

DEFINING AN APPRENTICESHIP: CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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Defining an Apprenticeship: Consultation Survey

This consultation is managed and led by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB). This consultation proposes a set of principles which will form the basis of our policy recommendations to Scottish Government on employer requirements for an over-arching definition of apprenticeships in Scotland. This will apply across the apprenticeship family (Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level Apprenticeships).

We believe that a definition is needed to:

- Provide clarity on what apprenticeships are and what differentiates them from other qualifications and methods of training and learning
- To ensure that Scottish apprenticeships are recognised as robust, industry-led and quality assured work-based learning programmes which provide transferable skills across the UK and internationally

Some of the proposed principles are already established in our system, while others could potentially bring significant change. We are seeking contributions from a wide range of stakeholders to help shape these principles, and to offer views on how any necessary change might be achieved. We would encourage stakeholders to be aspirational in their responses.

For further details on our consultation read our [supporting information](#).

Respondent Information

What is your name?

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Organisation

If you selected organisation, what is the name of your organisation?

If you selected organisation, please choose the option below that best describes your organisation:

Employer	
• Large business (Over 250 staff)	
• Medium business (50 to 250 staff)	
• Small business (10 to 49 staff)	
• Micro business (up to 9 staff)	
Business representative organisation	
Independent Training Provider	
College	
University	
Professional body	
Awarding Organisation	
Third Sector or social enterprise	
Equality Group	
Local government	
Other Public Body	
Trade union or staff association	
Individual	
Other (please describe)	

Skills Development Scotland would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- ☐ Publish response with name
- ☐ Publish response only (without name)
- ☐ Do not publish response

Info for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' refers only to your name, not your organisation's name. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published. If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

Info for individuals:

Any information you provide will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

If you are content for Skills Development Scotland to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise, please enter your email address in the space below:

DEFINING AN APPRENTICESHIP: SIX UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

The following six principles have been discussed and agreed by SAAB and will underpin our recommendations on the definition of apprenticeships in Scotland.

1. Apprenticeships and Employment

All post-school apprentices are employed ¹.

Employer demand and employment status are fundamental to the success of an apprenticeship and are what clearly differentiates it from a 'training programme'. The apprentice must be employed in a genuine job and not solely for the purpose of delivering an apprenticeship.

- An apprentice must be an employee from the first day of their apprenticeship
- An apprentice must be paid at least a wage consistent with the law for the time they are in work and in off-the-job training
- The job role must provide the opportunity for the apprentice to gain and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their apprenticeship

This applies to all apprenticeships with the exception of Foundation Apprenticeships, which are delivered in the senior phase of school. They require significant work experience over a sustained period to satisfy the competence requirements for the award.

2. Apprenticeships and Occupational Pathways

Each apprenticeship is a programme of work-based learning designed to develop competence in a defined occupation and apprenticeship pathway.

To develop competence, an apprentice must be employed in a clearly defined occupation or job. Whilst generic or cross-sectoral skills - such as entrepreneurialism and business improvement - can enhance an apprenticeship and support development of a wider skill set, they do not develop occupation-specific competence.

3. Availability and Investment

Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of sectors where there is demonstrable industry demand.

Apprenticeships can support the development of skills and competency across a wide range of sectors, including niche industries where employee numbers may be low, but are essential to retain specialist or traditional skills. There needs to be a strong business case for investing in developing frameworks.

¹ This applies to all apprenticeships with the exception of Foundation Apprenticeships, which are delivered in the senior phase of school. They require significant work experience over a sustained period to satisfy the competence requirements for the award.

4. Equality of Opportunity

Apprenticeships support equality of opportunity and are designed to ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

We firmly support the values of inclusion and diversity. We are committed to equality of opportunity within apprenticeships, and to ensuring that all individuals achieve their full potential, regardless of their personal characteristics, beliefs or experiences.

Each apprenticeship framework submitted for approval must provide information on the sector's employment demographics, actual or perceived barriers to access and measures to improve participation from under-represented groups. SAAB will work with partners to develop advice on approval criteria which identify any impact on different groups and provide options to mitigate against potential barriers.

