



Pearson

# Apprenticeships 101

A really simple guide to Higher  
and Degree Apprenticeships

# 101 Factsheet for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

## Who is this guide for?

Employers, especially  
HR Managers and  
Apprenticeship Managers

## MYTH BUSTER

**Myth:** Apprenticeships are only for low-skill or entry level employees.

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**Myth:** I can use an apprenticeships to 'top up' the skills of employees on our graduate recruitment programme.

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**Myth:** Degree apprenticeships are not as good as real degrees from Russell Group universities.



**Fact:** Many learners are working on management and/or team leading qualifications and apprenticeships are suitable for most sectors and kinds of jobs right from entry level up to degree level.

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**Fact:** Graduates can take apprenticeships provided it is at a higher level than the qualification they already hold (i.e. level 6). They can also take an apprenticeship at the same or lower level than their degree if the apprenticeship will allow the graduate to acquire substantive new skills. However, they must be enrolled on the full apprenticeship.

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**Fact:** This is not the case. Apprenticeships combine real-world experience with learning so apprentices are work ready from the off. The decision to take a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship will depend on an individual's ambitions. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships offer a number of benefits such as no higher education debt (as apprenticeships are funded by employers and the government), a salary and job while you study, and a clearer pathway to your chosen career pathway.

# THE REALLY SIMPLE GUIDE TO HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

## What are higher and degree apprenticeships?

Higher and degree apprenticeships are available at levels 4 to 7. They combine work with study and may include a work-based, academic or combined qualification or a professional qualification relevant to the industry.

Higher apprenticeships go from level 4 to 7 and are equivalent to a foundation degree and above e.g. a professional qualification.

Degree apprenticeships are available at levels 6 and 7 (full bachelor's and Master's degree).

## Why should my organisation pay to train an apprentice when we can hire graduates?

Many big companies actually recruit from both routes because it widens and diversifies the talent pool. There are numerous advantages of recruiting young apprentices and supporting them through a degree, including enhanced loyalty, assured cultural fit, and on-the-job learning that is specifically relevant to your organisation. Equally, there are advantages to offering degree apprenticeship opportunities to current employees – facilitating succession planning, career mobility and retention.

For more information about standards and Trailblazer groups visit the Institute for Apprenticeships website

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org>

## What is the difference between a Degree and Higher Apprenticeship?

### Higher Apprenticeships

'Higher Apprenticeship' refers to all apprenticeships that include the achievement of academic/vocational qualifications from Level 4 up to bachelor's and master's degree at level 6-7. All levels can include vocational qualifications and academic qualifications.

### Degree Apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships are the latest model to be developed as part of higher apprenticeship standards, seeing apprentices achieving a full bachelor's or master's degree (Levels 6 and 7) as a core component of the apprenticeship.

Both Higher and Degree Apprenticeships must last a minimum of one year; Degree Apprenticeships in particular will last longer, typically up to four years, though there is no fixed maximum duration.

## What makes a degree apprenticeship different to a degree?

A degree apprenticeship is first and foremost a job with substantial training. This means there must be a clear role for the apprentice in your organisational structure. Because the apprentice is working to a set timetable, a degree apprenticeship can naturally take longer than full-time study. However the quality of the training should be on a par with what they would receive with a graduate degree and they are constantly able to bring their learning back into the business while it is fresh.

## But aren't degree apprenticeships less rigorous than a 'real' degree?

Definitely not! University heavyweights such as Cambridge have recently entered the degree apprenticeship arena and they are quality assured by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (the same body as universities) to ensure they are fit for purpose. While it is a founding principle that the development of new apprenticeship standards is led by employers, there is recognition that for Higher and Degree apprenticeships, the partnership of academia and business is the key to achieving the perfect balance between theory and application. Trailblazers (the groups responsible for creating new standards) involve academic partners from the initial stages of standard development to ensure that there is alignment with the QAA benchmark standards.

## How do I find a degree or higher apprenticeship standard?

Because a degree apprenticeship is a job, you will need a 'standard' that relates to the precise occupation. Search on the Institute for Apprenticeships website to see whether one has already been approved or in development.

If there isn't one then you may wish to form a Trailblazer group with other representatives from within your industry to create one. Although this is inevitably a longer process, it does allow you to influence the exact definition of the core knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required for the role. As the new system becomes more embedded there will be more standards in existence to choose from. At time of writing there were 164 Level 6 and 7 standards approved or in development, in fields such as engineering, construction, financial accounting, health and science, creative and design.

For more information about standards and Trailblazer groups visit the Institute for Apprenticeships website

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org>



## How do I find a training provider?

### The easy route...

If you have found a suitable standard on the Institute for Apprenticeships website, you can follow a link through to the government's Apprenticeship System platform to find training providers who already offer the standard.

### As a Trailblazer (or if the existing training providers do not suit you)...

As a Trailblazer group looking to identify willing training partners to engage in the development of the standard, it is useful to know that there is a good appetite within the sector for degree and higher apprenticeships so overtures are likely to be welcome. Since all apprenticeship training providers – including universities – must have been accepted onto the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, this is a very good place to start (although you can take the gamble that a non-approved partner will be accepted onto the register in time for delivery).

If you have established links with particular universities – perhaps through graduate recruitment – this may also be a practical entry point into discussions. If you would like help narrowing the field, the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) may be a useful intermediary to match you to a willing partner. The same advice may also apply to a large employer looking to approach a more convenient provider than those already offering the standard.

### As a large employer...

As a very large employer you have additional options. Employers like CapGemini, Pearson, WorldPay, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Santander work directly with a training provider to create bespoke courses that are purely intended for their own employees. This might be built around an existing standard, or might involve the creation of a new one (bear in mind that this part cannot be done in isolation as a Trailblazer group must be representative of industry players).

There is also the option of becoming an Employer-Provider, establishing an in-house facility to deliver all or some of the 'off-the-job' training in the apprenticeship. You will need to meet the requirements of the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and would be subject to Ofsted inspection and need a relationship with a university.

Download the Department for Education guidance on becoming an Employer-Provider:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers>

