Proposal to develop an apprenticeship standard
L3: Working dog specialist

Title of occupation
Working dog specialist

UOS reference number
ST1298_V0.0

Core and options
No

Level of occupation
Level 3

Route
Agriculture, environmental and animal care

Typical duration of apprenticeship
17 months

Target date for approval
No target date

Resubmission
No

Occupational profile

This occupation is found in...
all organisations employing specialist working dogs within complex settings.

Working Dog Specialists (WDS) operate and manage specialist working dog teams in complex environments alongside other departments or agencies. They can handle specialist working dogs themselves but will very often be managing, developing, and supporting basic dog handlers to ensure that they are operating safely and effectively.

Specialist working dogs may need to be accredited to operate within a multi-agency setting. They may be combined with other resources to deliver a coherent, combined effect. WDSs are typically employed by Defence, Police, Border Force, Department for Transport, Prison Service, private security companies, or de-mining charities. The setting in which they operate might be austere and isolated with minimal support (e.g. military operations, search and rescue, disaster relief). Alternatively, it could be congested and confused (e.g. crowds, busy transport hubs). WDSs can be employed, in rural or urban settings, in tropical or arctic conditions, and anything in between. Employers can range in size and include government departments, private companies, or charities. WDSs can be employed across a range of settings. For example, they could use detection dogs to find explosives or detect other prohibited substances including narcotics or electronic devices. In other settings, they might use tracker dogs as part of a combined force to find and detain people (including those with hostile intent). In the charitable sector, they may be involved in de-mining or helping to find buried individuals following natural or man-made emergencies. In the search and rescue sector, a WDS will combine with other resources to find and rescue people in trouble.

The broad purpose of the occupation is...
to manage specialist working dogs effectively to support business objectives when operating in complex and/or high pressure environments or situations. The WDS must be aware of the constraints and limitations of their dog in all of the settings outlined above. Typically, the specialist dog may be deployed on general purpose, passive or active detection activities or tracking of individuals. The WDS will carry out dynamic risk assessments of complex environments in order to minimise risk to the dog and any individuals present during operations. They work closely with other departments or agencies to scope the operation and plan the most effective integration of the specialist working dog into the operation. They will deploy the specialist working dog in the most effective way necessary for the given circumstances and take necessary steps to preserve environmental or evidential integrity. The WDS may be involved in all aspects of managing specialist dogs from sourcing and handover of a dog through to the management of health and welfare, planning and evaluating feeding regimes, maintaining the dogs’ physical condition through to deployment and supporting evaluation of performance through to dog retirement. The WDS will maintain and use a range of dog records and will have responsibility for validating licensing arrangements and identifying continuation training requirements.

In their daily work, an employee in this occupation interacts with...
a wide range of stakeholders and depends on the sector they are operating in. This may include: Task Commanders such as the commander of a military, police, customs, prison service task group; the management team of a conference facility, a high-profile venue or a freight hub (including land, aviation and maritime); operational partners ‘on the ground’ that operate alongside the specialist working dogs, such as fire-arms teams, forensic experts, customs officials, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operators and medical teams; operational enablers such as transport operators for helicopter search and rescue or the military; inspectors who will validate and assure the accuracy and effectiveness of the dog and the control systems in place to manage it; dog breeders and trainers to replace or provide expert training of dogs; science support staff to enable validation of capability and the development of training aids when dogs are no longer meeting operational requirements and require specialist training; suppliers of food, equipment, training aids, kennels; veterinary care providers such as veterinary surgeons, physiotherapists, groomers; infrastructure management (to repair and maintain kennelling); cleaners and support staff; chains of command and management who may not have any specialist working dog expertise.

An employee in this occupation will be responsible for...
managing and operating specialist working dogs independently of other dog-related expertise for extended periods and reliably identifying when specialist working dogs are operating correctly. WDSs also support the assurance of dog capability, the failure of which could lead to injury and loss of life to self, the dog and others.

The WDS has a responsibility to the overall commander and other agencies involved in an operation to confirm how dogs will/are being used, will/are complementing other capabilities...
and are/have performed. They will communicate information that has been obtained from the action of the specialist dog to other agencies to enable them to act on that information. They support the sourcing/retiring, developing and licensing of dog teams as well as managing the health and wellbeing of multiple dog teams. They have knowledge of the latest science of how dogs behave and scent and how to use this knowledge to employ and operate dogs effectively. They will manage training aids, equipment and resources safely to develop and maintain the performance of dog teams.

They will maintain specialist working dog teams of different classifications at the required operational standard and retain evidence that demonstrates the assured status of the specialist dog. The WDS ensures that dogs under their charge are operated and cared for in compliance with all animal legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act, Dangerous Dogs Act and transport legislation. They select the safe and appropriate approach to deliver an operational task. This includes; undertaking suitable planning and reconnaissance; ensuring specialist working dog constraints and limitations are understood by all stakeholders; operating reliably within set constraints such as time, limits of exploitation, legislation; manage all resources relating to working dogs under their charge appropriately, such as food, medication, training aids (including explosives, schedule drugs and prohibited items), kennelling, vehicles, protective equipment, canine ancillaries and personal weapons. Whilst a WDS will provide continuation training to the dog, it would be the animal trainer that carries out initial dog training and any complex behaviour training.

