

GUIDE TO APPRENTICESHIPS



WHY WESTMINSTER?

The first polytechnic in London, and one of the first in the UK, the University of Westminster was established over 180 years ago to educate the city's working people.

Today, we remain as committed as ever to shaping the future of professional life; from access to specialist facilities and our talented pool of students, to bespoke training and professional development, research and consultancy. Our world-leading academic experts support companies of all sizes, from start-ups to those more well established.

The Government's industry-designed apprenticeships scheme brings together the best of higher and vocational education, something we've been doing at the University for almost two centuries. More recently as an apprenticeship provider, we've already worked with over 300 employers to train their staff through our apprenticeship programmes.

At our most recent inspection, Ofsted, which evaluates quality of education, learner welfare and leadership, awarded Westminster's degree apprenticeships with a rating of Good in all areas and commended the University for its strong leadership and clear vision for continuous improvement. The inspectors graded Westminster's apprenticeships on five key aspects: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, and safeguarding.

The quality of education on offer at Westminster was recognised for providing learners with an engaging curriculum and a supportive learning environment, equipping them with the skills needed for success in the workplace and beyond. Along with this, Ofsted found that the University places a strong emphasis on learner well-being, ensuring that support services are accessible and effective in promoting mental health, inclusion, social mobility and learner engagement.

The Ofsted inspection also highlighted the University's work on employability, with initiatives in place to ensure that learners are well-prepared for their future careers. At Westminster learners benefit from a wide range of opportunities to improve their careers and develop professionally, including workshops, 1-2-1 advice and international experience.

OUR VALUES

Right from the start, Westminster has had a pioneering spirit. As a progressive university, we look forward, anticipate what's changing, embracing the new with energy and imagination, just as we have with apprenticeships.

The University is known for the many ways in which we help our 19,000 students to realise their full potential, regardless of background. Our teaching is practical, relevant and contemporary, while our research is driven to make an impact in the world.



THE APPRENTICESHIP

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships combine paid work, bespoke Off-The-Job training and further / higher education. They're essentially a job where the apprentice works for you but spends at least 6 hours of their weekly working hours in study or training with a recognised apprenticeship training provider.

They are a cost effective way for you to upskill your workforce, giving your employees the chance to gain practical experience and a nationally recognised qualification debt-free. Research has proven that the opportunity of an additional qualification will not only help you as an employer to attract new talent, but also keep existing staff motivated and committed for the long-term, improving employee retention.

Name	Level	Equivalent Education Level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Apprenticeships are offered at different levels of learning; from the equivalent of qualifications achieved by a Year 11 school-leaver to either an undergraduate (or first) degree – a Bachelor of the Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) depending on the subject. The highest award we currently offer is a Level 6 BSc. Hons. undergraduate degree.

The portfolio of apprenticeships reflects the undergraduate provision taught here at the University. We are one of the leading providers of construction and healthcare related apprenticeship programmes in the country.

WHY APPRENTICESHIPS?

In 2016, the Independent Panel on Technical Education led by Lord Sainsbury and a number of industry leaders undertook a complete review of apprenticeships. It concluded that the old apprenticeships were simply not fit for purpose – they weren't giving employers a workforce with the skills they needed, with little room to tailor the programme for the employers themselves.

"THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER HAS QUICKLY BECOME A POPULAR AND INTEGRAL PART OF OUR RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE BIOMEDICAL SCIENTISTS WITHIN OUR WORKFORCE"

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THE DOCTORS LABORATORY

Industry panels were brought in to rewrite the specifications for each apprenticeship standard. From 2017, a simplified process (two sides of A4) is used to identify the core Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) required to succeed in the relevant profession. This gives huge flexibility to tailor the course to your individual organisation and for each apprentice, beginning with an Initial Assessment which determines the applicant's suitability for the programme.

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD?

Apprenticeships are aligned to a profession-based standard which is referred to as an 'apprenticeship standard'. The new standards were introduced as part of the Government's major apprenticeship reforms and are regularly reviewed in partnership with employers.

Apprenticeship standards are designed by groups of employers known as 'trailblazer groups' to meet skill shortages in their sectors, linked to an occupational profile. The academic element of the apprenticeship programme is mapped to the apprenticeship standard. What this means is that you can be confident that trainees will learn the new Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) they need to fulfil the relevant occupation, as academic study needs to be backed up by exposure to the KSBs in the workplace throughout the apprenticeship, including outside of university term time.

The changes represent an overall shift from assessing to learning. The standards don't include continual assessment – instead each apprentice must take an End Point Assessment (EPA) to pass their qualification, which assesses their occupational competency against the KSBs.

HOW DO APPRENTICESHIPS WORK?

