

Degree Apprenticeships Briefing



What is a Degree Apprenticeship (DA)?

An apprenticeship is a job that has a specific level of training attached to it, where the training is aimed at developing transferable skills, knowledge and behaviours that are assessed as achieving a 'standard' of competency. Standards are developed by employer groups named 'trailblazers'. Apprenticeship standards differ by their achievement requirements, though there is only one standard per occupation.^{1, 2, 3}

Degree apprenticeships "combine both higher and vocational education and fully test both the wider occupational competence and academic learning, either using a fully-integrated degree co-

designed by employers and HEIs [Higher Education Institutions], or using a degree plus separate end-test of professional competence" (pp.1).⁴ A core part of a DA is a bachelor's (apprenticeship Level 6) or master's (level 7) degree qualification.

DAs sit alongside higher apprenticeships (HAs), which cover Levels 4 to 7. The difference between a DA and a HA at Levels 6 and 7 is that a HA does not include a university bachelor's/master's degree as a directly incorporated component of the course.^{3,4,5}

The graphic below depicts the qualifications associated with apprenticeship levels:

Apprenticeship Level	Equivalent Education Level	Apprenticeship Type	
Level 7 Level 6	Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree	Degree Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships
Level 5 Level 4	Higher Education Certificate (CertHE) or Diploma (DipHE), Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND), Foundation Degree		
Level 3	2 A-Level Passes	Advanced Apprenticeships	
Level 2	5 GCSE Passes at Grades 9-4 (A*-C)	Intermediate Apprenticeships	

Source: Adapted from various sources. ^{4, 6, 7}

How has the policy around DA's changed?

Following recommendations in the Wolf report in 2011⁸, the boost to apprenticeships attempts to address the UK's relatively low productivity on international standards by placing employers at the forefront of reforming training quality. New apprenticeship standards, which replace the framework model, are designed to ensure that the critical skills needs of industry are developed. In addition, emphasis has been placed on the role that apprenticeships, and degree apprenticeships in particular, could play in raising aspiration and improving social mobility through alternative higher education routes.^{9,10}

The landscape has changed considerably since the commencement of degree apprenticeships in 2015 and the introduction of an Apprenticeship Levy in 2017. When this briefing was first published in 2016 there were 11 approved standards at levels 6

and 7. As of March 2019 this stands at 59, of which 32 have seen apprentice starts, cumulating in 15,799 starts in total.^{11,12} This is a product of an engaged Trailblazer process and the Institute for Apprenticeships' Faster, Better campaign, launched in December 2017 to streamline the approvals process.¹³

During this success, two areas of the Levy have seen an overhaul to facilitate increased business engagement with DAs. In early 2018 it was announced that businesses would be able to pass 10% of their Levy funds to other businesses, including those in their supply chains. This was then further increased to 25% in September 2018, coming into fruition in April 2019.¹⁴ Secondly, the Chancellor pledged in the Autumn budget that the co-investment rate from SMEs would halve from 10% to 5%.¹⁵ A commencement date for this reform has not yet been announced.

How are DAs organised?



1. ENTRY

A degree apprentice is first an employee of an organisation with an employment contract and as such employers are usually responsible for their hire. However, as all parties involved need to verify that the applicant meets their eligibility and entry criteria, recruitment can occur jointly between universities and employers.¹⁶ The apprentice can be a new recruit or an existing employee supported by their organisation to undertake the DA.³ Entry requirements for a DA will depend on the sector and the prior skills acquired and required.¹⁷



5. PROVISION

Employers can choose a training provider from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP), hosted by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with the information shared from the Office for Students (OfS).²⁴ HEIs, including those who act as employer-providers, must apply to the register in order to be eligible to deliver training for apprenticeships. Following feedback this register will remain open permanently from December 2018 with a streamlined approvals process of 90 days.²⁵



2. SALARY

The apprentice must have the right to work and reside in the UK, be employed for at least 30 hours a week (including non-workplace training) and earn a salary, paid for by their employer.^{3,5} Pay must be at least at the national minimum apprenticeship wage, currently £3.70 per hour for apprentices under 19 and those aged 19 or over who are in their first year. After which an apprentice must be paid at least the minimum wage for their age.¹⁸ As DAs are associated with senior occupational job roles, higher market wage rates may be applied, at an employer's discretion.¹⁹



