



Apprenticeship Support Guide

www.apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org



The Apprenticeship Support Network are here to help any apprentices with information, advice and guidance to help them through their apprenticeship.

When speaking about apprenticeships, we are referring to anyone taking an apprenticeship qualification at any level and by any means, through a university, college, or training provider.

Alongside local training providers and employers the project currently has the support of the following Trade Unions who represent; Prison Officers (POA), Fire Fighters (FBU), Trade Union for all GMB, Public Service union Unison, Trade Union for all Unite, Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers USDAW. This is subject to change.

The project is fully funded by unionlearn and is intended to reach out to as many apprentices as possible.

Alongside the website, (www.apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org.uk) which will guide you on general subjects, there is also a telephone line that you can ring to speak to someone who will help you with more specific problems:

07951 750926 / 01983 532769

or alternatively email:

info@apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org

Any information you give us will remain confidential.

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What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a way to study for an accredited qualification whilst being in paid employment and gaining additional skills within the workplace.

Is there a minimum age?

As a minimum, to begin an apprenticeship, you have to be at least 16 and not in full time education, there is no upper age limit. The oldest apprentice was Robert Brown who started as an apprentice funeral director at the age of 67.

How long does an apprenticeship last?

An apprenticeship must last for a minimum of 12 months but can last up to 4 years. The approximate time to complete a level 2 apprenticeship is between 12 - 18 months. The minimum amount of time is usually based on the time it will take to achieve your qualification.

How does it work?

When you accept an apprenticeship position you will receive two contracts; one with your employer regarding your employment (Apprenticeship Agreement) and one with your training provider, your employer and you, which outlines your planned training (Commitment Statement).

Your Apprenticeship Agreement, the one between you and your employer, will set out all your rights and responsibilities including; the length of your contract, your rate of pay, your holiday and sickness rights, together with all the details that are usually found in an employment contract. More specific information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice/apprenticeshipagreement

Your Commitment Statement will set out the name, level and awarding body of the qualification, whether it is a framework or a standard, the period that it should take you to attain the qualification and what you should expect from your training provider and employer. It will also set out what is expected of you and what you need to do to solve any queries or complaints.

If you are already a permanent member of the organisation and you are upskilling, you will still need to receive and sign a commitment statement to qualify under the funding terms for apprenticeships.

How will I attain additional skills in the workplace?

As part of the apprenticeship agreement you are required to complete *20% off the job training*.

Off the job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard, teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours required to reach occupational competency in your particular role. It can include the teaching of theory, practical training and learning support. Should you need to attend a college to gain your qualification, either on a day release or in a block session, this will count towards your 20% off the job training.

Off the job training must take place within your paid contracted hours. However, if there is a lecture or course that is in the evening that you are required to go to as part of your qualification, you must be given the time off in working hours to compensate for your attendance.

How much will my training cost me?

One of the advantages of being an apprentice is that your training will be funded either solely by the employer or by a combination of the employer and the government. There is no cost to you.

What will I get paid?

For your first year or if you are under 19 you will be entitled to receive the minimum wage for apprentices which is set down by the government; www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/payandconditions.

However, some employers may pay you more, you will need to look at your *Apprenticeship Agreement* to see your actual rate of pay. After you have been in an apprenticeship for more than a year you will be paid at least the minimum wage rate for your age.

Your income will decide on whether you pay tax and national insurance as apprentices are subject to the same tax allowances as everyone else. Your employer will take your tax and national insurance contributions from your wages before you get them. The amount deducted will appear on your wage slip and will be paid directly to the government on your behalf.

What are the different qualification levels?

There are 4 main levels: experience of the subject.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Equivalent to</u>	<u>Estimated time</u>
Intermediate Level (Level 2)	5 good GCSE's	12 - 18 Months
Advanced Level (Level 3)	2 A-Level's	2 Years
Higher Level (Level 4-6)	Foundation Degree	3 - 6 Years
Degree (Level 7)	Masters / Bachelors Degree	3 - 6 Years

What are the entry requirements?

Level 2:

There is usually no minimum requirement but you will need to show you have an aptitude for the subject as well as a good understanding in English and maths.

Level 3:

Usually GCSE's including English and maths as well as some experience in the subject you are studying.

To complete a level 3 apprenticeship you will also have to have gained a level 2 qualification in maths, English and in some cases, ICT or be willing to complete them.

Level 4 - 6:

Employers will usually seek A 'levels or level 3 equivalents as a minimum, as well as maths, English and ICT up to level 2. Knowledge demonstration of the subject would also be required.

