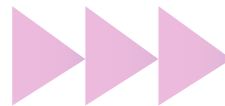
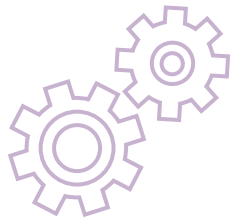




Higher Education Apprenticeships Toolkit

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**Supporting the
Apprentice's Journey:**
Learning and Teaching

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About this toolkit

The Higher Education Apprenticeships Toolkit is split into the following parts and sub-sections, published on the [QAA Membership Resources site](#):

Developing Apprenticeships



Supporting the Apprentice's Journey

- Recruitment and Admissions
- Learning and Teaching
- Assessment
- The Apprentice Experience
- Complaints and Appeals



Quality Assuring and Enhancing Higher Education Apprenticeships



Learning and teaching

In this section of the toolkit, we will consider:

- reference points for apprenticeship provision
- key sector reference points
- recognition of prior learning and on and off-the-job training
- learning and teaching applied to the training experience for apprentices
- delivery models
- work-based mentoring
- support for apprentices' achievement.



Reference points for apprenticeship provision

Apprenticeships are linked to (national) occupational standards, which describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) / understanding that an individual needs to be competent at a job. There are differences in the use of (national) occupational standards across the UK, in terms of apprenticeships, as outlined below.

National occupational standards are recognised as important in providing common standards in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales ([National Occupational Standards Strategy 2022 and beyond \(2022\)](#)). These National Occupational Standards can therefore be linked to apprenticeship frameworks and training ([About National Occupational Standards](#)).

In England, the policy has moved away 'from mandating the use of National Occupational Standards to underpin apprenticeships and technical education' (*National Occupational Standards Strategy 2022 and beyond (2022)*). The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has published [occupational maps](#) which show how occupations at different levels link together, along with occupational standards that describe the KSBs needed for someone to be competent in an occupation. The relevant occupational standard is a component of an apprenticeship, along with the end-point assessment plan ([IfATE- occupational standards](#)).¹

Training providers need to consider the relevant requirements when creating a cohesive package of learning and teaching, including the associated:

- (National) Occupational Standard
- Apprenticeship Framework/Standard (and any mandatory qualification and end-point assessment (EPA) requirements)
- professional, statutory and regulatory body standard(s) as applicable
- funding rules (which may stipulate the required amounts of on and off-the-job training)
- requirements from relevant regulatory bodies which need to be embedded and contextualised within the apprenticeship programme (such as, the wider curriculum elements of personal development linked to the [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) in England](#)).

¹ In England, IfATE works with trailblazer groups to develop new apprenticeships for occupations and this includes writing the occupational standard and associated end-point assessment (EPA) plan.

Key sector reference points

Key sector reference points such as the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and the [European Standards and Guidelines \(ESG\)](#) provide opportunities for providers to embrace a wide variety of modes of learning and teaching, and sites and situations of learning in order to deliver apprenticeships that align with employer and apprentice needs. These sector reference points highlight the need for training providers to design, approve and/or deliver high-quality programmes and provide apprentices with a high-quality experience, for example, by:

- putting in place strategic and operational plans and resources to support student (apprentice) achievement
- having sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff
- having sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and support services
- taking a student (apprentice) centred approach to learning and teaching
- actively engaging students (apprentices), individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience
- publishing appropriate information about the activities/programmes in an accessible way.

When applying these reference points to higher education apprenticeships, as with other higher education provision, the focus on designing and delivering a high-quality programme is important. This includes, for example, the need to have clear agreement on the responsibilities of all parties involved in learning, teaching (or training as it is often referred to) and in enabling the achievement of apprentices. A key part of the main provider's responsibility is to ensure that the apprentices' progression through their apprenticeships is tracked across all forms and locations of delivery, and that interventions and/or adjustments to delivery by a range of stakeholders are managed and recorded. This is a challenge for which apprenticeship programme leaders or apprenticeship managers need support and clear structures to work within. Providers may make use of bespoke apprenticeship management solutions software to support this tracking.

In the delivery of higher education apprenticeships, there is a need to ensure that:

- all staff who teach and manage/enable learning, including those staff who are not employees of the providers and/or are not based at the provider organisation, are appropriately qualified, supported and developed
- staff involved in apprenticeship training, such as workplace mentors, are appropriately experienced to undertake their responsibilities; support for mentors, may typically include ongoing liaison with tutors with responsibility for supporting the learning development of apprentices (which can involve induction sessions and regular, scheduled virtual or face-to-face meetings).

