



# Blueprint for Apprenticeships



## **Apprenticeships are the preferred route for young people to enter skilled employment**

They are a key plank of the Government's skills policy and have gained markedly in profile, particularly since the May 2004 re-launch. They enjoy good brand recognition: government, employers and the general public all think they know what an Apprenticeship is and consider it to be a 'good thing'. But rather fewer people – from any of those categories – really know what's involved or what benefits Apprenticeships bring. This document provides a "Blueprint" for sector skills councils, employers and awarding bodies involved in the design of Apprenticeship frameworks.

# Apprenticeships

## Part One:

### Why Apprenticeships?

In order to answer the question ‘Why Apprenticeships?’, we need to be clear about what makes them distinctive from other forms of learning and training. This helps us to identify where the Apprenticeship is most appropriate, why it is worth the investment and what needs to be in place for it to be an Apprenticeship.

This document sets out the key characteristics of Apprenticeships and goes on to provide a “Blueprint” to be used by those involved in the design of Apprenticeships. As Apprenticeships evolve to meet employer’s needs, this document is subject to periodic revision.



# Apprenticeships

## Distinctive characteristics

### Completely demand led, with primary demand coming from the employer

Without the employer there is no Apprenticeship, regardless of the wishes of learners, providers or government. Promoting Apprenticeships is therefore a fine balance between engaging employers and building awareness and demand among young people. It places a premium on close partnership working between learning providers and employers and on wider links into local, regional and national economic development.

### Three 'owners': the employer, the apprentice and the Government

Each 'owner' commits something different to the Apprenticeship and seeks something different from it – see Table 1. This contributes to the debate about its purpose and keeps the programme under a three-way tension, which we need to ensure is balanced if the programme is to retain its unique profile and value.



**Table 1: Investment and Returns**

Owner	Commitment	Return on investment
<b>Employer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary provider of learning in the workplace</li> <li>• Support for young person's learning and wages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-trained, highly-productive and motivated employee</li> <li>• Reputation for valuing its people and being prepared to invest in their development</li> </ul>
<b>Apprentice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participates in training</li> <li>• Completes rigorous training process</li> <li>• (possibly) lower starting wages than peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status</li> <li>• Secure employment</li> <li>• Broad, relevant and transferable skills and qualifications</li> <li>• Opportunities for progression in learning and work</li> <li>• Reputation for being committed to learning and self-development</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds the learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful apprentices contribute more to the economy and society</li> <li>• More efficient labour market</li> <li>• Reputation for being committed to meeting and balancing the needs of both employers and individuals</li> </ul>

# Apprenticeships

## Distinctive characteristics

### The learning provider is in partnership with all three 'owners'

A learning provider helps the employer with the necessary processes of recruiting an apprentice and contracting for, or delivering training. They support both the employer and the apprentice in developing the learning contract and work to meet the Government's agenda in terms of breadth and quality of training provision.

### Additional characteristics

- The employer receives subsidised training thus offsetting the cost of employing a young person who is relatively unproductive in the early stages of their training.
- The young person earns a wage while they are learning – increasingly important as people are expected to contribute more to the cost of their own learning.
- The Government sponsors a cost effective form of high quality work-based learning and can immediately count the apprentices' contribution to the economy
- An Apprenticeship is a model for a holistic learning process:
  - it takes learners through the full experiential learning 'cycle' (trying something out; understanding the theory; reflecting on what one has learnt; actively experimenting)

- learning takes place in context and is more likely to provide a successful learning experience for the vast majority who can find it difficult to engage with purely theoretical learning
- 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 or employer 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

## Distinctive characteristics

### Benefits of Apprenticeships

Using these characteristics as our starting point, and assuming they are all maintained, Apprenticeships deliver the following benefits:

- training that is truly based in a working environment, is tailored to the needs of specific job role but also provides transferable skills that will be needed throughout a working life
- a programme that entails explicit commitment from learners, employers and society (represented by government) and is thereby balanced in meeting their needs
- learning that is cost-effective for all those involved
- well-rounded learners, who have been given the foundations of lifelong learning and development
- employers who understand the benefits of experiential learning (although they might not recognise the term) and how to support it
- success measured by the ability to carry out a job in its entirety, assessed by those already skilled in the role.



