

Initial Assessment Policy and RPL Process for Apprenticeships

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Introduction

Prior to the commencement of an apprenticeship, the University of Westminster, as a training provider, must conduct an Initial Assessment to confirm both the learner's eligibility for Government apprenticeship funding.

This includes a robust assessment of the apprentice's existing knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs), prior learning, and work experience to establish a clear starting point. This is essential for determining:

- Whether the apprenticeship is a suitable training programme,
- What content the apprentice still needs to learn,
- Whether the programme meets the minimum funding rule thresholds, as determined by the DWP.

The Initial Assessment process also forms the basis for identifying any recognition of prior learning (RPL), and where necessary, adjusting the programme's duration and price, in accordance with the apprenticeship funding rules.

This process applies to all apprenticeship programmes delivered by the University of Westminster and is designed to ensure that any adjustments are applied consistently, fairly, and are clearly documented and agreed by the apprentice, employer, and the University.

What is an Initial Assessment?

An Initial Assessment is a mandatory requirement under the apprenticeship funding rules. It compares the apprentice's existing knowledge, skills, behaviours, qualifications, and experience against the outcomes defined in the apprenticeship standard.

This assessment determines whether the apprenticeship will provide substantial new learning and ensures the programme can be tailored appropriately. It identifies any prior learning that could reduce the duration, content, or cost of the programme, ensuring the individual is eligible to undertake the apprenticeship, as defined by the apprenticeship funding rules.

How we conduct an Initial Assessment

The Initial Assessment is completed within our Student Record System (SRS) and Aptem, during Stages 1 and 2 of onboarding. It involves a structured analysis of prior qualifications (including GCSEs or equivalent in English and maths), mapped experience, and existing KSBs. The assessment draws on information from:

- The apprentice's application including prior qualifications
- The employer's input and review of the job role description
- The completed Skills Radar
- Supporting evidence (e.g., certificates)

Once completed, the outcome is documented in Aptem in the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form and is subject to joint review and formal sign-off by the apprentice, employer, and University, ensuring all parties have a shared understanding of the programme and their roles and responsibilities.

Process for approval of the Initial Assessment

By the University, apprentice and employer

For apprentices with a straightforward outcome, the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form will be completed and signed electronically by the apprentice, employer, and University via Aptem.

Where additional clarification or evidence is required, the University will conduct a Microsoft Teams meeting with the apprentice and employer. These meetings typically apply to apprentices who:

- Do not hold relevant qualifications to support advanced entry but have scored highly on the skills scan and provided adequate evidence of prior learning and workplace competence;
- Have a job description or role that appears misaligned with the apprenticeship standard and cannot be resolved through written clarification;
- Require Level 2 English and/or maths Functional Skills qualifications and may need additional support or assessment.

These meetings are designed to validate evidence, confirm alignment with the apprenticeship standard, and ensure that the programme meets the Government's requirements for substantial new learning.

Outcomes from these meetings will be documented in the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form and signed by all three parties in Aptem, confirming a shared understanding of the programme structure, expectations, and any agreed deductions.

Reductions of duration and price

Where the University identifies relevant prior learning and/or experience through the Initial Assessment process, this may result in justified reductions to the apprenticeship programme's duration, price, and content — provided the programme continues to meet apprenticeship funding requirements.

Note: If there is insufficient learning remaining (i.e. less than 8 months in duration and/or less than 6 hours per week off-the-job training on average), the individual is ineligible for apprenticeship funding.

Reductions may be considered based on the following factors:

- **Qualifications:**
Where the apprentice holds qualifications that map to the knowledge, skills or behaviours (KSBs) in the apprenticeship standard, a proportionate reduction may be applied. These qualifications must be relevant and at the appropriate level to support RPL claims.
- **Competence in KSBs:**
If the Initial Assessment (skills radar) identifies that the apprentice is already competent in certain KSBs through prior employment or training, a reduction in the associated delivery may be applied. Competence must be evidenced through documented examples, assessment, or employer testimony, and mapped clearly to the standard.