Recognition of prior learning

As detailed in the [Recruitment and Admissions](#) section of this toolkit, recognition of appropriate and current prior learning is an important step in ensuring that an apprenticeship meets the needs of an individual apprentice as well as the relevant funding rules. For example, in England, where individuals' prior learning has been recognised, higher education apprenticeships are expected to be shorter in duration.



On and off-the-job-training

Training providers should work closely with employers to develop the apprenticeship - including the content, delivery and assessment of on and off-the-job training - to meet the needs of employers, employer bodies and the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship framework/standard. The majority of learning and apprentice development takes place through on-the-job training while apprentices are engaged in work activity. This may then be supported by off-the-job learning and training.

On-the-job learning and training

An apprentice's work needs to provide:

- sufficient exposure to meet the needs of the programme (and therefore the associated apprenticeship framework/standard) and be a source for learning
- the key context/environment for learning.



Off-the-job learning and training

Can:

- take the form of traditional face-to-face delivery by a training provider
- take place, if appropriate, within the workplace, perhaps using workplace facilities
- be supported by a variety of online learning opportunities.

The integration of on and off-the-job learning and training is fundamental for delivery of a high-quality apprenticeship. This integration, and the focus on delivering occupational competence, are what differentiates an apprenticeship from part-time learning while at work.

Providers are encouraged to:

- adopt a flexible curriculum approach that uses the apprentice's actual work environment and job role, and a variety of modes of attendance and delivery locations
- where appropriate, consider the technologies and/or software development environments used in the apprentice's employment
- take account of employer and industry needs in considering how the apprenticeship programme will develop the apprentices' employability-related skills and graduate attributes
- work with other organisations as appropriate.

Apprentices, in negotiation with employers and training provider tutors, will need to develop the ability to identify additional learning opportunities within the context of their day-to-day work activity. These might, for example, take the form of negotiated work-based projects that build on work activities and integrate knowledge, skills, behaviours and values developed through higher education learning. Reflective practice is often used to support the development of professional competence in apprenticeships. This practice often includes the use of approaches such as learning logs and professional development portfolios as vehicles for formative and summative assessment for learning, supported by feedback from workplace mentors and tutors.

Apprentices should be provided with a plan that details the apprenticeship, what is expected and offered by the employer, training provider (and any sub-contractors/delivery partners) and the apprentice in order to achieve the apprenticeship. This plan may be given different names across the UK nations, including individual learning and training plans (Scotland), a training plan (previously a commitment statement, in England), a tripartite agreement (Northern Ireland) and an [Apprenticeship Learner Agreement](#) (Wales).

Empowering both the staff within the training provider and apprentices to co-create learning can be very useful, particularly in relation to fast-moving occupations in technical degree apprenticeships.



Learning and teaching strategies

As shown by the [QAA Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales](#), a variety of approaches are often used in apprenticeship provision as part of the learning and teaching (training) elements including:

- lectures
- tutorials
- workshops
- practical exercises
- projects
- case studies.

In this review, providers' programme specifications and module descriptors were found to set out in detail the knowledge and skills to be developed, and the methods of learning, teaching and assessment. Positive feedback was given for the agreement of module content and assessment between the provider and employer, which enabled apprentices to work in a simulated real-world project development environment.

Access to online resources via the provider's website/virtual learning environment and/or app provided further support for apprentices, and facilitated a blended learning approach that enhanced the flexibility of the offer for apprentices and employers.

Delivery models

When training providers deliver higher education apprenticeships, there are a number of elements to consider, not least how to manage/deliver the apprenticeship in a way that:

- facilitates apprentices' transition to the higher education apprenticeship and provides support for any associated higher education qualification
- provides apprentices with the best possible experience, including a cohesion between on and off-the-job training, combining theory and practice
- enables apprentices to gain and evidence the required knowledge, skills and behaviours/level of competence for their profession
- provides opportunities for apprentices to apply theory to real-world situations
- enables apprentices to engage with the wider opportunities available at the training provider
- enables the training provider to manage financial and staff resources effectively and ensure the sustainability of the offer.

Providers may offer apprenticeship delivery at the site of the training provider for the off-the-job training, or provide online delivery or a blended approach.

