

**faster
&
better**



**Transforming the development of
quality apprenticeship standards**

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“...to improve access to high quality apprenticeships and technical education in order to transform the skills landscape.”

Introduction

Antony Jenkins



The coming year will see a number of significant milestones in the development of the Institute for Apprenticeships.

Not only will we mark our first anniversary in April 2018, but we are embarking on an ambitious change programme. You've told us the development process for standards and the Institute's approvals processes can and needs to be quicker – and slicker. And you're right.

We recognise that we are very much at the start of a journey. We share the view of the government and many employers of the challenge ahead: the pressing need for more highly skilled people, trained effectively, to grow the economy, raise productivity, and ensure prosperity and security for individuals.

To achieve this we need to make sure that all of our interactions with employers and processes we use are fit for purpose in the new age of apprenticeships.

There will be some transitional arrangements as we implement the new systems, to allow our current trailblazer groups time to adapt. And throughout 2018 and beyond, we remain committed to a programme of continuous improvement. Our systems must be sufficiently flexible and adaptable, to ensure as many high quality apprenticeship standards can be ready for employers and apprentices to use as soon as possible.

Through the “Faster and Better” programme, we're responding to the challenge as we enter the second stage of the Institute's development, and in preparation for technical and professional education becoming part of our remit later this year.

Antony Jenkins
Chairman

Revised policy

The Institute operates according to criteria set out by the Department for Education, which underpin our arrangements for the development and approval of standards and assessment plans. We also use a number of second order criteria, which play a part in the approvals process.



We've learned that some of these have been proved a stumbling block to approving otherwise good standards, so we've decided to:

- review the criteria to make them simpler and easier to use, for both employers and the Institute
- bring forward the approval of the apprenticeship occupation to the front, so that this is decided once and for all at the start of the development process
- modify and clarify the criteria on “overlap” and on “full occupational competence for new entrants”, to enhance quality and avoid thwarting otherwise good standards
- produce guidance on occupational levels in order to bring greater clarity to assignment of levels to apprenticeships
- simplify the criteria for standards, so they are only concerned with how standards are written. In future occupations and standards will be based on a comprehensive occupational profile, based on the activities involved. This will help to derive knowledge, skills and behaviours
- simplify the criteria on assessment
- eliminate as many of the second order requirements as possible. Institute staff and employer committees will make decisions from the new criteria instead of second order rules, except where these have been retained as essential.

Though technical in some respects, these changes will mean Route Panels aren't constrained by well-intentioned policy, which unintentionally inhibits their freedom to make reasonable decisions based on their occupational expertise. The new policy will be published on the Institute's website later this year.



Qualifications

In apprenticeship standards, the apprenticeship itself serves as the qualification that accredits occupational competence, as measured by a robust, independent end-point-assessment. Where there are no additional mandatory qualifications in an apprenticeship, there will still be a need for measuring and reviewing progress towards achieving competence.

Previously the criteria permitted the inclusion of a mandatory qualification within an apprenticeship. These were applied to all qualifications equally (except for Degrees).

However, we recognise that there are different types of qualifications, which we have divided into three categories below:


- qualifications which accredit occupational competence. These qualifications duplicate end-point-assessment, add costs and may draw resources away from training
- off-the-job technical qualifications such as “day-release qualifications”. These qualifications do not duplicate end-point-assessment and add very little in costs because the training would happen anyway
- short awards such as a “Food Safety Certificate” or “Manual Handling”, usually delivered off-the-job.

Until now we have allowed all three types of qualification to be mandated within an apprenticeship standard where: it is a regulatory requirement; is required by a professional body; or it is such a must-have in the labour market that an apprentice would be disadvantaged in job applications without it – known as the “hard sift” requirement.

To this list, we are now adding one more reason why a qualification can be mandated:

- if it is an off-the-job technical qualification that does not accredit full occupational competence and would either add breadth to the apprenticeship or provide structure for the off-the-job training.

The table below sets out our position on each type of qualification we have identified in relation to the criteria for mandating qualifications in apprenticeship standards.



