



Apprenticeships as a Pathway to Higher Education

Did you know that you can achieve higher qualifications such as Foundation Degrees and even Honours Degrees from an apprenticeship route? Part-time flexible study is a great opportunity available for many learners and their employers.

So what are apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes, leading to nationally recognised qualifications and are designed to meet the needs of employers.

Are there different levels of apprenticeships?

There are three levels:

1. Apprenticeships - level 2 qualifications equivalent to five good GCSE passes.

Apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ level 2, Key Skills and in some cases, a relevant knowledge-based qualification such as BTEC. These provide the skills you need for your chosen career and allow entry to:

2. Advanced Apprenticeships - level 3 qualifications equivalent to 2 A-level passes.

Advanced apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ level 3, transferable skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge-based certificate. To start this programme you should really have five GCSEs (grade C or above) or have completed a Level 2 apprenticeship.

3. Higher apprenticeships.

Higher apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ level 4 and in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation Degree.

How long does it take to complete an apprenticeship?

They can last between 1 and 4 years depending on the level, sector, delivery method and individual apprentice. For example, an Advanced Level Engineering Apprenticeships can last 4 years to gain both the level 2 and level 3 qualification

What are the benefits?

- Earn while you learn
- Gain practical experience
- Develop transferable skills
- Gain excellent career progression
- Earn £100,000 more over your working life than those without qualifications

How much do apprentices earn?

Apprenticeship minimum wage is £2.50 per hour (£95 per week) for apprentices aged 16-18 and older apprentices in the first year of their training, however, the employer is expected to pay the going rate for the job

Apprentices who start with an employer after the age of 19 will qualify for the national minimum wage after a 12 month exemption period.

An apprentice's working hours can range from 30–37 hours per week and include time for training even if training is delivered away from the employer's premises.

Where do I go for further advice?

Visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk for more information on apprenticeships and to find out more about the many different frameworks available.

Higher Apprenticeships

Don't know whether to choose work or university? Don't worry you might be able to do both!

The aim of the Higher Apprenticeship is to raise the skill levels of people available in their industry to degree level. You will usually need good passes in a relevant level 3 qualification or have completed an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Local examples of employers offering Higher Apprenticeships are:

- Rolls Royce
- Debenhams
- N Power
- Nationwide
- KPMG
- O2 and Vodafone

Higher Apprentices are highly motivated young people who have the potential to become 'managers of the future.' Apprenticeships provide a foundation from which young people can progress into management roles, particularly where the Apprenticeship frameworks are aligned to a company's management development programme. Apprentices learn while they work so their knowledge is up to date and because their training is on the job, the practical skills they gain are the one's that are right for the organisation's business.

Higher Apprenticeship frameworks include:

- Accountancy
- Contact Centres
- Construction-Surveying
- Building Services Design
- ICT Professional
- Engineering Technologies
- CAD
- Purchasing and Supply

With more frameworks being developed.

Levels 5/6	Full-time education or Part time flexible study	Foundation or Honours Degree
Level 4/5	Higher Apprenticeships	HNC or HND
Level 3	Advanced or Technician Apprenticeships	A-levels/National Diplomas
Level 2	Apprenticeships	First Diplomas and GCSEs
Level 1	Foundation Learning	

Case Studies



Lindsey Sheridan — Cognitor Ltd

Lindsey left Stourport High School at 16 with 3 'A*', 6 'A' and 2 'B' grade GCSE's and went on to further education at Worcester Sixth Form College with the intention of continuing to University. After speaking to family and friends in the accounting profession - who explained that practical experience within the working environment is more beneficial and highly regarded by prospective employers than academic success, she made the decision to leave Sixth Form after 6 months and enter the apprenticeship scheme.

With the help of Kidderminster College Lindsey was employed by Laud Grice & Co Chartered Certified Accountants, attending

college 1 day a week to do Foundation Level AAT in accountancy. Lindsey found that this was a much more suitable way of learning for her, combining tuition with a much more 'hands on' approach and being treated as a valued member of staff. Actually dealing with clients rather than textbook scenarios proved to be much more relevant. Although studying both at work and college required quite a lot of commitment, she received a great deal of support from a college mentor, tutors and work managers.

Three years after initially starting the apprenticeship, Lindsey has achieved success at Foundation, Intermediate and Technician stages (NVQ 2, 3 & 4). Laud Grice & Co was acquired by Bromsgrove based firm Cognitor Limited in 2008, with whom Lindsey is still employed. Her job at present, primarily involves preparing accounts for Sole Traders, Partnerships and Limited Companies, tax return work, VAT and dealing with clients (so not just making the tea!) Cognitor Limited is a forward thinking practice who act on behalf of a broad spectrum of small and medium sized enterprises and sustains an excellent reputation and a high client retention rate by giving a good quality of service and wide range of Tax beneficial services. Employees are encouraged to make progression and given further responsibility within their role as they gain experience. At present they have 3 members of staff on the apprenticeship scheme.

After qualifying as an AAT Accountant in August at the age of 20, Lindsey is now pursuing the Chartered Accountancy qualification at Kaplan Financial in Birmingham - a course entirely funded and supported by her employer at Cognitor Limited. With all tuition and study time given during week days, earning a good salary (hence she have certainly not missed out on having a good social life!) and in a job offering fantastic career prospects which she thoroughly enjoys, Lindsey says that the apprenticeship route was the right choice for her whilst many of my friends are still accruing University debt and are still unsure about which path they want to take after graduation.

