

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

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

September 2011



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

September 2011

This research explored the opportunities for, and attitudes to, progression from veterinary nursing and animal-related Apprenticeships to higher education. The project was a joint project between VETNET LLN South West and Lantra.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- To explore employer and apprentice awareness of Apprenticeships in their industry
- 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

## **Summary of findings – providers**

- The majority of providers did not have a policy to accept entry through Apprenticeships (44%)
- 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 Apprenticeships access policy
- The strengths of apprentices in HE was considered to be their work ethic, understanding of the workplace and practical skills
- Perceived weaknesses included academic literacy and numeracy, lack of study skills and specific theoretical knowledge (such as sciences)
- Apprentices were perceived to require more support than other students, more than they were a risk to retention, achievement or recruitment

## 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'
- Employers were very positive about the benefits of Apprenticeships as a way of teaching apprentices the right skills their business needs
- In general employers felt that the background knowledge, practical support from providers was either good or acceptable
- 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
- 75% of employers are aware of opportunities for apprentices to progress into higher education 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
- distance learning was the most popular mode of delivery for HE study

## 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
- 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 has 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
- The main reason apprentices had not considered progression to HE was related to cost

## Recommendations

The evidence presented in the 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 higher education 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 apprenticeship 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

## Lantra

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