

LANTRA

Frequently asked questions about Apprenticeships

1. What is an Apprenticeship?

It is important to understand that an Apprenticeship is not a qualification in itself, but is a package of learning and qualifications combined with practical work experience gained through employment in a chosen industry.

Apprenticeships involve a partnership approach between apprentices, employers and training providers. They are designed by industry, developed by businesses, training providers and Sector Skills Councils, and therefore tailored to meet the needs of each specific sector.

An Apprenticeship Framework contains the following mandatory components:

- A competence-based element – Diploma in work-based (previously known as NVQ)
- A knowledge-based element which tests the underpinning knowledge either in the form of independently assessed units or a separate qualification
- Transferable skills – these are key skills or functional skills
- A module on employment rights and responsibilities

These component qualifications are achieved through:

- On the job experience, an apprentice will work alongside other employees and learn the skills of the job working towards a work based qualification such as a Diploma in work-based Animal Care (previously NVQ).
- Off the job learning, apprentices spend time with a learning provider, working towards a technical qualification which provides them with the underpinning knowledge and key skills required for their job. This can be on a day or block release basis.

Both qualifications are usually at Level 2 and 3 and the amount of time spent studying varies; it can be anything from 100 to 1,000 hours over the course of an Apprenticeship, depending on the sector. Apprentices will also gain key transferable skills (key/functional skills) - like communication, information technology, maths and English.

2. What are key/functional skills?

These are the essential skills that learners need to support them in their job. They include:

Key Skills

communication;

application of number;

information and communications technology;*

working with others;*

improving own learning and performance;*

and problem solving.*

Functional Skills

English;

maths;

information communication

technology*

**Optional*

3. How long do Apprenticeships last?

Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships last as long as it takes to achieve competence in the job for which the apprentice is training. This varies by sector and by level but, in general, Apprenticeships last between one and three years.

4. Do apprentices take exams?

Most assessment is carried out in the workplace but there maybe a requirement to take some tests depending on the Apprenticeship - the key and functional skills are tested via a short test.

5. Why is it a good idea for employers?

Apprenticeships can help businesses across all industries by offering a route to harness fresh new talent. UK businesses consider skills shortages and recruitment difficulties a bigger threat to performance than soaring oil prices and declining consumer spending, and more than a quarter of these rate this form of vocational training higher than any other qualification.

Apprenticeships ensure that your workforce has the practical skills and qualifications your organisation needs now and in the future. The mixture of on and off the job learning ensures they learn the skills that work best for your business. Over 130,000 companies offer apprentice places because they understand the benefits that apprentices bring to their business – increased productivity, improved competitiveness and a committed and competent work-force.

6. Is there a cost for employers?

All employed apprentices must receive a wage of no less than £95 per week. However, recent research found that apprentices earn an average of £170 net pay per week. The highest paying sector is Electro-technical at £210 per week.

Where the apprentice is 19 or over, employers are expected to make a contribution towards the cost of training. The contribution does not necessarily have to be a cash payment to the provider but can be other contributions that reduce the cost of delivery.

7. What is the target number of apprentice uptake in England?

There are 130,000 employers currently offering apprenticeships, with a target of 1 in 5 young people undertaking an Apprenticeship and an overall target of 400,000 people in learning by 2020.

8. Can apprentices claim additional benefits (such as child care)?

For detailed information on claiming benefits, please contact the department for work and pensions. www.dwp.gov.uk/

9. Are apprentices entitled to Tax Credits whilst on the scheme?

For detailed information on claiming benefits, please contact the department for work and pensions. www.dwp.gov.uk/

10. What industries are Apprenticeships available in?

There are more than 180 career choices available in approximately 80 sectors of industry and commerce, ranging from accountancy to football, engineering to veterinary nursing, business administration to construction. They generally fall into one of two categories: 'Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level or 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels

In the environmental and land-based sector, Apprenticeships are available in:

- Agricultural crops, livestock and mixed farming
- (Amenity and Production) Horticulture
- Animal care
- Environmental conservation
- Equine
- Farriery
- Fencing
- Floristry
- Game and wildlife management
- Land-based service engineering
- Trees and timber
- Veterinary nursing

11. What are most popular apprenticeship schemes?

Some of the most popular apprenticeships for the environmental and land-based industries include: Agricultural crops, livestock and mixed farming, Horticulture, Animal care, Equine and Veterinary nursing.

12. Are their working hours/conditions the same as other employees?

Apprentices are employed, they are therefore treated like other employees and are entitled to at least 20 days' paid holiday per year as well as bank holidays.

13. How will taking on an apprentice help firms cope with recession?

59% of businesses report that training apprentices is more cost-effective than hiring skilled staff, with 59% believing that Apprenticeships lead to lower overall training costs and 53% feeling that they reduce recruitment costs.

