

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) – Statement on Apprenticeship Quality

Definition

1. An Apprenticeship is a job with an accompanying skills development programme designed by employers in the sector. It allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge and real practical experience, along with functional and personal 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 and embed new skills in a real work context. This broader mix differentiates the Apprenticeship experience from training delivered to meet narrowly focused job needs.
2. On completion of the Apprenticeship the apprentice must be able to undertake the full range of duties, in the range of circumstances appropriate to the job, confidently and competently to the standard set by the industry.

Requirements for a high quality delivery model

3. The focus of an Apprenticeship is on equipping individuals with the **new skills and learning** they need for their job roles and future employment and progression. It is appropriate for those moving into a new job or for individuals in an existing job where significant new knowledge and skills will be acquired through the Apprenticeship. Providers must work closely with the employer to ensure that the Apprenticeship will meet this requirement.
4. **Employment** is a fundamental part of an Apprenticeship and in this context is more than just having a contract of employment. An apprentice must be employed in a job role with a productive purpose. Ideally they will have a range of experience and additional enhancement opportunities that can aid their **future progression**. This can include, but is not limited to, additional units with smaller employers and higher level Maths and English.
5. The **minimum hours of employment** for an apprentice should be at least 30 hours per week. By exception, where the individual's circumstances or the particular nature of employment in a given sector makes this impossible, then an absolute minimum of 16 hours must be met. In such cases the duration of the Apprenticeship should be extended.
6. All Apprenticeship Frameworks are linked to **specific job roles or occupations**. Providers must work closely with employers to ensure that the Apprenticeship offered is the most appropriate for the individual's job role with their employer, whilst reflecting individual employer and learner needs.
7. The **duration of the Apprenticeship** is expected to reflect that set out by employers in the relevant Apprenticeship framework document, but at the very least must meet the minimum duration requirement announced by NAS. Apprenticeships for apprentices aged 16 – 18 must last at least 12 months. For those Apprentices aged 19 or over the Apprenticeship should also last at least 12 months unless relevant prior learning is recorded. Where this is the case the Apprenticeship will not be less than 6 months. Apprenticeship delivery must be planned to make full and effective use of the duration, including the opportunity for apprentices to embed and extend their learning through repeated workplace practice.

8. All apprentices commencing their Apprenticeship on or after 6th April 2012 must have an **Apprenticeship Agreement** between the employer and the apprentice. This can be used to reinforce the understanding of the requirements of the Apprenticeship.
9. The delivery model must be designed so that all apprentices who do not have **Level 2 in English and Maths** are given the opportunity to progress towards this.
10. Apprenticeship funding received from the SFA **cannot be used to pay apprentice wages**, as its primary function is to fund learning. Where the provider, or an associated organisation, is the employer the provider must be able to demonstrate that Agency funds are not being used in this way.
11. Apprentices must be paid at least the applicable rate under the **Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage**. This will reflect the amount appropriate for the age of the apprentice and the stage of the Apprenticeship. Providers and employers should not view Apprenticeships as a low wage employment option but understand that the wage rate reflects the initial lower productivity of an employee undertaking training. The clear expectation is that the wage level will increase as the apprentice becomes more productive
12. Frameworks reflect the requirements of the **Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)**. The majority of frameworks set the level of guided learning hours well above the minimum in SASE and also give a clear indication of the length of the programme. Providers must ensure that their delivery models are structured to deliver these framework requirements.
13. The **Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA)** model is designed to increase the engagement of smaller employers in Apprenticeships. All ATA Apprenticeships must have strong employer involvement and a focus on delivering permanent jobs either during or immediately following the Apprenticeship. The ATA model must never be used merely to meet the employment condition for Apprenticeships.

Provider responsibilities under the statement

14. Whilst the needs of employers drive the Apprenticeship programme, it is the provider's responsibility to ensure the standards set out in this statement are met. This includes **challenging or not engaging** with employers who are unwilling or unable to contribute to a high quality Apprenticeship.
15. Prime contractors retain full responsibility for ensuring that the obligations and requirements around Apprenticeship delivery are met by any **sub-contractors** they may appoint. The prime contractor remains accountable where quality and delivery standards are not being met.
16. Providers will be expected to be able to actively demonstrate that they have met the features described in this statement as their commitment to meeting the policy intent behind the Apprenticeship programme. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Funding Rules.