The section below outlines circumstances when reductions in price and/or duration may be made by the University.

Reductions based on prior qualifications

Apprentices who meet the standard entry requirements listed on [westminster.ac.uk](https://www.westminster.ac.uk) may undertake the full duration of the apprenticeship and the full funding band maximum may apply.

In accordance with the University's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Regulations, the duration and/or price of the apprenticeship must be reduced where prior qualifications or experience cover part of the apprenticeship content. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Completed HNCs, HNDs, Foundation Degrees, or
- Credit transfers from other Higher Education Institutions,
- Professional certifications that align with the KSBs of the standard.

An applicant who holds a qualification at the same or higher level than the apprenticeship standard may still be eligible if all the following conditions are met:

1. The apprentice will be developing substantial new Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs);
2. The training content is materially different from any previously completed qualification or apprenticeship;

3. The programme is linked to a regulated profession (e.g. Nursing Associate or Biomedical Scientist), where repeat learning is required to meet accreditation, even if the apprentice holds prior learning in the same field.
 - a. In such cases, prior learning will be formally assessed and documented, and where applicable, evidence retained to justify repeat delivery.
4. The Initial Assessment, including the Personal Learning Record (PLR), qualifications evidence, job role review, and skills scan, demonstrates that the apprentice will gain substantive new learning and not duplicate prior funded training.

Reductions based on the outcomes of the Skills Scan

The skills scan is an integral part of the Initial Assessment process. It evaluates the applicant's existing competence against each Knowledge, Skill, and Behaviour (KSB) in the apprenticeship standard, to help determine:

- Whether the applicant will gain substantial new learning, and
- Whether there is a case for a reduction in the apprenticeship price.

Apprentices self-assess their competence on a 1 to 7 scale, where:

- 1 = No prior experience or knowledge,
- 7 = Full occupational competence and confidence in applying the KSB independently.

At the University of Westminster:

- Apprenticeship modules are mapped to multiple KSBs, and
- Learners from each cohort attend the same taught sessions, regardless of skills scan outcomes.

Therefore, the University does not reduce the duration of the apprenticeship based on the skills scan alone, as all learners are expected to complete the full module content and assessments to ensure academic and occupational consistency.

Although the duration is not reduced from the skills scan outcome alone, a reduction in price may be applied where the following conditions are met:

- The apprentice scores 6 (advanced competence) or 7 (expert level) on the skills scan for specific KSBs, and
- Provides sufficient supporting evidence of prior learning or workplace competence.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Examples of how the KSB has been applied in the workplace,
- Employer verification of competence and job responsibilities,
- Professional development records or performance appraisals.

Note: Skills scan scores must not be used in isolation to justify a reduction in cost. The apprenticeship funding rules requires all reductions to be evidence-based and proportionate to the apprentice's prior learning.

1. Evidence submitted by the apprentice is reviewed and discussed in the Outcome of Initial Assessment meeting, attended by the apprentice, employer, and the University.
2. If the evidence is deemed sufficient, a proportionate price reduction is proposed.
3. The Apprenticeship Team calculates the adjusted price based on the KSBs covered by prior learning.
4. The Head of School approves the final apprenticeship price.
5. The agreed price is recorded in:
 - a. The ILR (Individualised Learner Record),
 - b. The Training Plan,
 - c. The Training Agreement, and
 - d. The Apprenticeship Service account.

All decisions and supporting documentation are stored in Aptem and retained in the apprentice's evidence pack in accordance with DWP audit requirements.

Approval of reductions in duration and/or price

The Apprenticeships Team is responsible for coordinating the deductions process and ensuring that all reductions in apprenticeship price and/or duration are:

- Evidence-based,
- Justified in line with Initial Assessment outcomes, and
- Documented and approved according to University and funding rule requirements.

