

Progression to Higher Education from Veterinary Nursing and Animal-related Apprenticeships

**A report by Lantra on
behalf of VETNET**

September 2011



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report presents the findings of research into progression routes to Higher Education (HE) in veterinary and animal-related subjects. It is the result of collaboration between Lantra and VETNET Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) South West. Both organisations have a common interest in researching progression routes in veterinary and animal-related disciplines into Higher Education.

Lantra is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the land-based and environmental industries. As an employer-led organisation licensed by governments across the UK, Lantra seeks to determine, promote and ensure that there are appropriate levels of skills and business development support for businesses and individuals within the sector. The animal health and welfare sector employs approximately 107,000 people across the South West region working in animal care, veterinary nursing, agricultural livestock, equine and farriery.¹

VETNET LLN was launched as a three-year project in 2007 as a National Network of Veterinary Schools, Universities and Colleges committed to supporting and enhancing opportunities for students on veterinary and animal-related vocational courses to progress into Higher Education. It formed part of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Widening Participation programme where a series of LLNs were established on a regional, sub-regional or subject related basis. VETNET LLN was established as a subject-based LLN and was one of only two national LLNs (the other being the National Arts Learning Network). The overall objective for LLNs is to improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through Higher Education.

VETNET LLN has operated through six regions across England and a national office. The timescale of delivery has been staggered across the regions as the three-year HEFCE funded activity commenced at differing times. In the South West, VETNET LLN is hosted by the University of Bristol within the veterinary school and is a partnership of HEIs and FECs across the region. The funded period is due to end in December 2011.

As the funded period for the national VETNET LLN nears an end the original aims and objectives of the initiative are being championed by the VETNET LLN Association, which is a membership funded association. Regional groups with representation from VETNET LLN's partner HEIs and FECs have also been set up to sustain and take forward the work started by the LLN into the post-HEFCE funded period and support future activity at regional and local level.

¹ South West Factsheet 2010-11, Lantra

The research covers the South West of England (specifically Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcester and Wiltshire) and focuses on the following industries:

- Agricultural livestock
- Animal care
- Equine
- Farriery
- Veterinary nursing industries.

1.2 Policy context

This research into HE progression routes from veterinary nursing and animal-based Apprenticeships comes at a time when Apprenticeships are a favoured way of delivering skills in a period of austerity. The White Paper *Skills for Sustainable Growth* announced government commitment to an additional 75,000 adult Apprenticeships via an additional £250m funding over the spending review period.² There has also been a drive to higher level skills via the publication and recommendations of the Leitch review of skills in 2006 and increasing employer ambition in developing higher level skills relevant to industry.³

Alongside this commitment, the recent White Paper states that Apprenticeships from now on are to focus on acquiring Level 3 (i.e. technical level) skills rather than the traditional focus on Level 2 skills.² There is also a commitment in the *Skills for Sustainable Growth* White Paper to ensure that adequate progression routes are in place from Level 3 to Higher Education and higher level Apprenticeships (Level 4).

While the White Paper does not suggest a clear mechanism to improve progression routes, existing policy has similar objectives and already has the infrastructure in place to deliver better progression to Higher Education from vocational routes (i.e. LLNs). The widening participation agenda aims to increase access to Higher Education for people from deprived backgrounds. A key initiative in the agenda is the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) widening participation programme, which has funded a series of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) which improve the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through Higher Education.

² BIS, *Skills for Sustainable Growth*, 2011

³ HM Treasury, *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy*, 2006

Changes to the funding environment in Higher Education also mean that there could be an increase in demand for HE delivered and accessed through non-standard routes. In December 2010, The Browne Review of university funding announced changes to the way Higher Education is funded in England.⁴ Tuition fees for students will increase to a maximum of £9,000 per annum from September 2012. This raises fees beyond the current cap of £3,290 but changes in arrangements means students will borrow the fees from the Government and will only start to be repaid when students earn over £21,000 pa. The result of these changes could mean an increase in demand for Higher Education delivered through less costly routes, as students avoid the costs of high fee-charging universities and costs of living away from home. It also could mean that students will increasingly access HE while they are working on a part-time basis.

It is clear that the work undertaken by LLNs will remain relevant politically and given the renewed importance of Apprenticeships in the skills system and the changes in HE funding, this research is timely. It is also important to include well-documented evidence related to Apprenticeships and progression to Higher Education in all future reviews of the South West Progression Agreement.

1.3 Rationale

One of the aims of the national VETNET LLN was to comprehensively map qualifications in the veterinary and animal-related sector, develop the curriculum in partnership with institutions and compile a catalogue of professional development opportunities. The network is organised regionally, with a coordinator appointed to drive activity in each area from a Higher Education institution located in the region.

In the South West region, the focus has been to develop a Regional Progression Agreement with FE and HE providers. The agreement:

- Sets out clear and consistent progression pathways for students with Veterinary and Animal-Related Vocational Qualifications (VARVQs) at Level 3
- Ensures that students with a VARVQ are treated in a way which is equitable and fair
- Clearly articulates the requirements for entry onto specified undergraduate programmes for applicants with VARVQs
- Creates a consistency of approach to progression from VARVQ programmes across the region, while retaining institutional autonomy in relation to admissions
- Encourages HE providers who sign up to the Agreement to apply a holistic approach when judging the suitability of an applicant.

⁴ Lord Browne, Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, 2010

During the development of the Agreement, the focus of attention was on the Level 3 vocational qualifications, which are most widely offered to full-time students in land-based and general FE colleges (e.g. Edexcel BTEC National Diploma and City and Guilds Advanced National Certificate, Advanced National Diploma). While the relevant animal-related and veterinary Apprenticeships are also within the scope of the Agreement as potential progression routes to HE, there was a limited evidence base supporting their inclusion. Time and budget constraints meant that this evidence base was not in place to support this access route in the progression Agreement. As a result, particular barriers to progression for apprentices accessing HE were not identified and explored in detail and not fully reflected in the Agreement.

This research project aims to provide equal consideration of progression into HE for apprentices alongside more common vocational access routes. It contributes to VETNET LLN's objectives as well as feeding into Lantra's research strategy, curriculum development and occupational standards.

1.4 Research aims

Building on the rationale of this research, the following aims were identified to best structure the methodology, findings and recommendations of the research:

- To explore employer and apprentice awareness of the value of Apprenticeships for career progression or into Higher Education
- To identify employer and apprentice demand and requirement for Higher Education provision
- To identify current provider attitudes and opportunities to progression into Higher Education from Apprenticeships
- To identify the Higher Education provision that is accessible to apprentices in the South West region
- To explore employer and apprentice awareness of Apprenticeships in their industry.

How these research aims will be addressed will be discussed in Chapter 2 (Methodology) of this report. The remainder of the report will be structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology
- Chapter 3 reviews some key evidence about apprentice progression to HE
- Chapter 4 maps higher level provision in animal care and veterinary studies
- Chapter 5 presents results and analysis from a survey of employers
- Chapter 6 presents results and analysis from a survey of apprentices
- Chapter 7 presents results and analysis from a survey of providers
- Chapter 8 concludes and makes recommendations.

2 Methodology

Working in partnership with VETNET Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) South West, Lantra implemented the following research process in addressing the key aims of the project. The following chapter will discuss the rationale for each stage, what it involved and a general discussion of robustness of results.

The aim of the desk research is to provide the context on the subject of progression routes to Higher Education for apprentices. Information from HEIs and FE providers on their courses was gathered in order to assess the level of supply of potential routes into HE available to apprentices in veterinary nursing and animal-related disciplines.

There is very little existing information on progression routes to HE for this particular subject area, let alone specific to the South West region. In order to meet the specific research aims, we initiated a primary research exercise to gather information from the three groups involved in the progression of apprentices to Higher Education; namely employers, apprentices and providers.

As the principal consideration of the research is attitudes among employers, apprentices and providers to progression in veterinary and animal-related subjects, the design of the research method reflects this by following a targeted sampling methodology. Lantra's Industry Partnership Manager and Vetnet LNN's regional coordinator selected employers for the survey who they knew had active apprentices within animal care and veterinary studies. Similarly, the principal providers of animal-related and veterinary subjects were targeted from all FE and HE institutions in the South West. Overall, we consulted with 125 respondents across the industry.

Figure 2.1 shows the breakdown of respondents across our three groups.

Figure 2.1: Respondents by group

Group	Respondents
Employers	46
Apprentices	70
Providers	10

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer, Apprentice and Provider Survey, Lantra 2011

Our targeting strategy means that we are unable to make statistical inferences from the primary research. This is because there are no available statistics on the total population of employers who employ apprentices as well as apprentices themselves specifically within the animal care and veterinary industries in the South West.

In terms of providers, there are 13 providers covered by the current regional progression Agreement and 16 institutions that offer veterinary and animal-related Higher Education. We have surveyed nine of these 16 institutions which represents a 56% response rate. We surveyed a mixture of admissions tutors, department heads, programme leaders/managers and directors. There is a mix of large HE dedicated institutions, smaller FE providers who also offer HE and specialist land-based colleges.

The results of the primary research exercise were analysed and are presented within this report. The results are contextualised against the desk research conducted and specific conclusions and recommendations are formulated.

3 Existing evidence on Apprenticeship progression

There is no research available on the extent of progression routes from Apprenticeships into Higher Education in the veterinary and animal-related area. This research represents a first attempt to identify key issues in this area. However, it is important to consider the evidence of apprentice progression into HE more generally and within other sectors as a way of validating and benchmarking our results. Some general key findings in terms of Apprenticeship progression are explored in this chapter.

