

Higher education apprenticeships – March 2017

Government policy on apprenticeships

- Government is actively stimulating demand for apprenticeships. They have a manifesto commitment of 3 million more apprenticeship starts by 2020
- The apprenticeship levy will start in April 2017, payable by all employers with an annual paybill over £3m at a rate of 0.5% (minus a £15,000 allowance). The government will top up an employer's contribution to their apprenticeship account by 10%
- Non-levy employers will co-invest 10% of apprenticeship training costs, with the government contributing the remaining 90%
- The government is introducing a target to have 2.3% of the public sector workforce as apprentices by 2020 in organisations with over 250 staff
- There are no targets set for the number of additional apprenticeships that should be at higher or degree level, nor any targets for the sectors the apprenticeships should be in

What are apprenticeships in higher education?

- HE apprenticeships can be higher apprenticeships or degree apprenticeships
- Higher apprenticeships include qualifications from level 4 (equivalent to the first year of a Bachelor's degree) to level 7 (equivalent to a Master's degree). A higher apprenticeship that results in the award of a Bachelor's or Master's degree at the end is a degree apprenticeship
- Degree apprentices benefit from a salary and do not pay tuition fees. Universities receive funding for the apprentice from the employer and government in varying proportions depending on the type of apprenticeship being delivered and the size of the employer
- An apprentice can be of any age and can be an existing or new employee
- Government wants to switch all apprenticeship provision to new apprenticeship standards designed by employer-led trailblazer groups. Of the 270 new apprenticeship standards published so far, 84 are for higher and degree apprenticeships
- In 2015/16 there were 1,240 higher apprenticeships starts on standards (490 at level

4, 720 at level 6 and 30 at level 7), up from 200 the previous year

- By comparison, in 2015/16 there were 25,920 higher apprenticeship starts on the old style frameworks (9,030 at level 4, 16,870 at level 5 and 20 at level 6)

Impact of apprenticeships on HEIs

- HEIs can work with trailblazer groups to develop new apprenticeship standards. Standards outline the knowledge, skills and behaviours employers define as required to be competent in a specific occupation
- There will be apprenticeship standards where HEIs have had no involvement in their development and yet they might be the provider asked to deliver the standard. This could have implications for institutional autonomy
- For a degree apprenticeship based on a standard, the cost of delivering the apprenticeship will be agreed between the employer and the HE provider up to a cap set by government. HEIs will therefore have employer customers who purchase apprenticeship provision directly from them
- HEIs that usually have a local or regional focus may have to adjust to the requirements of national employers seeking national contracts for apprenticeship training

HEFCE Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund

- HEFCE have set up a degree apprenticeship development fund to help the sector increase degree apprenticeship provision on new standards
- There is a total of £8 million funding available to HEFCE funded providers (FECs and HEIs)
- In phase 1, £4.5 million was allocated to 18 successful bids (a mix of single institution and partnership bids) out of a total of 70 to develop degree apprenticeships for students starting in September 2017
- Funding can only be used to develop degree apprenticeships at Level 6 or Level 7 including curriculum design, collaboration with employers and other stakeholders, and partnerships with other HEIs

Quality Assurance

- QA in apprenticeships is still an emerging picture but is proving to be complex
- From May 2017 providers of apprenticeships at any level must be registered on the Skills Funding Agency's register of apprenticeship training providers (RoATP)
- Employers will select an organisation to deliver the apprenticeship end point

assessment (EPA) from the register of apprenticeship assessment organisations (RoAAO). So although HEIs will award the degree or HE qualification as part of the higher apprenticeship, they will not determine whether the apprenticeship has been successfully completed unless they register on the RoAAO and are chosen by the employer to perform the EPA

- OFSTED are responsible for inspecting the quality of apprenticeship providers in the further education sector whereas it is the QAA that quality assures higher education (except in teacher education where there is dual quality assurance). OFSTED are in talks with government about a role in inspecting HE apprenticeships, although this would only apply to the actual apprenticeship and not the degree provision. However there is no clarity about how this would work in practice nor what the favoured model would be
- The QAA are developing a statement about the characteristics of degree apprenticeships. This will provide key information including their context, distinctive features of the qualifications, and information about their content structure and delivery. It will align with the UK quality code for HE
- Furthermore a new body, the Institute for Apprenticeships will be taking on overall responsibility for the entire apprenticeship system and thus will be the lead on improving apprenticeship quality and regulating quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments