

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP FRAMEWORK

1. This framework outlines the requirements for the design and delivery of higher and degree apprenticeships, which are developed by the University or its partner institutions in conjunction with employers and allow students to combine employment with study and training.

2. The framework should be read in conjunction with other relevant University regulations, policies and procedures, including:
 - Admissions Policy
 - Framework and Regulations for the relevant type of award
 - Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework
 - Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
 - Course approval, monitoring and review procedures within the Quality Manual

3. Apprenticeships should include an academic programme leading to a University award at Levels 5 to 7. The University validates two levels of apprenticeship programmes:
 - Higher apprenticeships (Level 5)
 - Degree apprenticeships (Level 6 and above)

4. All apprenticeship programmes should be aligned with an appropriate national Apprenticeship Standard and associated Assessment Plan, which set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours each apprentice needs to have to be fully competent in the role. Students on an apprenticeship programme will be expected to successfully complete an End-Point Assessment (EPA) to test full competence in the role, in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.

5. All apprenticeship programmes must operate in accordance with the Government funding and performance management rules for apprenticeships, as published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (hereafter referred to as “the funding rules”). All staff involved in the delivery and support of apprenticeship programmes will be kept informed of the requirements of the funding rules (and any associated changes) by the relevant central support team within the University or partner institution. Staff must act in accordance with the funding rules, including retaining appropriate documentation demonstrating compliance as part of an associated evidence pack.

Written Agreement and Commitment Statement

6. There must be a Written Agreement between the University or partner institution and the employer which forms the contract for services between the two institutions in relation to the delivery of the apprenticeship programme.

7. There should also be a Commitment Statement for each individual apprentice, signed by the apprentice, the employer and the University or partner institution, which sets out how all three parties will support the achievement of the apprenticeship. The content of the Commitment Statement should align with the requirements of the funding rules, including setting out the planned content and schedule for the training (including EPA), start and end dates, and what is expected of each party.

8. Signed copies of both the Written Agreement and the Commitment Statement must be in place at the start of the apprenticeship and for its entire duration, with any revisions resulting from a change in circumstance kept in the evidence pack.

Student recruitment and admissions

9. In accordance with the funding rules, students on apprenticeship programmes are required to be in full-time or part-time employment (normally for at least 30 hours per week), and must have an employment contract which is long enough for them to successfully complete the apprenticeship programme (including the EPA). Information on paid hours should be provided at the application stage. The apprentice's job role must provide them with the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their apprenticeship.

10. The University (or partner institution for collaborative provision) is responsible for checking the eligibility for funding for individuals prior to admission to the apprenticeship programme, in accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in the funding rules. An initial needs assessment is usually undertaken as part of the process for determining eligibility for admission to an apprenticeship programme. This enables any gaps in knowledge, skills or experience to be identified, and an individual learning plan (ILP) to be developed to address these as part of the overarching Commitment Statement.

11. Entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme should be aligned with the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. In accordance with the funding rules, all apprentices should have successfully achieved Level 2 functional skills or GCSE grade A* to C (or 9 to 4) in

English and Mathematics before taking their EPA. Where this is not set as an entry requirement, provision should be made for enabling apprentices to achieve this level of qualification in the allocated time.

12. Arrangements for recognition of prior learning (RPL) should follow the standard University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. In accordance with the funding rules, the University or partner institution is required to demonstrate that prior learning has been accounted for and that the content, duration and price of the apprenticeship is adjusted accordingly. Suitable evidence of this includes written assurance that the content of the apprenticeship is materially different to any prior learning and a skills gaps analysis demonstrating the new skills needed by the apprentice and how the apprenticeship will address these.

Approval of apprenticeship programmes

13. The validation and re-approval of apprenticeship programmes is undertaken in accordance with the University's standard procedures for course validation and re-approval as outlined in the Quality Manual. Specific requirements for the (re)approval of apprenticeship programmes are outlined in the procedures and associated guidance material.

14. Apprenticeship programmes may either be (i) developed as a new programme or (ii) developed using an existing programme, adapted to meet the requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard (usually in liaison with employer representatives). Where a new apprenticeship programme is based on an existing programme of study, the Head of Quality Enhancement is responsible for determining whether the programme requires full validation or whether an alternative approach is more appropriate given the scale of the changes required (for example course re-approval or course modification).

15. The validation and re-approval processes should include consideration of the full apprenticeship programme including preparation for, and arrangements for conduct of, EPA regardless of whether this is integrated or sits outside the University's award (see paragraph 24 for further information). The process should also verify that suitable arrangements are in place to comply with ESFA funding rules in relation to the delivery of the programme.

Structure and timing of programme delivery (including off-the-job training)

16. The structure of the academic year for apprenticeship programmes should align with the requirements outlined in the Framework and Regulations for the relevant award. The

typical and maximum duration of the programme will be outlined in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. The minimum duration of an apprenticeship programme is one year, unless the Apprenticeship Standard or Assessment Plan specifies otherwise.

17. In accordance with funding rules, all apprentices must spend at least 20% of their paid hours in off-the-job training over the planned duration of the apprenticeship programme. This excludes English and Mathematics training which does not qualify for the purposes of the 20% requirement. Arrangements for delivering this training and monitoring whether the 20% requirement has been met should be considered as part of course validation and re-approval processes.

18. Modes of delivery for apprenticeship programmes will vary according to employer need, and may include day release, block release or a blended learning approach involving a combination of face-to-face and distance learning. In accordance with the funding rules, off-the-job training cannot be delivered solely via distance learning. The structure and timing of delivery and duration of study will be approved at the point of validation and outlined in the Student Handbook for the course.

