

Brookes Briefing

Apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships were introduced in 2015. The coalition government of the moment stated that its intentions were to bring the ‘world of business and the world of education closer together’ by combining academic study from a traditional degree with ‘practical experience and wider employment skills vital for career success (DBIS, 2015).

The Apprenticeship model is founded on a partnership between the Employer, the Provider, the End Point Assessor and the Apprentice. Each apprenticeship has its own set of agreed standards which focus on knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs). Apprentices must satisfy each KSB in order to pass their apprenticeship. Degree apprenticeships must therefore closely align their curricula and pedagogic approaches with the KSBs given at www.instituteofapprenticeships.org

Degree Apprenticeship Standards

Knowledge

Skills

Behaviours

Early adopters of the Degree Apprenticeship included traditional industries such as construction and engineering and quickly extended to new areas such as law, business, administration, IT, nursing with more disciplines coming on stream each year. The Degree Apprenticeship model is funded by an employer payroll levy. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that deliver Degree Apprenticeships receive funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and are inspected by Ofsted.

The Degree Apprenticeship model necessitates close links between industry and education. This cooperative model offers apprentices real world experience, access to industry standard technology, systems and equipment, and the opportunity to build and demonstrate their abilities in the workplace (Valentin, 2000). The model also requires close partnership between employers and providers to frame the content, examples and application of each programme. Coupled with degree level studies, the intention is that graduates from apprentice programmes will have not only a set of skills, but also the underpinning knowledge and critical thinking capabilities that will facilitate a positive career trajectory. This is becoming increasingly important in a competitive job market, where employers are actively looking for graduates who can make an immediate contribution to the business (Bennett, 2002).

There is some controversy about the value of apprenticeships, but there is also evidence that undertaking training and gaining qualifications whilst in paid work is proving to be an attractive alternative to the traditional degree (BBC 2016; Lee 2012; Osuizugbo 2022). While apprenticeships were originally intended to support people from non-traditional backgrounds, data from the Sutton Trust indicates that young apprentices aged 19-24 from deprived areas are falling in number whereas the proportion of apprentices aged 25+ from the most advantaged backgrounds has doubled (Cullinane and Doherty, 2020). These factors all play an important part in the design of our Degree Apprenticeships.

Principles and Practices for designing and delivering degree apprenticeships

Principle 1: Design your programme to meet the Apprenticeship Standards

Each Degree Apprenticeship has its own set of standards which will frame your programme. You can find these at www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/ Apprenticeship Standards are categorised as Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs). This means that the design of your curriculum must go beyond 'content' (knowledge), it must also include learning activities that address skills and behaviours.

Principle 2: Foster good partner relationships

Apprenticeship programmes are built around partner relationships between the provider, employer and assessor and apprentice. This can be configured in several ways but is usually as follows:

Apprentice: Students in paid employment

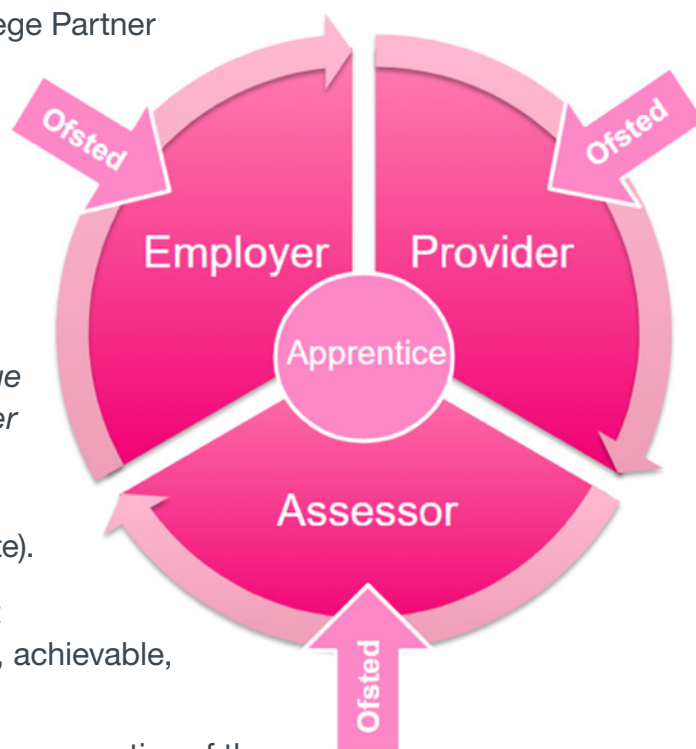
Provider: Higher Education Institution (HEI) or College Partner