In 2009, HEFCE published research into progression rates of apprentices into Higher Education by analysing the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA) student records as well as the Individualised and Work-based Learner Records held by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which has now been subsumed into the Skills Funding Agency. The research shows that of the apprentices completing an advanced Apprenticeship in 2002/03, around 6% had progressed into Higher Education four years later. The research shows how this varies by sectors where Apprenticeships are most common, which does not include the veterinary and animal care sector.⁵

Progression rates from Apprenticeships are low when compared to rates from other Level 3 qualifications such as A Levels. The literature explains this lack of progression within apprentices as a function of employer demand for higher level skills (e.g. leadership, management, technical and scientific skills). Qualitative research into employer experiences in progression of apprentices, which interviewed key large employers across different sectors, shows that the extent of progression is driven by business needs and their disposition to demand higher level skills and is higher in the automotive and engineering sectors for example. Progression is a means to an end in increasing productivity in many cases.⁶

Other explanations include the lack of recognition of Apprenticeships as a valid entry route in many admissions policies in HE provision. Alongside this, Apprenticeship frameworks have not attracted UCAS points on an equitable basis and there is a perception of limited information of Apprenticeship frameworks.⁷ While there has been significant work in developing progression agreements coordinated by LLNs across the country, this is still likely to be an issue. Other supply side issues include concerns over the flexibility of Higher Education courses in delivering courses that complement work commitments.⁸

⁵ HEFCE, Pathways to Higher Education: Apprenticeships, May 2009

⁶ CFE, The Road Less Travelled: Experiences of Employers that Support the Progression of Advanced Apprentices to Higher Education, 2011

⁷ Linking London LLN, Quality of Admissions Information for Applicants to Full-time Undergraduate study, Feb 2010

⁸ UVAC, Progression from Vocational and Applied Learning to Higher Education in England, 2009

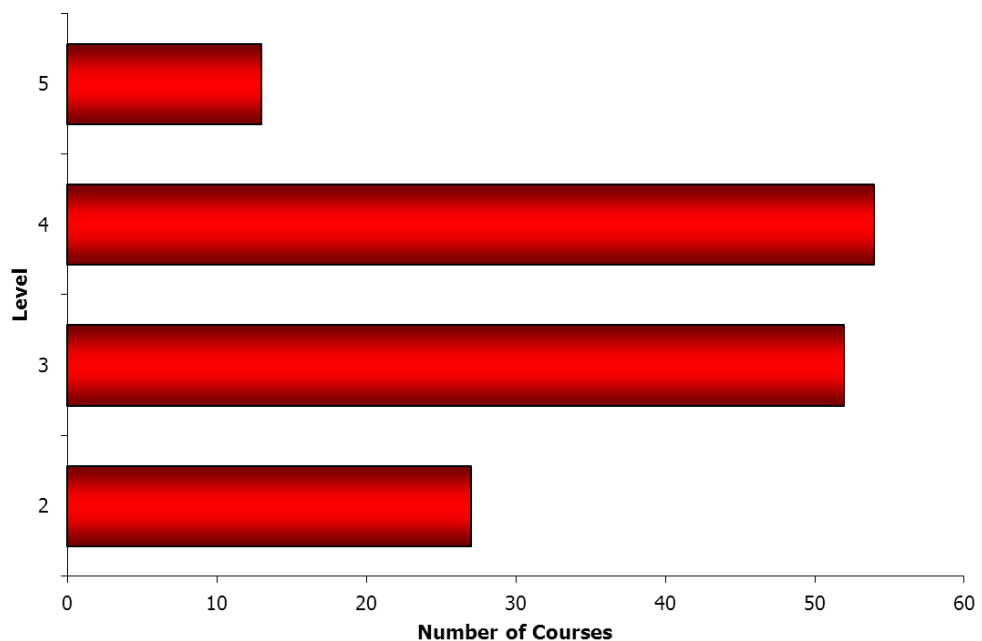
In terms of the characteristics of individuals who progress, 9% of advanced apprentices who progress are female compared to 4% who are male. The majority of apprentices progressing belong to the white ethnic group.⁹

⁹ HEFCE, Pathways to Higher Education: Apprenticeships, May 2009

4 Mapping progression opportunities

This chapter presents the results of a mapping exercise of courses and institutions offering Further and Higher Education provision in animal care and veterinary studies. Overall, 146 mainstream courses were identified in the South West Region. This includes Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 and higher awards. The majority of courses available were Level 4 (54) followed by Level 3 (52) with postgraduate level courses the least common type of provision.

Figure 4.1: Course by level



Source: Lantra, 2011

In terms of the spatial distribution of courses, the greatest concentration of courses is in Gloucestershire (one third of provision) followed by Cornwall (23%) and Devon (12%). This pattern holds true when looking at Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications only. Figure 4.2 shows the full results.

Figure 4.2: Course by sub-region and selected levels

Sub-region	All		Level 3		Level 4	
	Courses	% of total	Courses	% of total	Courses	% of total
Bristol, Bath & North Somerset	10	7%	5	9%	4	8%
Cornwall	34	23%	13	24%	12	23%
Devon	18	12%	4	7%	9	17%
Dorset	12	8%	8	15%	2	4%
Gloucestershire	48	33%	16	30%	15	29%
Somerset	11	8%	2	4%	5	10%
Wiltshire	13	9%	6	11%	5	10%
Total	146	100%	54	100%	52	100%

Source: Lantra, 2011

Among Level 3 and Level 4 courses, the most common industry area is animal care with over half of all provision in that area. Equine was also a common area with around a third of provision. There is more provision at Level 4 for veterinary studies than at Level 3, which is contrary to other industries where there is greater provision at Level 3.

Figure 4.3: Course by industry and selected levels

Industry	Level 3		Level 4+	
	Courses	% of total	Courses	% of total
Agricultural livestock	2	4%	1	2%
Animal care	28	54%	29	54%
Equine	17	33%	16	30%
Farriery	0	0%	0	0%
Veterinary	5	10%	8	15%
Total	52	100%	54	100%

Source: Lantra, 2011

5 Results - employers

5.1 Sample characteristics

We surveyed 46 employers regarding progression routes to Higher Education for apprentices. Figure 5.1 shows the split of employers and employees by industry. Over two fifths of respondents stated they operated in the veterinary nursing industry (41%) and 35% classified themselves as operating in the equine industry. Only one farriery business and four businesses in animal care were surveyed. The sample of veterinary nursing businesses also represents the largest number of employees in our sample of 293, with an average of 15 employees per business. Animal care has the next highest ratio of employees to businesses (9:5) followed by equine (7:1).

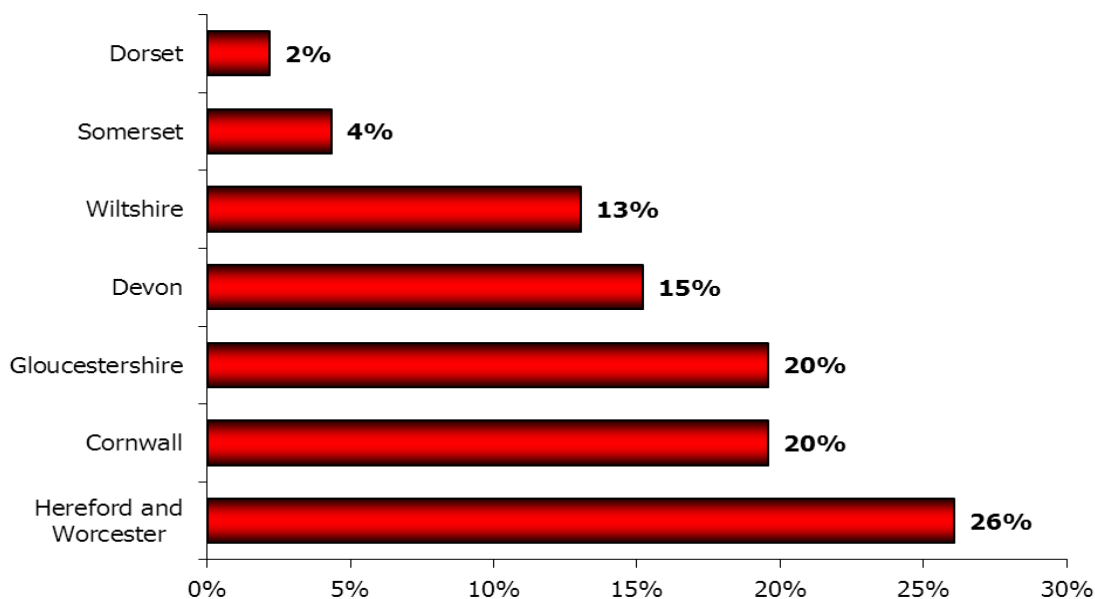
Figure 5.1: Employers and employees by industry

Industry	Employers		Employees		Employees per business
	Count	% total	Sum	% total	
Animal care	4	9%	38	8%	9.5
Equine	16	35%	114	25%	7.1
Farriery	1	2%	2	0.4%	2.0
Veterinary nursing	19	41%	293	64%	15.4
Agricultural livestock	6	13%	9.5	2%	1.6
Total	46	100%	456.5	100%	9.9

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

Over a quarter of responses were from employers in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, higher than any other county. However, this may be misleading as this category combines two counties. Other counties with relatively high response rates were Gloucestershire and Cornwall, making up one fifth of responses respectively. Fewest responses were gathered from Dorset and Somerset respectively.

Figure 5.2: Respondents by county group



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011. Base: 46 Respondents

The majority of respondents' employees were female, where 84% of the 458 employees were female and 16% male. The age of employees as stated by our respondents was skewed toward the lower age bandings. The highest proportion of employees were aged between 16 and 24 (one third) and 25 and 34 (23%) compared to 18% aged between 45 and 55 and just 6% aged between 55 and 64.¹⁰ This is contrary to the overall trend in the land-based sector of an older age profile. For example, in England the proportion of employees aged between 55 and 64 is 16% compared to 6% in our sample.¹¹

Figure 5.3: Reported employee age

Age group	Employees	% of total
16-24	43	33%
25-34	30	23%
35-44	23	18%
45-54	23	18%
55-64	8	6%
65+	4	3%
Total	131	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

¹⁰ Please note these findings are indicative only as they are calculated from a base of 131 employees which lacks statistical significance at standard confidence intervals and levels

¹¹ UK Skills Assessment 2010, Lantra.

