2079%2C%90%20and%2057%2C300%20respectively.>



Scottish Labour's new approach

To invest in the skills of our people is the greatest investment we can make in our country and economy. Scottish Labour believes that a flexible and dynamic skills system that is responsive to the needs of modern Scotland, as well as changes in technology and the economy, will unlock the potential of people across the country and help to grow key sectors and industries. Throughout our consultation we have listened to business, learners, and institutions and have developed proposals that are:

- **Industry led:**
A skills system with industry at its heart, focused on the needs of the economy
- **Individually focused:**
Improving access to opportunities and better work through training and reskilling
- **Flexible and dynamic:**
Responsive to a rapidly changing world of work.

Building on these themes we have made proposals that touch every part of the skills system and the learner journey. We want to build an education and skills system that spans school, college, university, and beyond, and which trains people to be work ready, focused on spreading opportunity for all.

The apprenticeship model should be driven by the needs of business and the economy, while Scotland's lifelong learning offer should be focused on wage maximisation, career development, job satisfaction, and the skills Scotland needs.

By working across sectors, and with business to create a skills system that meets the needs of a modern, growing economy, tackles the climate emergency, and supports technological innovation, we can create a more prosperous future for people across Scotland. As the late Jimmy Reid said in his rectoral address of 1972:

"the untapped resources of the North Sea are nothing compared to the untapped resources of our people and the flowering of each individual's personality and talents is a precondition for everyone's development."





Get the skills system right and we can spread opportunity for all, making Scotland a world leader in the new green economy and in technological innovation, and creating well paid jobs across the country.

Industry led: A skills system with industry at its heart, focused on the needs of the economy

Our skills system is often too slow to adapt to the changing needs of employers and workers and not sufficiently focused on the needs of the real economy. The Scottish Government's Business Insights and Conditions Survey regularly reports that 50% of businesses in Scotland are struggling to recruit, with skills shortages more acute in certain sectors including construction and accommodation and food services.⁵ There is a clear sense from business that the system is not producing the skilled labour required, or in the places where it is needed.

Our approach is to embed industry input at every stage of the skills system. We must ensure the skills we teach reflect industry needs, both to maximise the needs of the individual and ensure a clear pipeline of workers in key industries.

Industrial strategy and business voice

Insight: The only part of the system that speaks for industry, the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) plays a vital role in ensuring employers' voices are reflected in the system. However, SAAB is being wound down after recommendations by James Withers with no clarity over what will replace it.

Across all sectors, employers are asking for more input into the design and delivery of the skills system to meet the demands of the economy. A truly demand led skills system would align workforce training with the needs of employers to address shortages, boost productivity, and drive wage growth.

Change: Scottish Labour will align skills policy with industrial strategy and will replace SAAB with an empowered industry board.

This new industry board will be made up of Apprenticeship Levy payers and SMEs and will have a direct role in advising on the design of apprenticeships and skills interventions. Long term skills and labour forecasts will be produced every three to five years, in partnership with this new industry board.

Case Study 1

Sectoral Workforce Partnerships United States

How it works:

- Employers collaborate with community colleges, industry groups, and workforce agencies to design training programs.
- Focuses on high-demand sectors like healthcare, technology, and manufacturing.
- Uses real-time labour market data to align skills training with employer needs.

Example: The Colorado Workforce Development Council partners with healthcare providers to fast-track nursing and medical technician training, addressing hospital staff shortages.

Key Features:

- ✓ Industry-led curriculum development
- ✓ Government and private funding support
- ✓ Rapid response to emerging skills shortages

Apprenticeship Levy

Insight: There is currently no information available in the public domain on Scotland's share of the Apprenticeship Levy. However, analysis of the UK and Scottish budgets suggests there is a gap between what the Scottish Government received through the Barnett Formula and what they spent on skills development in 2024/25. The Flexible Workforce Development Fund which previously enabled Levy payers and SMEs to access skills funding for upskilling, has also been scrapped.

Scottish Labour believes that the SNP's failure to prioritise and invest in skills is damaging young people's prospects and denying them a more prosperous and stable future. Beyond this, it is holding back our businesses, economy, wider workforce, public services, infrastructure, and transition to a greener economy.

