

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Policy

Introduction

This Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Policy recognises that the University of Lincoln seeks to help each student to flourish academically and personally through its programmes of study.

Work-integrated Higher Education learning programmes have been a longstanding feature of UK Higher Education. Examples include medical degrees with clinical attachments, teaching, nursing, and social work degrees which all require varying periods of practice, Work-Based Learning degrees specifically designed to recognise learning from work, and Higher Education workforce development programmes designed to meet the needs of employers. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships represent the latest iteration of work-integrated Higher Education provision, providing apprentices with the opportunity to develop the relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours required by the specific apprenticeship standard that they are undertaking in partnership with their employers.

An apprenticeship is a job and any individual undertaking an apprenticeship that involves a Higher Education qualification will be employed as an apprentice. However, as a participant in a University of Lincoln Higher Education programme they will also be considered as a full University of Lincoln student. The QAA Quality Code was written with students in mind, and any references to students in the context of the Quality Code should be read to refer to apprentices.

All apprenticeships that involve a Higher Education qualification are covered by the expectations of the Quality Code. Providers also need to comply with wider regulatory frameworks that relate to apprenticeships, as well as those covering funding and any professional qualifications.

All Higher and Degree Apprenticeships are subject to University Regulations and further details are included within the associated programme and module specifications, which are approved at validation in accordance with processes detailed within the associated Quality Assurance Manuals.

Apprenticeship Levels

Apprenticeships are placed at the following QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) levels:

Intermediate Apprenticeships are at Level 2 and are considered equivalent to GCSEs.

Advanced Apprenticeships are at Level 3 and equivalent to A-levels.

Higher Apprenticeships include all those from Level 4 to Level 7.

Degree Apprenticeships include Level 6 programmes, leading to Bachelors' degrees, and Level 7 programmes, leading to Masters' degrees.

Characteristics

A defining feature of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships is that they are led and designed by employers to reflect employer need. Therefore, the University needs to be sufficiently flexible to ensure that it is responding to diverse and emerging employer priorities when designing and developing programmes, while also ensuring its ability to satisfy requirements for assuring academic standards and quality.

In this context, the employer-led characteristics of apprenticeships that involve Higher Education qualifications mean that the University has to meet the overarching requirement for assuring academic standards and quality, and the need for a more work-integrated programme designed along with employers, as well as the legal requirements of national apprenticeship policies and any associated PSRB accreditation standards.

Individuals can only be employed as apprentices if they are working towards the achievement of an approved *Apprenticeship Standard*. Apprenticeship Standards documents specify the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required to demonstrate full occupational competence in the relevant job role. These Standards are developed by Trailblazer groups made up of employers in a particular industry sector.

It is a condition of the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding that Higher Education providers must ensure that the apprenticeships they offer are designed to enable an apprentice to develop the KSBs specified in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.

Assessment of KSBs is conducted through a holistic *End Point Assessment* (EPA). For Degree Apprenticeships, the Trailblazer group has the option to specify that the EPA is integrated into degree programmes and provided by the Higher Education provider. Otherwise, EPA must be conducted by a separate, independent Apprentice Assessment Organisation, identified by the employer from an approved register. The outcome of EPA, whether integrated or non-integrated, determines whether the apprentice is competent to undertake the identified occupation.

Oversight of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

The University of Lincoln has the legal powers to award UK degrees and is responsible for the academic standards and quality of the qualifications it awards. This applies irrespective of the location(s) in which programmes leading to those awards are delivered, who is involved in delivery, or whether they are delivered in conjunction with professional qualifications. Accordingly, the University has sole responsibility for the academic standards and quality of any Higher and Degree Apprenticeships that it offers.

This means that when designing, developing and approving Higher or Degree Apprenticeships, the University must ensure the qualifications meet the expectations for academic standards and programme design set out by the Quality Code. Where Higher and Degree Apprenticeships also lead to PSRB recognition, the ability to identify, plan and take responsibility for continuing professional development may have to be integrated into the apprenticeship.

A key feature of apprenticeships is that the majority of learning takes place 'on-the-job' while apprentices are engaged in work activity. It is therefore fundamental that an apprentice's

work will provide a source for learning, an environment for learning and the key context for learning. 'Off-the-job' learning can take the form of traditional face-to-face delivery by the University, or take place within the workplace, perhaps using workplace facilities, and may be supported by a variety of online learning opportunities. Training must comply with the ESFA minimum requirements for time spent undertaking 'off-the-job' learning.

The Quality Code presents ample opportunity for providers to accommodate a wide range of sites and situations of learning, in order to deliver apprenticeships that align with employers' and apprentices' needs. However, it places specific requirements on the University to design and deliver apprenticeships to ensure that the quality of the learning opportunities is consistent with that of all other University of Lincoln programmes.

Every apprentice must hold a signed *Commitment Statement* which sets out the detail for the delivery of their apprenticeship and must also set out what is expected and offered by the employer, the University of Lincoln and the apprentice, in achieving the apprenticeship. The University has approved an *Apprenticeship Commitment Statement and Individual Learning Plan* template to ensure we have clear agreement of responsibilities and obligations of all parties involved in learning, teaching and enabling apprentice achievement.

In addition to the Commitment Statement, each apprentice must have an *Apprenticeship Agreement* to confirm they have a contract of employment. There must also be a legally binding *Apprenticeship Training Services Agreement* in place between the University and the Employer to comply with ESFA funding rules.

While the University retains responsibility for the academic standards of its awards, Programme Teams should ensure that all industrial partners and employers who provide apprenticeship opportunities are aware of their responsibilities in this regard, and that these are being fully discharged.

Programme Teams should ensure that both apprentices and employers are fully informed and supported through the apprenticeship. Programme Teams should also ensure that both programme staff and employers are appropriately qualified to fulfil their roles in supporting apprentices in Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

Programme Teams should ensure that Initial Needs Assessment is undertaken with the apprentice and the employer to ensure the programme of learning chosen is aligned both to the needs of the apprentice and their employer and that arrangements for delivering all elements of the apprenticeship standard are in place, including the relevant functional skills.

Programme Teams should ensure that the apprentice's progress both on their programme of study and in the workplace is regularly reviewed with the apprentice and their employer or workplace mentor and that employers are kept updated on the progress on their apprentices.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships are subject to all the University's standard Quality Assurance processes.

Data Protection

Higher and Degree Apprenticeship programmes must include formal information sharing and data processing agreements between employers and the University in accordance with data protection legislation.

Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships
September 2017