Typical entry point to the apprenticeship
Employers will set their own entry requirements, but these may include:
- A Level 2 qualification, including functional skills in maths and English.
- Animal Care and Welfare (Service Dog Handler) Level 2 Standard.

Transferability
The Institute expects that being competent in the duties you have listed in this proposal will mean that an individual will be able to undertake the occupation in all relevant types of employer. Please outline the steps you have taken to ensure that this will be the case.

A wide-ranging trailblazer group has been formed and is representative of all potential employers. Employers range in size from micro through to large businesses. They cover private security, transport, security and counter-terrorism, medical, policing, justice and defence and security. Non-employer members include training providers, a pet charity and an endpoint assessment organisation.

Stand-alone occupation
Please confirm that the proposed apprenticeship relates to a stand-alone occupation and explain how it will fit in with any associated apprenticeship standards.

The working dog specialist (WDS) operates and manages specialist working dog teams in complex environments alongside other departments or agencies. They can handle specialist working dog capability themselves but will very often be managing, developing and supporting basic dog handlers to ensure that they are being employed safely and effectively. WDS has responsibility for sourcing/retiring, developing and licensing dog teams as well as managing the health and wellbeing of multiple dog teams. They have knowledge of the science of how dogs behave and scent and how to use this knowledge to employ and operate dogs effectively. They manage training aids, equipment and resources safely to develop and maintain the performance of dog teams. They understand how specialist working dog teams must be accredited and assured and they are able to devise and implement continuation training plans to improve the performance of the dog teams under the charge. They have wide-ranging understanding of how to deploy dogs effectively across a range of operations. This may require them to be forensically aware and be able to manage dog teams within high-threat or austere environments.

This is substantially different to the dog handler option in the Animal Care and Welfare Apprenticeship Level 2. That occupation involves looking after the routine day to day husbandry and care of domestic and/or wild animals under supervision in a limited number of settings. The existing Level 2 standard provides the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to undertake basic dog handler tasks such as routine, low threat simple settings. For example, this might be the use of a security dog within the perimeter of a controlled environment or a detection dog in a low risk setting. Basic Dog Handlers have knowledge, skills and behaviours that tend to be limited to a single dog. They do not have a broader understanding of how specialist working dogs fit into a wider, multi-agency setting or how to develop and develop and prepare specialist working dog teams for licensing and complex operations. This apprenticeship would be a suitable first step for individuals aspiring to become a WDS but the knowledge skills and behaviours do not meet the standards required for a WDS and would not enable individuals to safely and effectively employ specialist working dogs in complex, multi-agency or high-threat settings.

The WDS Standard is also substantially different to the Animal Trainer Level 4, which is focused toward training animals to perform complex tasks. The Animal Trainer Standard includes planning, managing, delivering and reviewing the training of animals using positive, reward-based training methods. Animal Trainers have a high level of understanding of behavioural science, which they use to inform their approach to animal training. This may involve training animals to undertake specific tasks or more general training. Animal trainers would often work with animals that have no training at all and would efficiently and humanely develop those animals to the level of competence necessary to undertake the tasks required of them. Where dog performance seriously degrades or dogs become dangerous, the animal trainer has the underpinning behavioural science knowledge and techniques to break what is often a negative cycle to restore the dog to efficiency. The working dog specialist has neither the knowledge or skills to perform this function humanely or safely. Dog trainers also have the knowledge and skills to devise fitness and conditioning programmes for dogs and to coach and mentor dog handlers in how to implement such programmes. WDS would seek the expertise of Animal Trainers to support the development and delivery of specialist working dog capability.

Whilst the WDS must evaluate dog performance, and identify and deliver continuation training, they receive a trained dog for use in operations and their primary purpose is not one of training. The animal trainer offers a progression opportunity for WDS. That standard is under review and is being updated. The Chair of both the animal trainer and specialist dog
Proposal to develop an apprenticeship standard
L3: Working dog specialist (continued)

handler is the same person and the group commits to ensuring that the standards remain distinct throughout development/ updating.
Whilst the specialist dog handler occupation is not currently shown on the occupational map, there are 3 distinct occupations recognised by employers.

These are:

• Basic Dog Handler
• Working dog specialist
• Animal trainer

As an example, the MOD employs individuals within each of these three occupations and individuals must train and be qualified into each position. Each occupation builds on the previous and ensures career progression. In the MOD, it takes 18 months to 2 years to achieve level 2. The occupation of a working dog specialist (known as class 1 dog handler) takes at least 2 more years to attain. On completion of class 1, individuals with the required aptitude and academic potential are selected to follow a dog trainer route which takes at least 2 further years to attain.