5. Documentation

Apprenticeship Framework documentation is clear, accessible and in an easy to understand format.

Apprenticeship frameworks in Scotland are currently set out in long documents and include information such as registration, recruitment and selection and health and safety. SAAB will advise on how framework documentation can be reviewed to simplify the information for employers and stakeholders.

6. Relationship to Occupational and Professional Standards

Apprenticeship frameworks are based on occupational and integrate professional standards where necessary. They are designed to develop the apprentice's technical and wider skills.

Occupational and Professional Standards are critical because they define the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by an individual within a given industry to perform competently at a specified level.

They allow recognition and transfer of skills and competence across sectors and borders. Apprenticeships and their associated qualifications must reflect occupational, and where relevant, professional standards to maximise the value of the apprenticeship to employers and individuals.

Please provide any comments on these principles you wish to make:

Defining an Apprenticeship: Principles for consultation

The following eight key principles are proposed by SAAB. Explanatory comments have been included to highlight some current practice and key issues.

When answering these questions, please take time to consider the potential impact for employees and individuals. The responses you provide will assist in further refining these principles.

Principle 7: Framework Design Process

The requirements of an Apprenticeship are set out in a framework document defined by industry which adapts to emerging and future needs.

Apprenticeships are designed for industry, by industry. To be fit for purpose, the process for designing the apprenticeship framework's requirements must ensure that industry input represents the needs of the whole sector: from large multi-national companies to SMEs and micro businesses.

Framework design must also be informed by an understanding of the practicalities of delivery, therefore input is needed from other stakeholders such as Awarding Bodies and Training Providers as necessary. The processes that support the development of frameworks need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing industry needs.

Q1 a) Do you agree with this principle?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give a reason for this answer:

Q1 b) How can we achieve more involvement from employers, particularly SMEs, in developing the requirements for apprenticeships in their particular industry?

Principle 8: Qualifications and Pathways for Progression

Apprenticeships offer internationally recognised, accredited technical and professional qualifications, at SCQF levels 5 to 12, with clear pathways for progression.

In Scotland, mandatory vocational or degree qualification requirements are set at different levels for Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level Apprenticeships and these are accredited and recognised on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)².

In some sectors, there is also a requirement to gain **professional** qualifications (for example, some financial services).

Generic or cross-sectoral skills can also contribute to a successful, robust and future-proofed apprenticeship system. For example, Modern Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 5-7 include five Core Skills³ which are deemed most likely to be needed in a work environment while Technical and Professional Apprenticeships at SCQF Levels 8-11 include Career Skills units, to reflect work based requirements at a higher level.

Careers Skills include units such as “Negotiate in a Business Environment” and “Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your organisation”. Other examples of generic or cross-sectoral skills could include project management, commercial awareness, analytical skills, and leadership.

² The SCQF supports understanding of the range of qualifications in Scotland and how they compare to each other. <http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/> 2Communication, Numeracy, Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving and Working with Others

³ The five Core Skills are: Communication, Numeracy, Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving and Working with Others

Q2 a) Do you agree that all apprenticeships should include an accredited qualification?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q2 b) Where specific professional qualifications are a mandatory requirement to operate in a sector, should they also be a mandatory requirement of the apprenticeship?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give a reason for your answers:

Q3 a) Should apprenticeship frameworks include additional units to support the development of generic or cross-sectoral skills?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q3 b) If yes, what skills are necessary to apprentices to support their future career development?

Q3 b) If no, please explain why you believe this is unnecessary?

Q4 a) Are Core Skills still relevant for Modern Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 5-7?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q4 b) If yes, should all Core Skills be separately assessed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give a reason for your answers:

Principle 9: Framework Content and Assessment

Each Apprenticeship framework describes the required content and method of learning and the associated assessment methodologies

In Scotland, competence is assessed throughout the apprenticeship and although some sectors consolidate learning through an end test or skills test (e.g. construction), there is no requirement for consolidation across all apprenticeships.

