

STAFF APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME HANDBOOK



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APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are comprehensive work-based training programmes lasting a year or more, blending on-the-job and off-the-job learning.

More employers are realising that optimal learning occurs within the workplace, where individuals engage in a blend of genuine job-related encounters and experiences. This approach empowers them to make decisions, tackle challenges, and derive insights from errors. Employees also derive knowledge from their interactions and relationships, including mentorship, coaching, and collaborative learning.

Apprenticeships align perfectly with this hands-on learning philosophy, integrating practical experiences with formal learning components in their programmes. As the significance of workplace-based education grows, apprenticeships emerge as a fitting solution for holistic skills development.

For current employees, apprenticeships offer structured development and career pathways for those seeking alternatives to traditional education. For current employees, apprenticeships offer structured development and career pathways for those seeking alternatives to traditional education and present a cost-free way to acquire a qualification and apply new skills in a practical setting, enabling them to learn while they earn. With a diverse range of programmes on available, individuals can explore opportunities, whether it is in general business and management or honing specialised skills to excel in their current role.

THE BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Staff retention: Apprenticeships attract those seeking development-focused employers, yielding engaged and satisfied employees who stay longer with the employer.

Productivity: Apprenticeships cultivate motivated, skilled, and qualified team members. Many apprentices are keen to apply what they have learned in their apprenticeship programme, resulting in new and innovative ideas.

Skill Development: Apprenticeships equip staff with essential, up-to-date skills, aligning with technological advancements and contributing to workforce and succession planning.

Tailored Training: Apprenticeships can be tailored to the needs of the organisation or team and specific job roles, with start times spanning the year.

Leadership: Apprenticeships pave the way for leadership roles, aiding succession planning and propelling career advancement.

Cost Savings: Apprenticeship training and assessment costs are already covered by the apprenticeship levy, minimising expenses for departments and the learner.

HOW ARE APPRENTICESHIPS FUNDED?

Apprenticeship funding works under a system introduced in April 2017. Large employers, whose pay bill exceeds £3 million, contribute to the apprenticeship levy. This levy amount is collected by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), much like income tax and National Insurance, and these funds are set aside for apprenticeship training. When it is time to use these funds, the University taps into them through a Digital Apprenticeship Service account and pays the apprenticeship training providers.

This means apprentices and their departments do not have to worry about extra training costs. And importantly, there is no cut in the apprentice's salary because their job contract stays the same. If you are a manager looking to bring in a new apprentice, just remember to follow the RTF process and make sure you have enough budget for the new apprentice's pay. Please note, however, that some training providers may charge for exam re-sits.

APPRENTICESHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Apprenticeships span a wide array of subjects across all educational tiers, ranging from GCSE up to the equivalent of a master's degree.

INTERMEDIATE APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 2)

- Equivalent to five GCSE passes.
- Duration: 12 to 18 months.
- Average off-the-job training: Around 6 hours per week.

ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 3)

- Equivalent to two A-level passes or a T-level pass.
- Suitable for candidates with Level 3 qualifications.
- Provides practical, work-based skills and sector experience.

HIGHER APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 4)

- Equivalent to a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or first year of an undergraduate degree.

HIGHER APPRENTICESHIPS (LEVEL 5)

- Equivalent to a Higher National Diploma (HND) or a foundation degree.

LEVEL 6 DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

- Provides a full bachelor's degree.

LEVEL 7 DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

- Offers a master's degree in a chosen subject.

OCCUPATIONAL PATHWAYS

The [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education \(IfATE\) occupational maps](#) demonstrate where technical education can lead and the relationships that exist between education, qualifications, apprenticeships, and occupations in England.

The maps allow you explore occupations by searching for a specific job or browsing broader job sectors.

These occupations are shown on cards, along with details of relevant apprenticeships and other technical education qualifications, and career progression.



APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

Sussex staff have gained apprenticeship qualifications in Operational Management, HR Consultant Partner, Coaching, Junior Content Production, and Junior Desktop Technician.

There is a broad range of apprenticeship programmes available to Sussex staff, covering a wide range of subject areas and industries. You can find a comprehensive selection of the current offer on the [Apprenticeship Programmes webpage](#).

The apprenticeship must be linked to the apprentice's current role for them to succeed. There are exceptions; for example, if an administrator wants to complete an apprenticeship in Project Management, then their manager will need to confirm exposure and opportunities to project management for the duration of the apprenticeship.

The University already partners with several training providers who have been chosen for the quality and success rates of their apprenticeship programs. Following feedback, the University has also sourced training providers who can deliver training programs to suit different learning styles so whenever possible the option for face-to-face delivery is being increased.