6. COMPLETION

A DA is awarded by the HEI upon successful completion of the programme – which either comprises a degree course where academic skills and on-the-job learning are wholly incorporated and tested or an existing degree course combined with an end of programme assessment of academic and occupational proficiency. The degree earned is of equivalent standard to that achieved under a full-time undergraduate pathway.¹⁶ The HEI can also consider partnering with other providers – including further education colleges and private training providers – to ensure the learning requirements of the DA are delivered.¹⁹



3. TRAINING

The salary of an apprentice also covers those periods where they are training as part of the apprenticeship. A minimum of 20% of an apprentice's time must be spent on off-the-job training.²⁰ Training can be delivered through different approaches including 'day release' or 'block release' grouped days according to programme and employer requirements. Training can also incorporate work-based, distance, and blended online/face-to-face learning.³ Paid holiday entitlement is at least 20 days per annum plus bank holidays and the apprentice holds all employment rights as per any other employee.^{5,16,18}



7. FUNDING

Since the introduction of the Levy in April 2017, the cost of training provision is dependent on the position of the employer. For large, Levy-paying businesses (including universities) training is funded by a combination of funds drawn from their Levy-funded training account (90%) and a government top up (10%). For smaller, non-Levy paying businesses, training is funded by a 10% employer contribution and a 90% government top-up.²⁶ The employer contribution is set to fall to 5%, but no start date has been announced.¹⁵



4. DURATION

DAs are generally structured as a mix of core compulsory and elective modules, as well as work-based projects as set out by the employer. Elective modules enable the employer to tailor this component of learning to meet the needs of their business. The duration of the DA will vary, depending on the sector, though there is a minimum length of 12 months.^{3,21} Typically, DAs last for up to 4 years; they can be shorter (3 years) or longer (6 years) than this since there is no fixed maximum length.^{4,22,23}



8. LEVY

Supporting funds for the overall target of 3 million apprentices by 2020 is being raised through a Levy on both private and public sector large employers in the UK, including HEIs. The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in April 2017 and places a tax of 0.5% on an employer's wage bill over £3million. In England, Levy contributions are placed in an apprentice service account, and employers have 2 years to draw funds for contribution to apprenticeship training, after which the money cannot be claimed. Because apprenticeships and training is a devolved area, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different approaches to drawing Levy funds.²⁷

Where are DAs being developed?

September 2015 saw the running of the first university-business co-developed DA programmes in the digital, automotive engineering, banking relationship manager and construction fields.²⁸

As of March 2019, degree apprenticeships are 'ready for delivery' across 59 standards through 11 sectors.²⁹ The table below shows sector provision and the number of standards available. To date, 107 HEIs are registered as able to deliver training provision.²⁴

Sector	No. of Level 6 Standards	No. of Level 7 Standards
Business and administration	2	1
Care services	1	0
Construction	8	1
Creative and design	1	1
Digital	3	1
Engineering and manufacturing	15	4
Health and science	13	3
Legal, finance and accounting	1	0
Protective services	1	0
Sales, marketing and procurement	3	0
Transport and logistics	1	0

Note: Only those apprenticeships which award a degree are listed above. An additional 18 Level 6 and Level 7 standards are available which do not offer degree attainment.²⁹

References

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- We are very grateful to Adrian Anderson and Mandy Crawford-Lee of UVAC for these comments in particular.
- ESFA (June 2017). [Apprenticeships: off-the-job training](#).
- Universities UK (2016). The Future Growth of Degree Apprenticeships (a full list of universities that are registered with the Skills Funding Agency's Register of Training Organisations (ROTO) is shown on pp. 26) (last accessed 21/03/16)*.
- For examples, see (a) [Degree Apprenticeships Programmes available from BPP University: Chartered Manager \(PDF factsheet\)](#) and (b) [Manchester Metropolitan University Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship](#) (webpage).
- These lower and upper durations are taken from The Times Guide to Elite Apprenticeships supplement (27 January 2016), table on pp. 3 entitled 'The Times Guide to Higher & Degree Apprenticeships' (available by subscription).
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All web links last accessed on 02/03/16, *unless stated otherwise.

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