Apprenticeships Approval Process

Contents

<mark>Yellow highlighted text</mark> identifies the most recent revisions to the document/ regulations. If you require these revisions to be identified in an alternative format, please contact the responsible Policy Officer.

Purpose

1. Apprenticeships approved for delivery by the University or its partners are subject to the existing Course Planning and Approval processes, academic regulations and policies. This document sets out the additional requirements and process for approval of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships utilising University of Worcester awards. This includes guidance about supplementary documentation and considerations in the planning, design and approval process to ensure that the programme meets the requirements of the requisite Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan and assures the standards and quality of the higher or degree-level apprentice learner experience.

2. This document should be read in conjunction with University of Worcester DfE Compliance Policy<mark>[LINK]</mark>. This outlines the areas of scrutiny that must be taken into consideration to meet the Department for Education (DfE) Training Provider Funding Rules. It is essential that the apprenticeship programme and its delivery is DfE compliant in order to draw down apprenticeship funding and to provide appropriate evidence that funding compliance is being met on a DfE audit.

3. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Quality Statement for apprenticeships provides an overview of the key requirements and components for an apprenticeship. The Higher Education in Apprenticeships Characteristics Statement (QAA, July 2019), sets out the characteristics and distinctive features of apprenticeships in the UK where they include a higher education award, where they are a higher education programme and where they include higher level learning delivered through a higher education provider. Additionally, an Advice and Guidance document on 'Work-Based Learning' which makes reference to apprenticeships as work-based learning experiences has been published by the QAA in conjunction with the UK Quality Code for HE (QAA, Nov 2018). The Department for Education has published a guide for providers that focuses on the essential steps required to prepare for and then deliver high quality apprenticeships (DfE, updated August 2023). Ofsted has published guidance for providers relating to the inspection of apprenticeship provision. The Office

for Students quality and standards conditions of registration also apply to apprenticeships and the OfS is responsible for the external quality assurance of integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. This document has taken account of these external reference points.

4. **Early engagement with the Apprenticeship Office and AQU is essential prior to submission of the proposal to APPG to ensure full understanding of the requirements to meet compliance with the DfE Provider Funding Rules** and the commitment required to fulfil and evidence a number of these requirements in advance of the commencement of the apprenticeship.

5. An effective two-way relationship between the University and employers is fundamental to the design and delivery of apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Office can support Schools to develop productive relationships with employers. In turn, Schools will need to allocate the staff time needed to develop and sustain effective working relationships with employers over the lifetime of the apprenticeship.

6. The process for approval of the Higher or Degree Apprenticeship may vary according to the nature of the apprenticeship programme, whether it utilises an existing University approved course or requires new course development as part of the apprenticeship programme, whether there is a PSRB involved and/or if it involves delivery by an academic partner organisation. Any variation in process will be determined in discussion with the Academic Quality Unit and through the 'Intent to Approve' form.

Definitions

7. An apprenticeship is a job with training to industry standards. It should be about entry to a recognised occupation, involve a substantial programme of on and off-the-job training and the apprentice's occupational competence should be tested by an independent, end point assessment.

8. Individuals can only be employed as apprentices if they are working towards the achievement of an approved Apprenticeship Standard, which defines the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to perform an identified job role. Learning therefore fits around and within that work commitment and requires flexible modes of learning, for example, through block release, distance or blended learning.

9. The employer, not the individual apprentice, is the customer and purchaser of the Apprenticeship. Employers, levy and non levy-paying employers, purchase Apprenticeship training provision and the services of an apprentice assessment organisation to deliver the End Point Assessment (EPA) through the Digital Apprenticeship Service. EPA is the final stage of an apprenticeship. It is an impartial assessment of whether the apprentice has developed the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard. On successful outcome of the EPA, the apprentice is deemed to be competent in the KSB's and is awarded the apprenticeship by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

10. For Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, the EPA may be non-integrated (independent), integrated or fully integrated. For non-integrated EPA the University, as the training provider, (in consultation with the employer) is responsible for engaging the End Point Assessment Organisation. For integrated degree apprenticeships, the University must provide the off-the-job training (the degree) and end-point assessment. All EPAs must be conducted by a registered end-point assessment organisation. The University must be registered on the Apprenticeship Providers and Assessment Register (the Register) for each Apprenticeship Standard where the EPA is integrated and fully integrated.

