

HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL  
ESSENTIAL APPRENTICESHIP GUIDE

# Introducing higher and degree apprenticeships



**Henley**  
Business School

UNIVERSITY OF READING

Where business comes to life

# Introducing higher and degree apprenticeships

Higher and degree apprenticeships are an important and increasingly popular option for employers wanting to enhance skills and build capability within their organisation. They are also a good option for individuals seeking to start or develop their careers.

The number of people starting higher apprenticeships has more than doubled in the last four years to more than 88,000 a year <sup>1</sup>. The number of degree apprenticeships has more than tripled to 30,000 a year <sup>2</sup>.

This guide provides an introduction to higher and degree apprenticeships for employers and individuals who want to know more about their options.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons (2021) Library Briefing Paper Number 06113, 30 March

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## Essential Apprenticeship Guides

This guide is one of a series designed to help our clients engage with apprenticeships and deliver best value to their organisation and their apprentices.

## Further reading

Supporting an apprentice as line manager

How to help apprentices build a support network

[henley.ac.uk/business/apprenticeships/essential-apprenticeship-guides](https://henley.ac.uk/business/apprenticeships/essential-apprenticeship-guides)



# 1

## What are higher and degree apprenticeships?

Higher apprenticeships combine work with study at Levels 4 to 7 – equivalent to a foundation degree and above. Many higher apprenticeships include an academic or professional qualification. Degree apprenticeships include a degree and are available at Levels 6 and 7 – full Bachelors and Masters degree levels, respectively.

Higher and degree apprenticeships are based on apprenticeship standards developed by employer groups. These standards set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices should develop. Training providers and universities develop programmes of learning that enable apprentices to meet the apprenticeship standards and achieve any qualification or degree included within it.



# 2

## Who are higher and degree apprenticeships for?

Higher and degree apprenticeships are suitable for both young people entering the workplace and experienced professionals seeking to further develop their careers. Apprentices must be employed by your organisation and can either be current employees or those newly recruited into the role.

A wide range of people are eligible for government apprenticeship funding – including people with prior qualifications and work experience.

**Eligible candidates include those:**



aged 16 and above  
(there is no  
upper age limit)



already employed or  
newly recruited  
to a vacancy



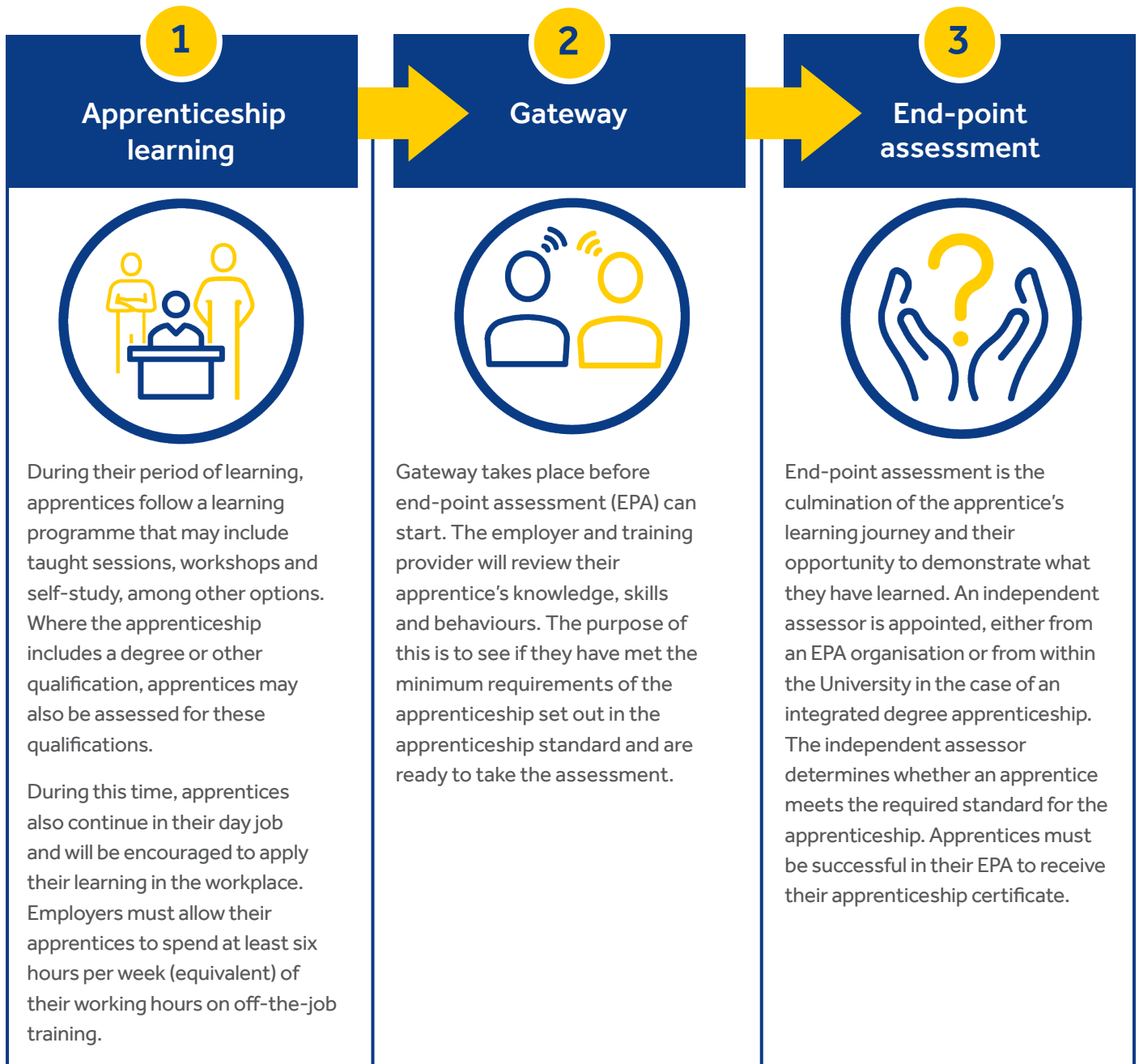
with the right to work in  
England and who will spend  
at least 50% of working  
hours in England during their  
apprenticeship with eligible  
residency status

Apprenticeships are suitable for organisations of any size. Organisations that pay the apprenticeship levy can use their funds to procure apprenticeship training from Henley Business School, University of Reading, or from other government-approved training providers via the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).

### 3

## How do higher and degree apprenticeships work?

Figure 1 There are **three stages** to an apprenticeship:



Working closely with employers, we use our collective experience to design and deliver apprenticeship programmes that support organisations in achieving their potential and ambitions. While developing great professionals and outstanding and responsible business leaders is at the heart of Henley apprenticeships, we don't just develop skills and knowledge but inspire organisations to build a diverse workforce fit for the new world of work.

Professor Elena Beleska-Spasova, Pro-Dean Education and Innovation

## 4

### What are the benefits for employers?

Through work-based learning, higher and degree apprenticeships are an excellent way for employers to enhance skills and build capability within their organisation.



#### Employers might aim to:

- Develop employees' management and leadership skills, enabling them to improve their effectiveness and maximise their contribution to the organisation
- Empower managers/leaders to innovate, change cultures, implement new projects and improve workplace relationships
- Improve recruitment and staff retention by investing in employees' development and future potential, and by increasing the scope and challenge of their roles
- Enable managers/leaders to think critically and analytically so they reach the right decisions
- Develop leaders or future leaders to support transformation within their organisation
- Support staff retention by investing in the development of employees
- Instil an awareness of the need for community, so managers understand the importance of networking and developing their peers as well as themselves
- Improve revenue and productivity through the development of employees' workplace skills

## 5

### What are the benefits for apprentices?

A higher or degree apprenticeship offers apprentices the opportunity to accelerate their professional and personal development.



#### Apprentices can:

- Join an enriching programme that provides new outlooks on important decisions
- Develop the confidence that comes from self-awareness and applied intellect
- Make more informed decisions, considering the long-term impact on society and the business as much as the short-term financial gain
- Develop the curiosity to explore new possibilities and apply this thirst for knowledge to the achievement of personal and organisational success
- Develop the capability to lead change and innovation in complex environments
- Gain external recognition of their achievements, including the apprenticeship certificate and (depending on the apprenticeship programme) a degree, recognised qualification and/or professional membership

## 6

## What do employers need to do?

Employers are responsible for supporting apprentices to successfully complete their apprenticeship.



### Their responsibilities include:

- Developing an organisational strategy for apprenticeships and understanding what the organisation intends to achieve by engaging with apprenticeship schemes
- Choosing an appropriate training provider and EPA organisation (EPAO)
- Identifying employees (new or existing) who are appropriate candidates and who will benefit from the apprenticeship programme
- Employing apprentices for the duration of their programme
- Giving apprentices enough time to complete their off-the-job training (apprentices must spend at least six hours per week (equivalent) of their contracted hours on this)
- Identifying projects that apprentices can undertake and giving apprentices a broader exposure to the activities of the organisation – enabling them to stretch and develop themselves
- Engaging with the apprentice and the training provider to monitor how the apprentice is progressing and ensure they have the support they need
- Making sure apprentices have an effective support network within the organisation, including support from their line managers

## 7

## What do apprentices need to do?

For apprentices, a higher or degree apprenticeship can be a career-defining experience – but one that requires hard work and commitment.



