
Guidance 3ix Guidance for apprenticeship event panels

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1. What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship: *An apprenticeship is a job with training to industry standards. It should be about entry to a **recognised occupation**, involve a substantial programme of **on and off-the-job training** and the apprentice’s occupational competence should be tested by an **independent, end point assessment**. Apprenticeships are **employer-led**: employers set the standards, create the demand for apprentices to meet their skills needs, fund the apprenticeship and are responsible for employing and training the apprentice. But the **needs of the apprentice** are equally important: to achieve competence in a skilled occupation, which is transferable and secures long term earnings potential, greater security and the capability to progress in the workplace*

– [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) (October 2024)

As per above, Middlesex University always retains the responsibility for the academic standards and quality of its degree apprenticeship qualifications where it serves as the main provider.

2. Apprenticeship standards

The design of all higher education in apprenticeships must begin with the relevant Apprenticeship Standard or Apprenticeship Framework. Higher education providers must design the provision to meet the requirements set out in these documents as well as and applicable regulatory and statutory requirements. Other reference points include the [Quality Code](#) and [Qualifications Frameworks](#), PSRB requirements and any other relevant information, including [Subject Benchmark Statements](#), [Characteristics Statements](#) and funding/regulatory body requirements. If there are conflicts between these documents, the higher education provider will notify the relevant stakeholders to agree an acceptable resolution, unless there is a specified hierarchy between different requirements.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
1.	Does all programme validation documentation recognise the programme as an apprenticeship standard first, accompanied by a Middlesex University qualification?	Programme specification

2.	Have all knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) been accurately mapped to the programme modules?	Apprenticeship mapping document
3.	Where these are in addition to programme learning outcomes, have the KSBs also been accurately mapped against them?	Programme specification: - Programme outcomes

3. Collaboration with employers

Employers are central to the development of Apprenticeship Standards to ensure that the required knowledge, skills and behaviours, along with any mandatory qualifications, are specified for the relevant professional and/or occupational roles. Apprenticeship programmes should also align with employers' strategic objectives and goals. To ensure that the standards specified align with both higher education and professional expectations, comprehensive collaboration between employers, higher education providers and professional bodies is required. Irrespective of the need to meet an employer's specific requirements, the apprenticeship is a broader (and, therefore, portable) programme which enables the progression of apprentices once they have completed the apprenticeship.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
4.	Has the programme been designed in consultation with employers in the sector to reflect current workforce development needs/established working arrangements and practices?	Overview/Critical review document: - Background/rationale

4. Social mobility

Apprenticeships can increase social mobility and access into further and higher education; the introduction of higher education in apprenticeships allows learners to 'learn and earn', avoid student debt (where student tuition fee loans and maintenance loans apply) and gain access to employment (as apprentices). They also provide an alternative route into higher education for those for whom academic study is not the preferred route and improve the apprentices' employability in addition to making higher education more accessible to those already in employment.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
5.	Where applicable, do alternative entry-points/module exemptions exist subject to a claim for recognition of prior learning/experience by apprentices?	Programme specification: - Programme structure
6.	Has the programme been designed to be occupation-specific as opposed to company-specific, meaning completing apprentices will obtain knowledge, skills and behaviours transferable across a sector to develop skills for lifelong learning?	Module narratives: - Aims - Learning outcomes - Syllabus

5. Recruitment and selection

A fundamental requirement of an apprenticeship is that it is a job which incorporates training to industry standards. The apprenticeship must provide employment that includes appropriate learning opportunities to enable the apprentice to develop the occupational and/or professional competence required. Apprentices may be existing employees or new recruits. Any recruitment processes will normally involve a collaboration between the employer and the higher education provider. This might be a joint recruitment process where the employer and higher education provider have equal involvement in developing a job and person specification, designing adverts and marketing campaigns, recruitment and selection. The relationships between employers and higher education providers for recruitment will vary. Standard applications to higher education courses, for example through UCAS, will not normally apply.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

At Middlesex University, recruitment and selection of all apprentices is principally an employer-led activity. The second stage of recruitment is the initial assessment process which is a University-led activity. All apprentices must meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in the latest version of the ESFA main provider funding rules at the recruitment stage. This is additionally covered in the Middlesex University regulations for apprenticeships. The University and employer in agreement may set additional entry requirements for apprenticeship programmes which remain compliant with the ESFA funding rules and the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure that all apprentices have an equal opportunity to develop the occupational and/or professional competence required to meet the apprenticeship standard.