Change: Scottish Labour will commit to spend all of Scotland's share of the Apprenticeship Levy funding on skills development.

Scottish Labour will ensure transparency on Levy funds received by the Scottish Government through the Block Grant and will dedicate these resources to skills programmes, including both apprenticeships and upskilling and reskilling interventions. Through our new industry board, Scottish Labour will ensure Scottish Levy payers have a clear mechanism to influence how this funding is spent and ensure they have access to the skills they need.



Inspiring young people

Insight: Evidence suggests that between the ages of six and eight, children have begun to form occupational aspirations and between nine and 14 they begin to dismiss potential roles based on gender, esteem, and perceived personal capabilities.

Too often children will have made decisions that limit their future opportunities because of a lack of quality information. For example, in construction-related Modern Apprenticeships 97% of all new starts were male.⁶

It is essential that a skills system begins to engage with children during this formative period and throughout their education journey. We need to ensure that schools are actively engaged with business and industry and there are clearly signposted pathways for children and young people to pursue vocational and technical education.

Change: Scottish Labour will establish a new Skills for School programme to join up schools and workplaces.

This will demonstrate the exciting range of possibilities that a job in industry can provide pupils of all backgrounds. Building on the good work already happening in many schools, including from the DYW Coordinators and programmes of study like Powering Futures, it will ensure there is a consistent approach, that industry links are not seen as just an added bonus, and that all schools have access to provision, addressing inequalities in the current system.

It will include:

- Classroom visits from role models, either in-person or via video calls
- Workshops or lessons that relate to the world of work
- Enterprise projects or industry-themed activities
- Pupil visits to workplaces where they can meet people doing their jobs.



⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/bics-weighted-scotland-estimates-data-to-wave-121/pages/recruitment/>
⁶ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/modern-apprenticeships>

Work experience and careers guidance

Insight: In his independent review, James Withers noted that, “there is an emphasis on careers services for those who are at risk of not pursuing education, rather than those who are already on that path”. He adds that, “whether real or not, the perception that careers services are for those outside or at risk of falling out of the labour market, rather than everyone who is trying to navigate it, is problematic and damaging.”⁷

This disconnect between school and the world of work for most pupils is exacerbated by an inequity in the provision of careers advice, while the nature of the relationship between SDS advisors and secondary schools is unclear. SDS note in their 2022/23 annual review that 85.3% of S1 to S3 pupils and 89.8% of S4 to S6 pupils received one-to-one coaching from an SDS careers advisor. However, there is a lack of clarity and uniformity across schools on the provision of advice and its delivery.⁸

Change: Scottish Labour will ensure all young people will have access to quality skills and careers advice when at school.

As well as having timetabled career advice available for every pupil, young people will access advice that has links with local employers and opportunities, with career advisors helping deliver the skills to school programme and source industrial and public sector placements and experience.

Change: Scottish Labour will widen certified work experience and guarantee every secondary school pupil has access to at least one industrial work placement.

Where possible these new placements will reflect opportunities in the local economy, public services, and innovative and growing sectors. Certification will also help to build prestige and ensure both young people and employers view this experience as worthwhile.

Case Study 2

Berufswahlunterricht (Career Choice Education) & Pre-Apprenticeships Switzerland

How it works:

- Career guidance starts as early as age 12 in secondary schools.
- Students take career choice lessons (Berufswahlunterricht) and short internships to explore trades and industries.
- By age 15-16, they can enter a pre-apprenticeship that transitions into a full dual apprenticeship.

Example: A 14-year-old student in Zurich might do a trial internship (Schnupperlehre) at a local bank to explore finance careers.





Work-ready graduates

Insight: Scotland has more world class universities than any other country by head of population.⁹ Our universities are centres of excellence with high quality, impactful research output. However, according to research conducted on behalf of the Fair Work Convention, 29% of workers in Scotland are overqualified or under-utilising their skills. In this area, Scotland performed worse than the seven other countries analysed as part of this study.¹⁰

This is not an argument for fewer graduates. Pursuing a university degree is enormously fulfilling for individuals, is shown to increase earning power, and boosts local economies. However, to maximise the benefits of higher education our graduates must be work-ready.