Apprenticeships are a collaborative system of training agreed by you, your apprentice and training provider to prepare a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession via a combination of On- and Off-The-Job training.

WHO CAN BE AN APPRENTICE?

Apprentices must be over the age of 16 and cannot be in full-time education or any other education that involves drawing funds from the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Our apprenticeships are only available to those employed as part of an agreed apprenticeship scheme in a related role i.e. they must be earning at least the relevant minimum wage rate and meet the academic entry requirements. We also ensure that the apprenticeship is suitable through carrying out an Initial Assessment that takes into account prior learning and employment.

HOW LONG DO APPRENTICESHIPS LAST?

Apprenticeships take between eight months and five years to complete depending on the level of the apprenticeship, the industry sector and the apprentice's prior skills and experience. All of the apprenticeships we currently offer take between two and five years to complete.

Name	Level	Equivalent Education Level	Duration
Higher	4	Certificate in Higher Education (CertHE)	2 years
	6	Bachelor's Degree	3-5 years

WHAT DOES THE APPRENTICE DO?

The apprentice will work alongside an experienced employee (a mentor) to learn specific skills, receiving work- and classroom-based training towards a recognised qualification. Each apprentice receives their own learning plan from the University which clearly sets out the expectations placed on them and you as their employer.

As part of the Apprenticeship Agreement, apprentices are entitled to spend 6 hours a week of their working time on Off-The-Job training. During term-time, they will attend University one day a week. Their work-based training should take place all year round. Apprentices record all Off-The-Job training on our online apprenticeship platform until they reach 'Gateway'; the point at which they are deemed ready for the End Point Assessment (EPA), the final element of the apprenticeship.

WHAT IS OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING?

Each apprenticeship has a published, unique minimum Off-The-Job training hours requirement. Off-The-Job training must make up at least 6 hours of the apprentice's normal weekly working hours (paid hours excluding overtime) over the planned duration of the apprenticeship. This does not include progress reviews and on-programme assessment, but it can include practical training, for example, shadowing, mentoring or industry visits.

As well as campus-based learning at the University Off-The-Job training is also delivered in the workplace, provided it is directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard and involves learning new knowledge, skills and behaviours. This gives employers an opportunity to identify skills or knowledge gaps and then tailor the apprentice's learning accordingly.

WHAT IS GATEWAY?

Gateway takes place before an End Point Assessment (EPA) can start. The employer (mentor) and training provider will review their apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviours to see if they have met the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship set out in the apprenticeship standard, and are ready to take the assessment.

WHAT IS THE END POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)?

The End Point Assessment (EPA) is the final stage of an apprenticeship. It is an impartial assessment of whether your apprentice has developed the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard. As well as successfully completing the EPA, your apprentice may need to complete several additional requirements before completing the apprenticeship.

End Point Assessments are designed by employers in the sector and are conducted by independent bodies known as End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs). Once all elements of the apprenticeship are completed, the apprentice will receive their apprenticeship certificate.

"THE BEST PART OF BEING AN APPRENTICE IS THAT I'M ALREADY IN EMPLOYMENT. I'M MEETING PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE SAME SITUATION AS ME AND NO JOB INTERVIEWS WHEN I GRADUATE!"

BRONWEN SEVEL, APPRENTICE



WHAT WILL AN APPRENTICESHIP COST MY ORGANISATION?

To increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships, the Government changed the funding structure for apprentices in England in 2017 to make it more favourable to employers.

All employers must pay the apprentice's salary, at least the relevant minimum wage rate. The rest of your contribution towards the cost of the apprenticeship training depends on whether you qualify for the Growth and Skills Levy.

Our apprenticeships team will guide through the funding process and support you to maximise the Government's Growth and Skills Levy. The National Apprenticeship Service also provides support to levy paying employers to help use apprenticeships to support their businesses. It can be contacted on **08000 150 600**.

WHAT IS THE GROWTH AND SKILLS LEVY?

In 2017, the Government introduced an apprenticeship levy on larger employers in both the public and private sectors to fund apprenticeships. In 2025, the Apprenticeship Levy evolved into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy.

If your organisation's wage bill is over £3 million, your organisation will pay the levy of 0.5%, some or all of which can be used to cover the tuition costs of any apprentices.

Administered by the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS), the levy is collected from the PAYE system and payments are held in your Digital Account. To reclaim this money, you must use it specifically for Government approved apprenticeship programmes.

Each month's fund must be used within 12 months, though you can choose to transfer up to 50% of your available levy funds to other employers, for instance those within your supply chains.

WHAT IF YOUR ORGANISATION ISN'T A LEVY PAYER?