Functional skills prerequisites

At the recruitment stage, applicants are not required to have level 2 (or higher) qualifications in functional skills for English and maths (or equivalent). However, it is a prerequisite for all apprentices to have obtained both in order to meet gateway for any apprentice on a programme at level 3+ to undertake end-point assessment. Therefore, where there is an agreement between the University and the employer to allow for the recruitment of apprentices who have not yet obtained a minimum qualification of level 2 in functional skills in English and/or maths, they will be required to enrol onto the applicable functional skills courses in English and/or maths as a part of their apprenticeship programme. This can run alongside the main programme or prior to the commencement of the main programme. Note that any functional skills training does not contribute towards off-the-job training hours. The University takes sole responsibility for the organisation of functional skills training and has come to the decision to use a sub-contractor (Runway Apprenticeships, Ltd.) to deliver functional skills training for any Middlesex apprenticeship programme, subject to an agreement with employers.

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
7.	Where there is an agreement between the University and the employer to allow for the recruitment of apprentices who have not yet obtained level 2 in functional skills in English and/or maths, has appropriate time in the programme allocated towards training for these qualifications?	Overview/Critical review document: - Resources Programme specification: - Programme structure

6. On-the-job and off-the-job training

The [UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Work-based Learning](#) describes higher education in apprenticeships as being at the most work-integrated end of the work-based learning continuum. Higher education in apprenticeships positions the workplace as the primary source of learning; the learning that emerges in the context of undertaking day-to-day work activities is on-the-job learning. This learning is facilitated, supported and enhanced through structured learning inputs by higher education providers and employers; this combination is often referred to as work-integrated learning.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
8.	Has the programme been structured to ensure a minimum of 6 hours a week if 30+ hours per week of the apprenticeship’s overall training hours has been dedicated to off-the-job training (whether University-based or work-based)? The hours should be proportionate if less than 30 hours, but total must equate to at least 278 hours across an extended part time extended duration.	Module narratives: - Scheduled teaching - Placement activity
9.	Has a structure for off-the-job training on the programme been decided (e.g. day release; block study; online study; self-directed study)? Can flexible approaches also be applied to accommodate individual employer and apprentice needs where applicable?	Programme specification: - Programme structure
10.	Have clear arrangements been coordinated for which party (employer or University) is responsible different aspects of an apprentice’s off-the-job training?	Module narratives: - Learning and teaching strategy

7. Teaching and learning

The knowledge, skills and behaviours required by apprentices may be delivered through a diverse and innovative range of methods that will reflect the diversity of the learners' needs and of individual workplace situations. The learning and teaching approaches for the apprenticeship will identify appropriate teaching styles and learning opportunities for apprentices, as well as elements that may require additional resources, for example the identification of learning opportunities and experiences within the workplace and those which are suitable for assessment.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
11.	Does the learning and teaching design demonstrate flexibility and inclusivity towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual learner needs? • individual employer needs? • differences in employer sizes? • differences in employer locations? • apprentices with varying job titles/responsibilities? • specific professional sector needs where standards are multi-sector (e.g. Senior Leader)? 	Overview/Critical Review Document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy Programme specification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme structure
12.	Will a work-based supervisor be allocated to all apprentices to ensure successful completion of work-based and self-directed off-the-job training? How are these supervisors qualified and have their responsibilities in supporting the University's apprentices been clarified?	Overview/Critical Review Document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources Module Narratives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning and teaching strategy
13.	Have programmes been designed with appropriate resources to conduct tripartite progress reviews throughout the entire duration of the apprenticeship (noting that these need to take place every 3 calendar months)?	Overview/Critical Review Document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources

8. Learning in the workplace

As learning in the workplace is fundamental to the learning in an apprenticeship, apprentices need to be able to identify opportunities within the workplace through which they develop the knowledge and skills and behaviours to enable them to achieve the Apprenticeship Standard. In order to do this, apprentices must feel that the employer organisation supports the learning process by having supportive and encouraging learning structures in place. It is good practice to appoint a workplace mentor or coach, who can provide an insight into the workplace, help to signpost learning opportunities and open doors for the apprentice, going on to support the apprentice to learn how to do this for themselves. This support process for learning in the workplace should be designed during the development phase and documented. The employer, apprentice, higher education provider and workplace mentor/coach will benefit from being involved in the design of this process.

– QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (Jun 2022)

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
14.	Are clear responsibilities for workplace mentors/coaches included as a part of the programme and module design to support in the development of apprentices meeting all learning outcomes through integrating work-based learning? Will the mentor/coach be able to provide employer-specific examples of where apprentices can undertake duties which can demonstrate learning outcomes?	Programme specification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programmes outcomes; teaching and learning methods Module narratives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning and teaching strategy

9. Sub-contracting

As a rule, all sub-contractors, including functional skills training providers, must fulfil at least one of the following rationale to be compliantly utilised and should be included in the programme specification. The use of any sub-contractor should also consider any impact this may have on individuals who share protected characteristics. The recognised rationale by the ESFA are where a sub-contracted training provision meets one or more of the following aims:

- To enhance the opportunities available for learners;
- To fill gaps in niche or expert provision, or to provide better access to training facilities;
- To support better geographical access for learners;
- To offer an entry point for disadvantaged groups; or
- To give consideration of the impact on individuals with shared protected characteristics.

In accordance with ESFA funding rules, sub-contractors must satisfy one of the following four criteria:

1. They are on the published Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR) and have applied by the main provider or supporting provider application routes; or
2. They are the apprentice’s employer, or a connected company or charity as defined by HMRC, and are on the published APAR, having applied through the employer-provider application route;
3. They have applied to the APAR subcontracting exception process and have been approved to be exempt from the requirement to be on this register and can produce written approval from the department confirming that this exception applies to them, including its duration; or
4. They are not on the published APAR but will deliver less than £100,000 of apprenticeship training and on-programme assessment under contract across all main providers and employer-providers between 1 August and 31 July each year.

Following [reforms to sub-contracted apprenticeship provision](#) in July 2020, rigorous monitoring of rationale behind sub-contracted provision has been conducted by the ESFA from the academic year 2020/21 onwards.

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
15.	Have different modes of delivery (including locations) been specified in the programme’s module design (inc. blended approaches)?	Programme specification: - Teaching institution Module narratives: - Learning and teaching strategy - Module run
16.	Has it been set out in the programme’s strategic aims how subcontracting will enhance the quality of the student offer? Is there a clear educational rationale for the utilisation of subcontractor(s) on a programme and is the criteria met?	Overview/Critical review document: - Background/programme rationale
17.	What procedures have been put in place which hold the University responsible for the selection/actions of all delivery subcontractors?	Overview/Critical review document: - Resources

10. Progression

At whichever level the higher education in apprenticeship sits, there should be flexible and transparent ongoing career progression by facilitating opportunities for progression, for instance into an apprenticeship at a higher level, into an alternative career path at the same or another level (recognising prior learning), into studies at a higher level that are not part of an apprenticeship, into professional status or potential career development. The potential progression routes should be established, between provider and employers, when a higher education in apprenticeship programme is approved including progression opportunities provided by professional, or other, providers. Potential and guaranteed progression routes can be established at programme approval stage and may include requirements for continuing professional development opportunities.

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	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
18.	Where applicable, have interim awards which sit outside of the apprenticeship structure been identified throughout the programme at appropriate exit points?	Overview/Critical Review Document: - Exit awards Programme Specification: - Programme structure

11. End-point assessment (EPA)

The final assessment for every apprentice (which may consist of multiple aspects) is known as End-Point Assessment (EPA). Upon the successful completion of EPA, an apprentice can be defined as having met the occupational/professional standard. EPAs can be either 'integrated' or 'non-integrated'. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) determines which type of EPA is applicable for different apprenticeship standards.

Non-integrated degree apprenticeship programmes

The University must ensure independence of the organisation delivering the end-point assessment and of the individual assessors making assessment decisions and check that the EPA plan clearly sets out how independence will be ensured for both parties.

Integrated degree apprenticeship programmes

The EPA organisation does not have to be independent but the individual assessor must be. The EPA will typically be conducted by Middlesex University but the University must ensure independence of the individual assessor(s) making assessment decisions and check that the EPA plan clearly sets out how independence will be ensured.

	Questions to consider	Where this should be addressed
19.	Is there clear articulation to make apprentices and workplace mentors aware of what work-based training must be undertaken in order to meet the requirements to pass assessments?	Module narratives: - Learning and teaching strategy

20.	Are employers involved in the formative assessment process (inc. tripartite progress reviews) with opportunity to provide insight/feedback regarding their apprentice's progress towards achieving occupational/professional competence?	Module narratives: - Assessment scheme
21.	Where employers are included in summative assessment processes, has sufficient induction, development and training plans for employers been put in place in line with HE assessment procedures?	Overview/Critical review document: - Programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy
22.	Does the programme have a clear EPA plan?	Programme specification: - Programme structure Module narratives: - Assessment scheme