



What is an Apprenticeship?

Background:

Apprenticeships are the Government's preferred route into work based learning (WBL) for young people aged 16-24 who are capable of achieving at Level 2 (Apprenticeship) and Level 3 (Advanced Apprenticeship). They are also the most common way in which young people enter WBL. They provide a structured programme of training leading to a recognised qualification and are available across a wide range of occupations and across the different sectors of the UK economy.

There are now more Apprentices in learning than ever. In 2007, there were more than 255,000 young people engaged in learning.

Progression to Higher Education:

Although traditionally not seen as a major route into HE, there is now a desire to more actively support those Apprentices who wish to access HE to do so. Both the recent reforms of Apprenticeships and initiatives around the Joint Progression Strategy and Aimhigher are actively focusing on Apprenticeships as a robust route into HE.

Two of the most important barriers to Advanced Apprentices accessing HE are:

- HE admissions tutors do not always understand Apprenticeships or the value of the qualification in the framework
- The apparent reluctance of some Apprentices to consider HE

Foundation Degrees (FDs) are a popular and successful route from Advanced Apprenticeship to HE. They have been designed with the co-operation of employers and their specific needs in mind.

It is important to recognise that Apprenticeships are frameworks and not qualifications – each framework will contain the following:

Components of an Apprenticeship:

- A competence based element – the NVQ
- A knowledge based element – the Technical Certificate
- Transferable, or 'key' skills
- Employer rights and responsibilities

Altogether these must be passed or gain prior accreditation and in totality these component parts are called 'the Framework'.

Competence Based Element

This element should take the form of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). NVQs are work-related, competence based qualifications which are assessed in the workplace. They are made up of units which describe the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively. NVQs are based on National Occupational Standards which are statements of performance standards which describe what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do. They cover all the main aspects of an occupation.

For an Advanced Apprenticeship the NVQ must be at Level 3.

Knowledge Based Element

This element should take the form of a technical certificate. The technical certificates were introduced to focus on the knowledge and understanding that underpins the NVQ competencies. They may also cover wider aspects of the chosen occupation or sector. Technical certificates are usually vocationally related qualifications and examples can include BTEC National and City and Guilds vocationally related qualifications, depending on the level and area of the Apprenticeship.

For instance, the BTEC National Diploma in Care is the technical certificate in the Advanced Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care.

For an Advanced Apprenticeship the technical certificate must be at Level 3.

Transferable or 'Key' Skills

Key Skills are a range of essential generic skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. They are practical, applied skills relevant both to young people and adult learners.

The following elements must be included:

Advanced Apprenticeship

- Key Skills of Application of Number at Level 2
- Key Skills of Communication at Level 2

Key Skills assessment must include an end test, unless an exemption applies, i.e. the learner already has the appropriate GCSE at Grade C or above.

Employer Rights and Responsibilities

Each framework must include a requirement for the Apprentices to develop knowledge and understanding about the world of employment.

Distinctive characteristics:

An Apprenticeship is a model for a holistic learning process:

- it takes learners through the full experiential learning 'cycle'
- the Apprentice must have an employer
- learning takes place in context and is therefore more likely to provide a successful learning experience
- it combines on-the-job and off-the-job, formal and non-formal learning opportunities – this can be a new and motivating experience for the young person who thought that 'learning' was something that could only happen in a classroom or formal situations

Apprenticeships:

- provide an alternative progression route from school to higher education
- offer wide range of job-specific and transferable learning, all formally recognised through existing qualifications – therefore already integrated into the education and training system

Apprenticeships deliver the following benefits:

- training that is truly based in a working environment, tailored to the needs of specific job role but also providing transferable skills
- well-rounded learners, who have been given the foundations of lifelong learning and development
- success measured by the ability to carry out a job in its entirety, assessed by those already skills in the role

(Taken from Blueprint for Apprenticeships LSC September 2005 & Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning, LSC, January 2006)