University of Suffolk

**SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING A
HIGHER OR DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME**

Introduction

These guidelines are intended to supplement the course validation guidelines where course teams are developing a new higher or degree apprenticeship programme. They provide an overview of additional points to think about when designing a new apprenticeship programme, including steps that must be taken to ensure compliance with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules. It is also recommended that you consult the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships (July 2019).

The University (or partner institution where relevant) is subject to ESFA audit in relation to apprenticeship provision, and so it is important that you have a clear understanding of what it required to demonstrate compliance with the funding rules.

Relevant course (re)approval procedures, guidance and documentation templates are available on the course approval, modification and review page on the University website.

Apprenticeship standards and assessment plans

New apprenticeship programmes may be developed from scratch, or may be based on an existing degree programme adapted to meet the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard and assessment plan.

When developing a new apprenticeship programme using existing provision, it is important to avoid just rebranding the existing programme with some minor amendments to make it fit into the apprenticeship model. You should use the relevant apprenticeship standard as a framework for building a fit-for-purpose programme with an emphasis on work-based learning as a central pedagogy.

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On- and off-the-job training should be viewed holistically, with both elements integrated so that apprentices are able to effectively acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard. As highlighted in the QAA Characteristics Statement for apprenticeships, "the workplace becomes a site for the development and generation of knowledge, understanding, skills and professional behaviours rather than just a site for their application". Close collaboration with employers and relevant professional groups is vital in informing programme design and delivery in this regard.

Entry requirements (including English and Maths)

Your course documentation should outline entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme, aligned with the relevant apprenticeship standard.

It is important to remember that as part of the funding rules, all apprentices should have successfully achieved Level 2 functional skills or GCSE grade A* to C / 9 to 4 in English and Maths before taking their end-point assessment. Where this is not a condition of entry and where apprentices do not possess such qualifications, you should outline plans for enabling them to achieve this level in the allocated time and monitoring progress. It is important to note that English and Maths provision cannot contribute to the 20% off-the-job training requirement.

Initial needs assessment

The initial needs assessment should be undertaken as part of the process for determining eligibility for admission to the apprenticeship programme. It 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. It can also serve to highlight relevant prior learning and confirm the need for English and Maths as part of the apprenticeship.

Arrangements for recognition of prior learning as part of the initial needs assessment should follow the University's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. In accordance with the funding rules, you will be required to clearly demonstrate that you have accounted for prior learning and adjusted the content, duration and price accordingly prior to the start of the apprenticeship. 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.

You should include information in the course documentation about arrangements for conducting the initial needs assessment (including any involvement of employers in the process) and how this feeds into the individual learning plan. Further information is available within the guidance on the initial needs assessment process, which includes a link to a template for recording the outcomes of the process. You should adapt this template to reflect the apprenticeship programme (in particular by adding the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours in Section A3 and outlining how these are addressed within the programme), and include the template within your validation documentation.

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Off-the-job training

It is a core requirement of the funding rules that all apprentices must spend at least 20% of their paid hours (minus statutory leave entitlement[1]) in off-the-job training over the duration of the apprenticeship programme. Off-the-job training is defined in the funding rules as:

> Training received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's paid hours, for the purpose of achieving their apprenticeship. It is not training delivered for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work for which they have been employed …Off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard, teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours required to reach competence in the particular occupation. It can include training that is delivered at the apprentice's normal place of work.

For example, an apprentice who is paid to work 39 hours per week would be required to undertake at least 362 hours of off-the-job training per year, calculated as follows:

39 hours per week x 46.4 weeks[2] of the year x 0.2 (for the 20%)
= 362 hours per year

Note: this applies to an apprentice commencing their programme from 1 August 2018 onwards; the calculation for those commencing earlier than this date would need to use the full 52 weeks of the year, in accordance with previous iterations of the funding rules.