Historically, those qualifying as WDS were enrolled on the Animal Care (Service Dog Handler) Level 3 framework (after completing the Level 2 framework). There is no current provision allowing progression to the WDS occupation. Employers currently run apprenticeships like training to enable progression, but the apprenticeship doesn't exist. Employers are funding this themselves using existing level 3 qualifications which are not agreed standards set by employers. At a national level, this undermines confidence in the quality of the capability provided by many of those employing working dogs.

As there is no national standard for a WDS, the authorities may be reluctant to employ private security dog handlers for high risk/threat or high-profile settings. This standard has the potential to have wide ranging impact on resource availability nationally.

The following is a list of additional competencies required by a WDS when compared to the Animal Trainer.

• Use the full range of equipment available to improve dog performance and understand the science behind them.
• Recognise the health needs of different breeds, roles and working environments.
• Implement, monitor and evaluate health plans.
• Source, handover and retire specialist dogs

The following is a list of additional competencies required by a WDS when compared to the Animal Trainer.

• Apply knowledge of complex behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods to improve performance.
• Apply knowledge of how health, welfare, fitness and age affect learning and performance to devise appropriate training.
• Evaluate information sources critically to inform the development of training plans.
• Apply and guide research to develop and deliver welfare and training change initiatives that enhance existing and introduce new canine capabilities.
• Collect, analyse and present data to develop and improve training plans.
• Collect, analyse and present research from diverse sources to develop and improve training pathways.
• Prepare written training plans and reports.
• Formulate and implement written training change initiatives.
• Devise fitness and strengthening programmes.
• Develop corrective training plans that can be implemented by others, including those with less experience.
• Manage corrective training sessions.
• Adapt corrective training plans promptly where animals are not responding.
• Coach and mentor less experienced personnel in the implementation of corrective training programmes.
• Develop and adapt training plans to train animals to Service Entry standard.
• Implement initial training plans and adjust where animals are not responding to ensure progress toward Service Entry standard.
• Ensure enhanced training is conducted in accordance with assurance procedures.
• Train an animal with behavioural challenges for retirement.
• Identify a suitable home to which an animal can be retired.
• Assure training practices.
• Assure handler and specialist dog handler training.
• Contribute to the audit and inspection regime conducted by assurance bodies.

Progression routes
ST0398: L4: Animal trainer

Typical job titles
'Conservation dog seeker'
'Explosives detection dog handler'
'Kennel manager'
'Specialist dog handler'
Proposal to develop an apprenticeship standard
L3: Working dog specialist (continued)

‘Working dog manager’

Does professional recognition exist for the occupation...
No
Duties

Duty

Manage working dog health and welfare needs taking account of the role and working environment.

Apply, maintain, and source specialist working dog training aids, working dog equipment, PPE, and other resources to deliver the operational effectiveness of specialist dog(s).

Maintain and use working dog information and records to inform the development of the working dog.

Establish the scope of the operation and liaise and communicate working dog capabilities to stakeholders.

Evaluate operational requirements and plan the effective use of the specialist dog to support business objectives.

Deploy and operate dogs effectively in order to contribute to operational objectives in line with employer policies and procedures.

Plan, conduct, and record continuation training to maintain the efficiency of the specialist dog(s) and to improve performance.

Prepare for and undertake licensing/ validation of the specialist dog(s).

Support the sourcing, handover, and retirement of working dogs from service in line with employer policies and procedures and legislation.

Support, coach, and mentor dog handler(s) to prepare and manage their dogs for operations, undertake operational planning and to operate their dog(s).

Support and collaborate with other teams or agencies to complement operations and augment specialist dog(s) effectively into wider operations.

Promote, monitor, and maintain health, safety, and security within a specialist working dog establishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duty</th>
<th>OTJ training (days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage working dog health and welfare needs taking account of the role and working environment.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply, maintain, and source specialist working dog training aids, working dog equipment, PPE, and other resources to deliver the operational effectiveness of specialist dog(s).</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain and use working dog information and records to inform the development of the working dog.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish the scope of the operation and liaise and communicate working dog capabilities to stakeholders.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate operational requirements and plan the effective use of the specialist dog to support business objectives.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deploy and operate dogs effectively in order to contribute to operational objectives in line with employer policies and procedures.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan, conduct, and record continuation training to maintain the efficiency of the specialist dog(s) and to improve performance.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for and undertake licensing/ validation of the specialist dog(s).</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the sourcing, handover, and retirement of working dogs from service in line with employer policies and procedures and legislation.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support, coach, and mentor dog handler(s) to prepare and manage their dogs for operations, undertake operational planning and to operate their dog(s).</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and collaborate with other teams or agencies to complement operations and augment specialist dog(s) effectively into wider operations.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote, monitor, and maintain health, safety, and security within a specialist working dog establishment.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>