

EMPLOYER-CENTRED FUTURE-FACING

Institute for Apprenticeships and
Technical Education
Strategic Plan 2021-2024



Institute for Apprenticeships
& Technical Education





Our vision

01

is for a world leading technical education and apprenticeships system, that equips individuals with the skills that employers need.

02



Our mission

is to enable employers to co-create high quality, cost-effective apprenticeship standards and technical qualifications, so that every employer and individual gets the skills they need to succeed.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD



Ruby McGregor-Smith
Institute Chair

In 2017 the Institute was established to meet the need for ambitious and expert leadership in the delivery of a high-quality system of apprenticeships. We received additional responsibility for various technical qualifications in the years that have followed. Over this time, the opportunities available to employers and learners from our skills system have undergone a significant transformation. This system is a national asset which we seek to extend and celebrate.

The events of recent years have presented challenges and opportunities on an unprecedented scale for individuals, employers and the labour market. They have highlighted the critical need for a technical education system that enables the economy to recover and flourish.

In just four years, we have built a body of over 600 employer-specified occupational standards across 15 occupational routes, that detail employers' need for competence in occupations across the economy. These have formed the foundation

of a rich system of high-quality apprenticeships leading to nearly 700,000 starts.

We are now also delivering a body of 23 Level 3 technical qualifications which form the core of T Levels. The first T Level qualifications were launched for students in September 2020, with more to come over the next few years. Work is now underway to bring employer approval and award a quality mark to Higher Technical Qualifications at Level 4 and Level 5. We expect high volumes of these to come to us for approval in the coming years.

The Skills for Jobs white paper was a vote of confidence in the Institute and what we have achieved. Likewise, our proposed new functions in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, represent a considerable expansion of activity and remit. They reinforce the government's intention to further improve technical education opportunities in England with the Institute as a leading partner. We expect that we will be asked



to play an expanded role in the approval of new technical qualifications. Like apprenticeships, T Levels and HTQs, these would arise from the common core of employer-specified occupational standards.

But we recognise that the nation will face new challenges in the years to come. The consequences of the pandemic, rapid industrial change, the growth in artificial intelligence, automation, the changes brought by Brexit, and the vital transformation to a green economy, will set new and exciting requirements for the skills system.

The Institute has laid a strong foundation upon which to move forwards in this era of change. We have shown that we can adapt and deliver quickly, launching T Levels and providing over 130 flexibilities for apprenticeship assessments.

To compete on the world stage, the nation requires an adaptable workforce that is trained and up-skilled with the full involvement of employers. First-class technical education will provide more people with the future-ready skills employers need, and will set the conditions for productivity and prosperity, 'levelling up' opportunities for all.

With an unrelenting commitment to end-to-end quality delivered through strong, employer-centred partnership, this strategic plan sets the Institute's goals for the next three years. We will build on past progress, our growing authority, and outstanding relationships to deliver them. Our strategy will be focused on three main areas:

- Delivering for employers
- Building a more integrated skills system
- Securing continuous improvement

I must pay tribute to the achievements and vision of Antony Jenkins CBE, whom I have recently succeeded as Chair of the Institute's board. His inspirational leadership and drive has played a critical part in enabling the Institute's achievements to date, and in setting the conditions in which this strategy can be delivered. As incoming Chair, I look forward to working alongside other board members, thousands of employers, and the Institute's staff to realise our shared priorities. I am confident that the Institute and its partners will continue to facilitate the development of skills vital for the nation.

Ruby McGregor-Smith
Institute Chair

EMPLOYER-CENTRED FUTURE-FACING

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR STRATEGY



Jennifer Coupland
Chief Executive

We are unashamedly a voice for employers as customers of the skills system, meeting a longstanding need to provide them with systemic representation in the realisation of a world-class skilled workforce in England.

In our work, we bring clear benefits to the employers with whom we set our standards, engaging and empowering them to regear the skills system in ways that meet their evolving needs. These benefits flow through the delivery of apprenticeships and technical qualifications, to the advantage of learners and wider society.

As Chief Executive, it is my privilege to lead our work and support the expertise of our own people and partners, building on the Institute's already strong foundations.

Over the next few years, we plan to work hard to reinforce and extend employers' place at the heart of the system. We'll ensure that our apprenticeships and technical qualifications are ready for the future needs of the economy. Our work will help to provide citizens with the skills they and their employers need for brilliant futures.