If you are interested in an apprenticeship not currently listed on the webpage, please contact the Apprenticeships Officer who will source a suitable provider and note procurement of new training providers can be lengthy so be prepared for the University to follow governance processes.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The staff member identifies the apprenticeship programme that they are interested in and meets with their Line Manager to discuss and agree to proceed with the application. Both parties read the relevant sections of the Staff Apprenticeship Scheme Handbook.
2. The staff member completes the first stage of the online application, the Expression of Interest form. They will receive a confirmation email and a link to share with the line manager for them to complete the second stage of the application.
3. The staff member emails copies of their GCSE Maths and English (or equivalent) certificates to the Apprenticeships Officer.
4. The line manager completes the second stage of the application. They will receive a confirmation email and a link to share with the Director for final approval.
5. The Apprenticeship Officer books an informal meeting with the applicant and line manager to answer any questions and confirm eligibility and suitability.
6. The Apprenticeships Officer contacts the training provider to confirm details or starts the procurement process for a new provider if necessary. They will confirm training dates, delivery method, location, end point assessment, and funding allocation. Please note that this process can take a few months.
7. The Apprenticeships Officer introduces the training provider to the staff member for initial assessments and confirmations.

START DATES

Some programmes have flexible start dates, allowing apprentices to begin within 8-10 weeks post funding approval. Meanwhile, others follow quarterly cycles, and higher-level apprenticeships typically feature two intakes per year.

ELIGIBILITY: WHO CAN COMPLETE AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria:

- Applicants must be over the age of 16.
- Applicants must have lived in the UK, EU, or European Economic Area for the previous three years and have the Right to Work in the UK.
- Applicants would ideally have GCSEs (grade C/4+) in English and Maths, or equivalent qualifications. However, those without formal qualifications are still eligible if they are prepared to achieve functional skills as part of the apprenticeship.
- Applicants must not be undertaking any other government-funded training and to be working at least 30 hours per week. However part-time workers can apply but note the duration of the apprenticeship will be extended.
- Applicants must not hold a similar qualification higher than the level of the apprenticeship. However, an individual can undertake an apprenticeship at the same level as, or at a lower level than a qualification they already hold, if the apprenticeship will allow the individual to acquire substantive new skills.
- For individuals on fixed-term contracts, the contract must cover the apprenticeship duration, including the endpoint assessment.

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Applicants who have not previously achieved grades 9-4 or A*-C in GCSE English and Maths (or equivalent qualifications) will be required to complete Functional Skills alongside their apprenticeship programme.

Functional Skills are an alternative to the GCSE route, with the flexibility to sit assessments all year round. Learning material for functional skills qualifications is based on practical and real-life situations, so Functional Skills can increase confidence and improve both daily life and work performance and productivity.

Functional Skills are funded by apprenticeship funding and the course runs alongside the apprenticeship. These English and/or Maths modules are generally delivered online for 2-3 hours per week with one subject studied at one time (until exams are achieved), and these must be completed before the end of the apprenticeship programme.

[View the current and prior qualifications accepted as meeting the minimum English and Maths requirements for apprenticeships at level 2 and above.](#)

DELIVERY METHODS

The University is actively procuring training providers who can tailor their offerings to match apprentices' individual learning preferences. This might encompass options like attending day releases, engaging in online learning through dedicated platforms, or receiving face-to-face instruction from a tutor or coach visiting the campus. Each delivery method has its own merits and drawbacks, so carefully evaluating what aligns with the apprentice's and the team's needs is crucial.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Training providers will conduct an initial assessment to check the apprenticeship will be at the correct level, aligned to the apprentice's job role and therefore achievable. The assessment also checks prior learning as part of a skill scan to ensure that training is relevant. Please note managers' input may be required, especially if the training providers require confirmation the apprentice will be granted access to additional tasks to meet the standard.

APPLIED LEARNING (OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING)

The Education and Skills Funding Agency states that apprentices should spend 20% of their apprenticeship learning and developing off the job, so a full-time working apprentice should allocate at least six hours per week to learning. This time is flexible; it can be 6 hours in a day, 6 hours across a few days, or even a block of time – the training provider tutor/coach will be able to provide guidance.

Applied learning is any activity that is not part of an apprentice's day-to-day role, and which supports their apprenticeship training so it must be dedicated time and agreed upon between the apprentice and line manager. All apprentices must log their learning time as entries are subject to audit by the ESFA and if any training takes place outside of working hours, then time off in lieu must be granted to the apprentice.