If your organisation's wage bill falls below the £3 million threshold, you will not pay the levy but will still be eligible to receive a 95% contribution towards training costs through the Government's co-investment model. Under this arrangement, you contribute 5% of the tuition fees directly to the training provider, and the Government funds the remaining 95%.

However, organisations that do not pay the levy are eligible for 100% Government funding if the apprentice meets certain criteria – including where the apprentice is under 25 years old at the start of the apprenticeship. We can offer guidance to ensure you receive the maximum support available.

WHAT ISN'T COVERED BY THE LEVY?

The levy fund cannot be spent on anything that isn't apprenticeship-based. Nor can it be used to cover wages, travel costs, optional field trips, repeat learning (e.g. module retakes), repeat assessment (EPA), work placements or setting up your own internal apprenticeship system. This is partly to prevent misuse of funds, but also to ensure that all apprenticeship courses associated with the levy fund adhere to consistent standards and a particular level of quality.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE EMPLOYER?

When you agree to employ an apprentice there are three contracts you will have to sign: an Apprenticeship Agreement, a Training Plan and a Contract for Services. These are legally binding documents that outline what you can expect from your apprentice and what they in turn expect from you. They are signed to ensure all parties fulfil their obligations.

APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENT

You must sign an Apprenticeship agreement with your apprentice.

This gives details of:

- the skill, trade or occupation the apprentice is being trained for;
- the name of the apprenticeship they're working towards;
- the start and end dates for the apprenticeship; and
- the amount of training you'll give them.

As indicated earlier in 'How do apprenticeships work?', you must provide the apprentice with the opportunity to spend 6 hours of their contracted working weekly hours to complete their Off-The-Job training, which may include completing coursework or assignments, as well as one day a week on campus during term-time.

TRAINING PLAN

You must also sign a Training Plan with your apprentice and the training provider, in this case, the University. The University's Training Plan includes:

- the planned content and schedule for training;
- what is expected and offered by the employer, the University and the apprentice; and
- how to resolve queries or complaints.

You will need to ensure the apprentice has access to the relevant training and practical experience to complete Gateway requirements and any other mandatory activities for the EPA. This includes assigning additional mentors/supervisors to the apprentice, if required and providing evidence of completed training activities.

WORKPLACE MENTOR

For each apprentice, you must assign a workplace mentor who is responsible for providing the internal support an apprentice needs to engage with the programme. The mentor will be required to attend mandatory progress review meetings on a regular basis throughout the duration of the apprenticeship.

The mentor can be a line manager or any other suitable individual who is committed to encouraging an apprentice's development, however the mentor must be an industry expert familiar with the apprenticeship standard. They act as a guide, providing the apprentice with advice on completing their apprenticeship, as well as future career options and progress. They must ensure that any work-based elements of the apprenticeship are completed on time and also sign off internal training once completed.



WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REGULATION OF APPRENTICESHIPS?

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE)

The DfE is responsible for ensuring public funding for the delivery of apprenticeships is appropriately spent. They check that funding is spent on training that fits the apprenticeship model, fulfils learner needs and meets quality regulations, and that providers aren't claiming funding for training they're not actually delivering. The DfE uses different auditing methods to monitor providers throughout the year – from remote desktop reviews to full five-day on-site assurance reviews.

OFSTED

From April 2021, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) took over the responsibility for quality assurance in degree apprenticeships from the Office for Students. This means that Ofsted will now inspect all universities that offer apprenticeships at any level to ensure they are meeting the needs of employers and apprentices. As part of the inspection, they also speak to apprentices and their employers about their experience.

Find out more at www.gov.uk/ofsted



APPLYING FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP

At the University of Westminster, we offer a comprehensive range of apprenticeships at undergraduate level in construction, surveying and healthcare, some of which lead to a professionally accredited qualification. Our apprenticeships are designed to fulfil your workforce needs whilst providing exciting career development opportunities for your apprentices.

STEP 1

Arrange a call with one of our Business Development Managers to discuss your training needs, suitable apprenticeships and the responsibilities of an employer whilst your apprentice is on programme.

STEP 2

Provide us with the details we need about your organisation and your apprentice(s) so that we can perform our eligibility checks. We'll ask you to complete Employer Information Request (EIR) forms so that you can provide this information and we will ask you to submit the apprentice's job description, employment contract and a copy of your current employer liability insurance certificate.

STEP 3

The University will review the EIR forms and confirm if the application can progress. If so, the apprentice will submit an application and their academic qualifications will be checked against the criteria advertised on westminster.ac.uk. Apprentices will be rejected or issued a conditional offer. Conditions to include meeting DfE funding eligibility and academic entry requirements.

