

## Skills for Work Case Study

National 5 Creative Industries course  
Forth Valley College (Stirling Campus)



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## Introduction

Forth Valley College (Stirling Campus) offers the National 5 Skills for Work: Creative Industries course as part of a school/college partnership with pupils from across the Stirling and Clackmannanshire local authorities. The course is offered to S4, S5 and S6 pupils. Learners from every school in each local authority can apply for a place on the course, which is delivered on the college premises for 4 hours per week across 36 weeks.

## Background

Forth Valley College has an established creative industries portfolio in areas such as art and design, contemporary art practice, visual communication, media and communication, digital media, and sound production. Most of the provision prior to the implementation of the Skills for Work course was at SCQF levels 6–9. The college recognised that there was a need for a qualification that would allow learners to access appropriate qualifications at SCQF level 6, as well as opportunities to develop their subject knowledge and skills, and the skills and qualities valued by employers. The Skills for Work qualification is considered alongside other National Qualifications (including Highers) when learners are applying for full or part-time college places.

## Approach

Learners attend college for four hours per week and participate mainly in practical activities within the area of art and design.

After some initial skills building, learners are introduced to the *Creative Industries: An Introduction* unit, which is supported by input from practising artists and designers, as well as visits to real workplaces. Alongside the input from practitioners, learners participate in web-based research tasks, discussion groups, and short individual or team presentations.

Once they have gathered enough information through researching sectors and roles, learners identify a role that interests them and begin to develop the relevant skills. Towards the second half of the course, learners are introduced to the *Creative Industries: The Creative Process* and *Creative Industries: Creative Project* units. The project topics usually involve a live brief. Recent projects have included the mounting of an exhibition of works produced on the course. Learners work in teams to deliver pitches to college management, practitioners, and other delivery staff, and the presentations are filmed and used for review. Once the ideas have been agreed, learners allocate roles and continue work on the project.

A recent project between the college and Historic Environment Scotland at Stirling Castle involved creating artwork to be exhibited during an event to commemorate the First World War.

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Learners were given a brief by Historic Environment Scotland representatives, and they used this as a basis for the *Creative Industries: Skills Development*, *Creative Industries: The Creative Process* and *Creative Industries: Creative Project* units. Throughout the practical stages of the project, learners were exposed to the variety of roles involved in planning and implementing a large exhibition, alongside professional artists, in a Scottish historical landmark. This included logistics planning and health and safety, as well as creating the exhibit pieces. Deadlines were tight and learners had to pull together and work as a team in order to meet them.

Learners used several online tools to document their process and communicate with one another while off-campus. One such tool was Padlet, an online application where weblinks, research and photographs can be shared with the team members and the assessor. Each learner had control over their own page and could use this as evidence of their progress. Electronic evidence, when used in conjunction with observation checklists and video evidence of performance, allowed learners to naturally generate sufficient evidence for the units.

Learners created a public art installation featuring a trench, and letters sent by soldiers to loved ones during the First World War. The final piece was seen by thousands of visitors to the castle over a period of several months.



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## Partnership arrangements

Although there are no formal partnerships in place to support this award, Forth Valley College uses its extensive network of creative practitioners — including artists, designers, film makers, and music industry professionals — to provide direct input into projects. This network of industry professionals gives learners access to working environments where they can meet with employers, reinforcing what is being learned at college. As employer engagement is such a crucial factor in any Skills for Work course, the delivering staff use such visits as pivotal components of delivery rather than as an additional experience.

## Benefits for learners and centres

The freedom to deliver this course in a wide variety of contexts, along with the multitude of ways that evidence can be gathered and presented, suits both the learners and the college's delivery team. Learners have commented that the *Creative Industries: An Unit Introduction* unit helps to inform them of career and progression options and to evaluate their process. One said that the course had taught them more about the art sector and the media that can be used within it; that it had allowed them to explore different techniques, and had made them feel more creative and expressive with their work. Another learner said that the course had given them more understanding and insight into the creative industries, and that this will help them feel better equipped when they go into their chosen area of work.

The ability to evidence the development of skills using the *Creative Industries: Skills Development* unit is very useful for learners, as it allows them to take ownership of their own learning, reflect on their achievements, and plan their progression.



The delivery team found that the Skills for Work course prepared pupils very well for progression and employment. Lecturer Brian Smith commented that, 'exposing learners to the wider creative industries means they are well informed when it comes to applying for appropriate courses. Through the promotion of skills and attitudes expected in the workplace, it has been apparent that learners carry this over into their learning.'

Learners who have participated in this programme are able to clearly demonstrate appropriate specific skills, as well as the attitudes and behaviours expected in the workplace.

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## **Future delivery plans**

The college intends to continue to deliver the National 5 Creative Industries course. Giving learners opportunities to experience a realistic workplace environment using live briefs and commercial projects has proven successful, and will be an ongoing strategy. Plans are in place for school staff to support and deliver aspects of the award, such as the evaluation and review components, while the college continues to provide the technical input and provides access to specialist facilities.

## **Advice to other centres**

This course is highly suited to engagement with external partners or clients. Learners get a sense of what it is like to work within the creative industries, and gain insight into how a range of specialisms are often required to pull together a project. The project may be an exhibition, which relies on artists to create works and on designers to create promotional material, or a performance, which counts on actors, sound engineers and musicians. However the project manifests itself, the component parts of the course naturally guide learners through the creative process and, therefore, give them the real life experience of a creative practitioner. The use of live briefs promotes ownership of learning and fosters a sense of pride within the learners.