Professional and associate professional categories were the most commonly cited occupational groups that employees belonged to with over a quarter of employees respectively. Skilled trades accounted for 15% of employment, which again is contrary to wider trends in the land-based sector where skilled trades are more common (for example, skilled trades account for 43% of land-based employment in England).

Figure 5.4: Reported employee occupation

Occupational group	Employees	Proportion of total
Managers	29	7%
Professional	113	29%
Associate professional/technical	108	27%
Admin	75	19%
Skilled trades	59	15%
Sales/customer service	6	2%
Other	3	1%
Total	393	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

Figure 5.5 examines occupational group by industry. Here we can see that the previous finding is driven by the veterinary nursing industry. The industry accounts for the largest amount of employment in our sample, and within this industry the most commonly cited occupational groups are associate professional and professional. The equine industry accounts for the second highest proportion of employment in our sample, however in this case, skilled trades are more prominent and not associate professional occupations.

Figure 5.5: Reported employee occupation by industry

Occupational group	Agricultural livestock	Animal care	Equine	Farriery	Veterinary nursing	Total
Managers	4	4	12	-	9	29
Professional	-	1	31	-	81	113
Associate professional/technical	-	-	4	-	104	108
Admin	1	1	8	-	65	75
Skilled trades	6	-	49	2	2	59
Sales/customer service	-	3	3	-	-	6
Other	-	-	3	-	-	3
Total	11	9	110	2	261	393

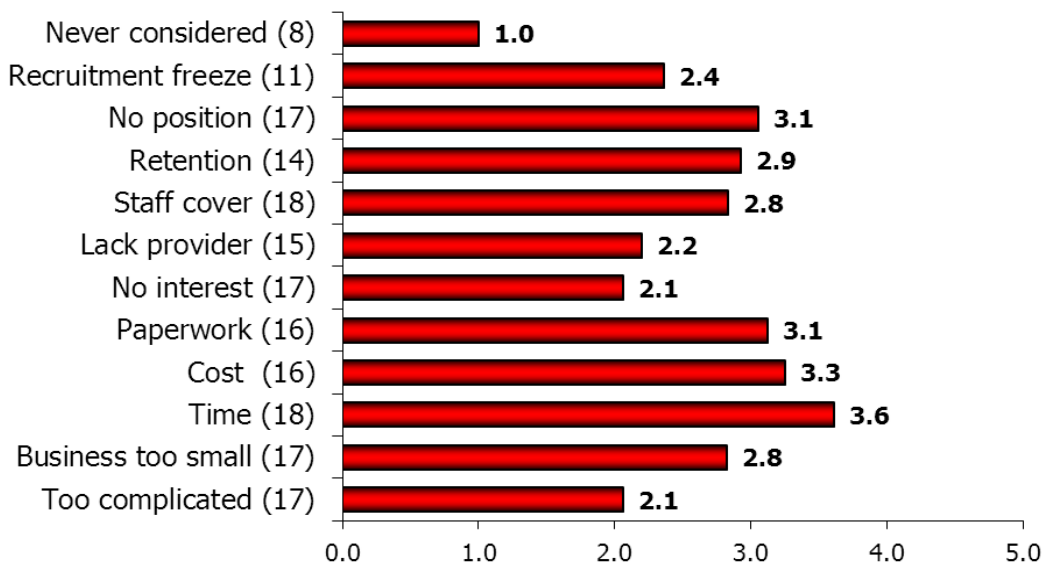
Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

5.2 Employing apprentices

Over half of respondents currently employ apprentices (58%), over a quarter have employed apprentices in the past (27%) and 16% do not employ apprentices (base = 45). Those respondents who do not employ apprentices (either not currently or never) were asked to identify the importance of possible reasons why they did not employ apprentices on a likert scale.¹² This is shown in Figure 5.6 below with the number of responses in parentheses.

For employers not taking on apprentices, 'time constraints' was the highest rated factor explaining why an employer did not take on an apprentice. Other important factors were 'cost', 'paperwork' and the 'lack of a position'. The least important factors were 'never considered', 'too complicated', 'no interest' and 'lack provider'. This suggests that employers are aware of Apprenticeships, they are not perceived to be complicated and that the supply of apprentices is not an issue.

Figure 5.6: Reasons for not employing an apprentice

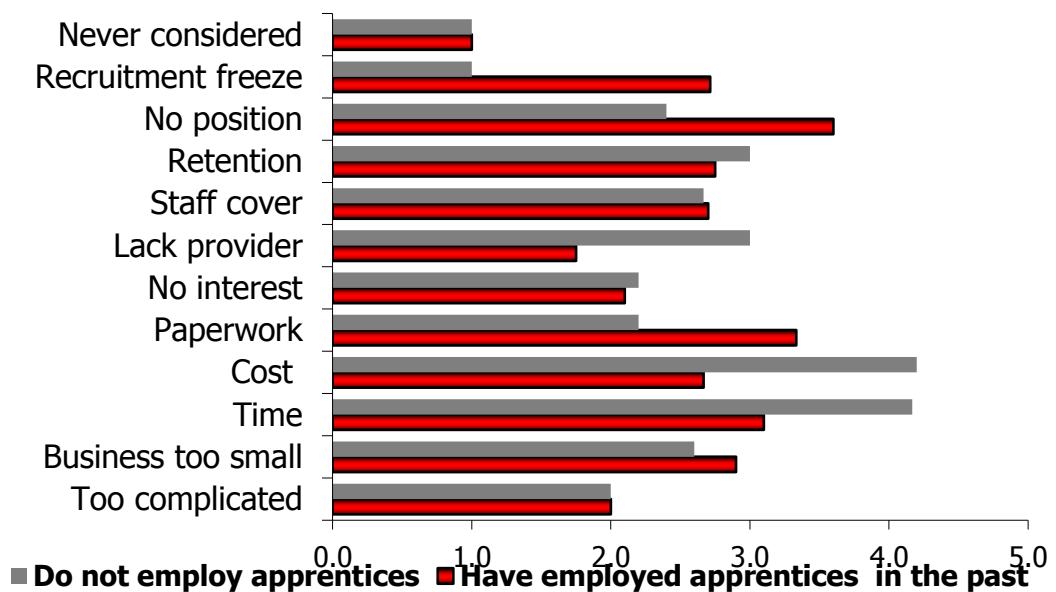


Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = shown in vertical axis in parentheses

¹² Respondents were asked to rate reasons on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was not a major factor and 5 was a major factor

Figure 5.7 rates reasons apprentices are not employed, cross-tabulated against whether a business has employed an apprentice previously or has never employed an apprentice. Those employers who have employed an apprentice in the past rate 'recruitment freezes', 'no position', and 'paper work' as bigger issues compared to those employers who have never employed an apprentice. Conversely, those employers who have never employed an apprentice rate 'retention', 'lack of provider', 'cost' and 'time' as more significant factors in their decision.

Figure 5.7: Reasons for not employing an apprentice by past history of employment



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

Employers were asked to provide demographic information on their apprentices. In total, 34 apprentices were identified from 18 employers representing an average of 1.88 apprentices per employer. The average age of apprentices was 21.5 years with the youngest apprentice aged 16 and the oldest 55. The most common age group was 20-21 years with nearly a third of apprentices while the least common were 26-30 and 31+. Full results are shown in Figure 5.8 below.

Figure 5.8: Age profile of apprentices

Age group	Apprentices	% total
16-17	4	15%
18-19	5	19%
20-21	8	31%
22-25	5	19%
26-30	2	8%
31+	2	8%
Total	26	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Employer Survey, Lantra 2011

Three quarters of the identified apprentices were female (76%) while 24% were male. All apprentices were described as having British or White English ethnicity (base = 26 apprentices). Apprentices in the main did not report any disabilities, with only one apprentice identified as having dyslexia. Employers stated that the average length of time spent on a Level 2 Apprenticeship was 12 months while a Level 3 Apprenticeship on average lasted for 17.4 months.

Fifty-nine per cent of apprentices accessed training at the provider's site (base = 24) while 41% accessed training on the employer's premises (base = 16).

Employers commented on their experience of on-the-job training and in general employers were very positive about its benefits for teaching apprentices the right skills. Comments received from employers included *"An excellent way for a student to learn a practical job in a 'real life' environment"* and *"Works well. Good professional input by people who appreciate a working farm."*

Employers also commented that in general the background knowledge and practical support from providers was good or acceptable. In terms of the assessment, employers commented that this element of training was good and that regular assessment by providers was particularly welcome. There were some concerns over an overly complicated process and time-consuming nature of assessment, but these comments were in the minority.

Employers felt in general that Apprenticeships benefited the employer and the apprentice as well as the wider health of the industry. Apprenticeships are a cost-effective way of employing new staff, providing a more efficient service while at the same time securing the future skills required for the host business as well as other businesses. Some comments alluded to the fact that Apprenticeships were the only real way of funding vocational training. Other benefits included the chance to train up a future employee. This implies that a business benefits from the opportunity to teach an employee all the skills required of a role, but within the specific context of a particular business.

Over seven tenths of employers aimed to employ their apprentices after their Apprenticeship ends. One employer would like their apprentice to *"then take a supervisory role once completed training and to then take in another student to work alongside her."* Those employers who were not planning to take on their apprentices commented that external conditions meant that it would be hard to justify, while another employer already had too many apprentices. Another employer used the Apprenticeship scheme as a way of selecting between candidates for full-time permanent employees.

Ninety-three per cent of employers stated that they would take on an apprentice again (base = 30). Comments included Apprenticeships were *"a useful way to train someone to your requirements and standard"*. One employer stated that they would consider taking on an apprentice again *"because it is the cheapest way of obtaining yard staff"*.

