
A Brief Guide to Apprenticeships Across the UK

and the Introduction of the Levy

This interactive guide intends to provide a useful overview of the introduction of the Apprenticeship levy and the differences in apprenticeships between the four home nations.



About SQA



The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is an international leader in education and training; we provide solutions for organisations to achieve the high standards needed in today's training and learning market.

With over 100 years' experience in educational support, we help organisations to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions.

Experts in specialist educational support, we are renowned for our quality and customer service.

Apprenticeship Levy



Apprenticeship Levy

The [Apprenticeship Levy](#) came into force in April 2017. All UK employers (public, private, and third sector) with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million will pay the levy.

The levy is set at 0.5% of an employer's annual wage bill and will be collected by [HMRC](#) alongside income tax and National Insurance.

Each employer will receive an allowance of £15,000 per year to offset against the levy. This means that although the levy applies to all employers, only those with a pay bill of over £3 million will pay it.

Administration of the Levy

Despite the Apprenticeship Levy being UK-wide, the nations of the UK will continue to have different administrative arrangements for funding apprenticeships and other skills training.

In England, the levy will be used to fund apprenticeships. This will be administered through a [Digital Apprenticeship Service](#). This service is only available to employers in England.

In Scotland, all proceeds from the levy will be invested in skills, training, and workforce development, but apprenticeship funding will continue to be administered by Skills Development Scotland through contracted training providers and direct employer contracts. According to the [Scottish Government](#), 'Scotland's share of funding from the UK Government's apprenticeship levy will support a range of employment measures including the delivery of 30,000 Modern Apprenticeships starts each year by 2020, and the establishment of a new Flexible Workforce Development Fund to help employers up-skill and re-skill their workforce.'

Similarly, in Wales, the [Welsh Government](#) will continue to deliver its Apprenticeship Programme via the Welsh apprenticeship provider network.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of the Economy is in the process of analysing consultation responses on how levy money should be used to support workforce development there.

Apprenticeships in Scotland



Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships are jobs for existing or new employees that lead to industry-recognised qualifications. In Scotland, Modern Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged over 16, with the funding contribution towards the cost of training prioritised to 16-to-24-year-olds and aligned to Scottish Government priorities. A small number are available to older people. SQA SVQs for the relevant sector are the heart of every Modern Apprenticeship.

Skills Development Scotland provides a contribution towards the cost of training through a training provider. For each Modern Apprenticeship, employers and apprentices work with an approved training provider. These training providers are contracted by Skills Development Scotland, who pay a contribution towards the costs of training.

As well as Modern Apprenticeships, [Foundation](#) and [Graduate Level](#) Apprenticeships are also available.

Foundation Apprenticeships

Foundation Apprenticeships mean young people can also now start work-based learning at school, and employers can prepare future employees for the world of work.

With a Foundation Apprenticeship, pupils in S5 can complete elements of a Modern Apprenticeship alongside their other studies, such as Highers.

Foundation Apprenticeships take two years to complete, with pupils spending part of the week out of school, getting hands-on experience at college and with a local employer in their chosen industry.

Graduate Level Apprenticeships

New Graduate Level Apprenticeships provide work-based learning opportunities up to Master's degree level for employees. Created in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sector, these apprenticeships combine academic knowledge with skills development to enable participants to become more effective and productive in the workplace. Learners can progress to the highest level of professional qualifications with a range of entry and exit points from a Higher National Diploma (SCQF level 8) to a Master's degree (SCQF level 11).

The [Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board \(SAAB\)](#) gives employers and industry a leading role in developing apprenticeships in Scotland. The Board ensures apprenticeships meet industry and economic needs, fair work, and job opportunities. The SAAB has recently announced its [structure & remit](#).

Apprenticeships in England



Apprentices are aged 16 or over and combine working with studying for a work-based qualification — from GCSEs or equivalent up to degree level. Apprentices can be new or current employees.

In England, all apprenticeship frameworks are being replaced by apprenticeship **standards**. The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is removing frameworks in phases and by 2020 all frameworks will be removed for new starts. Over 150 standards are already fully released and available for immediate delivery. These are developed by employer-led groups.

The standards provide apprenticeships at four levels: Intermediate, Advanced, Higher, and Degree.

Currently, around a third of new apprenticeship standards do not include a mandatory vocational qualification. However, all apprenticeship standards have three main components, which are required evidence and competence for: Skills, Knowledge and Behaviours (SKBs). All apprenticeship standards also require apprentices to complete functional skills in maths and English, although exemptions for prior attainment may apply.

One major difference between legacy apprenticeship frameworks and new Apprenticeship Standards is the introduction of end-point assessment (EPA). **An independent organisation**, approved by the ESFA, must be involved in the end-point assessment of each apprentice so that all apprentices following the same standard are assessed consistently — and independently from the training provider.

The **register of apprentice assessment organisations** is a list of organisations that have been assessed as being suitable to conduct independent end-point assessment of apprentices and be in receipt of public **funds**. Information is also available to training providers on the **funding bands** to which each of the frameworks and new standards have been allocated.

The **Institute for Apprenticeships**, the organisation created to approve apprenticeships will ensure high-quality apprenticeship standards and advise the ESFA on funding for each standard.

Apprenticeships in Wales



In [Wales](#), apprentices work alongside experienced employees to gain job-specific skills, while studying towards a nationally-recognised qualification from an approved college or training provider. The employer will cover the apprentice's wages, while the Welsh Government offers support with training costs. Apprenticeships are available at three levels: Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, and Higher Apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland



Apprenticeships in [Northern Ireland](#) are work-based programmes designed around the needs of employers offering recognised training and qualifications to new and existing employees aged 16 and over. A Higher Apprenticeship pilot programme is also underway.

We hope this guide has been useful in understanding the differences in apprenticeship policy in the UK and helped you source additional information where required.

Find out more

To find out more about how SQA could help your organisation reach its potential please contact;

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