

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***What is an apprenticeship?***

It is a job with training and assessment, which enables apprentices to gain highly transferable skills and knowledge in a specific occupation.

Apprentices must have a contract of employment which is long enough to allow them to complete the apprenticeship successfully. Most apprenticeships take between 1 to 4 years to complete (dependent on age, prior skills, apprenticeship type/level and sector). The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on an apprentice working 30 hours a week or more.

Perceptions of apprenticeships as an entry level and trade-based courses persist, yet this couldn't be further from today's reality. Apprenticeships have moved on from what they used to be and now present an exciting option for both the apprentice and employer.

Changes to funding, minimum requirements and the development of occupation-focused standards have driven up the quality of apprenticeships.

### ***What levels of apprenticeships are there?***

Name	Level	Education Level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grade A*-C or 9-4
Advanced	3	2 A level passes / Level 3 Diploma / International Baccalaureate
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree & above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or Master's degree

### ***Where can I find a searchable list of approved apprenticeship standards?***

Government standards including more information on each standard can be searched and found [using this link](#).

### ***Why should employers consider apprenticeships (for new and/or existing members of staff)?***

Apprentices can be employed at different ages and levels, from school leavers and university graduates to people who want to further their careers or change their career direction completely. They can be used to hire and train someone new or upskill an existing employee.

As an employer with a pay bill of more than £3 million at a rate of 0.5% of the total pay costs, the University of Essex is required to pay the apprenticeship levy. This means we have funding available to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment.

Funds expire after 2 years so there is funding to spend on apprenticeships that is currently not being fully utilised by the university.

There are many benefits to completing an apprenticeship, which include:

- experience and skills development
- a nationally recognised qualification (with no tuition fees)
- employee benefits and a wage
- exposure to industry professionals

As competition for talent intensifies, organisations need to look at the skills and knowledge gaps in their business, identify their future talent needs and then consider how apprenticeships can be used to address these needs.

Apprenticeships enable employers to future proof their business by developing and growing a more qualified workforce with the skills relevant to their sector and programmes tailored to the specific needs of their organisation.

## **The benefits for your business**

Hiring an apprentice is a productive and effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.

- 86% of employers said apprenticeships helped them develop skills relevant to their organisation
- 78% of employers said apprenticeships helped them improve productivity
- 74% of employers said apprenticeships helped them improve the quality of their product or service

Other benefits of working with apprentices include:

- you can adapt their training according to the needs of your business
- they're motivated to learn new skills
- you can expand and upskill your workforce

### ***Where do I find a training provider?***

It is possible to use an [online service](#) to search for apprenticeship training courses (by job role or keyword). You will also find some information on delivery models, satisfaction ratings and employer feedback.

When considering which training provider to use, there are a range of things that should be considered, including:

- Are any of the providers that deliver the standard (within our geographical locality) already known to/used by the University of Essex? The Employee Apprenticeships Manger based in People & Culture can help advise (see contact details on page 7).
- The quality of training
- Retention and completion rates
- Employer satisfaction rates
- Method of delivery of the off-the-job training (including the suitability/proximity of the location if it is at their premises; is it block release or one day a week; is it face to face or distance or blended learning) and how well that meets the needs of the business and the individual

## What is the role of the training provider?

The training provider has a key role to play in providing off-the-job training, assessing the progress of the apprentice towards achieving their qualifications and supporting the apprentice during their apprenticeship.

They will work closely with us to ensure the apprentice receives:

- An induction programme on starting
- A detailed training plan (including on-the-job training)
- Regular progress reviews
- Opportunities to put into practice off-the-learning so they can achieve the requirements of the apprenticeship
- Mentoring and general support throughout the apprenticeship

This will all be documented in a commitment statement which is part of the Apprenticeship Agreement that the provider, employer, and apprentice will all need to sign up to.