Approaches to the organisation of learning and teaching (training) can differ, with apprentices sometimes being in a co-taught environment with other students/learners, or, alternatively being in an apprentice only group, or a combination of both for different elements/modules. There may also be arrangements for apprentices to engage with peers from other employer organisations for group work and tutorial discussions 'to expose them to a wide range of experiences, viewpoints and contexts from those new to the industry to those with significant experience in employment, to create a rich learning experience' (*Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales*).

When considering the approach to delivery, a number of potential strengths and weaknesses can be identified. For example, from a resource perspective, it may be more efficient to deliver content to a mixed group of students/learners and apprentices, where this is feasible and the content is relevant for students/learners on the higher education course and apprentices completing the qualification as part of an apprenticeship. This approach can also encourage students/learners and apprentices to integrate through a shared experience of the higher education qualification. However, the shared delivery approach may make it more challenging to focus on the employment links and connections between on and off-the-job training for apprentices, and potentially mean a less explicit focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviours/learning outcomes from the relevant framework/standard. In some circumstances, there may also be other content that is required for the apprenticeship that is not part of a typical programme for non-apprentices - for example, in England the wider personal development elements and contextualised discussion about fundamental British values linked to the [Education inspection framework](#) (EIF) and the associated [Further education and skills inspection](#) method used by Ofsted.

Planning the delivery of any higher education qualification linked to an apprenticeship is therefore important, not least in facilitating any adaptations that may be required - for example, if there is a need to shorten the apprenticeship due to recognition of prior learning. An overarching consideration to the approach taken, is the creation of a wider student/learner community for all apprentices.

Where there is a lead training provider working in partnership with a partner organisation, these arrangements should be managed formally - for example, through a formal partnership arrangement and quality assurance arrangement. Communication between the partners is essential in ensuring apprentices benefit from the arrangements and can access the appropriate support systems at the lead and partner provider. Partnership arrangements may offer numerous benefits including the provision of local opportunities and additional expertise, but the lead provider retains overall responsibility for the standards and quality of the programme.



Insights into practice

[QAA Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales](#)

Modes of delivery

The mode of delivery of programmes may be influenced by the pedagogic approach, employer and apprentice requirements, the individual apprenticeship, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) and fitness-to-practise requirements.

The review found all providers, through the development of programmes, engaged with employers in their preferred delivery modes and delivery locations to ensure the best outcomes for apprentices and employers. Providers ensured through the delivery models, that off-the-job learning was integrated into day-to-day work activities so that apprentices maximised their learning opportunities.

Examples of good practice:

- The lead provider making effective use of an industry liaison panel in the development of creative work-based learning opportunities.
- A positive integration of academic/work-based learning built into work-based assessments.
- The appointment of a lead role for apprenticeships to benchmark against sector best practice and actively engage with employers.

Examples of areas for development:

- Employers wanted improved communication on the support and academic progress of apprentices, and greater engagement in the design of the programme.

Supporting apprentice achievement

Apprentices should be supported by their employer and training provider throughout the apprenticeship. The arrangements will be influenced by the context and requirements of the key stakeholders.

The QAA *Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales* outlined a number of key roles that were included in examples of good practice in supporting apprentice achievement. The examples of good practice and associated roles are outlined below:

- A Practice Tutor that facilitated the integration of academic and work-based learning, and performed a key academic liaison role between the provider, apprentices and employers.
- A Central Apprenticeship Unit responsible for the development of apprentice provision and supporting apprentice achievement, by monitoring the performance and engagement of every apprentice through the learning plans.
- An Apprentice Liaison Officer, for each degree apprentice, who maintained records of all progress meetings which formed part of a commentary on the apprentice journey through the programme, and included signposting of apprentices to support services, such as Student Services, as appropriate.
- The complementary roles of the Degree Apprenticeships Lead and the Personal Tutor that strengthened the tripartite link between the apprentice, the employer and the provider, and provided effective contact points for the provider in support of apprentice achievement.

Induction

Apprentices should be provided with a formal induction on starting a higher education apprenticeship so they are briefed on all elements of the programme and provided with relevant information such as:

- the training plan/process
- a skills audit/training needs analysis
- the tripartite review process
- terms and conditions of the programme
- key contacts
- relevant legislation, including health and safety
- risk assessments, safeguarding (and 'Prevent' duty)
- resources, including any virtual learning environment and apprenticeship handbooks/guides
- support services and careers (including access to any resources/facilities of a students' union)
- complaints and appeals processes, and whistleblowing procedures.