11. The term 'course' is generally used in this document to refer to the HE Award and 'apprenticeship programme' to the total apprenticeship learning experience, i.e. the combination of the off-the-job and on-the-job learning (work-integrated/work-based

learning) leading to an end-point assessment.

Proposals for new Apprenticeship Programmes

12. The initial recommendation for approval of proposals for new apprenticeships and associated course developments must be given by the **Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG) and approved by University Executive Board (UEB)** and are subject to the existing documentation and processes for Course Approval.

13. If any part of the University is invited to or intends to formally participate in a Trailblazer, this should be discussed with relevant senior managers and stakeholders and APPG and the Academic Quality Unit and Apprenticeship Office notified. This is required because membership of the Trailblazer commits the University as part of the Trailblazer group to promote the subsequent Standard and to participate in delivery of the apprenticeship.

14. If any part of the University intends to join the Apprenticeship Provider & Assessment Register (APAR) as an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), whether the intention is to act as EPAO for other Institutions or relates to an integrated degree apprenticeship, this should be discussed with relevant senior managers and must be approved in principle by APPG, in advance of any application being made.

15. In completing **the business case and apprenticeship proposal for the Academic Planning and Portfolio Group (APPG)** (see AQU website for proposal form), proposers must be mindful of the requirements for apprenticeships (see AO website for DfE guidance documents), and the specific requirements for the proposed apprenticeship; this will include consideration of:

   a) **Significant employer engagement and consultation** to establish employer demand for the apprenticeship and predicted numbers, alongside an overview of the existing provision in the area and analysis of how the proposal complements it or fills a gap in the market.

   b) How employers will be involved in the design, delivery and ongoing review of the course;

   c) The **Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan**;

   d) The **HE Award and other pre-requisites for the apprenticeship** as required by the Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan;

   e) The **Apprenticeship Funding Band for the Standard in comparison to current UW fees and financial viability** (the maximum cap allocated by the DfE and how the apprenticeship will be priced within the DfE cap);

   f) Whether **the HE Award has been mapped to the Standard** and approved by PSRB (where applicable);

   g) **Plans for the use of the HE Award**; any intention to deliver the HE Award separately from an apprenticeship and also as part of the apprenticeship programme **or** deliver the HE course solely as part of an apprenticeship programme (i.e. open or closed apprenticeship programme);

   h) **Anticipated number of cohorts per annum and proposed start dates and any potential implications arising from the apprenticeship delivery model** (e.g. multiple entry points (cohorts) for the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework (TCRF) and associated processes and systems, e.g. timing of examination boards, progression between levels and from FDs to Top-Up;

i) **Plans for variations to the standard TCRF that impact course structure**, which should be discussed and agreed with the Director of Quality and Educational Development and the Academic Registrar;

j) **Delivery model,** including flexible or distance learning modes and proportions of on- and off-the-job training, which should be developed and agreed with employer stakeholders;

k) **Any additional University (or partner) staffing considerations** confirming how the course will be resourced to meet the funding rule requirements, e.g. the adoption of an apprenticeship coach role (or equivalent) to support work-integrated learning, oversee the apprentice learner experience in the workplace in conjunction with the workplace mentor/supervisor and liaison between the University, School and the employers and apprentices in the workplace; administration of the apprenticeship over the lifetime of the programme.

l) **Admission procedures to ensure employer recruitment requirements are satisfied as well as the University's minimum entry requirements**, through consultation with employers to agree criteria and support selection of apprentices for the apprenticeship;

m) Whether the University needs to be an **approved supplier on a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)** in order to deliver this apprenticeship programme to employers;

n) The **intention to sub-contract any part of the delivery** of the apprenticeship, including for the achievement of English and Maths at Level 2;

o) The **arrangements for the end-point-assessment (EPA)** and the pre-requisites for the gateway to end-point-assessment (EPA) as identified in the Standard and associated Assessment Plan.

16. **Draft text for proposed web copy** (that accompanies the proposal) must take account of the nature and arrangements of the apprenticeship programme, with a view to promoting the apprenticeship to employers and as information for potential apprentices.

17. **Additional considerations for proposals where the partner organisation is the Training Provider** and the University is the awarding body include:

a) Whether the partner already delivers apprenticeships and, if so, consideration of their standing with DfE and Ofsted;

b) Whether the apprenticeship has already been approved to be delivered at UW or with another partner;

c) Whether the University plans to run/continue running the course contained within the apprenticeship programme as a separate academic award or whether the University will also deliver the apprenticeship programme;

d) Management arrangements/responsibilities for the apprenticeship eg. Apprenticeship Data reporting (via ILR returns) DfE evidence, DfE evidence, EPA process.

e) Financial viability, particularly where Apprenticeship Funding Band is lower than current UW fees.