## Who is eligible for an apprenticeship funded through our apprenticeship service account?

<p><b>E59</b> To use funds in your apprenticeship service account or government-employer co-investment, the individual must:</p> <p><b>E59.1</b> Start their apprenticeship after the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they have their 16th birthday.</p> <p><b>E59.2</b> Be able to complete the apprenticeship within the time they have available. If you know an individual is unable to complete the apprenticeship in the time they have available, they must not be funded.</p> <p><b>E59.3</b> Not be asked to contribute financially to the eligible costs of training, on-programme or end-point assessment. This includes where the individual has completed the programme successfully or left the programme early. Costs include any co-investment or additional training and assessment costs above the funding band, that you have paid directly to the main provider where this is part of the agreed apprenticeship.</p> <p><b>E59.4</b> Not use a student loan to pay for their apprenticeship. Where an individual transfers to an apprenticeship from a full-time further education or higher education course, and that course has been funded by a student loan, the loan must be terminated.</p> <p><b>E59.5</b> Spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship. When determining eligibility at the start of the apprenticeship, you must be confident that the apprentice will spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship. For working hours to be counted in the 50% limit, they must be regular, planned, and known at the start of the apprenticeship. Refer to Annex A (paragraph E369) for exceptions to this rule.</p> <p><b>E59.5.1</b> You must make separate arrangements with the relevant devolved administration if you are planning to deliver apprenticeships to individuals who spend more than 50% of their working hours in a devolved administration over the duration of their apprenticeship, including time spent on off-the-job training.</p> <p><b>E59.6</b> Have the right to work in England.</p> <p><b>E59.7</b> Have an eligible residency status (information can be found in the residency eligibility section in Annex A).</p> <p><b>E60</b> You can only use funds from your apprenticeship service account or employer-government co-investment for apprentices employed by you or a <a href="#">connected company or charity</a> as defined by HMRC. You must provide evidence of employment to the main provider. This also applies where the apprentice is funded by a transfer of funds from another employer.</p> <p><b>E61</b> We will fund an apprentice to undertake an apprenticeship at a higher level than a qualification they already hold, including a previous apprenticeship.</p>	<p><b>E62</b> We will fund an apprentice to undertake an apprenticeship at the same or lower level than a qualification they already hold, if the apprenticeship will allow the individual to acquire substantive new skills and you can evidence that the content of the training is materially different from any prior qualification or a previous apprenticeship.</p> <p><b>E63</b> The age of the apprentice on the day they start their apprenticeship will be used for all age-based eligibility criteria for that apprenticeship.</p> <p><b>E64</b> An apprentice's eligibility will not change during the apprenticeship unless their employment status also changes.</p> <p><b>E65</b> If an apprentice becomes unemployed or self-employed, they will at that point no longer be eligible for funding and the main provider must report them as having withdrawn from the apprenticeship in the ILR. If the apprentice has been made redundant, see paragraph E66.</p> <p><b>E66</b> If an apprentice is made redundant, we will continue to fund their training, even if they cannot find another employer, in the circumstances below:</p> <p><b>E66.1</b> Apprentices who are made redundant on or after 15 October 2020 and are either within six months of the final day of the apprenticeship practical period OR they have completed at least 75% of the apprenticeship practical period. These apprentices will be funded to completion (subject to the conditions set out in paragraph E301).</p> <p><b>E66.2</b> Apprentices who do not meet the conditions of paragraph E66.1 above. We will fund the training of these apprentices for 12 weeks while they seek a further apprenticeship agreement (see paragraph E302).</p>
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## Why is it important that prior learning is assessed before the start of an apprenticeship?

Funds must not be used to pay for training for knowledge, skills and behaviours already attained by the apprentice. The Education & Skills Funding Agency may take action to recover apprenticeship funding where this happens.

Where accounting for prior learning and experience and the reduction of content would mean the apprenticeship would take less than the minimum duration to complete the apprenticeship standard or fail to meet the requirement for the apprentice to spend 20% of their time in off-the-job training, the apprenticeship is ineligible for funding.