14. How are potential apprentices vetted? Do employers get a say in the final choice?

Yes. The selection process is just like any other job application process and individuals are put through a series of interviews, and in some cases, tests, to establish if they are the right fit for the role. It may be the learner is already employed, so if the employer agrees, they can become an apprentice where they currently work.

15. What is the average age?

Apprenticeships are open to all age groups (above 16yrs) whether you are just leaving school, have been working for years or are seeking to start a new career.

16. What key factors encourage take up of apprenticeships?

Apprentices will earn while they learn and will gain practical and transferable skills whilst keeping their options open. Career progression for apprentices is excellent and over the course of their career they can earn on average £100,000 more than those who don't do an Apprenticeship.

Some Apprenticeships already attract UCAS points and work is being carried out to extend this system and ensure that the qualifications gained during an Apprenticeship count towards an individual's university application.

Depending on the Apprenticeship chosen, they may also study for a Technical Certificate which will give further knowledge and understanding of the job. This might be a BTEC National Diploma, a City & Guilds Progression Award or similar. The apprentices will also learn about English and Maths. These important transferable skills will help them in any job and make them more employable whatever career they choose to follow.

Apprenticeships can be demanding but they are very rewarding. Because Apprenticeships train learners in the skills employers want, they give them choices in their career. When the apprenticeship has finished there is the opportunity to carry on working, maybe get promoted or go on to higher education in a college or university.

17. How do you find out what is available in your area?

There is lots of information on the Apprenticeship website where you can find out what Apprenticeship places are available or an employer can register and advertise their vacancy: www.apprenticeships.org.uk/

The Lantra CourseFinder also provides information on what is available in what area: www.lantracoursefinder.co.uk

18. Is there a limit to the number of apprentices that an employer can take on?

No they can take on as many as they can afford. The employer will be responsible for giving the apprentice an induction into their role and provide on-the-job training. They are also responsible for the wages of the apprentices. You need to take your own advice in relation to your rights as an employer as an apprentice will be classed the same as your other employees.

19. How often do apprentices attend college?

This varies from programme to programme it could be one day a week or block release.

20. Is there a chance to do distance learning instead of attending college?

This would need to be discussed with the provider offering the training but some providers will supply 100% work based learning.

21. Is it just a cheap 'labour' option?

No. New advances are constantly challenging businesses to keep pace or catch up. Apprenticeships can help your workforce master the latest techniques to fill the skills gaps you have and ensure against those that are likely to arise. By taking on apprentices, you develop the specialist skills you need to keep pace with the latest technology and working practices in your sector.

Research conducted on behalf of the LSC (Populus. February 2008) to launch the first National Apprenticeship Week revealed:

- 77% of employers believe apprenticeships make them more competitive;
- 76% say that apprenticeships provide higher overall productivity;
- 80% feel that apprenticeships reduce staff turnover;
- 83% of employers rely on their apprenticeships programme to provide the skilled workers that they need for the future;
- Two-thirds of respondents believe that their apprenticeship programme helps them fill vacancies more quickly, whilst 88% believe that apprenticeships lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce.
- 59% report that training apprentices is more cost-effective than hiring skilled staff, with 59% believing that apprenticeships lead to lower overall training costs and 53% feeling that they reduce recruitment costs;

- In terms of the return on investment linked to apprenticeships, 41% say that their apprentices make a valuable contribution to the business during their training period, while a further third (33%) report that apprentices add value within their first few weeks (or even from Day One);
- 57% report a high proportion of their apprentices going on to management positions within the company.
- Over three-quarters of respondents expect apprenticeships to play a bigger part in their recruitment policy in the future.

22. Are there specific skills in demand and are there shortages in different parts of the country?

Unlike some sectors, the environmental and land-based sector is distributed across the length and breadth of England. Employers in the sector are currently reporting that high levels of their vacancies are hard-to-fill; however, the sector is becoming increasingly skilled and there is high demand for individuals with skills at an Apprenticeship level.

23. If a company has to make redundancies, aren't apprentices most at risk?

No. Apprentices are treated the same as other employees.

24. What advice would you give to an employer who says they would like to help but can't afford to at the moment?

Lantra suggests that they find out more details about Apprenticeships so they are fully informed and keep in touch so they receive information on any new developments.

25. Do apprentices take jobs away from 'full time' employees?

No. Apprenticeships provide the opportunity for full time/ experienced employees to pass on their skills to the apprentice, therefore maintaining the skills of the workforce and ensuring these are replaced as the workforce gets older.

26. What are the benefits to employers?

Apprenticeships ensure that your workforce has the practical skills and qualifications your organisation needs now and in the future. The mixture of on and off job learning ensures they learn the skills that work best for your business. Over 130,000 companies offer apprentice places because they understand the benefits that apprentices bring to their business – increased productivity, improved competitiveness and a committed and competent work-force.