In your course documentation (and subsequently in the Commitment Statement for individual apprentices), you should outline arrangements for quantifying and delivering the 20% off-the-job training, and for monitoring that this requirement has been met across the full duration of the programme. As an example, it is not sufficient to say that the apprentice attends University or College one day per week in order to meet the requirement, as this does not take into account non-teaching periods (for example University/College holidays and inter-semester breaks). It is also important to express off-the-job training requirements in terms of hours rather than days, based on the individual apprentice's paid hours of work.

In addition to standard programme delivery (as outlined in the study hours breakdown within module specifications), additional off-the-job training may also be achieved through relevant practical training, shadowing or mentoring (excluding training delivered for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform their job); work-based projects; industry visits; attendance at conferences, workshops or competitions; additional allocated time within the working week to complete assignments or engage in online learning; and/or learning support.[3]

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[1] This is a requirement for all apprentices who begin their programme from 1 August 2018 (previously annual leave entitlement was not deducted).
[2] 52 weeks minus 5.6 weeks' statutory leave entitlement (equivalent to 28 days).
[3] What constitutes off-the-job training may be subject to change. You should consult the ESFA Funding and Performance Management Rules for the current list of what off-the-job training can and cannot include.

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> Details of how the 20% off-the-job training requirement will be met should be included in the Commitment Statement for individual apprentices, and progress in this regard should be considered at every progress review meeting.
>
> It is important to retain evidence to demonstrate achievement of the off-the-job training requirement, although the ESFA is not prescriptive about the type of evidence gathered for this. While tracking can be difficult, it is vital: apprentices should be encouraged to be vigilant in documenting this. Your course documentation should outline the approach you will use for this.

You can find out more in the DfE publication [Apprenticeship off-the-job training: policy background and examples (June 2017)](#).

Apprenticeship delivery models

There are a variety of delivery models that can be used for apprenticeship provision, which can be adapted to suit employer needs. For example delivery may be via:

- day release, with the apprentice attending the University or College for one day per week across the full programme

- block release, with the apprentice attending the University or College for concentrated periods staggered across the academic year (for example one week in five)

- 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).

Delivery must take place within the apprentice's normal working hours, and where this is not possible (for example when evening delivery is used), the apprentice should be given time off work in lieu of this.

Where different modes of delivery are being used for different employers as part of a single apprenticeship programme, your course documentation should outline the typical mode of delivery and any required variations to meet the needs of individual employers. Any subsequent changes in this regard should be considered through the University's procedure for the approval of changes to existing courses.

Support in the workplace

Apprenticeships are more likely to be successful when the employer is proactively involved in supporting the apprentice, but in reality this can sometimes be hard to achieve. Your course documentation should outline the mechanisms that will be used to encourage active employer engagement in the design and delivery of the apprenticeship programme and in

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supporting individual apprentices. This may include employer webinars or induction sessions to provide an introduction to the apprenticeship programme, which emphasise the importance of their active engagement in supporting the apprentice in the workplace (including providing access to appropriate experiences to reinforce their learning and to feed into their assessed work). Active employer participation in tripartite progress reviews is also key.

Your course documentation should outline arrangements for providing apprentices with support in the workplace, for example through the appointment of a mentor. It is also helpful to outline any arrangements you have in place to brief, train and support mentors, so that you can work effectively together to support the apprentice's progression and attainment. As highlighted in the QAA Characteristics Statement for apprenticeships, "workplace mentors should have a clear understanding of the fundamentals of mentoring and coaching, supporting the transfer of tacit knowledge and understanding how to facilitate the learning process within the employer organisation". Clear channels of communication between the course team and mentors will be important in this regard.

Apprentice progress reviews

Progress reviews are an important aspect of apprenticeship provision, and your course documentation should outline arrangements for these.

Informal progress reviews (monthly)

Informal student progress reviews should be undertaken at least every four weeks, drawing on input from the University or College, the employer and the individual apprentice. These regular points of interaction are vital in terms of monitoring the progress of individual apprentices and ensuring that the University or College is notified of any changes in circumstance (for example in paid hours or line manager). If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, these reviews can be undertaken virtually (for example via Skype), via phone or via email.