The initial assessment must be documented and demonstrate how prior learning has been taken into account to adjust the training content, duration and cost.

### ***How much will this cost the school/department?***

Although the direct training fees from the provider are covered by the apprenticeship levy, a service/school's budget would have to be used at the discretion of the budget holder to consider covering any additional associated training costs, such as:

- Essential subscriptions
- Uniform, tools and equipment
- Essential professional regulations or licences
- Exam fees

Apprentices may need to pay their own travel and subsistence expenses linked with completing their apprenticeship, including in relation to attending off-the-job training.

### ***Is support available for staff with additional needs to undertake an apprenticeship via the training provider?***

Yes, training providers have access to extra funding to support learners with additional needs, helping to meet the costs of providing additional support for learning and/or reasonable adjustments under the equality act for apprentices.

If an apprentice has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a statement of Special Educational Needs, or has had one in the past, there may be flexibility around the English and maths qualifications needed to complete an apprenticeship. The apprenticeship training provider should be able to provide more information.

If an apprentice requires additional support to complete their End Point Assessment (EPA), their training provider will be able to make appropriate arrangements. These could include extra time allowance, a scribe, a reader, a personal support worker to attend, a BSL interpreter and/or assistive technology. More information re EPA adjustments can be found by [clicking here](#).

### ***What do we mean by on and off-the-job training?***

We will select an approved training provider who will organise and deliver formal off-the-job training for the apprentice. Apprentices must spend at least 20% of their total contracted hours on off-the-job training. From August 22, this is changing to the equivalent of 6 hours a week to ensure that there is a consistent figure irrespective of the hours worked by the apprentice. The 6 hours a week is for calculation purposes only; once calculated the programme can still be delivered flexibly.

It should be noted that it is not necessarily a case of one day a spent a week in college, it can be block release or online or a combination of all. Off-the-job training is defined as training which is received by the apprentice, during their normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship. It is about upskilling an individual to reach full occupational competency, not accrediting their existing skills. It can, however, sometimes include research, networking events and seminars, if they are imparting new knowledge, which will help them to achieve the requirements of their apprenticeship standard. The delivery of off-the-job training will vary depending on the apprenticeship and training provider's delivery plan. It is up to the employer and training provider to discuss, decide and agree how the off-the-job training will be successfully completed and evidenced.

The employer will provide apprentices with the opportunity to practise new skills in the work environment. This is called on-the-job training and helps an apprentice develop the specific skills for the workplace.

### ***Where will the off-the-job training take place?***

It will depend on the programme and the training provider. Some training may be able to take place at the workplace (eg. using online distance learning), some sessions may be classroom type lectures or workshops at the providers chosen delivery site(s). These aspects should be discussed and clarified before any commitment is made to training since they may affect the cost and suitability of the training for the department and/or the apprentice.

### ***What do apprentices get paid at the University of Essex?***

All apprentices must earn a salary of at least the National Minimum Wage for apprentices.

The starting salary is based on the apprentice pay rates according to the grade of the job the apprentice is working towards. University of Essex apprentice pay rates for those joining us as an apprentice are currently under review and will be published shortly.

If an existing member of staff undertakes an apprenticeship, this has no impact on their salary as it is part of the learning and development offer at the University. However, they must ensure that they understand all the requirements of the training and be prepared to fully commit to its completion (including attending off-the-job training requirements and the End Point Assessment).

### ***Why is it so important to ensure apprentices have good line management in place?***

Line managers play a critical role in apprentices' success and progress. Apprentices may come from a range of backgrounds; some may have significant experience in the workplace whilst for others it may be their first job. The line manager duties for an apprentice are the same as they are for all members of their staff, however, they are also responsible for supporting apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve their apprenticeship and become a fully competent member of the workforce.