18. The University Apprenticeship Subcontracting Policy, will set out the University's approach to subcontracting its higher and degree apprenticeship provision.

Documents required for apprenticeship approval

19. **Core and supplementary documents and evidence required for approval of a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship include:**

   a) **Completed Briefing Paper to evidence effective stakeholder engagement** in the co-design of the apprenticeship programme (CAP Form 1). An employer partner will be asked to attend the approval meeting as part of the course development team.

   b) **Completed Briefing Paper to articulate anticipated number of cohorts per annum for the next 3 years and proposed start dates, and how any potential implications for TCRF and associated processes and systems arising from apprenticeship delivery model have been discussed and agreed with the Director of Quality and Educational Development and the Academic Registrar** (CAP Form 9), e.g. multiple entry points (cohorts), examination boards, progression between levels and from FDs to Top-Up (particularly managing the apprentice experience with reassessment and implications of retakes for funding).

   c) **Completed Provision of Information for Prospective Students (and Published promotional materials)** to promote the apprenticeship, recruit employers and to provide overview of the apprenticeship for potential apprentices.

   d) **Programme Specification for the HE Award and the additional Apprenticeship Specification** (See Appendix 1 - Template for Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Specification). The Apprenticeship Specification includes the mapping of the HE Award to achievement of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSB) and competencies of the Standard and any additional professional certificates/exit awards. It also identifies the core activities required in on- and off-the-job learning. The assessment strategy should detail how the assessment methods in the programme prepare apprentices for and align with the EPA. Where there is a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) route onto the apprenticeship, this should be explained in the Apprenticeship Specification. RPL would need to be completed in a timely manner as part of the initial needs assessment to ensure fees, content and duration are adjusted accordingly.

   e) **Updated or bespoke Module Specifications** to reflect apprenticeship delivery and contribution to the achievement of the KSB and competencies of the relevant Standard and associated job roles. Module Specifications should identify where there are different modes of delivery and learning and teaching methods for the apprenticeship. All Apprenticeship programmes (whether with integrated or non-integrated EPAs) should identify a gateway module to ensure effective learner preparation and implement formal checks on readiness; this may be a zero-credit rated module.

   f) A **Course Handbook for the HE Award where this is also offered in isolation from the Apprenticeship and an Apprenticeship Handbook** (see Appendix 3 - Guidance for Apprenticeship Course Handbook). The Handbook should include, and the Assessment Strategy should demonstrate how the programme maps to the Apprenticeship Assessment Plan, i.e. how the apprenticeship programme prepares learners for the requirements and activities associated with the EPA. **OR**

A **combined 'Apprenticeship Programme Handbook'** can replace the separate Course and Apprenticeship Handbooks where a new HE course is developed solely for the purpose of the apprenticeship. Also requires a hyperlink to the Programme Specification for the HE Award and the Higher/Degree Apprenticeship Specification.

g) **Draft DfE Funding documents: Training Plan template; Individual Learning Plan (ILP) template; Individual Learner Progress Review template; and Apprenticeship Agreement template** customised for the specific apprenticeship programme (see University Apprenticeship Office website)**.**

h) **Draft Initial Needs Assessment (INA)** (including English and Maths diagnostic) populated with the Apprenticeship Standard details, and where applicable EPA organisation.

i) **Completed Checklist for Managing University Apprenticeships (APP 3)** – identifies the arrangements within Schools/course teams and across the University/Partners for key aspects in the management and delivery of the apprenticeship programme. The Quality Assurance process for INA, ILP, and ILPR provides guidance on School Quality Assurance responsibilities (Appendix 4) and should be referred to in completing the checklist.

j) **Completed Resource Statement to evidence staffing arrangements to support apprenticeship delivery** in the workplace (on-the-job learning), administration and management over the lifetime of the programme and confirmation of arrangements for storage of apprentice information (CAP FORM 6 or CAP Form 7 for Collaborative). Teaching staff should be appropriately qualified and trained with the necessary contemporary industry knowledge for the apprenticeship standard. Staff development requirements regarding the difference between teaching an apprentice and a non-apprentice should be considered alongside the resource implications of delivering an apprenticeship, for example, progress reviews need to be focused on progress made and setting future targets in collaboration with the employer.