By the end of 2024, we are aiming to see:

- technical qualifications and apprenticeships that deliver even more for employers' current and future needs;
- a more joined-up, coherent skills system that is easy to navigate for all users and responsive to changing priorities;
- the extension of quality training and assessment throughout the economy, building on steady, incremental improvements in collaboration with delivery partners; and
- a flourishing, influential, collaborative and expert Institute playing its full part in bringing these things about.

We can't do any of this alone – and we don't intend to try to do so. The thousands of employers who have worked directly with the Institute have already delivered transformative and powerful reforms. These have supplied the national labour pool with skilled, enthusiastic and dynamic personnel in all areas of the economy and at a wide range of educational levels. Those employing apprentices and offering T Level placements are now seeing the many benefits they – and individuals – gain from employer-led training.

We want to expand our reach – and that of the system as a whole – to bring these benefits to an even wider body of employers. We'll need to work in partnership with other stakeholders to achieve this, too.

Underpinning our strategic priorities are three strategic behaviours, which express how we intend to play our role for the greatest impact:

Authoritative

We combine our unique access to hard data, evidence, and insights from employers with the intelligence available to us as a government agency. Along with the unrivalled expertise and understanding of our people, these permit us to generate ideas, influence political thinking and decision making, and make a positive impact on the development of technical education in England. We bolster that authority through close partnership with learners, and wider system stakeholders.

Collaborative

We build on outstanding working relationships with employers, government, regulatory bodies, educators, students and apprentices. Through collaborative partnerships, we can realise our vision for a world-leading apprenticeships and technical education system that works for all.

Efficient

We run transparent systems that set and maintain high-quality, cost-effective apprenticeships and technical qualifications as determined by employers and informed by other expert stakeholders. We aspire to operational processes that speed up decisions, make it easy for employers to work with us, and continually improve.

By observing these imperatives in our delivery, we will build on the foundations laid in our partnerships over the last four years and meet future challenges. We will consolidate the place of employers at the core of our system for the benefit of all. We're excited by our next steps, and energised by what these can achieve for employers, learners and the wider economy. I ask you to join us in committing to this vision and realising the aspirations we have set out.

Jennifer Coupland
Chief Executive

Our strategic priorities

1. Delivering for employers

We already collaborate with thousands of employers. With us, they create high quality technical qualifications and apprenticeships, and enable us to respond to employer demand in extending and updating our coverage. Now, we plan to deploy employers' influence even more efficiently and effectively. We will provide them with supported autonomy that will preserve their place at the core of the system. We will collaborate extensively to coordinate and determine authoritative foresight of industrial and social advancements, emergent training requirements, and national change agendas.

2. Building a more integrated skills system

We already publish and communicate authoritative factual and practical information about apprenticeships and technical qualifications. Now, we plan to construct a single technical education system built from occupational maps, detailing the connections between apprenticeships and technical qualifications, ensuring the system is high quality, intelligible and meets the skills needs of employers and learners.

3. Securing continuous improvement

We already work with others to build high-quality apprenticeships and technical qualifications. We assure quality practice in a range of areas. Our partnerships provide us with the authority to drive up system quality. Now, we plan to further improve the service we provide to employers and all stakeholders. We will also advocate across a complex landscape for a collaborative and harmonised approach to quality assurance. We will promote the merit of self-regulated best practice. We will continue to safeguard employers' need for quality training qualifications, introducing flexibility with care when sought.

We will have achieved this by..

- Taking more account of employers, including SMEs, apprentices, students and professional bodies in the design and deployment of respected technical qualifications and apprenticeships
 - Better deployment of the capability and capacity of employers, to get the best out of their intelligence and insights, and simplify our processes
 - Creating authoritative knowledge about future skills needs and building these into standards
 - Reviewing and revising technical qualifications and apprenticeships, based on sound evidence and data
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- Publishing clear information
 - Increasing the functionality of occupational maps for all types of users, across the whole system
 - Responding sensibly to calls for flexibility and new qualifications, ensuring these link to offers in the wider system
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- Within the wider system**
- Advocating for a collaborative end-to-end quality chain in technical education via a long term assurance model that supports the delivery of improved quality by all
 - Articulating and promoting standards of quality that enable self-regulation across and between delivery partners
- Within the Institute**
- Refining the Institute's operational structures
 - Continually improving and refining plans, procedures and policies that put all of our customers' needs first
 - Ensuring the Institute is a great place to work