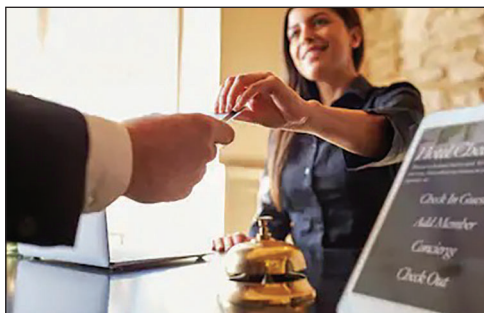
Level 7:

Level 4 qualifications or bachelor degree and several years' practical experience of the subject.

What is the role of the training provider?

The training provider can come in different formats; a college, a person that comes to your place of employment and delivers training, or an in-house training team.

No matter how your training is delivered, the trainer has a responsibility to ensure that you are working in a safe environment, you are gaining the correct knowledge and skills and demonstrating the right behaviour in your workplace for the level of qualification that you are undertaking.



You will have regular meetings with your training provider and your employer to ensure that your planned work is stretching you to the correct level and incorporating new tasks and skills. You will be set projects in conjunction with the training provider and the employer which will showcase your knowledge and understanding, demonstrating how you are able to put these into practice within the workplace.

If you have any problems with your qualification your training provider is there to speak to. They have a safeguarding responsibility for you and should ensure that you are working safely within your workplace. They are also required to record your progress, to help you gather your evidence and to keep relevant information about you such as your work details and level of qualification. Under the confidentiality codes of practice and GDPR they are not able to share any information, without your permission, to anyone who does not have the right to see it, even if that is your employer.

Should you have a problem, but do not wish to speak to your employer or training provider you can contact the Apprenticeship Support Network helpline either by telephone or email and they will be pleased to help you.

E: info@apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org / T: 07951 750 926

How do I find an apprenticeship?

There are many ways to find apprenticeships that are available in your area. You can visit the websites of your local training providers, colleges and job sites, they will usually have a section for apprenticeships and advise you on how to apply for them.



If you are interested in a particular career it would be beneficial to look on the websites of related companies to see if they have vacancies or when they usually recruit apprentices. Larger companies and certain sectors may only recruit in batches at specific times of the year. This especially refers to sectors such as banking, engineering and nursing. It may be

wise to sign up for job email alerts for these businesses.

If you have a school holiday coming up or are not currently working or not in full time education, it may be worth contacting a company where you may like to work to see if they will be willing to let you do work experience to get a feel for the industry. Don't leave this to the last minute to arrange, as companies will need to make arrangements to formulate a work plan and appoint a mentor for you before you are allowed on site.

Apprenticeships are advertised on national job sites such as Reed, Totaljobs or Indeed. To access them you may need to register with them, set your filters for your region and for 'apprenticeships' and request an alert when any relevant vacancies are listed.

Don't forget to also check the job sites in your local paper and on the local council website, particularly under schools and learning or in their job vacancies.

You can also check the Government website:

findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeships

or the government site for find a job:

<https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk>

For these sites you will need to create an account and search with filters. The Apprenticeship Support Network can help you with this.





I am on a low wage, will I be able to get help with my travel?

This will depend on your employer, your training provider, and any local schemes where you live.

Some employers realise that their premises may be difficult to reach and will offer you a bus pass. Your training provider may have bursaries to help with transport costs. Your local council may have schemes to help apprentices, which can include the loan of a bike or discounts on bus passes to help you get to work - ask your training provider for more information or look on your council website. Local train networks have discount cards but you need to look into the terms as sometimes the discount is only available after 9am. In addition your NUS card may give you an automatic discount on transport networks.

I will need Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to do my job is there any funding for this?

If there is a requirement for you to have PPE to perform your role your organisation have a duty by law to provide this for you free of charge. This may include shoes with steel toe caps, gloves or goggles.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you treat this equipment correctly, wear it when you are supposed to and report to your manager when it is becoming ineffective and may need replacing. However, in some industries as you progress, you may want to buy your own specialist equipment i.e. scissors for hairdressing or a set of knives as a chef, these will become the tools of your trade. Your employer may be able to help you by purchasing them for you and you can pay them back directly out of your wages.

Can I leave an apprenticeship early?

Because your apprenticeship involves you, your employer and your training provider, leaving your apprenticeship early can be complicated.

If you change jobs within the company – you may be able to complete your apprenticeship as long as your role is still relevant and your employer will allow you to do the 20% off the job training.