Price Reductions

- Where the deduction is based on prior qualifications or prior experiential learning (e.g., HNCs, HNDs, or credit transfers), the price will be reduced and confirmed within the Training Agreement.
- Where a price reduction is proposed based on skills scan outcomes plus supporting evidence of prior competence, the Apprenticeship Team will:
 - Review the evidence and scoring,
 - Propose an adjusted price reflecting the proportion of KSBs already achieved, aligned to funding rule requirements,
 - Submit the proposal for approval by the Head of School.

Duration Reductions

- Programme duration will only be reduced if the applicant is assessed as eligible for advanced entry, based on:
 - A robust Initial Assessment of prior qualifications
 - Sufficient prior learning or qualification at the appropriate level following the University's RPL process (<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/guides-and-policies/student-matters/recognition-of-prior-learning>), and
 - Evidence that the apprenticeship will still meet the minimum duration and OTJ requirements as per the apprenticeship funding rules.
- The Course Leader (or nominee) will:
 - Validate the Initial Assessment outcomes,
 - Confirm the academic relevance of any reductions,
 - Ensure any proposed adjustments are educationally appropriate and compliant with the programme's learning outcomes.

Note: All learners are enrolled onto open courses with a fixed curriculum. As such, even where price reductions apply based on the outcome of the Skills Radar, the programme's content and learning outcomes remain unchanged, and all apprentices will participate in the same teaching and assessment schedule. Adjustments apply only to the individual's price and not their access to course content.

Documentation and Approval

To ensure transparency, compliance, and confirm understanding, any reduction in the apprenticeship programme's price and/or duration must be approved and documented by all parties based on the outcomes of the Initial Assessment.

The following approvals are required:

Apprentice

- The apprentice must review and acknowledge the proposed reduction(s).
- Approval is confirmed by signing the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form in Aptem.
- This ensures that the apprentice understands and agrees with any adjustments to their programme, including their individual learning plan and expectations.

Employer

- The employer must review and agree to the adjusted apprenticeship price and/or duration.
- Approval is recorded by signing the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form in Aptem.
- This confirms that the employer supports the adjusted delivery model and understands the implications for funding and co-investment contributions, if applicable.

University

- The University (via the Course Leader or nominated academic representative and the Apprenticeship Team) must review and confirm the proposed reductions based on:
 - Prior learning evidence,
 - Skills scan outcomes, and
 - Alignment with programme content and government compliance.
- Final sign-off is recorded in the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form in Aptem and approved by the Head of School where reductions in price are applied.

All approvals must be retained as part of the apprentice's evidence pack and will be used to support any funding claims. Unjustified or unapproved reductions may result in audit failure or recovery of funds.

Record Keeping

All documentation relating to the Initial Assessment, including evidence of prior learning, skills scan results, and any agreed reductions in price or duration, will be securely stored within the apprentice's individual learning record.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- The Outcome of Initial Assessment form signed by the apprentice, employer, and university,
- Supporting evidence used to justify any deduction (e.g. qualifications, work-based evidence, employer statements),
- Confirmation of the final agreed programme price and duration.

All records will be:

- Stored securely in Aptem and/or the University's approved document management systems,
- Accessible for internal quality assurance, contract management, and external audit,
- Retained for the minimum period required by the government after the apprentice's completion, withdrawal, or termination of the programme.

Failure to retain complete and accurate documentation may result in funding clawback during a funding assurance audit. The University will ensure full compliance with documentation, transparency, and retention requirements

How do we comply with the requirements for the Initial Assessment

The tables below outline how the University complies with the different requirements of Initial Assessment as outlined in the 2026/27 apprenticeship Funding Rules

The Initial Assessment includes an assessment of:

- Learner eligibility
- Programme eligibility, after accounting for all relevant prior learning and experience
- Learning support
- English and maths support

The outcome of the Initial Assessment is recorded and shared with the learner and their employer.

Learner eligibility

The Apprenticeships Team ensures that all learner eligibility criteria are met during Stage 1 of the onboarding process in Aptem. The following steps are followed to ensure full compliance with government requirements:

1. Learner Information Collection

- a. Extended ILR form: Completed by the learner, containing personal information and qualifications, to confirm eligibility criteria, such as age, residency, prior learning, and right to work in England.
- b. Employer Information Request form: Completed by the employer, including confirmation of the learner's role, contract details, and alignment with the apprenticeship standard.