The vast majority of employers (93%) thought that Apprenticeships made learners work-ready on completion (base = 29). One employer commented that this is the case if they are training just to be a yard groom. The implication being that further training is required to be successful in higher order occupations such as a riding instructor for example. Employers generally commented that apprentices were given the 'best of both worlds' (i.e. both academic and practical).

5.3 Apprentice progression to Higher Education

Just under a third of respondents were aware that their apprentices plan to progress to Higher Education. One employer commented that their "*older apprentice intends to do her BHS Stage 3 and then go on to do her teaching and/or a foundation degree.*" This does not appear to be because of a lack of awareness/willingness from employers as 75% of employers are aware of opportunities for apprentices to progress into HE and 79% of employers are aware of career progression opportunities in general.

Employers were asked what topics would be of use to their business for an apprentice to be able to access at HE. The most common response was that business and management skills would be most useful. Other demands included animal behaviour, nutrition, machinery costing, agronomy, book keeping, animal therapy, marketing, specific equine qualifications and higher level skills taught in the context of animal care. One employer suggested that a higher level instructor's course would be useful while another suggested a practical CPD framework would be beneficial. In terms of course delivery, the most popular choice among employers was distance learning (37%), followed by blended learning (35%) and part-time college attendance (29%). Employers had no preference for full-time college attendance.

Other comments from employers included some good general support for the value of Apprenticeships in this area. However, there were concerns about the cost to employers, overly complicated processes, and lack of flexibility in monitoring arrangements. One employer stated they did not recruit younger people as they require too much supervision and are costly; they find training older people with more life experience more satisfactory. Another employer mentioned similar issues, believing that "*young people don't seem to leave school with skills that will help get a job.*"

Summary of findings - employers

- Apprentices were employed in over half of the businesses surveyed
- Of those not employing apprentices, the most common reasons were stated as 'time constraints', 'cost', 'paperwork' and the 'lack of a position'
- There are differences in the reasons for not employing an apprentice for those who had done so at some point in the past compared to those employers who have never employed an apprentice
- Employers who have never employed an apprentice stated 'retention', 'lack of provider', 'cost' and 'time' as significant factors in their decision.
- Employers who had employed an apprentice in the past rated 'recruitment freezes', 'no position', and 'paper work' as significant factors in their decision not to employ an apprentice right now
- The average age of apprentices was 21.5 years, were mostly female and were of white ethnicity
- Employers were very positive about the benefits of Apprenticeships as a way of teaching apprentices the right skills for their businesses' needs
- In general, employers felt that the background knowledge and practical support from providers was either good or acceptable
- In particular, businesses benefited from the opportunity to teach an employee all the skills required for a role, but within the specific context of their business
- Seven out of ten employers aimed to employ their apprentices after their Apprenticeship ends and 93% stated they would take on an apprentice again
- Employers felt that Apprenticeships offered the 'best of both worlds' in terms of the right blend of practical and academic skills
- Just under a third of respondents were aware that their apprentices were progressing to Higher Education
- Three quarters of employers are aware of opportunities for apprentices to progress into HE and 79% of employers are aware of career progression opportunities
- The most common skills useful for businesses that could be learnt in a HE setting were business and management skills and distance learning was the most popular mode of delivery
- There was good general support for the value of Apprenticeships in this area. However, there were concerns about the cost to employers, overly complicated processes and lack of flexibility in monitoring arrangements.

6 Results - Apprentices

6.1 Sample characteristics

We surveyed 70 apprentices regarding progression routes to Higher Education for apprentices. Figure 6.1 shows the number of apprentices by industry. Nearly half of the respondents stated they operated in the equine industry (47%) and 21% classified themselves as operating in the agricultural livestock industry. Only 14% of apprentices were working in animal care.

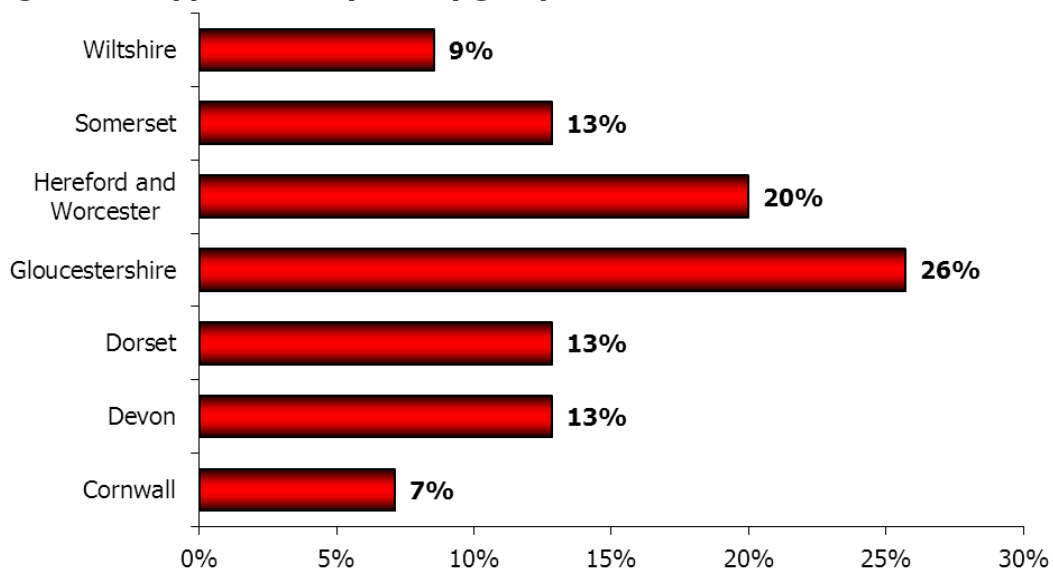
Figure 6.1: Apprentices by industry

Industry	Apprentices	% of total
Agricultural livestock	15	21%
Animal care	11	16%
Equine	33	47%
Farriery	1	1%
Veterinary nursing	10	14%
Total	70	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

The spatial location of these apprentices is shown in Figure 6.2 below. Over a quarter of respondents are located in Gloucestershire and one fifth from Hereford and Worcester. Devon and Cornwall represent 13% and 7% of the sample respectively.

Figure 6.2: Apprentices by county group



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 70

In terms of gender, the sample shows a greater proportion of females than males with over three quarters being female (76%) and 24% being male. This reflects the pattern nationally where there is a lot of sectoral variation in the gender of apprentices. Higher paid sectors such as manufacturing and engineering attract more male apprentices while sectors such as hospitality and personal services are female orientated.¹³ The most common age group was 16-24 with 74% of respondents. The full distribution is shown in Figure 6.3 below where there are several instances of older people training for Apprenticeships, particularly in the 45-54 age group. All apprentices described themselves as belonging to the white ethnic group. This reflects national findings where black and ethnic minority communities are under-represented in those individuals undertaking an Apprenticeship.¹³

Figure 6.3: Apprentices by age group

Age group	Apprentices	% total
16-24	52	74%
25-34	10	14%
35-44	3	4%
45-54	4	6%
55-64	1	1%
65+		0%
Total	26	100%

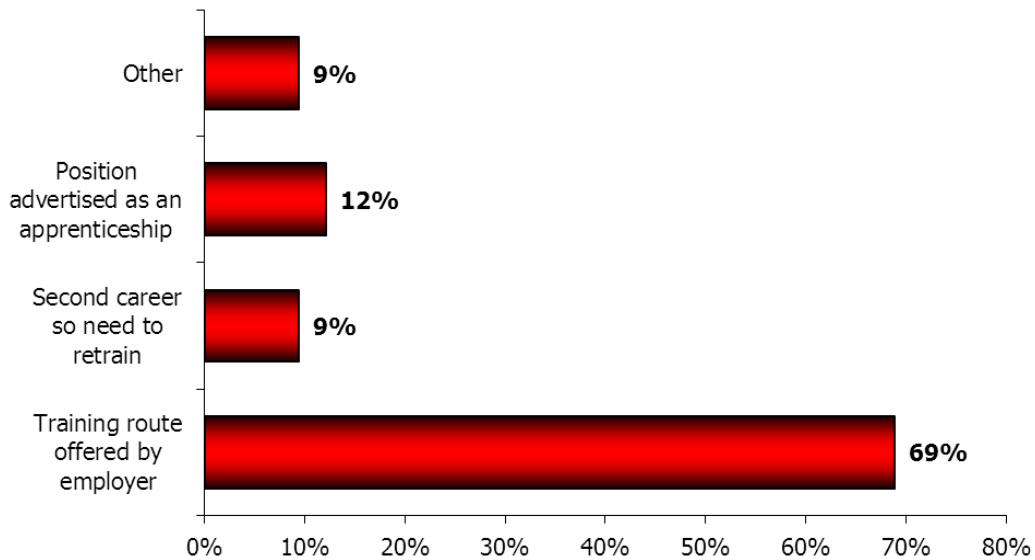
Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

¹³ IES, Research to Shape Critical Mass Pilots to Address Under-Representation in Apprenticeships, A Report for The National Apprenticeship Service, 2009

6.2 Views on career development

The majority of respondents stated they became an apprentice because it was a training route offered by an employer (69%). Twelve per cent described their interest as being due to the position being advertised as an Apprenticeship and 9% were career changers. This implies that the majority of apprentices had already found employment and an Apprenticeship was an additional development bonus.

Figure 6.4: Reasons for becoming an apprentice



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

Half of all respondents rated the overall experience of their apprentice as 4 and 37% scored the Apprenticeship experience 5. Please see Figure 6.5 below for full results. Overall there are a greater number of apprentices satisfied with their Apprenticeship than otherwise. Reasons behind these ratings generally stated that Apprenticeships taught them the vocational skills they required to progress in their career.

