
Regional Tertiary Pathfinders Programme

Project Overview: SoS West of Scotland Education Pathways

The tables below provide insights into projects delivered through the Regional Tertiary Pathfinders Programme, which aimed to strengthen collaboration between colleges, universities, employers, and local authorities.

Each project includes two tables:

1. **Collaboration & Impact** – covering the history of partnerships, project focus, geographic reach, and target beneficiaries.
2. **Delivery & Leadership** – outlining governance structures, project characteristics, stakeholder involvement, and key aims.

These tables highlight the context in which projects tested new ways of working, enhanced learner pathways, and improved regional skills planning. For further details, please refer to the System-Level Report.

Definitions of Project Characteristics

History of Working Together

- **None** – individuals and teams had not worked together previously.
- **Emergent** – individuals and or teams and organisations had previously done some work together. Relationships existed which could be built on and developed.
- **Previous positive experience** – individuals, teams and organisations had a history of successfully working together, in some cases over many years. These existing relationships were an accepted part of ‘how work was done’ and could be built on and further developed and strengthened.

Project Focus

- **Tight** – the project was tightly focussed on delivering specific products/pathways/outcomes.
- **Broad** – the project explored a broad range of topics or areas for improvement and developed associated products/pathways/approaches to deliver outcomes.
- **Multi-theme** – the project explores multiple themes which may be distinct or may intersect and overlap with each other, delivering products/pathways/outcomes related to the themes.

Target Beneficiaries

- **Providers** – colleges, universities and schools, benefit from the work done through the project e.g. increase student numbers, develop complementary provision which reduces competition etc.
- **Learners** – new products, pathways and provision are developed which improve the opportunities, experience and outcomes of learners.
- **Employers** – employers establish positive working relationships with the colleges and universities and become involved in the design of products/provision to meet their needs. Learners acquire the qualifications and skills needed by employers.

Geographic Reach

- **Regional** – for the Pathfinder programme this means aligning to the boundaries of the Regional Economic Partnership (REP).
- **Sectoral** – aligned to the needs of a particular sector e.g. Health, Energy.
- **Local Authority/Community Planning Partnership/Local Employability Partnership** – working within a particular LA Boundary rather than across the REP.

Starting Emphasis

- **Efficiencies** – cost saving as a result producing the desired outcome with little waste of time or resources.
- **Pre-considered improvement** – changes and improvements which had already been identified as needing to be made but which this programme gave the opportunity to catalyse and deliver with renewed focus and pace.
- **Innovation** – the development and delivery of a new method, idea or product to achieve desired outcomes.

Leadership and Sponsorship

- **Diffused** – responsibilities are spread between organisations and groups.
- **Central individual** – a leader/coordinator acts as the main driver for change and delivery.
- **Small group** – a small number of people champion and lead the work acting as a guiding coalition.

Who Was Involved at the Outset

- **Project beneficiaries** – learners, employers and organisations which would benefit from the outputs/outcomes from the project were involved from the outset.

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- **Frontline staff** – staff who would be developing/delivering products/courses were involved at the outset.
 - **Senior decision makers** – senior staff able to provide authorisation and create the conditions for project success were involved at the outset.

Character of Project

- **Pragmatic** – projects were identified and developed based on practical considerations and a realistic view of what could be achieved.
- **Adaptive** – projects evolved to take account of changing contexts or as a result of gaining more understanding/information about what was needed/possible.
- **Radical** – project affecting fundamental/far-reaching change.

Table 1

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History of working together	None	Emergent	Previous positive experience
		Skills planning and delivery collaboration between Pathfinder partners occurred prior to the Pathfinder programme. Articulation pathways and joint service delivery, such as shared library access, etc on the Crichton Campus. This prior collaboration was less systemic, and lacked some coherence in and around skills and portfolio planning.	While developing the Pathfinder, the institutions were in the process of formalising and finalising the relocation of UWS provision in SoS from the buildings on the Crichton site onto the College campus.
Project focus	Tight	Broad	Multi-theme
	To identify at least two new degree pathways to be delivered locally. Joint launch of new degree pathways in Academic Year	The project sought to deepen collaboration for new educational pathways in the region. To strengthen the partnership working model	To agree and achieve critical thinking to inform the establishment and delivery of new degree pathways across a