DELIVERING FOR EMPLOYERS

Upholding the fundamental principles of a technical education system based on employer-specified standards, and further securing employers' place at the centre of that system

We are the champion of employers' needs in the skills system. The system delivers the talent that employers require, and that starts with the co-creation of technical qualifications and apprenticeships by employers with the Institute. To do this, we are dependent on the shared passion and authoritative expertise that arise from our partnership with employers. Our dedication to the generation of high-quality, employer-specified apprenticeships and technical qualifications is unrelenting. In an age of unparalleled change, a skilful, flexible workforce is the essential precondition of commercial, industrial and business success.

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Employers know best what they need from their workforce. We have responded to their demand for a body of 600 standards which form the core of the skills system. From these have arisen as many apprenticeships. Three T Levels are already in delivery, with seven more now approved for September 2021, and more beyond. We are already working to bring employer approval and award a quality mark to HTQs that align to the same employer-specified standards.

The Institute remains committed to ensuring employers set the standards that provide the vital core in this evolving system. Many other valuable sources of insight and expertise exist about future skills needs. Brought together, they can ensure our occupational standards underpin a system that prepares the workforce for the future. Now, we think there are opportunities to build on these strong foundations and extend our recognised authority as experts in the skills needed for the future.

By 2024 we aim to support employers further by:

We plan to do the following to achieve this:

Taking more account of employers, including SMEs, apprentices, students and professional bodies in the design and deployment of respected technical qualifications and apprenticeships

- Continue to blend the vision and expertise of employers of all sizes with national priorities across each of our 15 occupational routes, leading to greater evidence-led decision making and prioritisation.
- Create further opportunities for learners and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies to influence development, review and revision activity.

Better deployment of the capability and capacity of employers, to get the best out of their intelligence and insights, and simplify our processes

- Review how employers contribute their input in our processes, streamlining their involvement to ensure their energy and insight is brought to bear where it adds the most strategic and operational value, and taking advantage of digital solutions to help achieve this.

Creating authoritative knowledge about future skills needs and building these into standards

- Develop a forward-looking approach that prioritises the identification of common, transferable skills, knowledge and behaviours (e.g. in sustainability and digital) and ensures that they are reflected in occupational standards.
- Implement forward-looking strategic plans for each of our 15 occupational routes that combine the foresight of employers with other strategies and intelligence drawn from within government and across sectors.
- Promote a scaled approach that ensures the right number of high-quality apprenticeships and technical qualifications are available to employers and learners, where there is demand.
- Evolve the policy governing mandated qualifications in apprenticeships (including degrees) to secure progression and transferability for learners.

Reviewing and revising technical qualifications and apprenticeships, based on sound evidence and data

- Grow and respond to our understanding of the performance of apprenticeships and technical qualifications for users, including adding longitudinal performance and progression data to inform reviews.
- Ensure apprenticeships and technical qualifications remain up-to-date and forward-looking through agile, evidence-based prioritisation of review and revision, and taking into account the public sector equality duty.

BUILDING A MORE INTEGRATED SKILLS SYSTEM

Evolving the coherence and unity of a flexible, high-quality system that is accessible and well-understood by all users

Successful technical education systems unlock potential where they comprise coherent and joined-up technical qualifications and apprenticeships that have value in the eyes of employers and students and grow productivity in the workforce. They are constructed to facilitate progression for learners within careers and through educational levels. They open up opportunity for the widest possible range of individuals and embed aspiration in the fabric of the wider education system.

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There is still some distance to travel to achieve full systemic coherence of technical education and make this widely understood. Working in partnership to develop a joined-up offer is essential to its success.

Our pioneering technical education reforms have yielded a foundation that can rival the best in the world. We can do more to ensure that its principles and configuration are understood, and that they play out in clear connections between technical qualifications and apprenticeships. The

Institute is uniquely well-placed to emphasise the value of employers' role in its formation. But we must also work across the landscape to secure its coherence as it evolves.