Change: Scottish Labour will establish skills-based modules and industrial placements to help Scottish graduates get work-ready.

These modules will be developed in partnership with educational institutions and industry and they will be flexible to allow university and college students to build them into their existing studies and qualifications. Focusing on key skills such as project management and AI, we will seek to leverage private sector financing to ensure graduates are augmenting their degrees with applied skills.

Case Study 3

Minors and Certificates in Vocational Skills United States

How it works:

- U.S. universities often allow students to add minors or certificates in vocational fields to their main degree program.
- These minors or certificates can cover areas like entrepreneurship, coding, or graphic design, giving students a specialised skill set in addition to their major.

Example: The University of California, Berkeley offers a certificate in digital marketing and a minor in entrepreneurship that students can pursue alongside their business or humanities degrees.



⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2023/06/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation/documents/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation-skills-delivery-landscape-review-final-report/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation-skills-delivery-landscape-review-final-report.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/kksbgpaj/annual-review-2022-23.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-international-education-strategy/pages/2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SCT10234932321.pdf>



Individually focused: Improving access to opportunities and better work through training and reskilling

People are more likely to be working longer, and often have multiple jobs, with multiple employers over multiple careers. We also know that learners, and employers, are looking for more flexible and agile ways of learning, including part time and short courses.

Nearly 2.5 million adults of working age in Scotland today (nearly 80%) will still be of working age by 2030.¹¹ We must treat our people as a precious commodity and think creatively about lifelong interventions to upskill and reskill in a dynamic economy.

Pre-apprenticeships

Insight: If we are to meet our net zero commitments and tackle the housing crisis we will need thousands of new construction workers, yet many young people leave school without having the necessary information about specific vocational options before choosing an apprenticeship. For too many people choosing to do a construction apprenticeship is viewed as a negative choice and an option of last resort.

This results in high drop-out rates, with only a 76% completion rate across all Modern Apprenticeship frameworks, dropping to 62% across some construction frameworks. 97% of new starts in construction related Modern Apprenticeships are also still male.¹²

Change: Scottish Labour will introduce "Taster Apprenticeships".

These will be short courses that give young people experience of a workplace and apprenticeship before they commit to a programme. The purpose would be to better match young people with apprenticeships and demonstrate to pupils the breadth of options available to them.

Industry Standards to create clear pathways from school to jobs

Insight: Over half of school leavers don't go to university. Foundation Apprenticeships for those in S5 and S6 provide good training and industry experience but come too late for many including those who choose to leave school at 16. The Post-School Learning System Review identified that Foundation Apprenticeships "are often not viewed as comparable and that there is little consistency in the way that educational institutions will treat them when assessing entry requirements for further and higher education."¹³

In Manchester work has begun on the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate, co-designed by education and business leaders to give young people a clear pathway from school to high-quality jobs in crucial sectors.

Change: Scottish Labour will work with industry and education providers to create and deliver Scottish Industry Standards to link school subjects to career pathways.

We will work with schools, colleges and Scottish employers to design combinations of subject choices and vocational and technical skills that are required for key growth sectors in Scotland's economy.

Starting in the Senior Phase level, Scottish Industry Standards will outline the mix of subject choices and qualifications at school and college that are desirable for high quality jobs in Scottish industries, and can be taken as part of wider subject choice.

Completing this agreed set of qualifications will be recognised as the achievement of an Industry Standard and this will appear on individuals' digital skills passport,

alongside learner's other qualifications and subject choices. Recognising achievement of these agreed sectoral criteria will give both employers and young people clarity about how they can use school and college qualifications to move into well-paid and skilled work.

