

Chapter 7: Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

This chapter provides information for Brookes staff who are interested in developing Higher or Degree Apprenticeships.

1. What is an apprenticeship?

- 1.1 Apprenticeships combine a job with study towards a higher education qualification, enabling students to 'earn while they learn'. They receive a salary from their employer and their tuition fees are met from funding generated by the apprenticeship levy. The levy is paid by all employers with a staffing bill of over £3m, as part of the Government's aim to substantially increase the number of people taking apprenticeships and to promote them as an alternative route to a higher education qualification. The awards associated with Higher and Degree apprenticeships are available from levels 4 to 7: Higher apprenticeships are usually equivalent to a Foundation degree or professional qualification, while Degree apprenticeships are available at levels 6 and 7 (equivalent to Bachelors and Masters degrees). Apprentices work at least 30 hours per week for their employer, and learning fits around their work commitment.
- 1.2 Apprenticeships must be aligned with 'apprenticeship standards' which have been developed by groups of employers (called 'trailblazers'), and define the knowledge, skills and behaviours required in order to be competent in a specific occupation. New apprenticeship standards are continuing to be developed, where new trailblazer groups are established - the current list of occupations available to employers and training providers can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-list-of-occupations-available>
- 1.3 A higher or degree apprenticeship standard will typically be comprised of a higher education qualification at the appropriate level and an assessment plan made up of:
 - assessment of work based competence, which may either be incorporated into the degree qualification or assessed independently – tasks in the workplace must align with the level of the final academic award;
 - End Point Assessment (EPA). This is a final independent assessment of competence, the format of which may vary according to the apprenticeship standard. The EPA may involve examinations or assessments for relevant professional bodies; and some standards have integrated EPAs, i.e. they form part of the degree qualification;
 - English and Maths at level 2, for apprentices who do not already hold these qualifications.
- 1.4 Oxford Brookes is on the Education & Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, as are a number of members of the University's Associate College Partnership (see the RoATP at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>)
- 1.5 The development of a degree apprenticeship may offer an opportunity to work with a strategically important employer on a large or prestigious programme. Apprenticeships differ from a traditional on-campus undergraduate or taught postgraduate programme in a number of important ways - see guidance note G7.1 for some of the key issues to be taken into consideration when developing a higher or degree apprenticeship. A checklist of key questions for teams intending to develop a new higher or degree apprenticeship is also included in the guidance note.
- 1.6 The Degree Apprenticeships Working Group - chaired by the PVC(Student Experience) - has been established to provide a strategic approach to identifying and taking advantage of opportunities for developing higher and degree apprenticeships.

2. Models for delivery of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

- 2.1 It is common for delivery of apprenticeships to involve two or more organisations, but one provider is required to act as the 'main provider' for the apprenticeship. It is also typical for apprenticeships to be delivered through partnership (subcontracting) relationships with more than one provider, in order to gain access to appropriate specialisms for the delivery of elements of the apprenticeship. Contracting

and subcontracting rules can be found in the DfE guidance on Apprenticeship funding (*see link in section 4 below*).

- 2.2 The main provider is ultimately responsible for:
- delivery and quality assurance of the apprenticeship, ensuring the apprenticeship standard is met;
 - managing the relationship with the employer;
 - producing agreements for each employer, which specifies the roles of any subcontractors;
 - ensuring compliance with the ESFA funding contract.
- 2.3 If the University will be responsible for a significant aspect of delivery of a particular apprenticeship, it is advisable for Brookes to take on the role of main provider. Other potential models are set out below:
- A. ACP member or other organisation as main provider; Brookes as awarding body for qualification (*see 2.4-2.6 below*);
 - B. ACP member or other organisation as main provider; Brookes delivering/assessing aspects of apprenticeship (*see 2.7-2.8 below*);
 - C. Brookes as main provider subcontracting delivery of part of the apprenticeship to a training provider (*see 2.9 below*);
 - D. Brookes as main provider subcontracting delivery of part of the apprenticeship to an employer provider (*see 2.10 below*);
 - E. Brookes works in partnership with other universities/partners to win a large contract (*see 2.11 below*).

A: ACP member (or other organisation) as main provider; Brookes as awarding body for qualification

- 2.4 This is likely to be a fairly standard arrangement for the University, and a bespoke contract and financial schedule has been prepared for the scenario involving ACP members. In this model the college will use a Brookes qualification to meet part of an apprenticeship standard. The contractual relationship resembles the normal relationship between the University and the college delivering the award, and it is therefore not necessary to enter into a subcontracting relationship with the college (unless Brookes staff are to be involved in any teaching and/or assessment on the programme).
- 2.5 The partner college must be approved to deliver the programme leading to the award (through the normal approval processes described in Chapter 5 of the Quality & Standards Handbook); and even if the college is already teaching the relevant programme, the University must approve its use as part of a degree apprenticeship.
- 2.6 In this scenario, the college takes responsibility for:
- managing and delivering the overall standard;
 - delivering and assessing the Brookes award in line with university operations manuals as part of the standard;
 - returning apprentice data to HEFCE and ESFA;
 - collection and management of fees and funding;
 - marketing and promotion of the apprenticeship;
 - recruitment to the apprenticeship and management of the employer relationship;

B: ACP member (or other organisation) as main provider; Brookes delivering part of apprenticeship qualification

- 2.7 This scenario may occur, for example, for a level 6 or 7 degree apprenticeship where the main provider delivers levels 4 and 5 of the programme and Brookes delivers levels 6-7 of the qualification; or where the EPA is integrated into the qualification. The main provider would need to set up a subcontracting arrangement with the University which specifies the aspects of delivery for which the university is responsible. It is likely that this would only involve delivery of some or part of a degree or postgraduate programme. If an end point assessment is integrated into a degree programme and the

University is responsible for carrying out or quality assuring the assessment arrangements, a sub-contract is required.