Taking time out from a busy workload is never easy and often requires planning and agreements in advance but it is flexible, and a list of acceptable types is supplied here and on the apprenticeship webpage. The tutor/coach will also be able to advise.

- Learning new skills at work through shadowing other members of the team.
- Practical training or training in the workplace relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Writing assessments, and assignments and completing projects or activities.
- Personal development discussions to plan new learning.
- In-house training programmes relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Coaching or mentoring sessions with a coach or mentor.
- Attendance at workshops, training days and webinars relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Completion of online learning through a learning system and/or an in-house system.
- Writing reflective journals.
- Self-study that includes reading researching or watching videos.
- Training on new working practices or new equipment.
- Role-playing or simulation exercises.
- Industry visits/conferences relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Mock assignments to prepare for End point Assessment.

AGREEMENTS AND TRAINING PLANS

Before an apprenticeship commences the training provider will ask the apprentice to complete an apprenticeship agreement – this is the agreement between the apprentice and employer. They also sign a Training Plan from the training provider.

The plan sets out:

- Details of all parties involved (employer, training provider and apprentice)
- relevant policies
- the commitment from each party
- expectations, roles, and responsibilities
- an agreed plan of training

END POINT ASSESSMENTS

All apprentices must complete an end-point assessment (EPA) consisting of several assessments to pass to complete the apprenticeship. These assessments provide each apprentice with the opportunity to demonstrate all the required knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard and this assessment is completed by an independent endpoint assessment organisation.

As their employer, managers will need to support and help practice the end-point assessment with the apprentice and may also be asked to sit on the final assessment panel.

STANDARDS

Apprenticeship programmes consist of standards that include skills knowledge and behaviours for which the apprentice will need to be fully competent to pass the endpoint assessment at the end of their apprenticeship.

Standards are occupation focused and are not led by qualifications although some apprenticeships do include qualifications as part of the program. Apprenticeship standards detail what an apprentice will be doing, and the skills needed by them in their job role. More details of the knowledge skills and behaviours of each apprenticeship can be found on the [Institute for Apprenticeships: Standards website](#).

WHAT SUPPORT WILL AN APPRENTICE RECEIVE?

The training provider tutor/coach will provide an overview of the program with the criteria the apprentice will need to achieve. The manager should provide exposure and opportunities to practice the theory they are learning.

Apprentices could initially start by shadowing another colleague to see how a task is completed and then progress to practicing those tasks until they are fully competent, thus allowing theory to be embedded. It is sometimes necessary to ask other colleagues to provide learning opportunities so obtain buy-in and agreement as soon as possible and be mindful of their workloads too.

The most successful apprentices have engaged managers who actively encourage and support their apprenticeship. Most apprentices will be allocated an online portfolio or learning platform and training providers can provide managers with a login too.

The managers' involvement includes:

- Giving apprentices a clear outline of expectations and a safe supportive environment to learn and develop.
- Encouraging them from the start to own and drive their learning targets and to seek regular feedback to self-assess their performance.
- Providing apprentices with the work experience needed to develop the skills and knowledge included in their apprenticeship.
- Allowing time for their 20% applied learning.
- Supporting the completion of relevant projects and portfolio evidence.
- Meeting with them regularly to provide feedback and review progress.
- Being approachable and understanding.
- Liaising regularly with the training provider.
- Putting a workplace mentor in place to further support the apprentice.

MENTOR

A mentor can be invaluable to provide an apprentice with advice and further objective feedback, outside the more formal relationship with their manager – especially if they are new recruits. More experienced members of staff can act as a mentor for the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship programme. Their role will include:

- active listening
- questioning
- building rapport
- offering constructive feedback
- offering support and guidance
- signposting
- acting as a role model

FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR LINE MANAGERS

Many apprenticeships will come about because of a discussion between a manager and an individual during an annual Achievement and Development Review (ADR), but the process can begin at any time.

Offering an apprenticeship to your existing staff is an accessible and cost-effective way to enhance the knowledge, skillset, and competency of your team. Have you considered the skills that your team/department will need in the next two years, five years, and beyond? Or maybe you have identified a team member who would make a good leader or manager in the future, but needs some training first?

Apprenticeships are an excellent way to invest in your team's development and to bring new talent into the University. They have become an accessible way for people of all ages and backgrounds to upskill and gain valuable qualifications,

In advance of approving a Staff Apprenticeship Scheme request, it is important to consider:

- Is this the right development opportunity for the staff member? What would the apprentice gain from completing this programme? And do they have a clear sense of what they want to achieve, both personally and professionally?
- Does the apprenticeship programme align with the individual's job role, and does the skillset align with organisational or departmental objectives?
- What level of commitment would be required for the staff member to complete the apprenticeship programme, and is it sustainable?