STEP 4

The apprentice will be invited to Aptem (online apprenticeships platform) to continue their application by completing the Extended ILR form, a Skills Radar and an Initial Assessment in English and Maths. The funding eligibility and duration of the apprenticeship, along with the fees, will be determined based on the outcome of the Assessment in Aptem. The employer and the apprentice will be asked to review and sign the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form in Aptem. A meeting may be necessary to confirm any additional requirements.

STEP 5

Apprentice is made an unconditional offer if the academic and DfE funding eligibility requirements are met. Once the apprentice accepts the offer, the University will issue the Training Plan, Apprenticeship Agreement and the Training Agreement. All documents must be fully signed before the apprenticeship starts in September.

STEP 6

All funding for the apprenticeship is managed through the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account so if you haven't done so already, you will need to create a DAS account. We can provide support and guidance for this, if required. We'll reserve funding for your apprentice(s) once they've secured their place on the apprenticeship.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of apprenticeships, our dedicated apprenticeships team is here to help. Get in touch by emailing us: enquiries.apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk or telephoning +44 (0) 207 911 5027



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

CAN A NON-LEVY PAYING ORGANISATION CLAIM 100% FUNDING?

Yes, in some cases this is possible.

You can check if your organisation qualifies here: apprenticeships.gov.uk/employers/understanding-apprenticeship-benefits-and-funding

ARE THERE ANY INCENTIVES IN PLACE FOR AN ORGANISATION TO TAKE ON APPRENTICES?

Yes, there are Government incentives in place in relation to hiring apprentices. You can find more information here: gov.uk/guidance/incentive-payments-for-hiring-a-new-apprentice

IS MY APPRENTICE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE LEVEL 2 QUALIFICATIONS IN MATHS AND ENGLISH?

If the apprentice is under 19 at the start of the apprenticeship, they will be required to complete Level 2 Functional Skills qualifications before reaching Gateway. For apprentices aged 19 or over at the start of the apprenticeship, this requirement is optional.

THE ORGANISATION HAS NO EXPERIENCE OF APPRENTICESHIPS. HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

You can request a call with one of our Business Development Managers by emailing enquiries.apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk

CAN YOU HELP WITH DIGITAL APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE (DAS) QUERIES?

Yes, we can guide you through the process of setting up your DAS account. Please contact enquiries.apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk

WHY TAKE ON AN APPRENTICE?

Apprenticeships can support your business to grow talent and develop a skilled workforce.

Offering an apprenticeship can:

- introduce fresh talent and ideas to your business by recruiting new staff and upskilling existing members
- align training to your business needs boost staff loyalty and motivation

Studies show that because of apprenticeships:

- 80% of employers report higher staff retention
- 92% of employers see a boost in workforce motivation and satisfaction

CAN AN APPRENTICE COMPLETE JUST THE UNIVERSITY QUALIFICATION AS PART OF THE APPRENTICESHIP?

No. The apprenticeship is based on complementary elements of a University qualification, work-based training and experience, completion of Off-The-Job training, and the EPA. All of these elements must be completed by the apprentice.

CAN I TRANSFER AN APPRENTICE FROM ANOTHER TRAINING PROVIDER TO WESTMINSTER MID-APPRENTICESHIP?

Yes, depending on the circumstances. Contact one of our team on apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk to discuss further.

CAN PART-TIME EMPLOYEES JOIN AN APPRENTICESHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER?

Although it is possible for a part-time employee to be an apprentice, we require apprentices studying with the University of Westminster to be contracted for a minimum of 30 hours per week. The apprentice is required to have a contract of employment covering the duration of the apprenticeship.

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED WEEKLY WORKING HOURS FOR AN APPRENTICE?

In order to deal with the workload created by the various elements of the apprenticeship, we recommend that apprentices are contracted to work between 30-40 hours per week. The apprentice's well-being is also considered when making this recommendation.

CAN I TRANSFER SOME OF MY ORGANISATION'S SURPLUS LEVY TO ANOTHER EMPLOYER?

Yes. Employers who pay the growth and skills levy, can make a transfer to fund apprenticeships in another organisation. If you're a levy-paying employer and interested in making a transfer to another organisation, useful information can be found here: gov.uk/guidance/transferring-your-apprenticeship-levy-to-another-business

If you're an employer that doesn't pay the levy and is looking to receive a transfer from another employer, please see here for further information: gov.uk/guidance/receive-a-levy-transfer-from-another-business-to-fund-an-apprenticeship

CONTACT US

To find out how your organisation can start benefiting from an apprenticeship, please get in touch with our apprenticeships team

Email: enquiries.apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk
 Telephone: +44 (0) 207 911 5027
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