Employer: Organisations, companies, firms who employ the apprentices

Assessor: End Point Assessor with an external body or End Point Assessor HEI for integrated programmes

In the Apprenticeship Degree it is vital to ensure there is *'effective and meaningful on-going dialogue between the apprentice, employer, training provider and end-point assessment organisation so that all parties are aware of whether they are on track and how to raise concerns if they are not.'*(IfATE, no date).

- Network regularly with all parties to ensure that expectations are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) and agreed.
- Check on the progress of apprentices and their perspective of the dynamics between the on the job and off the job learning.



Principle 3: Employ active teaching and learning approaches

A Degree Apprenticeship should look and feel different to a traditional degree programme, as its target group are those who want to learn 'on the job'. Learning should therefore be active (Freeman et al, 2014; Powell, 2003). Translate course content into learning activities. To do this effectively employ behaviourist and constructivist pedagogies in addition to cognitive approaches.

The examples below give a set of KSBs from the Coaching Professional (CP) Degree Apprenticeship and suggest related learning activities.

CP Knowledge K1: *Theories of learning and reflective practice such as Kolb, Gibbs, Schon, etc., and basic schools of psychology and neuroscience, including linguistic interpretation and application.*

Learning Activity: In depth critical appraisal of reflective models

CP Skill S15: *Demonstrates awareness of own values, beliefs and behaviours; recognises how these affect their practice and uses this self-awareness to manage their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of those receiving coaching and, where relevant, the sponsor*

Learning Activity: Effective and inclusive coaching facilitation with a range of clients.

CP Behaviour B2: *Self-awareness, including of their own behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes, and attending to their own wellbeing, resilience and maintaining mental capacity*

Learning Activity: Development of reflective log. Entries reflecting on impact and management of own values, beliefs and behaviours in coaching sessions.

Principle 4: Draw on apprentices' experience of work

Apprenticeship Degrees provide an opportunity for individuals to engage in studies directly relevant to their chosen profession or employment. The combination of theory and practice makes the Degree Apprenticeship a powerful learning approach. It is therefore essential that apprentices are invited to apply theories, models and concepts to their working environments.

To maximise the potential for this applied learning:

- draw on the apprentices' experiences of work in the classroom
- ask where apprentices see the connections
- invite apprentices to critique the models, theories and concepts against the reality of their lived experience in the workplace.

Principle 5: Design formative assessment and feedback opportunities to build towards the End Point Assessment (EPA)

All degree apprenticeships have an End Point Assessment Gateway. *'The apprentice should only enter the gateway once the employer is content that the apprentice is working at or above the occupational standard.'* (IfATE, no date). The End Point Assessor determines what the final assessment will be.

- Build in opportunities for formative assessment and feedback that directly align with the EPA. This will help the students to identify their strengths and the areas they need to work on.
- Employ formative activities such as discussion, debate, quizzes, presentations, sketch booking, journaling, reflecting on practice etc give apprentices opportunities to consolidate their learning, practise their skills, foster professional behaviours and build confidence as they work towards the EPA.

Principle 6: Engage in regular Teaching Observations and developmental dialogue

Reflective practice is an essential element of gaining insights to one's own professional approaches and engaging in a process of continuous learning (Schon, 1991). Any programme under the auspices of Ofsted is required to employ a developmental Teaching Observation (TObs) process as part of its Continuing Professional Development cycle (CPD). Use this TObs process as a developmental opportunity to:

- engage in dialogue about effective pedagogical approaches
- deepen your own reflective practice
- learn from, and with, fellow colleagues.

References, resources and further reading

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