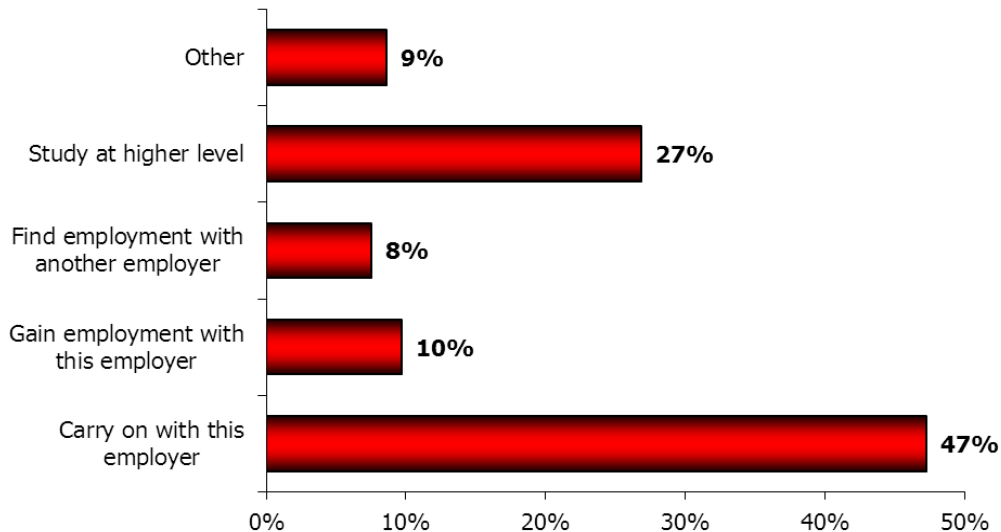
Figure 6.5: Reasons for becoming an apprentice

Rating	Apprentices	% total
1 – of little or no value to my career aspirations	1	1%
2	1	1%
3	7	10%
4	35	50%
5 – has fully met or exceeded my expectations	26	37%
Total	70	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011.

Figure 6.6 shows that almost half of the apprentices in our sample expected to remain in employment with their current employer (47%). There was also a relatively large appetite for higher level learning with over a quarter of apprentices stating they expected to study at a higher level once their Apprenticeship had finished (27%).

Figure 6.6: Career expectations after Apprenticeship completion



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 93. Note: multiple responses allowed

Respondents were asked what topics or subjects would be of interest for further study or career development. Responses were coded manually against the categories shown in figure 6.7. The most common response was general equine courses (17%). This includes topics such as breaking and schooling horses, grassland management, competitive riding and stud management.

Apprentices were also interested in advanced Apprenticeships with 16% of responses, and technical skills were also popular. The latter includes on-farm skills such as sheep and beef production, tractor driving alongside mechanics and chainsaw training. Medical veterinary nursing and animal behaviour were popular topics/subjects (10% respectively) alongside teaching, training and assessing. Business and management qualifications were not as popular as technical courses.

Figure 6.7: Topics/subjects of interest for further study or career development

Rating	Apprentices	% total
General equine	11	17%
Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3)	10	16%
Technical skills	10	16%
Medical veterinary nursing	6	10%
Animal behaviour/zoology	6	10%
Teaching/training/assessing	6	10%
Business and management	3	5%
BHS higher qualifications	2	3%
Equine physiotherapy	1	2%
Customer care	1	2%
Nutrition	1	2%
Other	3	5%
None	3	5%
Total	63	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

There was good awareness of a whole range of qualifications and progression routes available to qualified apprentices. Most common was the advanced Apprenticeship and employment (16% respectively) followed by assessing and teaching (11%). Further Education and certificates and diplomas were well recognised on the whole while fewer non-academic routes were present; for example, only two apprentices thought that routes into management are a career progression opportunity.

Figure 6.8: Awareness of opportunities for career development

Rating	Apprentices	% total
Advanced Apprenticeship	10	16%
Employment	10	16%
Assessor/teaching	7	11%
Advanced Diploma/NVQ 4	5	8%
Further Education, FT Study	5	8%
None/unsure	5	8%
Certificate/NVQ 3	4	6%
Degree/Foundation degree	4	6%
BHS stages	2	3%

Rating	Apprentices	% total
Employment abroad	2	3%
Management	2	3%
Other	8	13%
Total	64	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

When asked to choose a preferred opportunity, the most common were advanced Apprenticeship, employment, and Further Education/FT study. See Figure 6.9 below for full results.

Figure 6.9: Preferred opportunity for career development

Preferred career pathway	Apprentices	% total
Advanced Apprenticeship	3	11%
Employment	4	14%
Assessor/teaching	1	4%
Animal behaviour	2	7%
Further Education, FT study	3	11%
None/unsure	3	11%
CPD	2	7%
Specialist	1	4%
BHS stages	2	7%
Employment abroad	0	0%
Management	1	4%
Other	3	11%
No preference	3	11%
Total	28	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011

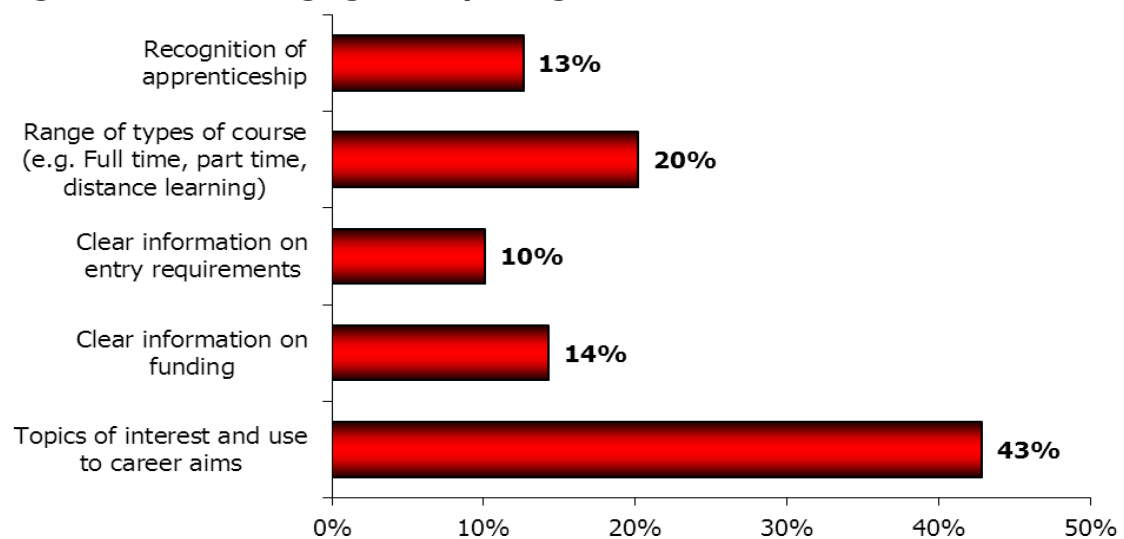
6.3 Views on progression to Higher Education

In terms of progressing to Higher Education, 46% of apprentices had considered this as an option for their career development and 54% had not considered this (base = 68). Of those who had considered HE or FE, the following specific qualifications were stated:

- Advanced Apprenticeship in Horse Care
- Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing
- Animal Behaviour Courses
- Advanced NVQ
- ATF-approved training farrier
- FWCF Fellow Worshipful co of Farriers
- BHS AI and further
- BHS Stages, Stages 3 and 4 and PTT
- BSc Science degree
- Canine Behaviour degree
- Degree in Horse Care/Business
- Equine physiotherapy course/diploma
- City & Guilds in Dog Grooming, Customer Care, Dog Training
- Higher Apprenticeship
- NVQ Level 3
- Assessor's Course.

In Figure 6.10, apprentices were asked what would encourage them to apply to study in Higher Education. The majority would like to see topics of interest and use to their career aims (43%). A wider range of course types is also important, with one fifth of respondents stating this reason. Lack or quality of information on entry requirements and funding is not perceived to be as big a problem, alongside recognition of Apprenticeships.

Figure 6.10: Encouraging take-up of higher education

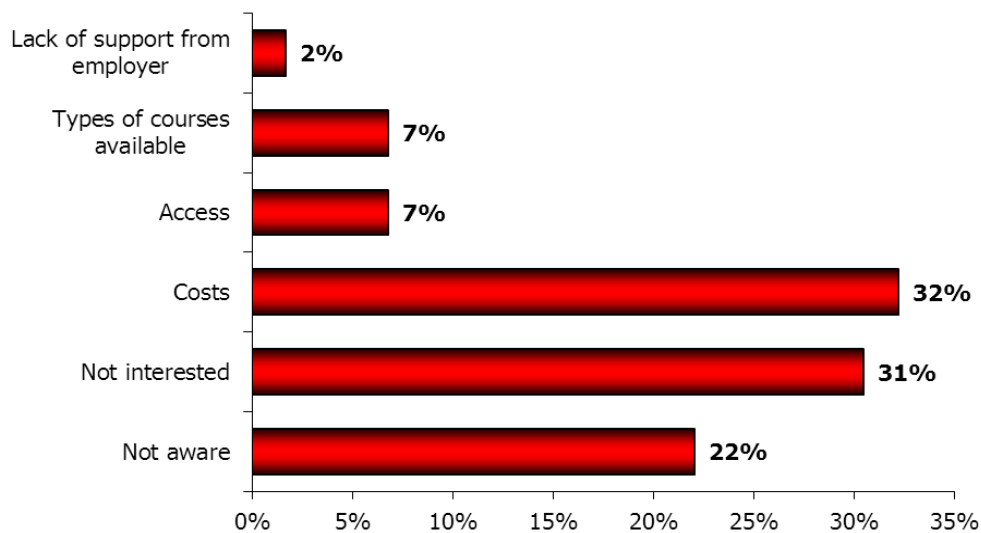


Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 119. Note: multiple responses allowed

Figure 6.11 shows that, among apprentices who had not previously considered progressing to a higher level qualification, the most common reason why this was the case was the cost of progression. Nearly a third of respondents stated this was the main reason why they had not considered HE before. Just under a third (31%) stated they were not interested, while 22% were unaware of the opportunities available to them.