k) **Completed Intention section of the Apprenticeship toolkit - meeting the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) requirements** which identifies the processes, policies and procedures that can provide evidence of an outstanding impact on learning (see AQU website). The Implementation sections on each tab will then be completed after the apprenticeship has commenced and the Impact sections completed on each tab after the first year.

l) Completed **Work-based Learning Audit Record** (version 2 – where the learner's workplace is the WBL setting, as the apprentice will be in employment) and arrangements for support of work-integrated learning and liaison with employers and apprentices, workplace mentoring, briefing and support of mentors.

m) **Provide sample online materials** where learning is to be delivered as **highly blended or fully online** in accordance with the University's [Blended, Online and Distance Learning Guidance](#).

n) Where delivery is campus-based with **supplementary asynchronous and synchronous sessions**, evidence in documentation: how apprentice's digital skills will be supported and developed; how online learning is integrated with their wider training; how apprentice access to online environments both on and off-the-

job will be ensured; and access and training arrangements for apprentice's line manager or mentor.

o) Where the end-point assessment (EPA) is integrated or fully-integrated:
   a. Confirm that the University is on the Department for Education Apprenticeship Providers and Assessment Register for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard;
   b. Provide a clear specification and protocols setting out how the EPA will be managed (and provide a summary in the Apprenticeship Specification).
   In addition for integrated EPA:
   c. Provide an **Assessment Strategy**, evidencing how the curriculum is designed to prepare learners for the requirements and activities associated with the EPA (and provide a summary in the Apprenticeship Specification);
   d. Provide a statement outlining how the School will prepare to act as the EPA Organisation and ensure the quality, validity and reliability of integrated EPA;
   Following the approval process a detailed School internal readiness check should be completed 16 weeks in advance of the scheduled first cycle of EPA for the standard (see Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment Policy).

20. In accordance with the Course Planning and Approval process Schools should carry out internal scrutiny of documentation prior to circulation. In addition, before the approval meeting, the Apprenticeship Programme lead should review the completed Checklist for Managing University Apprenticeships (para. 17 viii /APP3 with the University Apprenticeship Manager and AQU Officer to confirm the arrangements within Schools/course teams and across the University or Partners for key areas in the management and delivery of the apprenticeship programme.

Contractual requirements for delivery of apprenticeship

21. **Additional requirements that must be considered and completed outside of the approval meeting prior to commencement and delivery (and form part of the Evidence pack for the DfE; see DfE Compliance Tracker, contract templates are held by the Apprenticeship Office):**

   a) **Contracts for apprenticeship services between the HE Provider (University) and Employer(s) for the specific apprenticeship programme being approved** (see University template for the 'Apprenticeship Contract between the HEI/HE Provider and employer'). These are written agreements that include expectations of the role employers play in supporting learning, access to employer resources when engaging in off-the-job learning, arrangements for workplace mentoring, involvement in EPA, protocols for addressing issues, arrangements for involving employers in HE programme evaluation, monitoring and enhancement. If the University needs to be an approved supplier on a Dynamic Purchasing System, the contract will fall under the scope of an approved supplier contract framework.

   b) **Contracts between the HE Provider (University) and sub-contractors where relevant**, e.g. for provision of GCSE Maths and English (see University template for the 'Apprenticeship Contract between an HEI/HE Provider and sub-contractor').

   c) **Identification of EPA arrangements (within the Apprenticeship Specification) and evidence of a signed agreement with an approved EPAO for the EPA or approval on the Register as an EPAO for the requisite Standard for integrated EPA**. The arrangements for EPA should be

confirmed as early on in delivery of the apprenticeship as possible (forms part of Training Plan). Guidance and process for the selection and appointment of an independent End-point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) for non-integrated apprenticeships can be found on the AQU website.

d) **Initial Needs Assessment** (see University Template) completed for each apprentice. The purpose of an Initial Needs Assessment (INA) is the significant contribution the process has in determining the eligibility of an applicant for admission to an apprenticeship programme. It should be undertaken with the apprentice and employer prior to the start of the apprenticeship to mark the starting point of each potential apprentice and assist in determining the 'distance travelled' by the end point assessment and confirm eligibility for apprenticeship funding (see University INA Process and flowchart).