## Part Two:

# The Apprenticeship Blueprint

*This “Blueprint” was approved by the Apprenticeship Ministerial Steering Group, chaired by Ivan Lewis, MP on 10 February 2005.*

Modern Apprenticeships: the way to work (the Cassels Report) presented a clear vision and objectives for a successful Apprenticeship system and the benefits to the country this will bring. The Report identified, at Chapter 4, the need for a clear framework to define the parameters and essential content of the system and for this to be

widely accepted by all involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships.

This document sets out the essential content and areas where flexibility is possible as a basis for agreement by those principally concerned with the design and implementation of Apprenticeships, that is: Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and their employers, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Department for Education and Skills and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).



Apprenticeships are intended to provide an integrated programme of learning leading to the acquisition and application of the skills, knowledge and understanding required by employers.

The completion of an Apprenticeship framework shows both current and potential employers that the holder has achieved competence in the skills covered by the Apprenticeship, has demonstrated the knowledge required by the Apprenticeship and has attained the level of transferable skills required by all Apprenticeships.

The content of each Apprenticeship is designed by Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and their employers in accordance with the following:

### **Apprenticeships – Essential Content**

All apprentice frameworks must comprise:

- a.** a competence based element
- b.** a knowledge based element
- c.** transferable, or ‘key’, skills
- d.** employment rights and responsibilities.



Apprenticeships should be directly accessible to those from age 16 who possess the required entry criteria.

Advanced Apprenticeships should be directly accessible to those who possess the required entry criteria for this level. An Apprenticeship in the same employment sector should provide entry to the corresponding Advanced Apprenticeship.

Sector Skills Councils and Sector Bodies are responsible for determining and publicising entry criteria.

In addition to the above, Apprenticeships may include other elements as required by employers who employ apprentices but these will not normally be funded.

Apprenticeships are intended to be an employed programme, although parts of the framework may be capable of Programme-led application in educational establishments as outlined in the Cassels Report. However, it is not possible for an Apprenticeship to be achieved without significant employment-based learning and application.

The next section outlines the essential content and areas where flexibility is possible for each of the above elements.

# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Competence-based element

### Essential content

The competence-based element must be assembled from the National Occupation Standards from the employment sector for which the framework is designed and if required, other employment sectors. It should take the form of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and should be assessed using methods designed to test competence.

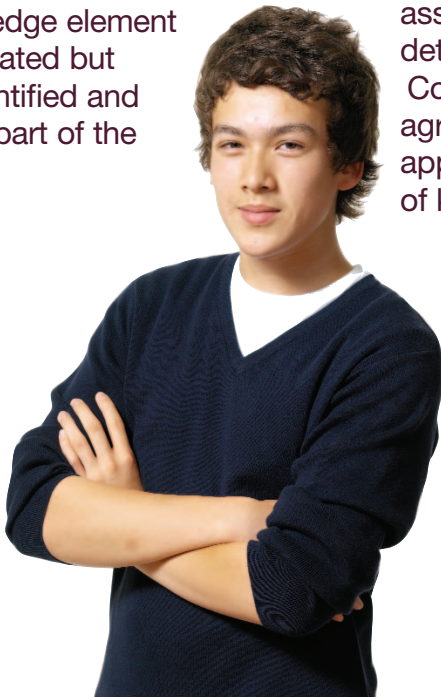
- It must be at:
  - Apprenticeship – Level 2
  - Advanced Apprenticeship – Level 3.

### Areas of flexibility

- The content of the competence element may be determined by the Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and their employers.
- The name of the qualification may be varied to suit the employment sector.
- Assessment methods should be determined by the appropriate Sector Skills Council in collaboration with the QCA.
- The knowledge element may, or may not be integrated with the competence element at the discretion of the Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and their employers.