The first Industry Standards will be developed in:

- Digital and technology
- Construction and the green economy
- Tourism, hospitality and food and drink

The Scottish Industry Standards will:

- Provide clear routes to good work for young people who are still in school but are interested in pursuing routes other than university;
- Provide guidance and clarity on the qualifications that employers in key sectors are looking for;
- And target skills shortages in the Scottish economy



Case Study 4

Manchester MBacc (Manchester Baccalaureate)

How it works:

The Manchester MBacc is an innovative educational program developed by Manchester Metropolitan University in collaboration with local employers and schools. It combines academic learning with practical, work-based experiences to better prepare students for the workforce.

- Students complete core academic qualifications alongside vocational training.
- Industry involvement is central, with businesses offering work placements, mentorship, and involvement in curriculum design to ensure the skills learned align with employer needs.
- The program includes project-based learning and real-world problem-solving, enabling students to apply academic knowledge in practical contexts.
- There is a focus on developing skills that are in high demand, such as digital skills, critical thinking, and communication.

Example: A student in Manchester might combine A-levels with a digital marketing placement with a local company, allowing them to gain skills directly linked to career opportunities in the sector.

Key Features:

- ✓ Work-integrated learning alongside traditional education.
- ✓ Employer-driven curriculum, ensuring relevance to current labour market needs.
- ✓ Project-based approach, linking theoretical knowledge with practical applications.
- ✓ Focus on employability skills and industry-relevant qualifications.



¹¹ <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A77246>

¹² <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/modern-apprenticeships>

¹³ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2023/06/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation/documents/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation-skills-delivery-landscape-review-final-report/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation-skills-delivery-landscape-review-final-report/govscot%3Adocument/fit-future-developing-post-school-learning-system-fuel-economic-transformation-skills-delivery-landscape-review-final-report.pdf>



Prioritising earning and learning with Graduate Apprenticeships

Insight: The Graduate Apprenticeship is widely recognised as an excellent model of collaboration between industry and universities, while also serving as a useful mechanism for upskilling and retraining. The strong focus on skills and in-built workplace vocational learning mean Graduate Apprentices can often command higher salaries than a conventional graduate. However, numbers remain stubbornly low at 1,166 in 2021/22, compared to the 43,230 enrolments on Degree Apprenticeships in England during the same period.¹⁴

Change: Scottish Labour will expand the Graduate Apprenticeship offer.

Working with universities, schools, colleges and our new industry board we will prioritise increasing the total number of, and pathways for Graduates Apprenticeships, starting in key growth sectors. As well as being a tool for reskilling, we will ensure they are promoted as a valid choice for those at the beginning of their careers and considering what to do following school.

Focused courses, tailored to skills' needs

Insight: According to the Resolution Foundation, non-graduate workers, particularly women, often experience declining wages after around 30 years in the workforce. For instance, female non-graduates see average hourly wages decrease after age 50, indicating limited opportunities for wage progression in the later stages of their careers.¹⁵

Meanwhile there are key shortages in roles paying above average wages. From HGV drivers and skilled tradespeople to photographers and graphic designers, there is unfulfilled demand across the economy.

Change: Scottish Labour will develop short, specific courses that offer new skills or retraining.

These tailored learning opportunities will be developed with educational institutions and learning providers to sit alongside current formal education offers. These new modules will be flexible enough to work as bolt-ons or stand-alone courses, and will be designed to address specific sectoral shortages or skills gaps in the wider economy.

Crucially, the short and flexible nature of courses will also help broaden access, for example to those with caring responsibilities and for those living in rural Scotland. The aim of these focused interventions will be to help employers upskill their workforce, as well as support those far from the labour market or who want to change careers to develop skills in growing sectors of our industrial strategy.

Digital skills passport

Insight: A more flexible and individually tailored approach to skills requires a common language of attainment, so it is clear to employers and individuals what qualifications and training a worker has completed and how qualifications compare across courses and institutions.

Change: Scottish Labour will create a digital skills passport.