Different approaches may be taken to the induction, which may also involve the line managers of the apprentices. The induction process provides a valuable opportunity to highlight the importance of the different elements - such as plans for the tripartite reviews which enable the apprentice, employer and training provider to engage with the planning of learning activities and monitoring of progress. Training providers can support the apprentice's line manager/supervisor/mentor involved in the training/mentoring/assessment of the apprentice, through the development of guides and resources for mentoring, and the provision of opportunities for training and development.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

An aim with apprenticeships, as with other provision, is to encourage participation from individuals with a diverse range of backgrounds, experience and skills. Taking steps to raise the profile of apprenticeships and working with other organisations to develop/show the potential progression routes is important in raising awareness of the opportunities on offer.

It is important to embed equality, diversity and inclusion from the design and development stages of an apprenticeship, through to the learning and teaching/training and evaluation phases. This approach should enable the creation of a collegiate learning environment where apprentices feel safe, can use their experiences in a positive way and are supported in discussing and reflecting upon relevant issues. Additional support needs may be identified from the point of an apprentice applying to the programme or as the apprenticeship progresses. Monitoring attendance, engagement and progress is also an important part of identifying any specific needs. Therefore, providers and employers should work collaboratively with an apprentice to identify and implement appropriate support mechanisms, which could include the provision of additional sessions/support to meet the specific needs of apprentices.

Workplace mentoring

A workplace mentor can play a key role in the provision of learning opportunities. A well understood and consistent mentoring process offers many benefits.

Mentors should:

- help apprentices to identify relevant work activity that can operate as a source for work-integrated learning
- advise on the development of work-based projects
- provide feedback on the development of professional competence
- formatively comment on progress in achieving negotiated work-integrated learning objectives.

Where mentors are appointed, the arrangements between the training provider and employer should include the roles and responsibilities of these mentors. There are likely to be visits from training provider staff members (such as a module/liaison tutor) to the apprentice's workplace which enables regular contact between the tutor, the apprentice and the workplace mentor.

Progress reviews

In addition to the numerous benefits of a workplace mentor, formal requirements for progress reviews may be outlined by the relevant funding rules in the UK nation, and it is therefore important that providers keep abreast of these. For example, in England the [2023-24](#) funding rules outline that formally recorded progress reviews between the training provider and employer must take place at least four times per year with an expected frequency of at least every 12 weeks unless there is an evidenced reason for a different frequency. These progress reviews are gateway requirements (with gateway sitting between the end of the training and the start of the end-point assessment period) and a workplace mentor is a key contact. The 12-week progress review point is also used in Scotland and Wales, and while there is not a formal 12-week progress review requirement in Northern Ireland, progress reviews are still an important part of the process.

The need for regular progress reviews is also highlighted in the [QAA Higher Education in Apprenticeships Characteristics Statement](#). These progress reviews, or tripartite reviews (involving the apprentice, employer and provider) can be used to monitor and record achievement, progression and success. Reviews can facilitate liaison between the parties, the implementation of theory into practice, and enable the identification and tracking of targets.

Progress reviews contribute to:

- the personalisation of the curriculum
- planning and coordinating of the on and off-the-job learning activities
- supporting the apprentices to evidence their achievement of the KSBs/learning outcomes
- aligning assessment activity to meet the academic requirements of the programme.

Progress reviews are a learning and teaching/training opportunity that facilitate:

- the checking of knowledge and understanding
- the reviewing of feedback
- signposting of additional support.

Progress reviews also enable the discussion of wider elements, such as the personal development curriculum and checking understanding of fundamental British values in the context of work as outlined in the [Education inspection framework \(EIF\)](#) in England (for example - through a discussion about democracy in the workplace).

The resourcing of these progress reviews is a key consideration in terms of the selection of appropriately qualified and experienced personnel and the time required. An example from the area of health, involves a higher education (training) provider registered healthcare professional being employed to facilitate the reviews, which include contextualisation of theory to practice, the linking of KSB's/learning outcomes to practice, and health and wellbeing.

Where a lead provider is working in partnership with another organisation, there should be clear arrangements for the monitoring of progress. As well as the core elements of the apprenticeship, any additional requirements - such as where apprentices are able to work on the development of English and maths skills - should be considered to ensure that appropriate progress is being made. These additional requirements may vary by UK nation, and the associated framework/standard in terms of any specific entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme.