## Knowledge Element

Technical Certificates were introduced to ensure that the underpinning theoretical knowledge required by a successful apprentice was clearly demonstrated. Whilst some Sector Skills Councils and Sector Bodies have effective Technical Certificates that are fit for purpose, others have indicated that they would like to see the knowledge element as a integrated but clearly identified and assessed part of the NVQ.



## Essential content

- The knowledge element must be designed to provide evidence that the underpinning theoretical knowledge required by an entrant to the employment sector covered by the framework has been demonstrated.
- The knowledge element will normally be independently assessed using methods determined by the Sector Skills Council and Sector Bodies and agreed by the QCA as appropriate to the assessment of knowledge.

\*This applies to all frameworks with the exception of Approved Employer Schemes where additional flexibilities apply.

# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Competence-based element

- The knowledge element should form part of a clearly described progression route from Apprenticeship to Advanced Apprenticeship and on to higher education.
- It must be at:
  - Apprenticeship – Level 2
  - Advanced Apprenticeship – Level 3.

This applies to all frameworks with the exception of Approved Employer Schemes where additional flexibilities apply.

### Areas of flexibility

The knowledge element may be separately accredited or may be accredited as part of the competence element.

Progression from Advanced Apprenticeship to higher education may require additional knowledge, provided that this requirement is clearly stated and the means of progressing is available to apprentices when they start the Apprenticeship.



# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Transferable Skills

### Essential content

- The following elements must be included:
  - Apprenticeships
    - Key Skill of Application of Number at Level 1
    - Key Skill of Communication at Level 1
  - Advanced Apprenticeships
    - Key Skill of Application of Number at Level 2
    - Key Skill of Communication at Level 2

Key Skills assessment must include an end test, unless an exemption/relaxation applies.

### Areas for flexibility

- The range of proxy qualifications.
- The relaxation requirement where a learner holds other qualifications and the time limit relating to this relaxation.
- How the aspiration that apprentices achieve Level 2 Key Skills and advanced apprentices achieve Level 3 key skills might be expressed within the framework.
- Contextualisation, integration and embedding of key skills external assessment.
- Key Skills delivery models within the Apprenticeship programme.

Possible future flexibility: The Department for Education and Skills is drawing up an action plan to consider how the end test may be adapted for use as an initial assessment.

# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Employee Rights and Responsibilities

### Essential content

- Employment rights and responsibilities must be included for all Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships and include a requirement for all apprentices to understand their responsibilities for equal opportunities, health and safety and to understand the safe learner concept.

### Areas for flexibility

- The content and assessment of Employment rights and responsibilities is the responsibility of the Sector Skills Councils and Sector Bodies designing the framework.





# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Other Considerations

### Qualifications

The Apprenticeship is currently not a qualification in its own right. Rather, it is the achievement of a collection of qualification components, each requiring differing assessment methods and requiring registration and associated costs.

The Cassels Report recommended the awarding by the Sector Skills Councils and Sector Bodies of an Apprenticeship diploma on completion and provided evidence that such publicly-recognised evidence of achievement was highly motivating to young people considering an Apprenticeship.

Whilst some Sector Skills Councils and their employers have indicated a reluctance to move from the current system where the Apprenticeship is not a qualification in its own right, others have identified the current structure as a barrier to engagement. Further, as we move towards a credit based qualification system, there is value in offering Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and their employers the option of a single, overarching qualification.

# Apprenticeship “Blueprint”

## Other Considerations

### Essential content

- Key Skills, where required by the learner, must be independently accredited (although they may be delivered as part of other qualifications).
- Knowledge and competence based elements must lead to accredited qualifications.

### Areas for flexibility

- Competence and knowledge elements may be separately assessed or may be covered by a single overarching qualification.
- Sector Skills Councils, Sector Bodies and the QCA may wish to consider the feasibility of introducing grades to Apprenticeships or their component parts.



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