Improve your productivity

Because apprentices receive relevant training, they can have an immediate effect and make a real and more meaningful contribution to your business. Their training is 'on the job', so they can directly gain from the skills and experience of those around them.

Motivate your workforce

Apprenticeships are available to both new and current employees. As a result of their training, apprentices are highly motivated and eager to know more. The extra responsibility also makes them feel more valued and they are easier to retain in the long term.

Give them relevant training

Apprenticeships provide your workforce with expertise that's not only specific to your industry, but also directly relevant to your business. They are literally designed around your business needs by industry specialists who genuinely understand what you do.

Avoid skills shortages

Change and innovation are always with us. New advances are constantly challenging us to keep pace or catch up. Apprenticeships can help your workforce master the latest techniques to fill the skills gaps you have and insure against those that are likely to arise. By taking on apprentices, you develop the specialist skills you need to keep pace with the latest technology and working practices in your sector.

27. Does Lantra provide financial support/incentives to employers especially in the current economic climate? Does the support vary depending on the age of apprentice and does it impact on their wages?

Lantra does not provide any financial support. Lantra, along with employers and training providers, develop the qualifications that make up an Apprenticeship.

If the apprentice is aged between 16 and 18 the Government fully funds the training costs of an Apprenticeship programme.

Where the apprentice is 19 or over, employers are expected to make a contribution towards the cost of training. The contribution does not necessarily have to be a cash payment to the provider but can be other contributions that reduce the cost of delivery.

28. Hardship funding

Hardship funding is only available to learners under 25.

Where learners are made redundant between the ages of 16-18 year olds, they should be treated as programme-led apprentices and are expected to claim the Education Maintenance Allowance.

Adult learners (19-24) may be following a programme-led apprenticeship where they are not employed and are therefore entitled to the Education Maintenance Allowance.

Learners aged 19-24 hardship funds should be made available for a period of up to 6 months for a max of £95/week based on 30 hour working week. It is expected that learners made redundant and accessing hardship funds should move back into employment within this time. All this should be discussed with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

29. How are apprenticeships funded?

Apprenticeships are made up of different qualifications and courses. It is the qualifications within the framework that each attract their own funding.

Competence A Diploma in Workbased (NVQ replacement) with assessment methods designed to test competence

Knowledge Some frameworks have a technical certificate whilst others demonstrate knowledge within the Diploma element

Transferable, or 'key', skills Frameworks include as a minimum, Key Skills in Communication and Application of Number, which as of the 1st September will be replaced with Functional Skills in English and Maths

30. As an employer, will I get help with funding?

Employers are required to employ the Apprentice, pay their wages, and in some cases contribute themselves to towards the training costs.

31. Who applies for the funding?

Funding is applied for by the training provider i.e. college or private training provider as the funding is used for the delivery and assessment of the apprenticeship.

32. Does the employer pay for the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship?

Dependent on the age of the employee, the employer may be required to contribute to the costs of the additional courses within the apprenticeship. The contribution will be discussed and agreed with the training provider and employer prior to sign up.

33. Does age make a difference to the funding?

Yes. If you are aged 16 - 18 then the apprenticeship will be fully funded by Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). If you are 19+ the funding will be provided by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) however, there will be approximately a 50% reduction.

34. What is an Apprenticeship Training Agency?

This is an organisation set up to recruit and employ apprentices, who are hired out to a host employer whilst they undertake the apprenticeship. The host employer pays the ATA a fee for the services of the apprentice.

This type of agency can be set up where small employers are not able to guarantee that they can employ an apprentice for the full period of their apprenticeship or offer the full range of work activity necessary. It is the role of the agency to ensure the apprentice continues in employment throughout their apprenticeship by finding them another host employer if circumstances change.

The ATA also has responsibility for the welfare, health and safety, learning and employment of the apprentice, which can be attractive for the host employer.

The ATA is responsible for making sure the host employer understands the apprenticeship and will be able to support the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship.

The ATA will work with the training provider to ensure the appropriate training takes place. The training can only be through a Skills Funding Agency contracted provider.

The ATA must be aware and comply with relevant employment law and regulation.

This model will usually require the employer or ATA to be registered with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and further information can be obtained from their website www.gla.gov.uk

35 What is a Group Training Association (GTA)?

This model is where a group of employers come together to access, manage or deliver training to a group of employees. The training may be towards an Apprenticeship, a vocational qualification or 'non-accredited' training that does not lead to a qualification.

In this model apprentices will be employed by individual employers/businesses but they may be a distance away from their local provider so they come together for delivery of provision. Many GTAs deliver training but some work with training providers on behalf of members. By working together, employers are better able to deliver economies of scale or can create enough demand to encourage training providers to develop courses that meet their needs.