

DataLab and Skills Development Scotland: The Apprenticeship Pathway

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Purpose of document	Description of datalab event on the future of apprenticeships in data science
Event detail (delete row if appropriate)	The Apprenticeship Pathway, arranged by DataLab and Skills Development Scotland to discuss apprenticeships in data science
Other detail (delete row if appropriate)	

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Last Thursday, Sanna and Laura were invited to attend an event held by The Data Lab, one of the other seven innovation centres. The event was a very stimulating discussion surrounding the future of apprenticeships in data science. Skills development Scotland gave an overview of the different levels of the apprenticeships that will be available, ranging from SQF level 6 through to potentially an SQF level 11, equivalent to an MSc.

The skills gap within Data Science is large and will only continue to expand until the relevant skills are sourced. Despite this growing skills gap, the demand for data scientists has never been higher, with more industries making use of data analytics than ever before. Over 75,000 people in Scotland currently work in the IT sector. It is estimated that Scotland will require over 10,000 new data scientists in Scotland every year until 2021 to fill this gap. In addition, the ratio of uptake of modern apprenticeships is 25:75 for females verses males which must be improved.

To ensure this skills gap is filled, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and The Data Lab are working to ensure that data science is a subject which is attractive to people of all ages and from various work streams. For example, they are raising awareness of data handling and its advantages to school leavers who do not necessarily see themselves going straight into higher education from school. Not only are they directing attention towards school leavers but they are also speaking with the careers advisers within the schools to ensure that they are aware of the career prospects within data science to relay that information on to pupils. Of course, there is also great potential for people already within industry to be upskilled in the art of data handling to increase productivity within their industry.

Several universities are on board with the challenge including Glasgow Caledonian University who have an MSc in Big Data Technologies and are interested in developing more courses within data science in the future. The Data Lab are also interested in developing new graduate level apprenticeships to support graduates to fill these skills gaps.

The apprenticeship career pathway is a fantastic way to ensure that the skills gap currently present in data sciences is narrowed and it allows for people of all levels of experience within data handling to enhance the output of a variety of industries.