e) **Training Plan** (see University Template) completed for each apprentice – these are signed agreements between the employer, the apprentice and the apprenticeship provider. This must be in place prior to the apprenticeship commencing. The apprenticeship provider must hold a signed Training Plan to deliver the required apprenticeship/s, and the document must be updated throughout the lifetime of the programme to reflect any changes in circumstance. The purpose of the Training Plan sets out the agreement being made between the apprentice, the employer and the apprenticeship provider.

f) **Apprenticeship Agreements** (see University Template) completed for each apprentice – these are signed agreements between the employer and the apprentice, and must be in place prior to the apprenticeship commencing, i.e. to identify the skill, trade or occupation for which the apprentice is being trained; and to confirm the qualifying Apprenticeship framework that the apprentice is following.

g) **Possible formal agreements required between HE Provider and a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)** and clarification of any additional accreditation/certificated learning that may be achieved. Course teams should seek guidance from PSRBs regarding processes for validation/approval of apprenticeship routes.

22. Before moving to contract stage, School representative (Head of Department) to meet with Apprenticeship Office representative (University Apprenticeship Manager) and employer contact to ensure the employer understands their responsibilities and confirm the organisation has the capacity to support apprenticeships.

Supplementary documents required for approval of apprenticeships where the partner organisation is the Training Provider and the University is the awarding body

23. The standard partnership and collaborative provision approval processes and associated documentation will be required for approval of an apprenticeship programme that utilises a University of Worcester HE award and is to be approved for delivery in its entirety or part by an academic partner institution. Where the Partner is the Training Provider and therefore has responsibility for the delivery of the apprenticeship programme, the documents required under paragraph 19 will be agreed through the preliminary course approval meeting dependent on the nature of the collaborative arrangement.

24. Assurance will be required that an 'Apprenticeship Annex' to the Partnership Agreement or new form of Apprenticeship Partnership Agreement/Contract and any associated Financial Annex to cover financial arrangements for the specific apprenticeship relationship, is in place/in progress.

Related Guidance and Templates:

APP 1 Template for Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Specification
APP 2 Guidance for Apprenticeship Course Handbook
APP 3 Checklist for Managing Apprenticeships
APP 4 Quality Assurance process for INA, ILP, ILPR including School Quality Assurance Responsibilities Guidance

Related Policies, Documents or Webpages

Apprenticeship Approval Process and EPA Policy can be found on the [AQU website](#)
University of Worcester DfE Compliance Policy, guidance documents and master templates can be found on the University [Apprenticeship Office website](#)
Contract templates are available from the Apprenticeship Office

[Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Quality Statement](#)
[Raising the Standards: the apprentice guide to quality apprenticeships](#) (DfE, Sept 2021)
[Higher Education in Apprenticeships Characteristics Statement](#) (QAA, July 2019)
[QAA Revised UK Quality Code for HE (QAA, Nov 2018) – WBL](#)
[Department for Education's Accountability Statement](#)
[Ofsted Inspections for FE and skills providers](#)
[List of Apprenticeship Standards](#) (DfE)
[Provider guide to delivering high-quality apprenticeships](#) (DfE, updated August 2023)
[End-point assessment organisation guide to assessing apprenticeships](#) (DfE, updated August 2023)
[Apprenticeship Workforce Development: Working with Employer checklist](#) (Education and Training Foundation, 2022)
[Apprenticeships: Initial Assessment to Recognise Prior Learning Guidance](#) (DfE, updated Nov 2023)

For glossary of terms refer to current [DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules](#)

Approval/Review Table

Item	Notes
Version Number	v1.2
Date of Approval	October 2021
Approved by	ASQEC/Academic Board
Effective from	October 2021
Policy Officer	Head of Academic Quality
Department	Academic Quality Unit
Review date	September 2026
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Policy/procedure/guidance superseded by this version	Guidance and Process for the University Approval of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (v3 March 2019).
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	N/A
Accessibility Checked	October 2021

Recent changes

Committee/Author	Date	Change
N. Rawlings	09.2022	V1.1 Reference to Training Plan, section 14.

| N.Rawlings | 02.2024 | V1.2 Updates relating to employer engagement, documents required for apprenticeship approval (section 17), and to reflect changes to EPA regulation, as approved at APSC/ASQEC. |
| P Wright | 05.2025 | Updated to remove references to ESFA and IfATE and replace these with DfE |