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	2022/23 - BA Business and BSc Cybersecurity.	between UWS and DGC in the Dumfries and Galloway region, through delivering a fresh approach to joint regional portfolio planning leading to an extended portfolio and efficient operation through appropriate sharing of resources.	range of regionally relevant subjects in Dumfries.
Geographic reach	Regional	Sectoral	Local Authority/CPP
	Dumfries and Galloway.	Initially Business and Computer Science (Cyber Security). Project partners are exploring the potential of expanding the model to include Health & Social care and Creative industries pathways.	Dumfries and Galloway Council.

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Target beneficiaries	Employers	Learners	Providers
	<p>An increased talent pool through relevant regional skills development supports a stronger employee pipeline.</p>	<p>Learners benefit from new and more efficient, seamless learner pathways that increase their employment options in the South West of Scotland/ D&G region.</p> <p>Due to the remoteness of the region – increasing the number and percentage of young people in Dumfries and Galloway having access to degree pathways that are attractive to the applicant and that meet regional skills requirements.</p>	<p>Through collaboration on curriculum planning, institutions can share resources and create more efficient pathways.</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway College was shortlisted for the South West Education Pathways pilot under the widening participation category in The Herald - Higher Education Awards 2023.</p>

Table 2

Project: SoS West of Scotland Educational Pathways			
Leadership sponsorship	Diffused	Central individual	Small group
		Identified senior leaders from the institutions.	Core leadership and project development staff including marketing and communication.
Who was involved at the outset	Senior decision-makers	Frontline staff	Project beneficiaries
	Senior leadership staff from the institutions, the local authority and the regions' head teachers at key points.	Current core leadership, project development and teaching staff from DGC, UWS, and D&G Council.	
Character of project	Radical	Adaptive	Pragmatic
	As part of the new ways of working, there was a complete "re-set of collaborative academic planning and delivery". This meant the teams working together from concept stage to look at areas of mutual understanding and	The intelligence from the discussions between the college, the University and the local authority was considered in light of a number of tools and information sources to inform skills planning:	A key focus in this project was that existing barriers to progression, such as re-applying at various points of articulation, were removed or minimised – this is more complex than it sounds, however the teams are

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	<p>expertise with a focus on how the teams could work collaboratively to deliver a truly shared programme.</p> <p>In developing curriculum, partners continually challenged existing norms.</p> <p>e.g., UWS recognising DGC's knowledge on regional skills needs and listening to DGC's insights and recommendations in provision planning.</p>	<p>for example, the Regional Skills Assessment (RSA), data sources like Lightcast and the Digital Economy Business Survey and DESAP, engagement with key employers and employer groups.</p> <p>Due to the factors specific to SOS region (i.e., remoteness, geographical barriers, the role of the college as a conduit to understanding regional skills requirements), unlike in other regions where UWS' Foundation academy is in operation where UWS delivers the programmes, in SOS, partners have agreed the College will be delivering the programme in the senior phase of high school.</p>	<p>actively engaged to deliver against this objective.</p>
Starting emphasis	Innovation	Pre-considered improvement	Efficiencies

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The major innovation was a new form of deeply collaborative working (e.g., UWS recognising DGC's knowledge on regional skills needs and listening to DGC's insights and recommendations in provision planning) to understand regional requirements and taking the reflections of that joint work forward to collaborative development of the integrated pathway programme that provided the opportunity for senior phase school students to engage in tertiary education. This involved discussion and input from the local authority, schools across the region, the college, and the university.

The combined effort of both institutions led to a new way of working together, that allowed more rapid development of the portfolio—in essence the institutions were able to move more quickly and collaboratively to meet emerging demand. It involved senior leadership teams, academic development teams, marketing teams and student recruitment teams collaborating to ensure join-up across the institutions, with shared costs and resource allocation.

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	Delivering the programme in the senior phase of high school through the Foundation Academy (a critical component of delivery).		
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