Feedback

As with other provision, feedback is essential in enabling apprentices to progress. Features of effective feedback include, ensuring that it is:

- clear and detailed
- accessible
- related to the elements being assessed (for example, knowledge, skills and behaviours/ learning outcomes)
- informative, and includes positive points and areas for development as appropriate
- timely - received in an appropriate timescale to inform an apprentice's future learning and subsequent assessments.

Reflective questions

Learning and teaching/training - design/delivery

- What are the key requirements that learning and teaching/training (and the associated learning outcomes) need to meet on the apprenticeship programme?
- How are you embedding and enabling the achievement of the required knowledge, skills and behaviours/learning outcomes within learning and teaching/training, and making this transparent to apprentices?
- How are the needs of employers incorporated into the design and delivery of learning and teaching/training?
- Is there any co-ordination with the human resource systems during the development of any individual learning and teaching/training plans to ensure that the required employer contextualisation is effective?
- What model of learning and teaching/training are you using for apprenticeships in relation to your other provision? For example, are you co-teaching apprentices with students/learners on a traditional degree/other higher education programme or providing specific learning and training delivery for apprentices, or using a mixture of approaches?
- As applicable, how are you embedding elements of the personal development curriculum from the [Education inspection framework \(EIF\)](#) used by Ofsted in England (such as fundamental British values) within your teaching/training?
- What bespoke apprenticeship-specific systems/structures do you need to put in place to ensure that you are not rebadging your existing full-time provision?
- How are you ensuring investment in apprenticeship delivery from the senior leadership team?
- How are you designing the learning and teaching/training to facilitate recognition of prior learning (and the potential shortening of the apprenticeship)?
- How are you embedding equality, diversity and inclusion within the apprenticeship, including consideration of any reasonable adjustments?
- How are you making use of technology in the arrangements for learning and teaching/training?
- Do you have clear alignment between the apprenticeship framework/standard, learning outcomes, learning and teaching/training activities and assessment?
- What mechanisms do you put in place to ensure that your learning and teaching/training activities are current/up-to-date/topical, work-based and reflect the needs/practices of employers?
- How are you standardising the learning and teaching/training experience across multiple tutors and ensuring that good practices are shared?

Support for apprentices

- How does the design and delivery of the apprenticeship facilitate achievement?
- How does the off-the-job training integrate into the apprentices' experience on-the-job?
- What arrangements are in place to support apprentices (including progress reviews)?
- How do you ensure that progress reviews facilitate the development of apprentices over time?
- How do you encourage apprentices to develop their English, maths and digital literacy skills as applicable?
- What information is provided to apprentices so they are aware of the learning and teaching/training opportunities and facilities that are available?
- How do you encourage apprentices to develop their support networks?
- How will you track the attendance and progression of apprentices (including monitoring the completion of the required on and off-the-job training)?

Support for employers

- How will you involve employers in the arrangements for learning and teaching/training and keep them informed (including progress reviews)?

Support for staff

- What staff roles are required in order to provide apprentices with a cohesive, high-quality learning and teaching/training experience (for example, teaching staff, workplace mentors)?
- What qualifications and/or continued professional development opportunities are expected/available for staff involved in delivering and supporting higher education apprenticeship programmes? For example, do you have arrangements for industry placements in the vocational area, mentoring and coaching qualifications and training in relation to elements such as safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty?
- How will you ensure that all staff members (and the associated parts of the organisation(s)) are aware of the requirements of higher education apprenticeships, and that they work together to support apprentices?

Arrangements for quality assurance/enhancement

- What are the internal arrangements for monitoring the quality of learning and teaching/training (including at any partner organisations)?
- What steps do you take to enhance the quality of learning and teaching/training?
- What are the regulatory and external quality assurance requirements for learning and teaching/training on the higher education apprenticeships you deliver?

Further resources

Reference points

[QAA - UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)

[QAA - Quality Code - Advice and Guidance](#) - for example, [Learning and Teaching](#) and [Work-based Learning](#)

[ENQA - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance \(ESG, 2015\)](#)

[QAA - Subject Benchmark Statements](#)

[QAA Scotland - Valuing and recognising prior learning and experience](#)

Guidance

[ASET - Good Practice guides](#)

[Jisc - Apprenticeship toolkit](#)

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