2. Eligibility Review

The Apprenticeships Team reviews both forms to assess eligibility based on the 2025/26 apprenticeship funding rules. This includes verifying the learner's:

- a. Age and residency status,
- b. Right to work in England,
- c. Previous qualifications and learning.

3. Eligibility Declaration

If the learner meets the eligibility criteria, the Apprenticeships Team signs a declaration confirming eligibility, and the application proceeds to Stage 2 of the onboarding process.

4. Document Storage and Audit

The completed Extended ILR form and Employer Information Request form are securely stored in Aptem for audit purposes. These documents are part of the apprentice's permanent record and are accessible for internal quality assurance and external audits.

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored?
Confirmation that the provider has seen the learner's identity documents or immigration permission to verify their residency eligibility in line with Annex A. Confirmation of the apprentice's date of birth.	Passports/photo IDs are checked during onboarding and at enrolment. Extended ILR (Aptem Stage 1)
Confirmation that the provider is satisfied the learner is eligible for funding and (where necessary) where a learner's permission to stay has expired, they must hold evidence that an application to remain has been made	Extended ILR (Aptem Stage 1)
Evidence that the apprentice will spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship including time spent on off-the-job training. Where the business footprint is larger than England this could include a roster for a typical month for the apprentice along with written confirmation from the employer.	Employer Information Request form)
Evidence of employment to confirm that the apprentice is employed by that employer or a connected company or charity as defined by HMRC. This can be a relevant extract from a contract of employment, or it could be a signed declaration by the employer.	Employer Information Request form and employment contract attached to the learner's profile in Aptem
Confirmation that the apprentice is not: Enrolled on another apprenticeship. Enrolled on a Department for Education (DfE) funded Higher Education (HE) / Further Education (FE) programme (excluding Adult Education Budget) where that programme is more than 4 weeks from completion. Enrolled on an AEB funded programme where that programme does not comply with	Extended ILR (Aptem Stage 1) and Employer Information Request form

rules 23.11. The provider must confirm the type of evidence they have seen to satisfy that	
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Programme eligibility (Recognition of prior learning and experience)

After accounting for all relevant prior learning and experience

The confirmation of programme eligibility is carried out by the University, after the apprentice and employer have provided all the required information and evidence. This information is provided during the application for a place on the apprenticeship (on our Student Records System) and then in Aptem Stages 1 and 2.

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored?
The University has had a discussion with the learner about the likelihood of relevant prior learning against the proposed apprenticeship standard. Checked the individual's personal learning record. Where this information is unavailable or an apprentice is unable to provide evidence of prior attainment, please refer to guidance to get a replacement exam certificate. Evidence of proof of equivalency from UK European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) can be used where an individual has an international qualification.	Prior qualifications are discussed on Business Development calls with applicants and employers. Qualifications are checked and stored on the Student Record System; if a learner meets the academic entry requirements as published on www.westminster.ac.uk, their application is progressed to Stage 1 in Aptem. Personal Learning Records (PLR) are checked during Stage 2 in Aptem (Aptem is linked to the PLR database)
Conducted a skills scan against the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the proposed apprenticeship standard and where relevant, has supplemented this with additional diagnostic testing, of either occupational competence or of English and Maths prior attainment.	Skills Scan and Basic Key Skills Builder (BKSB) English and Maths Initial and Diagnostic Assessments (Aptem Stage 2)