We also know that authoritative information and clear guidance remain elusive for many users of the system. Understanding of how that system works, and the opportunities it provides, is vital for growing its prestige. It is also a precondition for improving quality in all areas.

By 2024 we aim to evolve a technical education offer that is well-understood by users, available to all who can benefit, and supports career-led learning by:

We plan to do the following to achieve this:

Publishing clear information

- Improve the transparency of our outputs, decisions and communications, and better signpost the system-level information needed by employers, training providers, apprentices and students.

Increasing the functionality of occupational maps for all types of users, across the whole system

- Extend the utility of occupational standards as the foundation for all apprenticeships and technical qualifications, including to show the relationships between them, their distinctive purposes, and clear progression pathways.
- Expand the accessibility and functionality of occupational maps, in recognition of their use to employers, learners, careers advisors, awarding organisations, educators and others.

Responding sensibly to calls for flexibility and new qualifications, ensuring these link to offers in the wider system

- Play a central role in delivering the government's ambitions for lifelong learning, the alignment of qualifications to employer-specified standards, and the development of programmes that enable transition into apprenticeships and technical qualifications, as laid out in the Skills for Jobs white paper.
- Ensure that apprenticeships and technical qualifications are sufficiently adaptable to enable the widest possible uptake and utility, for instance to deliver regional and social agendas.
- Support the Skills & Post-16 Education Bill into law. If approved, this will grant new functions to the Institute, including the responsibility for approving post-16 qualifications, our continued journey on meeting the needs of employers and learners, and our role in the oversight of technical education, including on the long term assurance of the quality of our products. After royal assent, we will begin to perform our new functions.

SECURING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Adapting and evolving to ensure that the expertise of employers and our people make a real difference

Our system of technical education has come a long way in raising the status and value of technical education across the full occupational landscape. Confidence in the quality and value of apprenticeships and technical qualifications is growing. But this remains a work in progress. A commitment to continual improvement is vital to ensure the system and our own organisation listen, learn and evolve. They must rise to the challenge of emerging opportunities for improvement.

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Quality really matters to all users and stakeholders in the technical education landscape. It protects learners' investment of time and energy in worthwhile education. It assures that employers and our economy are equipped with the skilled workers we need to compete. It endows educators with the right tools to evolve world-class technical education provision that changes lives.

We're still part-way through delivering pioneering reforms intended to recalibrate standards of quality in a renewed system. The signs are encouraging, but there is still a lot to do. We are

also going to adopt an end-to-end partnership approach to assurance and oversight, particular in technical qualifications. We will commit to learning from what is working, and where improvements may be needed.

Beyond continuing to develop, approve and monitor top-quality apprenticeships and technical qualifications, we plan to advocate for wider quality in the system. This requires a focus on continuous improvement so we can provide the best possible service to our stakeholders and advocate for the right evolutions of the system.

By 2024 we aim to implement a strengthened, joined-up, end-to-end quality system that serves and articulates employers' quality aspirations by:

We plan to do the following to achieve this:

Advocating for a collaborative end-to-end quality chain in technical education via a long term assurance model that supports the delivery of improved quality by all

- Develop a long-term assurance model that assures the quality of development, implementation and impact for technical qualifications and apprenticeships, and deploy it in partnership with regulators and other stakeholders.

Articulating and promoting standards of quality that enable self-regulation across and between delivery partners

- Advocate for a continuous improvement philosophy that enables our delivery partners to self-regulate and drive up quality in the system.
- Deliver an employer directory to secure employers' voice in the external quality assurance of assessments.

By 2024 we aim to refresh and evolve our own operations by:

We plan to do the following to achieve this:

Refining the Institute's operational structures

- Reorganise the Institute's operational functions, enabling greater authoritative influence, informed policy development, improved stakeholder relationships, and in a route-facing structure that allows Institute staff to understand better, advocate for, and meet employers' needs.

Continually improving and refining plans, procedures and policies that put all of our customers' needs first

- Devise and adopt a user-centric ethos to ensure operational processes take account of customer experience, make effective use of digital solutions, deliver improved transparency of decision-making, and secure value for money.

Ensuring the Institute is a great place to work

- Prioritise the wellbeing and development of our people, increasing the benefits of diversity and inclusion to our organisation, including supporting the reforms through T Level placements and the appointment of apprentices.
- Attract and retain talent by investing in the skills and development of our people.