	1. Regulatory Requirement	2. Professional Body Requirement	3. "Hard Sift"	4. Provides greater Breadth and/or Structure for OTJ	5. Levels
Occupational Competence Qualification	✓ If the regulatory body will not recognise the apprenticeship itself ✓ Evidence required	✓ If the professional body will not recognise the apprenticeship itself ✓ Evidence required	✓ Evidence required ✓ Only with a timed action plan designed to achieve market recognition of the whole apprenticeship instead	No	The qualification must be at the same level as the apprenticeship occupation
Off-the-job Technical Qualification and short awards	✓ If the regulatory body will not recognise the apprenticeship itself ✓ Evidence required	✓ If the professional body will not recognise the apprenticeship itself ✓ Evidence required	✓ Evidence required	✓ Proposal required which shows breadth and/or structure re OTJ	The qualification does not need to be the same level as the apprenticeship occupation

Where there is no mandatory qualification for an apprenticeship standard, an employer can use one voluntarily - including Degrees - if the content aligns with the standard and the employer pays the registration and certification fees.



A note on continuous assessment: we are often asked whether it is necessary for training providers and/or employers to carry out continuous assessment during the apprenticeship where there is no qualification. This is necessary to track progress - for the apprentice, training provider and the employer - to sign-off the apprentice as ready for End-Point Assessment. This is called 'formative assessment'.

However, a defining principle of apprenticeship standards is that the only assessment that counts in determining whether an apprentice is fully competent is carried out at the end of the apprenticeship (the End-Point Assessment). Continuous assessment carried out prior to this cannot be counted towards the outcome of the apprenticeship.

Revised guidance

Our trailblazer group guidance has been updated in response to your feedback, bringing it up-to-date with the latest requirements for new apprenticeship development, and the Institute's improved processes.



We've also put the guidance online, with downloadable PDFs for those who want them.

The criteria for trailblazer groups, standards and end-point assessment plans have been simplified, to better describe the desired outcome. The revised guidance also includes some new content, for example how to decide an occupational level.

The new online format will make it easier to find what information you need relating to different aspects of developing a new apprenticeship. From the front page you will be able to easily navigate to more detailed information on different aspects of apprenticeship development, as listed below:

- Developing new apprenticeships – overview
- Forming a trailblazer group
- Developing an apprenticeship occupation proposal
- Developing an apprenticeship occupational standard
- Developing an end-point assessment plan
- Providing information to inform the funding band allocation
- Submitting the template and the approvals process
- Promoting new apprenticeships
- Resources

In addition to written guidance, each page contains links to supporting information, including new templates and video guidance. We plan to add more resources as they are developed in the coming months.

A new deal

We want to help trailblazer groups understand the journey from developing the initial proposal, through to when an apprenticeship standard is approved for delivery.



We are committed to supporting you at each stage, and the aim will be to set out commitments and expectations between the Institute and the trailblazer group. This will ensure each party is clear of what to expect from each other along the way.

Once you have decided that you would like to develop an apprenticeship standard, a Relationship Manager will contact you and provide a welcome pack.

The guide includes:

- delivery timetable and process: to enable efficient development of new apprenticeship standards, maximising the quality of the end product
- working with your Relationship Manager to outline the need for effective, considerate and collaborative working arrangements between both parties
- approvals process: to ensure the approvals process operates in a timely manner and the right information is provided at the right time
- feedback loops: to maximise feedback so that we can learn from experience.



Intuitive templates

We're introducing a new set of templates to help you develop proposals, standards and end-point assessment plans, in an easy format to help you focus on key areas.

These templates will include:

- a fixed format to ensure that we receive all the necessary information consistently from each trailblazer group
- drop-down menus where there is a finite number of possible responses
- basic guidance relating to individual information requests, and links to further information if needed
- links to best practice examples of standards and end-point assessment plans, to help illustrate the sort of information we need
- automatic prompts to ensure all relevant sections have been completed.

Some parts of the forms such as the free text boxes will necessarily require subjective responses, but with our updated guidance and the continued support of Relationship Managers we anticipate the new templates will significantly improve the development process.

The aim of the new templates is to radically reduce the need for requests for additional information, reducing the overall time from development to final approval.

Ultimately this will feed into our new, digital end-to-end process that will likely be launched later this year.

The screenshot shows a web interface titled "APPRENTICESHIP BUILDER". At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs: "RM control", "Introduction", "This submission", "Basic information" (which is highlighted with a green bar), "Occupational profile", "Duties", and "Submit". Below the navigation bar, the section is titled "STANDARD: BASIC INFORMATION". It contains three main input areas: 1. "Standard Reference Number:" followed by a text box and a small italicized note: "Your Relationship Manager can provide you with your reference number". 2. "Title of Occupation:" followed by a text box and a small italicized note: "Insert occupation title only (e.g. Arborist, Baker, Dental Nurse, Teacher...)". 3. "Route" followed by a text box and a small italicized note: "placeholder for link to guidance on routes in How to Guide".