Where relevant prior learning and experience does not exist, the provider has recorded this and the reason for this assessment. This has been agreed with the employer. Summarised the impact of the prior learning assessment, including whether, and by how much, the apprenticeship content and duration has been reduced. This summary confirms that the resulting apprenticeship meets the funding rules in relation to the minimum duration and off-the-job training.	Summary statement on the 'Outcome of the Initial Assessment' form: this will be added for all learners and will include information on their prior qualifications, RP(E)L process if applicable and on the outcome of the skills scan. The Apprenticeship's university qualification component will require adherence to the University's RP(E)L process. Supporting evidence for those who ranked 3, 4 or 5 on the skills scan will also be saved on the learner's record. (Aptem). This summary statement is also added to the Training Plan.
Where content is to be omitted from the training plan, this has been shown as a volume of off-the-job training hours.	Training Plan
Where the standard is linked to a regulated profession, and this impacts the reduction, this has been documented.	N/A
Calculated the reduction in price by following the example set out in paragraph 28.2 and has split the outcome over fields TNP1 and TNP2 in the ILR.	Pricelist for Apprenticeships

Learning support

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored
Where the provider has identified a learning difficulty or disability, they must (1) evidence that an assessment has been carried out and hold a copy of the assessment results which identifies the apprentice's learning difficulty or disability; (2) evidence/details of the reasonable adjustments that are necessary to enable the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship on which they are enrolled; and (3) include a description of how progress towards the completion of the apprenticeship would be directly impacted if the reasonable adjustments listed were not put in place for the apprentice.	Learners self-declare if they have a disability on the 'extended ILR' (Aptem Stage 1) All learners who self-declare are then referred to the University Disability Support Service (DLS). Learners complete registration with DLS post-enrolment DLS will evaluate the apprentice's circumstances and provide a form for reasonable adjustments to assist with their studies.
The provider has documented evidence of how they plan to deliver the necessary reasonable adjustments throughout the apprenticeship. This plan has been agreed and signed-off by the apprentice, prior to a claim for learning support funding being made, and where the apprentice has given consent this information has been shared with their employer.	All learners who self-declare are then referred to the University Disability Support Service (DLS). Learners complete registration with the DLS post-enrolment. During the discussions on the outcome of the Initial Assessment (Aptem Stage 3) the university will discuss the DLS process and options with the apprentice and their employer, should the apprentice provide consent. The University does not claim for learning support funding for apprentices.
For the months where learning support funding is claimed, the provider has evidence and documented details of the necessary reasonable adjustments that have been delivered in that period. Learning support funding will only be paid in months where the reasonable adjustments are required and are being delivered. Where costs exceed £150 per month the provider	N/A The University does not claim for learning support funding for apprentices.

must provide invoices to evidence the actual costs incurred (claimed via the Earnings Adjustment Statement).	
The provider has documented evidence of reviews being undertaken, at least every 3 calendar months, throughout the apprenticeship to ensure that reasonable adjustments are still necessary and appropriate (for the apprenticeship). This evidence confirms the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments and how these have been adapted where necessary – evidence should also confirm the month(s), where claims have been made, are accurate. Where amendments to the original plan are required, these will need to be documented, signed-off by the apprentice and evidenced accordingly.	N/A The University does not claim for learning support funding for apprentices.
Where exceptional learning support (ELS) is claimed for an apprentice, the provider has the application and supporting evidence for this claim. This includes details of the reasonable adjustments and the actual costs incurred.	N/A The University does not claim for learning support funding for apprentices.

English and Maths Support

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored?
Details of how English and Maths will be delivered, including a plan of delivery and evidence of delivery taking place against that plan.	Training Plan
All Initial Assessments for English and Maths, including evidence of prior attainment. Please also refer to the evidence requirements for recognition of prior learning and experience	BKSB Assessment (Aptem Stage 2) Level 2 qualifications are stored in SRS and Aptem Communicate BKSB results to Course Leader and Skills Coach / Reviewer (if Level 1 or if they don't have L2 qualifications)
Additional information where the apprentice is assessed as exempt from the normal English and Maths requirements. In these circumstances the provider must also include: A copy of the authorisation by an appropriate professional, for example the head of special education needs (SEN) or student support; or Evidence of how the apprentice's learning difficulty or disability affects their English and / or Maths abilities; The apprentice's recommended learning plan to achieve entry level 3 in English and / or Maths (as appropriate); and The apprentice's education, health and care (EHC) plan (or one of the legacy equivalents: a statement of special educational need (SEN) or learning difficulty assessment (LDA)).	N/A