Formal tripartite progress reviews (termly)

In addition to informal progress reviews, formal tripartite progress reviews should take place at least termly. These review meetings should involve the apprentice, a University or College representative and an employer representative. Again, these meetings can take place virtually (for example via Skype) if this is agreeable with all parties.
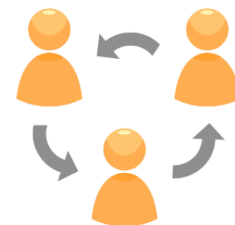
It is helpful to involve the apprentice's line manager in the initial tripartite review meeting, and to use this as an opportunity to go through the commitment statement to confirm responsibilities. It is important to ensure that employers are fully committed to these tripartite meetings as they are a key part of the process for ensuring that learning has taken place.

The tripartite reviews provide an opportunity to:

- ✓ check 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 (including confirmation that this is taking place within the working week)
- ✓ review attendance and highlight any issues
- ✓ discuss and evidence the apprentice's learning (through both on- and off-the-job training), and review performance
- ✓ review the apprentice's continuing support needs, including triggering an assessment where appropriate
- ✓ review the support being offered by the University/College and the employer
- ✓ discuss personal and career development
- ✓ celebrate successes and achievements
- ✓ agree future targets and objectives
- ✓ identify improvements/changes that could be made
- ✓ discuss preparation for end-point assessment
- ✓ raise awareness and discuss safeguarding, British Values and Prevent
- ✓ identify any revisions required to the individual learning plan and commitment statement, for example because of any changes in circumstance.

It is vital that a formal record of these meetings is maintained. A template is available from the University's Apprenticeships Hub.

End-point assessment (EPA)

All apprentices will be required to successfully complete an end-point assessment to test their full competence, in accordance with the relevant apprenticeship standard and assessment plan. The apprenticeship standard relevant to a particular apprenticeship programme will specify if this will be delivered by the University / partner college or an independent training provider. In both cases, arrangements for EPA will be considered as part of the course validation process. It is important that you demonstrate how preparation for EPA is built into the design of the programme.

Where EPA requires the involvement of an independent training provider (as listed on the Register of Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment Organisations), your course documentation should outline arrangements in this regard. While the University or College can provide information to employers about possible End-Point Assessment Organisations, the selection of the organisation is ultimately the responsibility of the employer (however, the University or College should lead the relationship with the EPA organisation once selected).

Where EPA will be delivered by the University or College, the assessment must be undertaken by someone who has not been involved in the delivery of the apprenticeship, in accordance with the University's [Conflict of Interest Policy for Apprenticeship End Point Assessment](#).

It is important to remember that 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 Maths at Level 2), and both you and the employer are content that they have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Where relevant, your course documentation should also refer to any professional recognition that students will be eligible for upon successful completion of the apprenticeship programme. Where EPA is not integrated, confirmation should be provided regarding whether recognition is dependent upon successful completion of EPA in addition to the requirements for the University of Suffolk award.

Progression opportunities

Opportunities for progression from the apprenticeship programme should be clearly articulated at the outset. This may include, for example, progression to a higher level apprenticeship, undertaking a higher academic or professional qualification, gaining professional status, or potential career development. Apprentices should be provided with regular advice and guidance on progression opportunities and career development, both as part of their apprenticeship programme and through access to wider University careers advice and guidance.

Further advice and guidance

If you would like further advice and guidance on developing an apprenticeship programme, you can contact:

- The Apprenticeships Hub (email apprenticeship@uos.ac.uk)

- The Quality team (see staff contact details at https://www.uos.ac.uk/quality)

- Ruth Fox, ILR and Funding Manager, Planning and Management Information team (email Ruth.Fox@uos.ac.uk)

Key reference points

Apprenticeship standards
https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/

ESFA apprenticeship funding rules for training providers
https://www.gov.uk/education/apprenticeships-funding

QAA Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships (July 2019)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/characteristics-statement-apprenticeships.pdf

Apprenticeship off-the-job training: policy background and examples (June 2017)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621565/OTJ_training_guidance.pdf

Register of Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment Organisations
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-end-point-assessment-organisations