If you change your subject – you will have to terminate the apprenticeship qualification you have completed to date and start a new apprenticeship qualification in your new subject area from the beginning.

If you leave your current employment and want to continue with your qualification – you may well be able to do this as long as your new employer agrees to the terms of the apprenticeship ie, 20% off the job training and to keep progressing you in the subject matter. A new agreement will need to be signed with the new parties. However, there is only a small window of opportunity to find a new employer should you leave your employment without somewhere else to go to. There may also be a cost to be paid to the training provider by the new employer to enable you to continue.

Leaving your apprenticeship altogether and still completing your course. This would be highly unlikely unless you find a new employer quickly or you only have a few weeks left and have already satisfied the 20% off the job training requirement.

Can I do an apprenticeship if I have a degree?

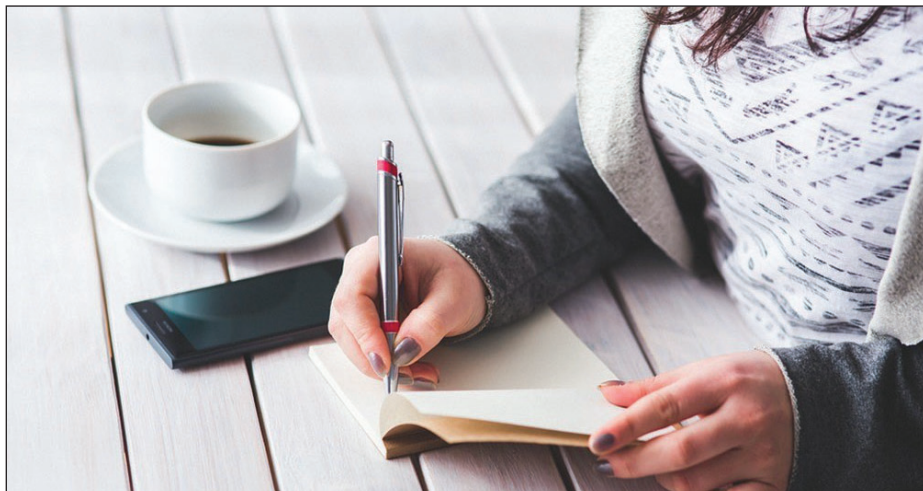
As long as it is not in the same subject, yes you can, these restrictions have been lifted.

I did my GCSE's more than 5 years ago, will I have to re-do them for the purpose of an apprenticeship?

No you don't. These restrictions have been lifted.

Can I apply to go to university with my level 3 apprenticeship?

Advanced apprenticeships (level 3 & 4) will receive UCAS units for application to university. However, it is always best to check with the university first.



What does the terminology mean?

Levy and Non-Levy

This terminology defines how your apprenticeship qualification is paid for. It is determined by guidelines set down by the government. **Levy**; if your employer has a wage bill in excess of £3 million per year they will pay into a levy pot and the payment for your qualification will be taken from there. **Non-Levy**; If your employer does not have such a large wage bill they will have to pay a contribution to your qualification (5% in 2019/2020) and the government will pay the rest.

There are however, certain occasions where your employer will make no contribution to the cost of your qualification due to your age or circumstances, more information can be found on; www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice

Standards and Frameworks

This is the format that your apprenticeship will take.

Framework is on a continual assessment basis after tuition has taken place. You are required to demonstrate your competence and knowledge as you progress through your qualification. After 31st July 2020 you will not be able to start a qualification by this method.

Standard is when you gather all the knowledge, and are able to demonstrate your skills and behaviours and showcase this in an assessment at the end of your studies to an independent assessment team. You will be scored on your skills, knowledge and behaviour. You will pass if you get 60% or more and will get a distinction if you achieve over 80%.

Gateway and End Point Assessment

Gateway is the period when you get ready for your end-point assessment. It is essentially when your tutoring has been completed and you are ensuring that your portfolio and knowledge are ready for external assessment and accreditation.

End-point assessment is where you will showcase your portfolio and where other methods are used to demonstrate your knowledge, skills and behaviour. This may be an observation or an interview with you and your manager, for you to present a project you have been working on, or any other method that has been set down by the awarding body.

Apprenticeship Agreement

This is the agreement that you will have with your employer. This is the same as a contract of employment and will set out the length of your contract, your rate of pay, the qualification you will be working towards, your holiday entitlements as well as any other terms for your employment.

This will be signed by you and your employer and you will receive a copy. Ideally you should have this within the first few days of starting your apprenticeship, but if not you must have received it within the first 2 months of employment.