- 2.8 In some cases, the main provider may wish to sub-contract the delivery of the whole qualification to Brookes; for example, if the main provider has a relationship with an employer for a wide range of apprenticeship provision but does not have capacity to deliver a degree programme in the required subject area. In this case, it is important to establish what the main provider expects in respect of the University's contribution to the development of the apprenticeship evidence pack and preparation towards the end point assessment. It should also be noted that since the main provider leads on the relationship with the employer, this may have implications for any other connections that exist between the employer and Brookes.

C: Brookes is the main provider, subcontracting delivery of part of the apprenticeship to a training provider

- 2.9 While acting as main provider, the University may need to set up partnership arrangements for delivery of part of an apprenticeship standard. For example, it might be more cost effective to sub-contract certain activities, such as in-company delivery, monitoring of work-based learning, or the delivery of English and Maths or a professional/technical qualification which forms part of the standard. The University is responsible for setting up subcontracting arrangements with the proposed partner, and must ensure that the relationship with the chosen subcontractor does not breach ESFA funding rules, such as the limits on the involvement of providers who are not on the register of training providers. Brookes is also responsible for managing the relationship with the employer, which cannot be devolved by the main provider to any partner. Consideration should also be given to how the information needed for audits of contract compliance/quality assurance will be gathered from subcontractors.

D: Brookes is the main provider, subcontracting delivery of part of the apprenticeship to an employer provider

- 2.10 Employers are able to apply to the ESFA to join the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers as employer providers. They are only permitted to deliver to their own employees or those in a connected company, and can only claim for the direct cost of delivery to apprentices. In this scenario consideration will need to be given to the employer's capacity to deliver, and the University must monitor the employer's contractual compliance and to quality assure the training they are delivering. Where there are strong relationships with employers and clear standards that map from a qualification to work-based practice (e.g. professional standards frameworks), this model can offer a beneficial and cost-effective way of delivering work-based training (e.g. arrangements with schools for delivery of in-school teacher training).

E: Brookes works in partnership with other universities/partners to win a large contract

- 2.11 There may be instances where large companies, or organisations funded by the public sector (e.g. the police force), may issue large-scale contracts for the delivery of training on a national scale. In these cases, Brookes may wish to enter into arrangements with other providers in order to increase the likelihood of winning the contract, and to ensure appropriate geographical coverage can be achieved. In this model, one provider would need to act as the main provider, and the other parties would be subcontractors.

3. Approval processes

- 3.1 To a greater or lesser extent, all apprenticeships represent partnership working, even where the University is adapting an existing in-house programme, since they all involve working in partnership with employers. Many also involve working with other providers (either training or employer providers). For this reason, all proposals for Degree or Higher Apprenticeships – whatever model of delivery is to be used - must be considered by the Learning Partnerships Advisory Group. Apprenticeship proposals should be notified to LPAG on form T7.1. *Note: EPA-only applications do not need to be submitted to LPAG.*
- 3.2 For apprenticeships involving aspects of programme delivery or assessment by another provider, the approval process described in *Chapter 5* of the Quality & Standards Handbook should be followed,

and form T7.1 must be submitted to LPAG with the appropriate Collaborative Provision Proposal Form (CPPF). This is usually likely to involve members of the Associate College Partnership, who will be the main providers (models A and B); and where an existing programme delivered by that ACP partner is to be used for the Degree Apprenticeship, form T7.1 is sufficient to notify LPAG of the proposed arrangements.

- 3.3 Once LPAG has endorsed a proposal for a new apprenticeship where Brookes is the main provider - involving either new or existing in-house provision - the approval process described in *Chapter 2* of the Quality & Standards Handbook should be followed. Where existing home provision is to be modified to the apprenticeship model and to meet employers' needs, the approval process may be adapted to suit the proposed arrangements, on the advice of the Faculty link Quality Assurance Officer. Guidance note G7.2 provides information for PDTs about developing Degree Apprenticeships and the information that should be submitted to the approval panel. Approval panels should particularly focus on the proposed delivery and assessment arrangements, to ensure that they meet the apprenticeship standard and assessment plan; and on the management of the employer relationship.

4. Useful links

Office for Students

Degree apprenticeships guidance:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/skills-and-employment/apprenticeships/>

Department for Education

Apprenticeship funding information:

<https://www.gov.uk/education/apprenticeships-funding>

Find apprenticeship standards:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-for-apprenticeship-standards>

Register of End Point Assessment organisations:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-end-point-assessment-organisations>

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):

Quality assuring higher education in Apprenticeships:

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/quality-assuring-higher-education-in-apprenticeships.pdf?sfvrsn=6e4cff81_24

Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC):

<https://uvac.ac.uk/category/apprenticeship/degree-apprenticeship/>

Approved by: Learning Partnerships Advisory Group on 4th October 2017
(also endorsed by the Degree Apprenticeships Working Group on 12th October 2017)