Intensive workshops

You've told us you'd like to see a more streamlined standards development process, so the Institute has been piloting different approaches, including a more intensive option for those trailblazers wanting to move swiftly, with access to support throughout.


Our two-day workshops will enable trailblazers to complete – or nearly complete – the writing of standards or end-point assessment plan submissions in just two days, reducing the average duration of the development process by about a third. Standards will be available for use as quickly as possible.

At the end of the workshops (subject to any amendments that may be made following external consultations), groups should have a complete or nearly-complete submission that has been agreed by the Institute as compliant, and which is ready to go before the Route Panel. We'll publish dates and venues for upcoming workshops on our website.

Trailblazer groups will have some preparatory work to complete for each type of workshop, but the vast majority of the development work can then be carried out in intensive facilitated workshops, led by Relationship Managers.

The two-day events will begin with plenary sessions to outline apprenticeship policy content and context, so trailblazers are in the strongest position to combine their occupational expertise with the necessary understanding of the policy constraints of the apprenticeship system. Some exercises and workshops to develop the key skills required will also be offered before work begins on the trailblazer's own submission.

Relationship Managers will then lead groups through the process of completing the submissions forms, and opportunities will be taken to check progress and compliance with staff from the Approvals and Assessment teams.





New funding process

Last April the Institute took responsibility for advising government on the funding band for each apprenticeship standard.

Our existing process provides an 'indicative' funding band following approval of the apprenticeship standard, and a final funding band recommendation following approval of the assessment plan.


Feedback from trailblazer groups tells us that the current process for allocating funding bands doesn't work well, and needs to change. You've told us that the process is too slow, leading to delays and frustration, and that we're asking for detailed costing information too early in the process.

The changes we're making will mean:

- trailblazer groups will get an initial funding band allocation when their proposal is approved, which is much earlier on in the process than currently
- funding evidence forms will only have to be provided once, and we have redesigned our forms to make them easier to use
- funding processes will be faster as we join up with the approval of proposals, standards and assessment plans to improve customer service.

In most cases this will mean we'll tell trailblazer groups their initial funding band allocation when their proposal is approved, and their final funding band recommendation at the same time as their assessment plan is approved.

We plan to introduce these changes as soon as possible. We'll write to all existing trailblazer groups to tell them when the changes will happen, and what it means for them. We'll also put in place transitional arrangements for those proposals, standards and assessment plans which are already part-way through the approvals process.



Reviews process

A core, statutory responsibility of the Institute is to regularly review the 15 occupational routes and the individual standards within them, to ensure apprenticeship and technical education provision is high-quality, and that employer demand is being met.



The Institute will begin this programme of reviews later in 2018. These reviews will take a strategic view across each route considering whether the mix of occupations reflects the labour market, and the needs of employers, apprentices and the economy.

Each review will also look at individual standards and assessment plans to determine how they relate to others in the route, and whether they underpin high-quality apprenticeships.

The process will draw on a range of data monitoring and consultation with employers, including trailblazer groups, and other stakeholders through surveys, meetings and roundtables. The reviews will be overseen by the relevant route panel and the Institute's Board.

Where there is a pressing requirement for an evaluation, the Institute may undertake an exceptional review.

The Institute will release a schedule of reviews and further details shortly. Current standards will continue beyond any expiry date until a review has taken place.

Engagement events

We want to work with you using a combination of face-to-face contact and digital engagement, to meet the needs of both large and small employers.

So, we're planning a number of trailblazer events throughout 2018 – webinars, an annual seminar, workshops and increased use of social media.

Webinars for new trailblazers will cover each of the three stages in the standards approval process, to take place during each cycle of submissions. These can be supported through additional social media channels such as Facebook, Periscope and Twitter.

An inaugural trailblazer seminar is planned for this Summer.

We're also planning pilot workshops, to complement the cycle of webinars. The proposal is for the first workshop to be held this Spring.



Implementation timeline

Date	Activity	Audience
February	Communications: Stakeholder Faster & Better briefing event	Stakeholder Reference Panel/Quality Alliance/other stakeholders
	Communications: Membership event with Faster & Better briefing	Route Panels
	Implementation: 2018 Cycle 2 Submissions Deadline <u>Outgoing forms (alongside a pilot for some TBs using the new forms); new policy applied</u>	Trailblazers/IfA
April	Implementation: 2018 Cycle 3 Submissions Deadline <u>New forms/policy only</u>	Trailblazers/IfA