### Apprentices' responsibilities include:

- Exploring the apprenticeship before starting, to understand whether it aligns with their ambitions and to confirm that they can meet the required commitments
- Understanding the apprenticeship standard and learning programme, and taking ownership of their development during the programme
- Participating in all planned learning activities, carrying out tasks to the best of their ability, and taking an active role in planning their on- and off-the-job training
- Staying in touch with their employer/line manager and training provider, to keep track of how they are progressing – including asking for help, if needed
- Applying what they have learned in the workplace, to bring their learning to life and deliver maximum impact for their organisation

# 8

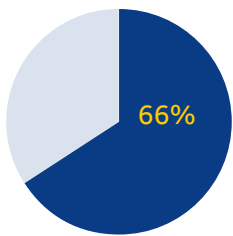
## What do training providers do?

Training providers are responsible for delivering a training programme that covers the requirements of the apprenticeship standard and is appropriate for apprentices and their organisations.

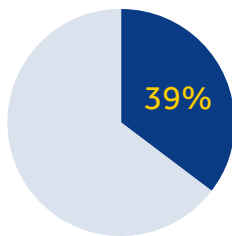
### Their responsibilities include:

- Helping employers identify the right apprenticeship for each learner
- Reviewing the apprentice's progress with the individual and their employer
- Assessing and awarding any degree element (in the case of degree apprenticeships)
- Supporting apprentices in preparing for EPA and any other external assessment

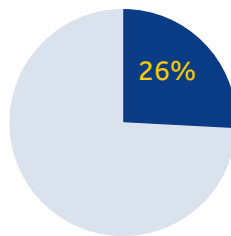
### Employers' top 5 reasons for offering higher apprenticeships:



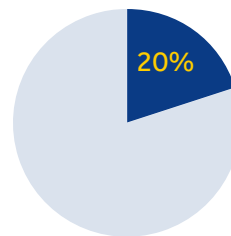
To help staff develop their skills



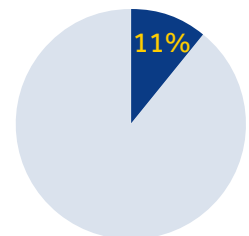
As part of their workforce development strategy



A higher apprenticeship is required for promotion/moving into a managerial role



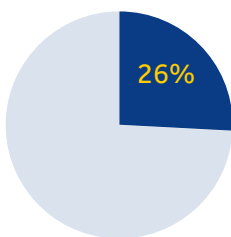
As part of their staff retention strategy



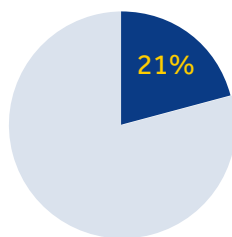
To develop skills that are required by their clients/customers

(Department for Education, 2020a)

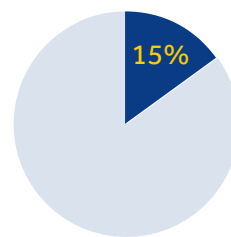
### Learners' top 5 reasons for choosing a higher or degree apprenticeship rather than another qualification:



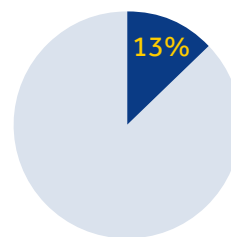
Their employer suggested/recommended it to them



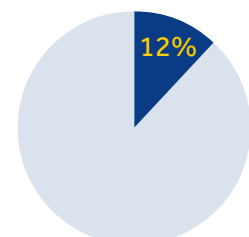
The course content was most relevant



They wanted to be paid while training



As part of a progression from a previous qualification



An apprenticeship was required to allow them to progress in their career

(Department for Education, 2020b)

### References

Department for Education (2020a) Apprenticeships Evaluation 2018–19: Employers Research Report. [Accessed 1 July 2021] [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875561/Apprenticeships\\_Evaluation\\_-\\_Employer\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875561/Apprenticeships_Evaluation_-_Employer_Report.pdf)

Department for Education (2020b) Apprenticeships Evaluation 2018–19: Learners Research Report. [Accessed 1 July 2021] [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875553/Apprenticeships\\_Evaluation\\_-\\_Learner\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875553/Apprenticeships_Evaluation_-_Learner_Report.pdf)



### Where business comes to life

Henley is a triple-accredited business school with over 75 years' experience in developing confident, resilient business leaders and supporting organisations in reaching their strategic and transformational goals.

We are one of the largest providers of leadership, management and digital apprenticeships. Our programmes support around 1,600 learners and are enriched by the cutting-edge research and wide-ranging commercial experience of our academics.

The depth and breadth of this knowledge base equips learners with an extensive understanding of leadership and, along with the latest sector-specific insights, enables them to become the strategic and responsible leaders of the future.

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Guide reference | 1.1  
Information valid at the time of publication. Sept 2022.  
21.MIS.038