[This link](#) takes you to some useful and quite detailed general guidance developed by the Learning & Work Institute specifically for line managers. Pages 5 to 8 help to support you through the stages of supporting an apprentice from preparing before they arrive right through to apprenticeship completion.

### ***Can other team members be involved in training the apprentice/staff member on-the-job?***

Yes, like any other role, team members can be involved in supporting the learning of their colleague(s). Line managers need to ensure that any training given by team members is appropriate, relevant, and effectively delivered.

It can be a good idea to assign an apprentice a workplace mentor, who, in addition to the line manager, can provide some day-to-day support and can help an apprentice to raise concerns or make suggestions to improve their experience. Providing a mentoring opportunity to an existing member of the team may also provide another member of the team with a personal development opportunity.

### ***What is End Point Assessment (EPA)?***

End Point Assessment (commonly referred to as EPA) is the final stage of the apprenticeship programme. The purpose of EPA is to confirm that the apprentice has met all the knowledge, skills and behaviour requirements set out in the relevant apprenticeship standards. The assessment is the apprentice's opportunity to demonstrate that they are fully competent in their occupation at the end of their training.

The whole process of EPA is coordinated and conducted by a third-party organisation that is not connected to the employer or the training provider – the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).

An apprentice can't achieve their apprenticeship without satisfying all the requirements listed in the apprenticeship standard, including the End Point Assessment.

### ***How do we adequately safeguard our staff apprentices?***

The University's [safeguarding policy](#) makes clear the University's commitment to take reasonable steps to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect; to safeguard those vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism; and to ensure that relevant legislation and government guidance and local guidelines and processes are followed.

Staff (on induction and as part of the annual booster) undertake essential training which helps all staff to:

- Understand the legal and frequently adopted definitions of safeguarding children and adults at risk
- Know how to access University policy and procedures and routes for escalating a concern about a member of the community
- Understand what may cause an individual to be vulnerable to abuse or neglect or be drawn into terrorism
- Embed learning and understand how safeguarding works in practice with the use of case studies

The University, in accordance with guidance from the Health & Safety Executive, aims to safeguard children throughout the duration of their work placement at the University. Although the work placement itself may not meet the definition of regulated activity (as set out in Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006), the University has a duty of care to safeguard those on work placement whilst they are participating in university-related activity.

[This guidance](#) provides some useful dos and don'ts in terms of behaviours to help keep yourself safe from allegations and promote a safe space for all.

If a member of staff has a concern regarding the welfare or vulnerability of a member of our university community, [they are responsible for reporting this](#).

An apprenticeship training provider would want to check that the location and environments in which students and apprentices will be working are appropriate, that sufficient health and safety policies and procedures are in place and that risks are being effectively managed. The training provider would provide advice and guidance in any safeguarding matter linked with their apprentices.

[Rules on working hours for young workers](#) (under 18s) would need to be adhered to where relevant.

### ***How is feedback about a member of staff's apprenticeship programme gathered?***

If anyone was to experience problems or have any complaints about any aspect of an apprenticeship programme, it is always best to raise them as early as possible with the training provider, University of Essex's Employee Apprenticeships Manager (based within People & Culture) and/or the line manager, as appropriate. This hopefully will allow issues to be quickly and easily resolved.

However, if no resolution is found, the matter can be escalated through the relevant written complaint's procedure.

Once someone has been through this process and if they felt that their complaint was still not resolved, it can be escalated further by contacting the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

At various points during an apprenticeship, it is highly likely that an apprentice will be asked for feedback about their training and their training provider. This is to help support continuous improvement.

### ***As a member of staff, who should I speak to add the University of Essex to find out more about staff apprenticeship opportunities?***

Authorisation to recruit and/or offer/access learning and development opportunities will need to go through the normal University of Essex processes, including gaining full line management support.

For any more information, about apprenticeships, including the levy funding and how you might be able use it to support training in your department, please feel free to get in touch with the Employee Apprenticeships Manager, who is more than happy to help and provide advice.

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