Commitment Statement

This is a contract signed by yourself, your training provider, and your employer. It will set out the qualification that you will be working towards; how it will be delivered i.e. at college or the training provider coming to you, how long it will take, and what will be expected of you, your training provider and your employer. It will also set out what you need to do to resolve any queries or complaints.

External Quality Assurer (EQA)

An EQA is somebody from outside the training organisation who will come in every so often to ensure that the training provider is delivering the subject at the correct level in the correct way according to their accredited standards. You can also appeal to the EQA if you feel you have not been graded correctly for your work.

OFSTED

(The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills)

All training organisations are rated by Ofsted. Ofsted will undertake inspections on a regular basis to ensure that apprentices receive the high quality training and support they deserve. Ofsted will then rate the provider as either outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. The inspection is completed over all aspects of the organisation not just the delivery of the qualification. You can find out the details of your training providers last assessment by visiting: www.gov.uk/government/organisation/ofsted

Off the Job Training

Off the job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard, teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours required to reach competence in your particular occupation. It can include the teaching of theory, practical training and learning support. If you attend a college to gain your qualification either on a day release or in a block session, this will count towards your off the job training.

Off the job training must take place within your paid contracted hours, however, if there is a lecture or course that is in the evening which you are required to go to as part of your qualification, you must be given the time off in working hours to compensate for your attendance.

Trade Unions

Trade Unions have played an important role in how we work today by collectively bargaining for better conditions and wages alongside providing many support mechanisms for its members, including enabling them to train for different qualifications. They are not present in all businesses but anyone can join a trade union. They have many membership benefits such as discounts, but more importantly they are there to support you should you need any help. This can be in person or by letting you have access to their expert advice, or by representing you if you are in dispute with your employer.

To be a member you will need to join a trade union and you are usually required to pay a subscription fee. However, the fee may be reduced for apprentices or students.



Offering:
Workplace Support
Advice & Guidance
Access to Trade Union help

Apprenticeship
Support Network

POA **poalearning** unlock your potential

Union Learning Fund with unionlearn

Where can I get help and advice?

As your qualification will last between 12 months and 4 years there are bound to be times when you struggle with your apprenticeship, this could be due to work issues, coursework problems or changes in your home circumstances, all of which can put extra pressure on you.

One of the places to go for help and advice is your employer or your training provider. However, if you don't feel you can do this or need help with something that is not connected with your apprenticeship other help and advice is available;

The **Apprenticeship Support Network** is a free, independent advice and support network who can help you. They can offer general help and advice, for example; advising you on your rights and responsibilities or more specifically arranging someone to accompany you to a meeting, or helping you to source support through the trade union route.

You can visit their website on www.apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org or contact them by email info@apprenticeshipsupportnetwork.org or telephone; **01983 532769** or **07951 750 926**. Remember, no question is ever wrong and if it is worrying you it is better to speak to somebody.

There is also a dedicated National Government Helpline: **0800 015 0400** or email: nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk

The government also have a website where you will find up to date information for example, the current national rate of pay:

www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/becomeanapprentice

ACAS is a free, independent organisation who can offer confidential advice on employment law and your rights. Tel: **0300 123 1100** / www.acas.org.uk

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or the Samaritans (T: **116 123**) are free services that are there to help you when you need them.

You can download the App from the TUC unionlearn website entitled **"Apprenticeship Essentials"** which contains a lot of helpful information and advice . It also has a pay calculator which will advise you if you are getting at least the minimum wage for your apprenticeship.

For more specific help and guidance:

Alcoholics Anonymous

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

0845 769 7555

Anxiety Uk

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

03444 775 774

BEAT

www.b-eat.co.uk

0808 801 0677

CRUSE Bereavement Care

www.crusebereavementcare.or.uk

0844 477 9400

MIND

www.mind.org.uk

0300 123 3393

Narcotics Anonymous

www.ukna.org

0300 999 1212

National Gambling Hotline

www.begambleaware.org

0808 8020 133

PAPYRUS

www.papyrus-uk.org

0800 068 4141

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org.uk

116 123 (free helpline)

Talk to Frank

www.talktofrank.com

0300 123 6600

Remember, although it is good to ask friends, no two apprenticeships are the same and everybody's circumstances are different. If in doubt, seek advice.

Apprenticeship Essentials

Are you an apprentice? Considering an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship Essentials is made for you.

Our *all-in-one* resource for apprentices and anyone considering an apprenticeship in England. Includes guidance, interactive tools, bite-sized learning, job search and more.





Training
Education
Career and Personal Development
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Apprenticeships

www.poalearning.org.uk





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