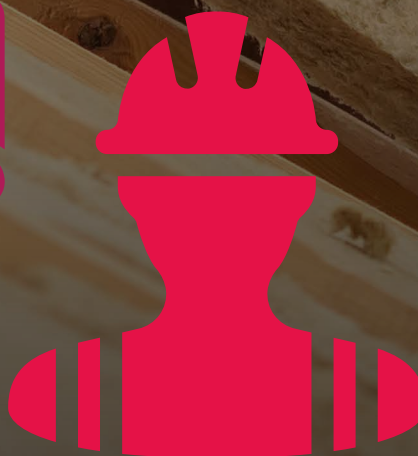
This will be a universal digital record of individuals' skills, formal qualifications, and achievement, available to all in Scotland from pupils in schools, to those in further and higher education, and workers participating in retraining or further skills development later in their careers. It will provide clarity for employers and workers and ensure the value of work experience and technical and vocational training is recognised. It will also allow apprentices or individuals with existing skills to bypass certain modules in order to avoid duplication and complete training faster.



¹⁴ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2022/december/employers-show-demand-for-graduate-apprenticeships-supporting-learners-across-scotland>
¹⁵ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8741/CBP-8741.pdf>
¹⁵ <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/a-hard-days-night/>



The Graduate Apprenticeship is widely recognised as an excellent model of collaboration between industry and universities.





Flexible and dynamic: Responsive to a rapidly changing world of work

Our economy is going through rapid transformation. Technological advancement, the climate crisis, and our net zero commitments are creating new jobs and opportunities, while making some established careers obsolete. This challenge is exacerbated by Scotland's specific demographic challenge as outlined in the Scottish Fiscal Commission Sustainability Report.¹⁶

Not only do we need to produce the skills for today's economy, we must also plan for the future. A report by Scottish Engineering predicts that by 2027, across 31 engineer roles, the workforce will need to be 58% larger than it is today.¹⁷ The Scottish Government must support industry to plan for future skills needs and ensure a predictable pipeline of workers.

Adaptable Modern Apprenticeships

Insight: Scotland's skills system, including the Modern Apprenticeship programme, is quality and rigorous. However, too often it can be slow to adapt and not flexible enough to meet the needs of the individual and industry. It can currently take years for new frameworks to become available for learners, which deprives the economy of vital skills.

Further barriers exist because many employers do not believe that the structure and content of apprenticeships meet their needs and feel like they have no voice over their design. The Scottish Employer Perspectives Survey 2019 found that only 16% of employers in Scotland take on apprentices, with SMEs particularly underrepresented. Over 30% of employers stated that apprenticeships were not relevant to their business, with a further 13% stating that apprenticeships were not offered for their specific industry. That is the scale of the challenge.¹⁸

As well as speeding up the execution of new apprenticeship courses, it is important to look at the structure of the courses themselves. Modular courses, whether taken through the Open University or in colleges are becoming more popular with employers and learners. They allow additional flexibility and an opportunity to specialise,

which is appealing to employers. They can also be studied in conjunction with full time employment, providing an additional route to learners who cannot afford to drop out of the labour market. As well as providing flexibility for employers and learners, modular courses can also make it easier for learning providers to respond to new technology and changes in the economy.

Change: Scottish Labour will streamline the process of establishing new Modern Apprenticeship courses.

Where skills gaps or opportunities have been identified in key sectors Scottish Labour will work with educational institutions to speed up the process of bringing new apprenticeships on-stream. This faster approval process will be supported by the skills forecasts carried out by our new industry board, ensuring new apprenticeships are relevant to the modern economy.

Change: Scottish Labour will develop modular apprenticeships.

This new approach to apprenticeships would deliver a core of compulsory modules, alongside a range of additional and optional modules to be selected by the individual. This would allow learners and employers to build an apprenticeship and training programme that suits their needs. By reviewing and updating the range of optional modules, it would also help apprenticeship programmes be more easily refreshed and keep on the cutting edge of skills development.

Empowering our colleges

Insight: Colleges are currently held back by an inflexible funding model that makes innovation difficult, if not impossible. Important schemes like the Flexible Workforce Development Fund were used by colleges to leverage in private sector funding and deliver popular, flexible industry specific training. The Scottish Government's scrapping of this fund was a body blow to colleges and industry and severed an important point of collaboration between colleges and industry.

Change: Under Scottish Labour, colleges will play a key role in delivering skills-based learning.

As part of our wider work to deliver sustainable funding for further and higher education Scottish Labour will empower colleges to find new and innovative ways to engage with industry to provide new and modern programmes of skills delivery. Colleges will also have an important role as a key point of contact for both individuals seeking skills-based learning opportunities, and employers seeking to attract new workers and develop the skills of their workforce.

Joint-working within sectors

Insight: It can be a significant commitment for an employer to invest in training apprentices and developing young people's skills. It can take years before apprentices are at a skill level to produce additional value for employers and businesses, and this is exacerbated in sectors where fluctuating order books can make predicting future skills needs even more difficult.

Spreading this risk across employers has the potential to broaden the experience of the learner while bringing more employers into the system and boosting the skills pipeline.

There is also evidence that individuals may miss out on opportunities because training places are not simple to find. According to research conducted by the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland, some larger businesses can attract 3,000 applicants for fewer than 200 apprenticeship roles.¹⁹ Meanwhile, smaller SMEs and micro-businesses advertising apprenticeships will often have more available apprenticeships than qualified candidates applying. Many candidates who do not get a place with a large employer drop out of the system, despite having the potential to take up a place at an SME or micro-business.

Change: Scottish Labour will allow shared apprentices across employers.

By allowing businesses to partner together and share the delivery of apprenticeships, we can expand and diversify the pool of employers participating in the apprenticeship system. Larger firms will also be supported to train apprentices with SMEs or microbusinesses, for example in their wider supply chain.

Graduate Apprentices will also be able to spread their apprenticeship across different employers if required to ensure they can complete their training to degree level and broaden the skills and workplaces that they can participate in.

This approach will reduce the risk for individual employers, increase opportunities across the economy, and expand the experience of apprentices.

Change: Scottish Labour will introduce sector-specific clearing systems for apprenticeships and vocational training.

University clearing systems allow applicants who miss out on their first choice to still find opportunities and progress in their education and career. Replicating this model for apprenticeships will help people find new opportunities, by allowing them to see the range of roles available across the country and ensuring that good candidates do not drop out of the system.



Case Study 5

Welsh Shared Apprenticeship Scheme

How it works:

- Allows apprentices to gain experience with multiple employers instead of just one.
- Managed by industry bodies and regional partnerships, ensuring businesses of all sizes can participate.
- Supported by the Welsh Government, providing funding and coordination.

Example: The Cymru Shared Apprenticeship Scheme in engineering and construction lets apprentices rotate between firms, gaining a broader skill set while ensuring businesses access skilled workers.

Key Features:

- ✓ Flexibility for SMEs that cannot commit to full apprenticeships.
- ✓ Broader industry exposure for apprentices.
- ✓ Government-industry collaboration to address skills shortages.

Driving in-work training through the public sector

Insight: Workforce development and investment in staff training can drive productivity and growth. However, despite Scotland's above average proportion of university graduates, we perform poorly on in-work training. Employers are less incentivised to invest in their workforce because of a risk that trained employees could move jobs.

Change: Scottish Labour will embed retraining into public procurement contracts.

The Scottish public sector generates £13 billion of economic activity from public procurement annually. We will leverage this investment to encourage and incentivise workforce development to drive better training options for people, building the case for upskilling across the wider economy.

¹⁶ <https://fiscalcommission.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Fiscal-Sustainability-Report-March-2023.pdf>
¹⁷ <https://www.insider.co.uk/news/scottish-engineering-survey-highlights-skills-34448215>
¹⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/12/scottish-employer-perspectives-survey-eps-2019-official-statistics-publication/documents/employer-perspectives-survey-2019/employer-perspectives-survey-2019-official-statistics-publication/documents/employer-perspectives-survey-2019.pdf>

¹⁹ National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland

Speak to us

This report follows on from the publication of our Business Case for Scotland and is a result of the consultation we have carried out with employers and workers across our country.

We will continue our engagement with businesses and education providers over the coming year ahead of the 2026 Scottish Parliament election. We want to road test our approach in opposition before seeking the opportunity to deliver it in government.

Scotland's economy is at a turning point - we want to make sure it turns in a new direction and delivers a prosperous, dynamic and green future that creates opportunity for all.