Student progress monitoring

19. Informal student progress reviews should be undertaken at least every four weeks, drawing on input from the University or partner institution, the employer and the individual apprentice. These should feed into formal tripartite progress review meetings which should be held at least termly. These meetings should include a review of progress against the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and Commitment Statement, including ensuring that the apprentice is on target to meet the 20% off-the-job training requirement. Any change in circumstance (for example to the apprentice's paid hours or line manager) should also be discussed. A formal record of these meetings should be maintained for the evidence pack. Further guidance on the conduct of progress reviews and a template for recording meetings is available from the Apprenticeships team.

20. E-portfolios provide an effective mechanism for developing individual learning plans, setting targets, reviewing progress and tracking off-the-job training. The e-portfolio is also often a requirement for the EPA. Further advice and guidance on e-portfolio systems and their use in supporting apprenticeship provision is available from the digital learning specialists in Learning Services.

21. Attendance monitoring and absence reporting should be undertaken in accordance with the University's Student Attendance and Attendance Monitoring Policy or equivalent within partner institutions. The apprentice's employer should be notified in the event of any concerns regarding attendance highlighted through established monitoring procedures, and this should also be considered as part of both informal and formal progress reviews. Students should be encouraged to consider intercalation where there are extenuating circumstances meaning that they are not fit or able to study for an extended period (see paragraph 27).

Support in the workplace

22. Course teams should encourage active employer engagement in the design and delivery of apprenticeship programmes, for example through active participation in induction processes, informal and formal progress reviews, and supporting apprentices in the workplace. There should be clear points of contact and channels of communication between the University or partner institution and the employer to facilitate effective programme delivery and partnership working.

23. Support is normally provided by the employer through the appointment of a mentor (or equivalent), who is usually a more senior or experienced member of staff who is able to provide advice and guidance to the apprentice and support them in developing the required knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the Apprenticeship Standard. The course validation and re-approval process should consider arrangements for supporting the apprentice in the workplace, including any arrangements for appointing, briefing, training and supporting workplace mentors.

End-point assessment (EPA)

24. EPA provides a holistic assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been acquired through the apprenticeship programme. EPA may either be integrated into the programme of study or it may represent an additional stage beyond meeting the requirements for the relevant University award. The approach to EPA will be outlined in the Assessment Plan for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and confirmed at the point of course validation. Where EPA is not integrated into the programme, students who fail to successfully complete the EPA may still receive the relevant University award where the requirements for that award have been met, but will not receive the apprenticeship completion certificate from the ESFA.

25. Non-integrated EPA requires the involvement of an authorised independent End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) listed on the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment

Organisations (RoAAO). The University or partner institution will provide information to employers about possible EPAOs but the selection of the EPAO is the responsibility of the employer. The University or partner institution will liaise with the EPAO to arrange the EPA and will fund the cost of the EPA from the apprenticeship fee paid to the institution. One EPA for each apprentice will normally be funded, with any re-sits funded on the basis of the agreement between the University / partner institution and the employer as set out in the Written Agreement.

26. An apprentice can only take the EPA once they have satisfied the gateway requirements set out in the Assessment Plan (including attainment of English and Mathematics at Level 2) and both the employer and the University or partner institution are content that they have attained sufficient skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Intercalation or withdrawal

27. Apprentices may submit claims to intercalate their studies on the basis of extenuating circumstances where they are not fit or able to study for an extended period, in agreement with their employer and in accordance with the University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Any periods of intercalation must be reported to the ESFA so that funding can be adjusted accordingly.

28. Where an apprentice is made redundant by their employer, the University or partner institution must make reasonable efforts to find the apprentice a new employer. If a new employer is not found within twelve weeks of the apprentice becoming redundant, the apprentice must be withdrawn from the apprenticeship if they are more than six months from the end date of their apprenticeship. If they are less than six months from the end date of their apprenticeship, they may continue on the programme without being employed under a Written Agreement and will continue to be funded by the ESFA.

29. Where an apprentice is enrolled on an apprenticeship programme where additional responsibilities are placed upon them regarding their professional suitability, as outlined in the codes of practice of the relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB), failure to meet these requirements may lead to the University's Fitness to Practise Procedure being invoked. The apprentice's employer will be involved in the decision-making process as outlined in the Fitness to Practise Procedure. Serious, proven allegations may result in the withdrawal of the apprentice from the apprenticeship programme because they are unfit to practise.

Ongoing monitoring and review of apprenticeship programmes

30. Apprenticeship programmes are subject to the University's standard Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) processes as outlined in the Quality Manual. This includes arrangements for gathering student feedback, for example through module questionnaires, student representation on course committees, and completion of the Internal Student Survey (ISS) and the National Student Survey (NSS).

31. The ESFA Learner Satisfaction Survey and Employer Satisfaction Survey provide supplementary sources of information on the quality of apprenticeship programmes from an apprentice and an employer's perspective, and outcomes should feed into quality monitoring processes. Employer representation on course committees and/or the establishment of employer consortium groups is also encouraged as a means of securing employer input and gathering feedback.

32. An annual report on the operation of apprenticeships will be submitted to the Quality Committee, to provide a holistic overview of apprenticeship provision.

Points of contact regarding apprenticeship provision

33. Queries regarding engagement with employers in relation to apprenticeship provision should be directed to the Business Development Manager (Apprenticeships).

34. The initial point of contact for all other queries regarding apprenticeship provision is the Deputy Academic Registrar (Registry Services).