Very few stated lack of support from employer as why they were not interested in higher education. 'Access' and the 'types of courses available' were not stated widely as reasons for not considering higher Education.

Figure 6.11: Encouraging take-up of Higher Education



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Apprentice Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 59

Six general additional comments were provided by respondents. One respondent stated the course was too general to aid progression to HE, while another recommended an Apprenticeship as a useful way to change career. Meanwhile, one respondent cited a lack of funding as a barrier.

Summary of findings - apprentices

- Most respondents stated they became an apprentice because it was a training route offered by their employer
- The majority of apprentices rated their experience four out of five in terms of meeting their career expectations
- While most apprentices expected to remain with their employer, over a quarter expected to study at a higher level after their Apprenticeship ended
- Popular topics for study at higher levels were equine, advanced Apprenticeships and other technical topics. There was little demand for business and management topics among apprentices
- There was good awareness of a whole range of qualifications and progression routes available to qualified apprentices. Most common was the Advanced Apprenticeship and employment (16% respectively) followed by assessing and teaching (11%)
- There was less awareness of non-academic progression routes such as routes into management
- When asked to choose a preferred opportunity, the most common were Advanced Apprenticeship, employment, Further Education/FT study
- 46% of apprentices considered progressing into Higher Education as an option
- Subjects and topics of use to career aims was the most important factor in encouraging apprentices to progress to HE
- Lack of quality of information on progression was not seen as an issue and neither was funding or recognition of Apprenticeships as an entry route
- The main reason apprentices had not considered progression to HE was related to cost.

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7 Results - providers

7.1 Sample characteristics

Nine providers across the region were surveyed with respect to routes into their institutions from Apprenticeships. The institutions vary in size with the smallest having 120 students and the largest 30,000 students. The average size of institution in our sample is 7,700. Four colleges in our sample (44%) offered Higher Education alone while five (56%) provided a mixture of FE and HE. Figure 7.1 shows that respondents were located across most counties in the SW with the exceptions of Cornwall, Somerset and Wiltshire.

Figure 7.1: Respondents by county

County	Providers	% total
Cornwall		
Devon	3	33%
Dorset	1	11%
Gloucestershire	1	11%
Somerset		
Worcestershire	1	11%
Bristol	2	22%
Wiltshire		
Outside SW	1	11%
Total	9	100%

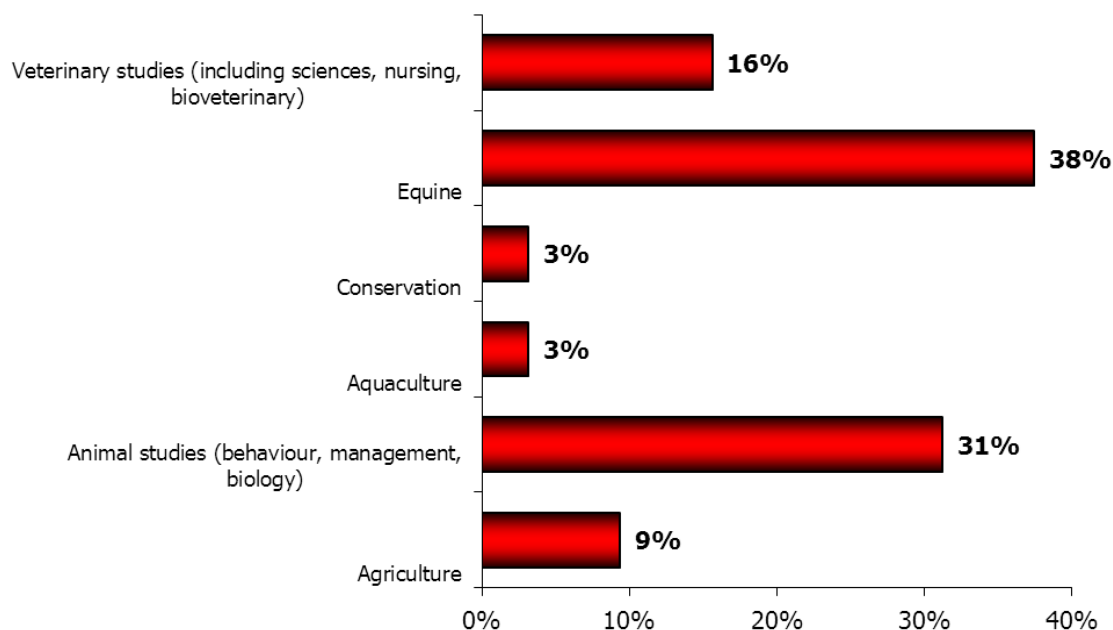
Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011

In total, providers named 33 applicable HE courses for the purposes of this research. Each institution offered four courses on average with 45% at Level 5, 45% at Level 6 and 9% at both academic levels. Over three quarters of the courses were full-time delivery only (76%), while a further 21% of courses offered part-time delivery as well as full-time delivery. Only one course was part-time only.

In terms of degree type, the majority of courses were Bachelor of Science (42%), followed by foundation degrees (39%) and 12% were offered jointly as a full degree or a foundation degree. Six per cent were Bachelor of Veterinary Science degrees (base = 33).

The subject areas of named degrees are shown in Figure 7.2 below. The most common types of course were those relating to equine studies (38%) and animal studies (31%).

Figure 7.2: Subject areas covered



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 32

7.2 Apprenticeship access policy

The majority of providers did not have a policy to accept entry through Apprenticeships (44%), a third of respondents however did have a policy (33%) and two respondents did not know (22%). The three colleges who did have a policy were smaller in size with an average of 682 students while those without a policy had 13,000 students on average. All colleges who had an Apprenticeship access policy offered both Higher and Further Education courses.

Figure 7.3: Apprenticeship access policy

Apprenticeship access policy	Institutions	Average inst. size	FE & HE	HE only
Yes	3	682	3	
No	4	13,403	1	3
Don't know	2	6,990	1	1
Total	9	7,700	5	4

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011

Of those providers stating they had an access policy, all said that this was institution wide. Three institutions also provided the wording of their policy as follows:

- "Level 5 Foundation Degrees – You will need to have achieved one of the following: at least 2 A Levels, BTEC National Diploma, City and Guilds Advanced, National Certificate, GNVQ Advanced"
- "Advanced Vocational A Levels, NVQ Level 3, Advanced Apprenticeship in Agricultural Crops and Livestock Production or Amenity Horticulture or Animal Care and Management or Floristry or Horse Care and Management or Land-based Service Engineering, and Level 3 Diplomas"
- "It is not formally listed (...online) but it is something we consider on application."

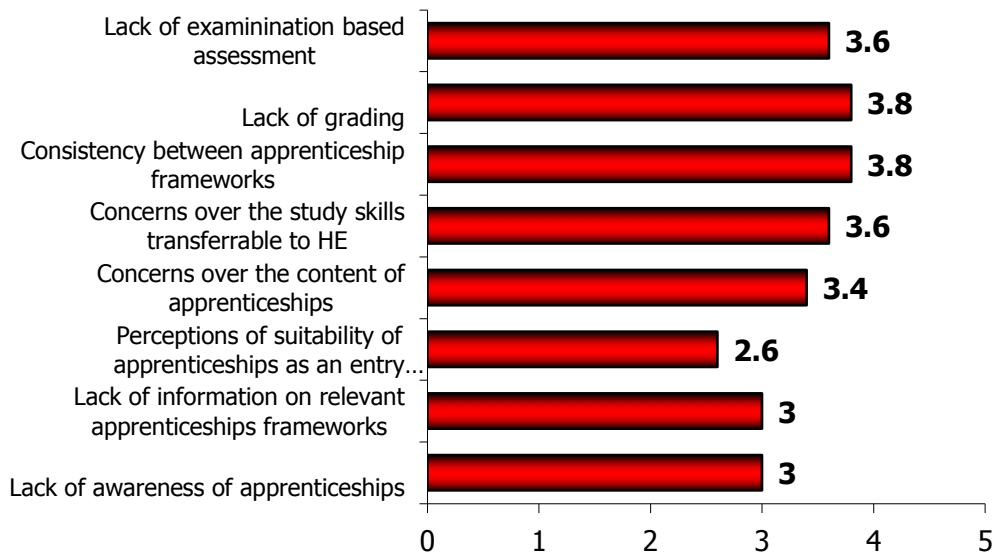
Providers stated the following additional entry requirements that may apply for apprentices entering HE:

- "For Fds [*Foundation Degree*], Apprenticeship alone is likely to be accepted but for BSc may need additional experience, qualifications or assessment"
- "Progression to HE is subject to a UCAS application and the availability of places"
- "Numbers applying from NVQ and Apprenticeships are very small. Applicants are generally required to attend interview prior to offer"
- "Students may be asked to complete an initial assessment, particularly if they are mature students or have non-standard qualifications."

In general, most respondents felt they did not have enough information on Apprenticeship frameworks, and one institution stated that "*filling in this questionnaire has identified that we are poor at encouraging their recognition as a route into HE.*" There were mixed views from respondents about where to find information on Apprenticeships with one provider stating there was no central source for Apprenticeship frameworks.

Institutions were asked to rate various reasons why their organisation did not have an Apprenticeship access policy. These ratings are shown in Figure 7.4. The most highly rated reasons were lack of grading and lack of consistency between Apprenticeship frameworks. The lack of examination-based assessment was considered an issue alongside concerns over the transferable study skills for HE.

Figure 7.4: Reasons why an organisation does not have an Apprenticeship policy



Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011. Base = 5

Respondents were asked whether these issues differed between HE programmes. Overall there was a mixed response with some providers stating that admission is governed by a common framework and others stating that there will be inherent differences because of the understanding and opinions of individual admissions tutors.

