

# ***WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?***



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## So what is all this fuss about Apprenticeships?

### What does the term 'Apprenticeship' mean in the first place?

This is something the department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) wants to be absolutely clear about. In its current consultation on preventing misuse of the term 'apprenticeships' in relation to unauthorised training, it is proposing legislation to protect the use of the term and helpfully provides the following definition:

'An apprenticeship is a job with high quality training. It allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge, real practical experience and wider skills required for their immediate job and future career. These are acquired through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal off the job training and the opportunity to practice new skills in a work context. This broad mix of transferable skills gained differentiates Apprenticeships from training delivered to meet narrowly focused job needs.'



It goes on to say: 'The Government has taken steps to give employers and apprentices confidence and clarity on the quality measures that government apprenticeships possess...' The phrase 'government apprenticeships' is not repeated but it is a reminder that the sort of apprenticeships that are talked about by politicians are those that meet design criteria set by government, are approved by government and are partially funded by government.

### What is happening to Apprenticeships?

It seems that every corner of the education and training system is undergoing major reform, and Apprenticeships are no exception. Following the recommendations in the Richards Review, commissioned by the last Government, the design of apprenticeships is undergoing a major overhaul.

To date, the design of Apprenticeships has been set out, within sectors and by occupation, in documents called Apprenticeship Frameworks. You can find all of them by visiting Apprenticeship Frameworks On-line at [www.afo.sscalliance.org](http://www.afo.sscalliance.org). For the vast majority of sectors, these frameworks are still live, and they specify the training and qualifications that make up the apprenticeship programmes being followed by existing and new apprentices. However, the Government has put in place a process to replace all of these frameworks with 'apprenticeship standards'.

### What is the timeline for Apprenticeship reform?

The very first new apprenticeship standards were launched in 2013. The government website states: "These have been designed by employers and for employers to ensure that apprenticeships are even better placed to support businesses and help them prosper." From September 2017 all apprentices will be starting on one of the new apprenticeship standards. Each of the employer-led groups appointed by government to develop these standards is referred to as a 'trailblazer'.

You can find an up-to-date list of the apprenticeship standards published so far, and of those currently under development and likely to change in the near future, by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-changes>.

## How significant are these changes – what's new?

This will vary - employers have been encouraged to take a fresh look at their requirements and the way they express them so you will notice some innovations and differences in approach from one sector to another. However, there will be noticeable continuity from old to new apprenticeships – after all, the core skills and competences required of a particular job will not change radically.

Like the predecessor frameworks, the new standards are likely to include core qualifications that need to be taken and baseline requirements in Maths and English (although this baseline may increase for some occupations). Minimum levels of 'off the job training' will be specified and the design is intended to be more 'high level' avoiding some of the heavily detailed criteria that are a feature of some existing frameworks.

## Won't the new frameworks also be assessed differently?

The requirements for assessment are also changing: apprentices will be assessed largely at the end of the programme; both theoretical and practical elements will be assessed; and there will be a 'synoptic' requirement to assess an apprentice's ability to make connections between the different things they have learned throughout the programme.

Also, all new apprenticeships must be graded Pass, Merit or Distinction. Overall assessment of achievement of an apprenticeship will be delivered by an independent third party, which doesn't have to be a regulated awarding organisation. Nevertheless, formal qualifications offered by awarding organisations, such as OCR, are likely to continue to be components of any apprenticeship.



## How committed is government to making apprenticeships grow?

Very committed. Any provider of Post 16 and adult vocational education and training ignores the importance of apprenticeships at their peril. The Government is so serious about its target of delivering 3 million apprenticeships within this term of office it is bringing forward primary legislation to underpin the target. One of the surprises of the first Budget was the announcement that it will introduce a levy for large employers to raise funds for supporting apprenticeship delivery.

The push to develop new apprenticeship standards is gathering momentum, the first Phase of Trailblazers consisted of 8 standards and these were launched in October 2013. The latest 26 Trailblazers making up Phase 5 were launched in July 2015. Overall there are now over 140 Trailblazers who are collectively designing over 350 standards with assistance from awarding organisations, providers and professional bodies.

And now BIS has announced a wholesale review of Post 16 education and training institutions, to take place, region by region from September 2015 to March 2017. Amongst other things, we are told the review will take account of national government policy, including the national expansion of the Apprenticeship programme. It isn't just apprenticeship standards that are being reviewed; it's the whole system that supports them.

To find out more

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or call our Customer Contact Centre on **02476 851509**

Alternatively, you can email us on **[apprenticeships@ocr.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@ocr.org.uk)**



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