Outcome of the Initial Assessment

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored?
Confirmation, after completing the initial assessment, that both the individual and the programme are eligible for funding. The initial assessment and its outcome have been discussed face to face or virtually with the employer and apprentice, has been agreed / shared via email or by embedding it in the signed training plan. There is evidence that the employer agrees with the information provided (this could be in the form of an email or a signed training plan which has incorporated the initial assessment information).	All employers and apprentices will be required to review and sign the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and the Training Plan. All employers will have a chance to give feedback and contribute to the Outcome of the Initial Assessment (Aptem)
Taken account of relevant prior learning and experience, and relevant learning difficulties and / or disabilities, in the design and proposed delivery of the apprenticeship and has explained to the employer and apprentice how this information has informed a tailored training plan.	The Outcome of the Initial Assessment form and Training Plan.

The provider must also discuss and agree with the employer:

Evidence requirement	Where is the relevant evidence stored?
That an apprenticeship is the most appropriate training programme for the individual;	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem)
That all relevant prior learning and experience have been identified and properly accounted for in the design of the training plan, which has been adjusted accordingly;	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem)
That the training plan aligns with an approved apprenticeship standard, at the most appropriate level;	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem)
That the individual's job role has a productive purpose and there is a direct link between the selected apprenticeship standard and the individual's job role;	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem)
How all parties will work together to achieve the apprenticeship (i.e. roles and responsibilities of the provider, employer and apprentice).	Roles and responsibilities for all parties are included in the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form that all parties sign (Aptem)
The price of the apprenticeship (see paragraph 134). It must be clear to the employer from the outset how much they will need to contribute (if applicable).	The price is confirmed in the Training Agreement, which is issued before the apprentice starts the programme.
Provide the individual with the appropriate support and supervision to carry out both their job role and their apprenticeship (including the endpoint assessment);	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan

Release the apprentice for off-the-job training (and English and Maths training if required), as documented in the training plan;	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan
Provide the apprentice with the opportunity and support to embed and consolidate the knowledge, skills and behaviours, gained through off the-job training, into the workplace; and	Statement with the employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan
Take part or provide input into progress reviews.	Statement with employer's confirmation on the Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan
Confirmed, after completing the Initial Assessment (as outlined in paragraph 16), that both the individual and the programme are eligible for funding. The Initial Assessment and its outcome has been documented and has been agreed with the employer and apprentice. Where the employer is not able to attend the discussion, there must be evidence that they were given the opportunity to contribute (this can be an email from the provider to the employer) and that they have been sent the relevant information after the discussion, for their review and signature.	Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan

Taken account of relevant prior learning and experience, and relevant learning difficulties and / or disabilities, in the design and proposed delivery of the apprenticeship and has explained to the employer and apprentice how this information has informed a tailored training plan.	Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan Further information on the University's support available to learners with disabilities. Additional Needs do not impact on the duration of the programme nor price reduction. The delivery of the apprenticeship may be adjusted to reflect learning difficulties and/or disabilities following registration with the University's Disability Learning Support (DLS) service – for example, learners may be given extra-time to complete assessments as outlined in the Reasonable Adjustments form.
Agreed with the employer the conditions listed in paragraph 49	Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan
The employer has: Agreed to the conditions listed in paragraph 50	Outcome of the Initial Assessment form (Aptem) and Training Plan

Relevant Supporting Guidance

- [DWP Funding Regulations](#)
- [Recognition of Prior Certified Learning \(RPCL\) and/or Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning \(RPEL\) processes](#)
- [RPL regulations](#)

Process Review

This process will be reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with any changes in regulations or programme requirements. Any revisions or updates to this policy/process will be communicated to the relevant stakeholders in a timely manner and changes will be approved by the Apprenticeships Board.

Maintained by: Business Engagement and Graduate Futures

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