7.3 Apprentices in Higher Education

Comments from providers on the strengths and weaknesses of students who have progressed to HE via an Apprenticeship route are shown in Figure 7.5. The strengths of apprentices are in their work ethic, understanding of the workplace and practical skills. Meanwhile weaknesses included academic literacy and numeracy, lack of study skills and specific theoretical knowledge (such as sciences).

Figure 7.5: Strengths and weaknesses of apprentices in HE

Strengths	Weaknesses
"Although we publish them as an entry route we have very few applicants for them. Work-based knowledge is a key strength of apprentices."	"Academic literacy and numeracy (this is an issue with wider vocational qualifications). Things like written work, independent learning, using and citing references will be a challenge"
"Strong vocational skills and a good work ethic in conjunction with a positive understanding of the associated industry. In an Fd this will be a distinct advantage over, say, A Level students"	"Apprenticeship assessment is very different to standard HE assessment practice. As a result former apprentices may need more help to develop this new skill set"
"Work experience and ethic. Ability to engage in independent learning. Self-motivated. More driven and positive about study"	"May lack some of the theory required e.g. science related and may not have some of the study skills required at HE level"
"We believe it gives all-round skills"	"Not necessarily enough transferrable skills to HE"
"Very good practical skills"	"Settling back to full-time study"

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011

Figure 7.6 shows providers believed that apprentices in general required more support than learners entering from other access routes, with over a third of responses. Providers also thought that apprentices were a higher risk for retention (29%) but not as high a risk for recruitment and achievement (18% respectively).

Figure 7.6: Provider opinions on apprentices in terms of recruitment, retention, achievement and support

Apprentices are...	Respondents	% total
A higher risk for recruitment	3	18%
A higher risk for retention	5	29%
A higher risk for achievement	3	18%
Requiring more support	6	35%
Total	17	100%

Source: Veterinary and Animal-related Provider Survey, Lantra 2011

Additional comments from providers regarding Apprenticeships as a progression route into HE included:

- "Apprenticeships are not at a high enough academic level"
- "There is an evident increase in interest across all Apprenticeship provision and it is being seen as a real alternative to linear academic pathways"
- "Current HE offer is not sufficiently flexible or innovative enough to meet the needs of most of our Apprenticeship cohort. Is there an HE progression market from Apprenticeships or are they looking for something different that the current HE offer is not providing?"
- "We are very interested in pursuing the possibility of entry to HE through Apprenticeships and also potentially delivering Level 4+ Apprenticeships as an additional form of provision."

Summary of findings - providers

- The majority of providers did not have a policy to accept entry through Apprenticeships (44%), although a third of respondents did have a policy (33%) and two respondents did not know (22%)
- The three colleges who did have a policy were smaller in size with an average of 682 students while those without a policy had 13,000 students on average
- All colleges who had an Apprenticeship access policy offered both Higher and Further Education courses
- In general, most respondents felt they did not have enough information on Apprenticeship frameworks
- 'Lack of grading' and 'lack of consistency between Apprenticeship frameworks' were the principal reasons why providers did not have an Apprenticeship access policy
- The strengths of apprentices in HE were considered to be their work ethic, understanding of the workplace and practical skills. Meanwhile weaknesses included academic literacy and numeracy, lack of study skills and specific theoretical knowledge (such as sciences)
- Apprentices require more support than other students more than they were a risk to retention, achievement or recruitment.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 Value of Apprenticeships for career progression

Employers report that they are aware of progression opportunities in HE for their apprentices. Very few apprentices stated lack of support from their employer as a significant reason they did not pursue a higher level qualification.

The most valuable higher level skills identified by employers were business and management skills. This is a typical higher level skills gap within the land-based sector and in our employer survey was articulated in rather generic terms. This suggests that employers have not identified specific higher level skills needs that they wish to address through staff/apprentice progression. The implication is that employers in the sector, while not hindering the progression of their apprentices, may not fully value or require their staff to progress to higher educational levels (this could also be related to the higher percentage of SMEs in the sector). As this has been identified nationally as a key driver of apprentice progression, an individual apprentice's personal career ambitions are more likely to drive the demand for progression through this route.

Providers recognised that apprentices may require more support but also recognised the strengths of entrants into HE from Apprenticeships, typically having a very good work ethic, with useful knowledge and practical experience which is very beneficial in an academic environment. There were, however, concerns about apprentices not having the breadth of study skills, scientific knowledge and academic literacy and numeracy to succeed.

8.1.2 Demand and requirement for Higher Education from apprentices

Our primary research suggests that there is already a high level of demand for higher level courses. Twenty-seven per cent of apprentices surveyed planned to enter Higher Education in the future and a third of employers stated their apprentices were planning to enter HE. While these findings are not statistically robust, they are significantly higher than the progression rates of 6% for advanced apprentices nationally. While there may be some self-selection bias at work, it gives quite a strong indication that there is demand among apprentices for HE.¹⁴

¹⁴ In this context, our sample may suffer from a self-selection bias because those apprentices more likely to be interested in Higher Education are also more likely to respond to the questionnaire

Respondents who wished to continue to Higher Education, on the whole had a good idea of the specific course they intended to study from degree courses to advanced NVQs and diplomas. There were instances of Level 3 qualifications and Advanced Apprenticeships being identified, which suggests that the proportion intending to study at higher levels is less than reported.

This evidence of confusion regarding the names and levels of Apprenticeships leaves us uncertain as to the extent to which the above conclusions hold true for all. It is clear that apprentices would benefit from a greater awareness of all the opportunities available to them, including progression to Advanced Apprenticeships as well as opportunities in Higher Education.

8.1.3 Provider attitudes to progression to HE from Apprenticeships

Institutions with competitive, highly selective HE programmes tended not to have a policy on entry via Apprenticeships. Those that did have a policy were all providers of both HE and FE programmes. This means that apprentices may potentially not be given similar chances when compared to traditional entrants to the more prestigious institutions and their highly competitive HE programmes.

Similar to the picture nationally, providers in general felt they did not have enough information on the content and frameworks making up Apprenticeships. Other factors in not having a policy included a lack of grading (i.e. evidence of academic ability) and a lack of consistency between Apprenticeship frameworks. Information about Apprenticeships and consistency of delivery are key barriers to increased supply of opportunities within the region.

8.1.4 Accessibility of Higher Education to apprentices in the South West

In terms of supply of Higher Education opportunities, this evidence clearly shows that progression to HE among apprentices is more likely to occur within animal care and equine studies as these two subjects/industries dominate both Level 3 and Level 4+ provision.

8.1.5 Awareness of Apprenticeships

While this research aim was clarified with the original terms of this project, to ascertain meaningful data on the four previous objectives meant that an assessment of awareness of Apprenticeships could not be undertaken within this commission. This is because our methodology targeted active employers and apprentices.

8.2 Recommendations

The evidence presented in this report allows us to form the following recommendations. These are general in nature, aimed at policy makers, Higher Education Institutions, Further Education institutions and employers:

- **Recommendation 1: Better information and awareness about Apprenticeships targeted for different audiences; potential entrants, employers and providers.** Our research highlights the importance of raising awareness of Apprenticeship progression. There is confusion around the differences between Advanced Apprenticeships and Higher Education, as well as a lack of awareness from HE providers on the suitability of Apprenticeships as a progression route.
- **Recommendation 2: Promote the value of apprentice characteristics in Higher Education.** This research demonstrates the strengths of apprentices in HE; bringing practical knowledge and experience that helps to contextualise teaching and enhance learner experiences. The value of apprentices should be promoted to HEIs through VETNET LLN and the monitoring of progression agreements.
- **Recommendation 3: Highlight the strategic and business benefits of developing staff through high level skills.** The literature around Apprenticeship progression shows that different industries have different levels of Apprenticeship progression, and this is higher in sectors where HE is more valued. Persuading businesses of the benefits of higher levels of skills and training, through a series of case studies for example, will help create the conditions to facilitate apprentice progression.
- **Recommendation 4: Encourage all providers of Higher Education to develop and publish an entry policy for Apprenticeships.** Alternative access routes are being increasingly recognised by universities from the new 14-19 framework; however, Apprenticeships are not always recognised within this. Our evidence shows that HEIs do not have awareness or access policies uniformly in place.
- **Recommendation 5: Encourage greater transparency of entry policies for advanced Apprenticeships.** Where policies exist, HEIs should be encouraged to state their institution's position on Apprenticeships as an entry route, even if this is confirming they are not currently a recognised entry route.
- **Recommendation 6: Encourage all providers to consider greater flexibility in the design and delivery of HE provision** in order to offer the flexible learning opportunities sought by employers and potential students in terms of the delivery methods and accumulation of credits. Through this research, employers and apprentices alike identified being able to access Higher Education through a range of flexible options including blended learning and part-time studies as an important factor in considering HE.

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Appendix one – Acknowledgements

Lantra and VETNET LLN South West would like to thank all those who supported this report and in particular:

Bicton College
Duchy College
Hartpury College (UWE)
Kingston Maurward College
Moulton College
MYF Training
South Devon College
Summerhouse Equestrian & Training Centre
University of Plymouth
University of Worcester
University of Bristol
Warwickshire College

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Appendix two – Questionnaires



VETNET LLN South West – Apprenticeship Progression Project

Employer Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions, your reply will form part of a research project into the awareness and perceptions surrounding Apprenticeships in the South West and also how Apprenticeships are recognised for entry into Higher Education.