In other countries, there is a more blended approach. A report undertaken by SEMTA⁴ in 2017 reviewed the assessment approaches for apprenticeship systems judged internationally as being of high quality (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands). All of the systems reviewed - apart from the Netherlands - require apprentices to pass written examinations as well as tests of their practical competence at the end of their training.

An end test will not be necessary for all sectors, but consolidation of learning can be important to ensure that the apprentice has gained the necessary skills, competencies and behaviours for that sector. Consolidation of learning can be applied through a wide range of methods including appraisal, 360 degree feedback and reflective accounts.

Q5 a) Should all apprenticeships in Scotland require consolidation of learning (such as end assessment, appraisal, review) as well as continuous assessment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q5 b) If yes, what methods to consolidate learning would be most useful and appropriate?

⁴ SEMTA (2017). The Role of Qualifications and End Point Assessment in Apprenticeships: An International Comparison. Available online at <http://semta.org.uk/images/pdf/Role-of--Qualifications-and-End-Point-Assessment-in-Apprenticeships-March2017.pdf>

Q5 b) If no, please explain why you feel this is unnecessary, stating any sector-specific relevance?

Principle 10: Common and Specific Elements

Each apprenticeship is designed to develop transferable skills across the sector.

There are over 80 apprenticeship frameworks across a wide range of sectors in Scotland, designed to be transferable within a sector, rather than company-specific.

Apprenticeship policy and the current model in Scotland should mitigate against apprenticeships which are too job or task specific, but there may be an opportunity to look at developing a core and options model. This would include core elements - common to all apprenticeships at that level within the sector - and specific requirements which reflect differing occupational pathways across the sector.

This could further support transferability of skills by combining common learning elements applicable to a range of jobs across the sector, with specific elements which focus on individual occupational pathways.

Q6 a) Is it desirable to introduce a 'core and options' approach to apprenticeships across a sector?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q6 b) What challenges and opportunities might this approach present?

Principle 11: Supporting the Apprentice in the workplace

Each apprentice is supported in the workplace by a trained mentor and in their learning and assessment by a qualified trainer/ educator/ assessor.

Mentoring is an important part of high quality apprenticeships. Mentoring can ease the transition into (or within) the workplace by helping young people to understand: their role in the workplace; how to contribute to the success of the business; and how to develop their own career pathway.

A recent study⁵ noted the benefits of mentoring to businesses, including improved communication between the apprentice and the employer and improved quality and relevance of the training.

Mentoring can be undertaken by a range of people such as: a dedicated mentor; a work colleague or peer support; or a training provider or assessor, depending on the size of the business. Currently, while promoted as good practice, there is no requirement for apprentices to be allocated a trained mentor.

Q7 a) Do you agree with introducing a requirement for a trained mentor to support apprentices?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give a reason for your answer:

Q7 b) If yes, how can we ensure this requirement is met?

⁵ "The role of mentoring in supporting Apprenticeships". Andy Hirst, Christina Short and Sini Rinne, Cambridge Policy Consultants, Research paper 20 April 2014. Accessed at: <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/research-paper-20-role-mentoring-supporting-apprenticeships>

Principle 12: Type of Learning and Duration

Apprenticeship learning is work-based and delivered to fit the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, the needs of the business and the individual's pace of learning.

Off-the-job training

The key focus of apprenticeships is on work-based learning to develop competency, skills and knowledge, with the content of learning defined by employers to meet the skills needs of the sector.

Countries such as Germany and Switzerland, and more recently England, also mandate off-the-job learning in addition to work-based learning. Off-the-job learning is defined as learning which is completed outside of the normal day to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of an apprenticeship. It is much wider than learning delivered in a training centre or college and can encompass activity such as simulation exercises, shadowing and industry visits. It must, however, be directly relevant to the apprenticeship and add value.

In Scotland, off the job learning is mandatory only for those apprenticeships where industry specifically requires it (e.g. engineering). Some sectors specify formal off-the-job learning to deliver underpinning knowledge; others do not require taught learning but may deliver additional training outside the workplace or out with the apprentices' normal working duties. For some apprenticeships, there will be no off the job learning and all learning will be delivered on the job.