Managers should check the commitment required to complete the program ensuring there are no major life events planned for the duration of the programme such as a house move, or wedding.

An apprenticeship is a big commitment and requires input – it is not a quick win, especially at the higher levels. Managers should always consider the impact on any SLAs (Service Level Agreement) (Service Level Agreement) and other team members, especially if the department has peak work times with deadlines to meet.

KEY POINTS

- For individuals on fixed-term contracts, the contract must cover the apprenticeship duration, including the endpoint assessment.
- Current staff stay on the same salary and contract of employment and all the training and assessment costs associated with the apprenticeship will be met by the apprenticeship levy. There is no cost to the department or apprentice. However, some training providers may charge for exam re-sits, and occasionally books but this will be communicated prior to the programme starting.
- Both the manager and apprentice will need to consider the effect on existing workloads and agree to any changes necessary to facilitate the programme in advance of the start date.
- The sign-up process can take 4-5 months to draw down the funding.

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR STAFF THROUGH AN APPRENTICESHIP

Ask to meet with the training provider tutor/coach and request an overview of the program with the criteria the apprentice will work through. Plan how to provide exposure and opportunities for the apprentice to practice the theory they are learning. The apprentice could initially start by shadowing another colleague to see how a task is completed and then progress to practicing those tasks until they are fully competent, thus allowing theory to be embedded. It is sometimes necessary to ask other colleagues to provide learning opportunities so obtain buy-in and agreement as soon as you can and be mindful of their workloads too.

The most successful apprentices have managers who are engaged and actively encourage and support their apprenticeship. A quick regular update for the apprentice to explain what they are working on allows managers to make suggestions for additional learning opportunities but most of all it demonstrates the apprentice is supported. Most apprentices will be allocated an online portfolio and training providers can provide managers with a login too. Please request yours so you can check progress and engage with the programme.

Managers' involvement includes.

- Giving apprentices a clear outline of expectations and a safe supportive environment to learn and develop.
- Encouraging them from the start to own and drive their learning targets and to seek regular feedback to self-assess their performance.
- Providing apprentices with the work experience needed to develop the skills and knowledge included in their apprenticeship.
- Allowing time for their 20% applied learning.
- Supporting the completion of relevant projects and portfolio evidence.
- Meeting with them regularly to provide feedback and review progress.
- Being approachable and understanding.
- Liaising regularly with the training provider.
- Putting a workplace mentor in place to further support the apprentice.

TRAINING RESPONSIBILITIES

Check with the apprenticeship coach about any training the training provider will provide and identify what can take place within the workplace as soon as you can, ensuring that the apprentice is recording all the job training in their portfolio of evidence. Knowing the timetable of topics to be delivered is useful so everyone is clear on what learning is planned. The training provider will provide theory-based learning and the apprentice will practice in the workplace. This provides the apprentice with hands-on learning dealing with daily issues and challenges – naturally occurring experiences.

PROGRESS REVIEWS

All training providers should conduct progress reviews during the apprenticeship program – most complete these reviews every 10 to 12 weeks so please schedule these dates in your diary. The apprentice manager (or mentor) should be available to meet with the apprentice, and their tutor/coach as reviews are an ideal opportunity to check on progress made and to keep on top of any problems or issues so that solutions can be found. Manager/mentor attendance at these meetings demonstrates support to the apprentice and the training provider.

During the review, the tutor/coach will often check health and safety and safeguarding, and these are a requirement of the funding from the ESFA, to ensure the safety of all apprentices on the programme.

MENTOR

A mentor can be invaluable to provide an apprentice with advice and further objective feedback, outside the more formal relationship with their manager – especially if they are new recruits. More experienced members of staff can act as a mentor for the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship programme. Their role will include:

- active listening
- questioning
- building rapport
- offering constructive feedback
- offering support and guidance
- signposting
- acting as a role model

This should be actioned by the manager to identify a suitable mentor and organise.

ADDITIONAL INPUT

Some apprenticeships require the apprentice to complete a work-based project. This might mean engaging with other stakeholders within the University and is an ideal opportunity to complete a project that is useful to the organisation whilst also allowing the apprentice to practice and learn new skills.

Please engage and support this as the project is often part of the endpoint assessment and therefore crucial to the success of the apprenticeship. It might be the chance for thinking out of the box, for exploration of ideas and concepts, please collaborate with the tutor/coach for guidance.

For any queries related to the Staff Apprenticeship Scheme, please contact the Apprenticeships team:

staffapprenticeships@sussex.ac.uk
Human Resources
Sussex House
University of Sussex

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