To be used with Higher Education Providers with provision in the following subject areas: **Animal Care, Equine, Farriery, Veterinary Nursing, Agriculture Livestock.**

Please tick the relevant boxes:

Name of Company:	
Contact Name:	
Position / Job Title:	
Number of Employees:	

Industry:

- Animal Care
- Equine
- Farriery
- Veterinary Nursing
- Agriculture Livestock

1. **Overall, how many people do you employ?**
include full and part-time staff but not outside contractors/agency staff

2. What is the gender split of staff at this business location?

Number that are female

Number that are male

3. Approximately how many of your staff are aged:

16-24 yrs

25-34 yrs

35-44 yrs

45-54 yrs

55-64 yrs

65+

4. How many of your staff are employed in the following occupations?

*Select response based on the highest proportion of time spent per staff member.
Read out and code all that are mentioned.*

Managers (i.e. Yard Manager)

Professional Occupations (i.e. Instructor, Veterinary surgeon)

Associate Professional and Technical Occupations
(i.e. Veterinary Nurse, Therapist)

Administrative and Secretarial Occupations

Skilled Trades Occupations (i.e. Farrier, Groom)

Sales and Customer Service Occupations

If other, please specify

5. Do you employ Apprentices?

Yes

No

Have done in the past

6. **If you answered no or have done in the past to question 5 here is a list of issues that may or may not apply to you; please identify on a scale of 1 to 5 how each issue affects that choice:**

	1. = major factor	2.	3.	4.	5. not a major factor
<i>Too complicated</i>					
<i>Business too small</i>					
<i>Time it takes to support the apprentice in the workplace</i>					
<i>Lack of skills to supervise an apprentice in the workplace</i>					
<i>Cost</i>					
<i>Paperwork</i>					
<i>No interest</i>					
<i>Lack of provider in local area</i>					
<i>Staff cover for college attendance</i>					
<i>Retention</i>					
<i>No position to offer at end of the Apprenticeship</i>					
<i>Recruitment freeze</i>					
<i>Never considered taking on an apprentice</i>					

Is there another reason not identified above that prevents you from taking on an apprentice?

7. If you answered yes to Question 5 please complete the following questions for each Apprentice you employ:

Apprentice	Level	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability

8. How long does the Apprenticeship take to complete in months?

Level 2 Level 3

9. Which training provider do you use to support your apprentices?

10. How do your apprentices access the training provider?

a) Attend at provider site
 b) On-site

11. On average how much time per week (in days) does your apprentice spend:

a) Time with you?
 b) Time with the provider?

12. What is your experience of each of the processes below?

On-the-job training:

Support from provider – background knowledge, practical skills:

Assessment:

What are the benefits of an apprentice to you and your business?

13. Do you aim to employ your apprentice?

Yes No

Please explain:

14. Would you have another apprentice?

Yes No

Please explain:

15. Does an Apprenticeship equip the people to be work-ready on completion?

Yes No

Please explain:

17. Can you describe the job-specific skills that you have provided for your apprentices?

18. Are you aware of any of your apprentices going on to study a Higher Education course?

Yes No

Please specify:

19. Are you aware of opportunities for your apprentices to progress in to Higher Education?

Yes

No

20. Are you aware of opportunities for career progression open to apprentices?

Yes

No

21. What topics would be of use to you and your business for an apprentice to be able to access at HE? *e.g. business skills, topics in your trade*

22. Which of the following course delivery methods would be most suitable for you or one of your employees to study a Higher Education course?

- a) Full-time college attendance
- b) Part-time college attendance
- c) Distance learning
- d) Blended learning (mixture of e-learning and college attendance)

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding Apprenticeships?

VETNET LLN South West – Apprenticeship Progression Project

Apprentice Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions, your reply will form part of a research project into the awareness and perceptions surrounding Apprenticeships in the South West and also how Apprenticeships are recognised for entry into Higher Education. Please tick the relevant boxes.

1. What is your gender?

Female Male

2. What is your age group?

16-24 yrs 25-34 yrs 35-44 yrs 45-54 yrs 55-64 yrs 65+

3. What is your ethnic group?

White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese	Other ethnic group
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Which of the following options best describes why you became an apprentice?

- a) Training route offered by employer
- b) Second career so need to retrain
- c) Position advertised as an Apprenticeship
- d) Any other reason please specify

5. In an average week how much time do you spend with your.....? (please provide your answer in Days)

- a) Employer or supervisor days
- b) Training provider or college days

6. Can you describe the job-specific skills that you have gained through your Apprenticeship?

7. How would you score the overall experience of your Apprenticeship?

1. of little or no value to my career aspirations	2.	3.	4.	5. has fully met or exceeded my expectations

Can you describe this for us?

8. Once you've completed your Apprenticeship are you hoping to...?

- a. Carry on with this employer
- b. Gain employment with this employer
- c. Find employment with another employer
- d. Study at higher level
- e. Other, please explain:

9. What topics or subjects would be of interest to you for further study and/or career development?

10. What opportunities for your own career progression are you aware of once you have completed your Apprenticeship?

11. Which opportunities in question 10 are of most interest to you?

12. Have you considered any opportunities for you to progress on to study at Higher Education level once you have completed your Apprenticeship?

Yes No

13. If you have answered yes to question 12, please list the Higher Education courses/opportunities that you are interested in:

14. What would encourage you to consider applying to study for a Higher Education course?

- a. Topics of interest and use to career aims
- b. Clear information on funding
- c. Clear information on entry requirements
- d. Range of types of course e.g. full-time, part-time, distance learning
- e. Recognition of Apprenticeship

15. If you answered no to Question 12, please tick all of the reasons that explain why you haven't considered progressing into studying a Higher Level qualification:

- a. Not aware
- b. Not interested
- c. Costs
- d. Access
- e. Types of courses available
- f. Lack of support from employer

16. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding Apprenticeships?

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VETNET LLN South West – Apprenticeship Progression Project

Provider Questionnaire

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries and VETNET LLN SW Region are undertaking this joint research project on veterinary and animal-related Apprenticeships. There has been little previous research into Apprenticeships in this sector. In this research project, we want to find out how Apprenticeships are valued by employers, apprentices and Higher Education institutions.

This project will further underpin the VETNET LLN SW Regional Progression Agreement as no research on the Apprenticeship route to Higher Education (HE) was carried out during the development of this Agreement. The relevant animal-related and veterinary Apprenticeships are within the scope of the Agreement as potential progression routes to HE.

This questionnaire, for use with providers of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), will enable us to collect data and information relating to the current opportunities available to apprentices to access HE. It will also provide information on the value which HEIs place on Apprenticeships as an entry route to their courses and any perceived barriers to progression to HE.

To be used with Higher Education Providers with provision in the following subject areas:

- **Veterinary Science, Animal Care (includes animal science, behaviour, management, welfare etc) , Equine, Farriery, Veterinary Nursing, Agriculture Livestock**

Name of Institution:	
Contact Name:	
Position / Job Title:	
Total number of HE Students:	

Type of institution: HE only FE & HE:

List all course titles offered in the above subject areas on page 4

1. Does your institution have a policy to accept entry through Apprenticeships?

- Yes please go to Question 2
No please go to Question 8
Don't know (can you direct me to someone who may know?)

2. Is this an institution-wide policy?

- Yes No

If yes go to question 2a

2a. Please provide the current wording from your prospectus, website and individual course material that relates to Apprenticeships and entry requirements

3. If you have answered no to question 2 does this policy vary from:

a) Department to department? *Please explain*

b) Course to course? *Please explain*

c) Mode of delivery or study?

- I. Full-time
II. Part-time
III. Distance learning
IV. Blended learning?

Please explain

4. Are all of the following Apprenticeships equally valued as entry requirements?

	1. = fully valued / accepted	2.	3.	4.	5. = not valued / accepted
Animal Care					
Equine					
Farriery					
Veterinary Nursing					
Agriculture Livestock					

5. Does your institution have additional entry requirements in order to achieve a place on an HE course?

6. Do you have enough current information on Apprenticeships/frameworks?

7. Do you know where to find current information on Apprenticeship frameworks?

8. If you answered no to question 1, why not? Please tick all that apply

--

	1. = Not an issue	2.	3. = Unsure	4.	5. = Definitely an issue
Lack of awareness of Apprenticeships					
Lack of information on relevant Apprenticeship frameworks					
Perceptions of the suitability of Apprenticeships as an entry requirement					
Concerns over content of Apprenticeships					
Concerns over study skills transferrable to HE					
Consistency between Apprenticeship frameworks					
Lack of grading					
Lack of examination-based assessment					

9. In question 8 we identified some of the issues that may affect how Apprenticeships are perceived, does this differ between programmes?

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10. If you accept Apprenticeships as an entry requirement, what are your perceptions in relation to students who have progressed from an Apprenticeship in terms of their:

a. Strengths – please explain:

--

b. Weaknesses – please explain:

--

11. Do you view apprentices as? Tick all that apply

- a. A higher risk for recruitment
- b. A higher risk for retention
- c. A higher risk for achievement
- d. Requiring more support

12. How accessible is the data relating to entry to HE through Apprenticeships, retention, achievement and destination of students?

1. = Very accessible	2.	3.	4.	5. = Not accessible

13. Would it be possible to allow us access to this data?

14. Does your institution have additional entry requirements in order to achieve a place on an HE course?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add relating to Apprenticeships and entry to HE that hasn't already been covered in this study?



Provider questionnaire – course information

Animal studies

	Course title	Level	Delivery	Student numbers per cohort
1				
2				
3				

Equine Studies

	Course title	Level	Delivery	Student numbers per cohort
1				
2				
3				

Veterinary Nursing

	Course title	Level	Delivery	Student numbers per cohort
1				
2				
3				

Agriculture Livestock

	Course title	Level	Delivery	Student numbers per cohort
1				
2				
3				

Farriery

	Course title	Level	Delivery	Student numbers per cohort
1				
2				
3				

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Lantra

Lantra is the Sector Skills Council supporting skills, training and workforce development for businesses in the environmental and land-based sector. We are committed to helping everyone access the training, qualifications, skills and knowledge they need for business success and to develop their career.

We are an independent, UK-wide organisation that is owned and managed by our industries, which are grouped around land management and production, animal health and welfare and environmental industries.

We lead the way in understanding our industries' future skills and business needs. We work together with trade organisations, unions, training providers, governments and many more to maximise investment in skills.

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