Q8 a) Should each apprenticeship in Scotland require mandatory off the job learning?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q8 b) What would be the advantages and disadvantages of introducing mandatory off-the-job training for all Scottish apprenticeships?

Minimum Duration

There are set durations for Foundation and Graduate Level Apprenticeships.

Scottish Modern Apprenticeships have retained the original premise of ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of the employer and the apprentice, and thus only a few sectors mandate a minimum duration. There are some indicators of duration for Modern Apprenticeships: each framework does set out an estimated duration for the average learner and the number of SCQF Credit Points can also be used as a proxy to estimate learning hours. While these are a useful guide, they do not fully recognise how long it can take to consolidate learning, embed skills and develop competence in the workplace.

Other countries (including Germany and Switzerland) have a minimum duration for apprenticeship. It is recognised, however, that the apprenticeship and education systems in these countries are very different from Scotland.

A minimum duration may have benefits to both the apprentice and the employer, by giving the apprentice wider experience in the business and support to embed new skills.

An apprenticeship should include achievement of the mandatory components, enable the embedding of skills and competence and support the transition from being an apprentice to becoming a skilled worker.

Q9 a) Would a minimum duration for all apprenticeships in Scotland add value to apprenticeships in Scotland?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q9 b) Should a minimum duration for each individual apprenticeship framework be defined and set by the sector?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give a reason your answers:

Q9 c) If a minimum duration was introduced, how should duration be defined? For example, a set time period from the date of registration?

Principle 13: Apprenticeship Agreement

Employer and apprentice roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in an apprenticeship agreement.

An apprenticeship agreement would be a standardised document, additional to the contract of employment, which sets out the relative roles and responsibilities of employers and employees during the completion of an apprenticeship.

Employers have a fundamental role in supporting apprentices' learning. Employer input and commitment is essential to ensure that the apprentice achieves competence in the role for mutual benefit. The role of the employer is to transfer skills, knowledge and experience to the apprentice and provide learning opportunities in the workplace and, if required, allow time away to undertake any off-the-job learning.

The apprentice should understand the content of the apprenticeship, and the learning required to successfully become competent and achieve the apprenticeship. They should also be able, and willing, to commit to the requirements of the apprenticeship. This can include, for example, attending courses, keeping records, contributing to the review process, undertaking assessments and keeping their employer informed of progress.

Q10 a) Would an apprenticeship agreement between employers and apprentices be a useful addition?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q10 b) What roles and responsibilities should an apprenticeship agreement include?

i) The employer should:

	Yes	No
Sign a declaration confirming the apprenticeship		
Confirm the content of the apprenticeship and identify learning opportunities		
Understand what support they need to have in place to support the apprentice		
Other (please list)		

ii) The apprentice should:

	Yes	No
Sign a learning agreement which sets out their roles and responsibilities		
Confirm the content of the apprenticeship and requirements to meet learning outcomes		
Identify learning opportunities with the support of their mentor		
Other (please list)		

Q10 c) Do you think employers or apprentices require additional support to meet the responsibilities contained within the agreement?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q10 d) If yes, what support might be required?

Principle 14: Quality Assurance

Apprenticeships are underpinned by robust quality assurance processes from design to delivery

A range of organisations are involved in the quality assurance of apprenticeships, from the development of underpinning standards, and approval of apprenticeship frameworks, to the delivery of training. Each organisation has – and will continue to have - a distinct role, but there may be opportunities to share best practice and adopt more collaborative working. End-to-end quality assurance is currently under review by a SAAB working group. We are keen to look at how to further enhance and improve quality assurance processes and are interested in your views on this.

Q11 a) How can quality organisations work together to strengthen quality assurance in apprenticeships?

Q11 b) How can we embed equality into the principles of quality assurance to ensure that apprenticeships are fully accessible for all equality groups?



Please use the space below to make any final comments.
