

Land-Based Skills Course

Unemployed young people from Scotland's rural areas are being given the opportunity to acquire those skills rural employers say they most need.

The Rural Skills Academy, a partnership between Oatridge Agricultural College in West Lothian and Access to Industry, will provide free places on a 13-week land-based skills course, funded partly through the European Union, and is inviting applications from unemployed young people throughout Scotland.

Students will be given accommodation for the duration of the course, through which they will gain knowledge and practical experience of modern agriculture.

A key component of the course is training in employability skills – literacy, numeracy, marketing and communication – all expressed requirements of employers in Scotland's crucial land-based economy.

Mark Calder, who is managing the initiative for Access to Industry, describes the project as “a significant first step towards employment for young people in those rural areas, still so often overlooked in discussions about exclusion and deprivation.”

He continued, “This project increases the likelihood that beneficiaries of the Academy, some drawn from remote rural areas of Scotland, will ultimately find work within their communities. The endgame is not just better off young people, but stronger and more prosperous rural communities.”

The course consists of 13 weeks training in a range of land-based skills, during which students can specialise in either animals or crops. If successful over this introductory period, they will then be able to progress onto a further 13 weeks of applied work on the Oatridge estate.

Applications are open. For more information, Mark Calder is contactable at mark@accesstoindustry.co.uk, or by phone on 0131 442 1042.