Case Studies

Tom Weston—Thomas Weston Construction Services



Tom went to Bishop Perowne School where he achieved several A-C GCSE grades. After leaving school at 16, Tom then went on to a full-time college course at Worcester College where he completed a 1 year Foundation Carpentry Course which he then followed on from by starting an Apprenticeship in Carpentry with an employer he worked for on a Saturday. Tom continued on to an Advanced level 3 Apprenticeship in Carpentry and completed both level 2 and 3 City & Guilds qualifications and NVQs in under 2 years. Tom was still keen to progress further with his qualifications so he continued day release at college, supported by his employer

for a further 2 years and achieved a BTEC Higher Certificate in Construction. He was then able to continue for a further 2 years on day release to achieve a HNC in Construction.

Although this route has taken Tom several years to achieve his HNC, he has been able to work and earn a decent salary throughout the whole time, which meant at age 22 he was able to purchase his own house and has achieved a high qualification without obtaining any student debt.

Tom has worked as a carpenter in restoration work of old buildings, secured a position as an assistant site manager doing new build developments and has gained loads of experience and hands-on skills in the construction industry.

When the recession hit, Tom was unfortunately made redundant but due to his qualifications and experience he was able to secure another job as a working site foreman. It was after this that Tom decided he wanted to set up his own business in carpentry. So, in March 2010 he went on a Business Start-Up Course, bought a van and set up Thomas Weston Construction Services. Tom has been sub-contracting to a national decking company and building up his own client list for carpentry and joinery work since then and his business is going from strength to strength, with most of the work he has secured, being recommendations from his previous employer.

Tom has had no regrets about the path he has taken, completing a trade meant he has always been able to secure work, even during difficult times and he is now his own boss and building a successful company. Later this year, Tom will be fulfilling his ambition to go to Australia for 18 months to travel and work in construction as there is a high demand for all qualified tradesmen in Australia, especially carpenters. Who knows where the future will take Tom? But it certainly looks very bright.

Case Studies

Shane Langston — Amada UK Ltd

Shane left King Charles High School in Kidderminster age 16 with 'C' Grade GCSEs and a BTEC Diploma in Engineering, which he achieved on a Young Apprenticeship Programme through school. Although Shane felt he could have done better in his GCSEs, the fact that he completed a Young Apprenticeship, had worked one day a week with an employer gaining valuable engineering experience, and had attended college one day per week, enabled him to secure an apprenticeship place at Amada UK Ltd, through Kidderminster District & Training Company.

Shane started his engineering Apprenticeship with Amada at age 16 and has never looked back. He was employed by Amada from day one of his apprenticeship, earning a decent salary whilst also attending college one day per week to complete his Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship.

Four years later, Shane has completed his Advanced Apprenticeship, achieved a Diploma in Engineering, City & Guilds level 3 Maintenance Engineering, BTEC National Certificate in Engineering and has now gone on to study a HNC in engineering, of which he is now in his second year of. Shane feels that he has had the best of both worlds, a secure job earning good money, gained hands-on work skills whilst also achieving high level qualifications.

Shane said "although it has been hard work, both working and attending college, it has been manageable and I now have a good job as a Service Engineer for Amada which I thoroughly enjoy. I have been given a lot of responsibility and visit various sites, often alone, and I have been responsible for commissioning and de-commissioning machines. I also get to drive a company car and have travelled all over the UK to visit customers."

Shane says the Apprenticeship route has been eye-opening. It has helped him to mature and gain in confidence and has opened up opportunities for him that he would have not otherwise achieved. It has allowed him to achieve high level qualifications without having to study full-time at college or university.

Amada, who are based in Kidderminster, sell and service a range of sheet metal working machines and employ 130 people with 60 Field Engineers. Amada have always been committed to Apprenticeships and currently have 8, aiming to take on 2 each year. They look for attitude and commitment as well as some hands-on experience showing engineering capability. The company considers the BTEC Diploma in Engineering an excellent grounding to start along the Apprenticeship route. Amada state "the Apprentices at Amada make an increasingly valuable contribution to our success in all areas of business."



Case Studies

Mark Wheeler—Syspal Ltd



Mark Wheeler saw an advertisement for an Apprentice Welder and Fabrication at Syspal Ltd 13 years ago, and decided to apply, after low achievement at school and years of uninspiring roles in many different companies. The idea of having an apprenticeship together with welding appealed to him due to the hands-on role and the ability to take a product from start through to finish. Mark attended the interview and his enthusiasm and confidence secured him the Apprenticeship position.

Mark started his level 2 qualification in Welding and Fabrication with Shrewsbury College on a day release basis, whilst working at Syspal, helping to produce street furniture and fabrications for the food and pharmaceutical industries. "Many of the products I was making went on to be both part of structural and sculptural items on the London Underground, Birmingham Airport and some high profile memorials—it was great motivation seeing what I had made on display" enthuses Mark.

Mark thoroughly enjoyed his Apprenticeship and with the support of his employer, Syspal and Shrewsbury College, he gained skills and knowledge in all skills aspects of welding and has now achieved a high level of responsibility with his employer.

Mark continued onto his Advanced Apprenticeship, achieving level 3 in Welding and Materials and more recently started a 3 year Foundation Degree in Engineering Manufacture. This degree is teaching him how to manage large scale projects from start to finish and has broadened his knowledge of the whole process from design and selling through to manufacturing. Mark has aspirations to complete a Masters Degree in the future.

Mark is a valuable member of the team at Syspal and is involved in the recruitment, training and mentoring of all their welding Apprentices. He currently mentors 3 welding Apprentices and uses his own experience and knowledge to support them through their Apprenticeship Programmes. Emma Bytheway, HR Manager, said "he is a great inspiration to new Apprentices as he has been there and done it all before, and understands any problems they may have. He is absolutely key in ensuring they retain motivation and willingness to learn—a necessity when working in such a large manufacturing firm."

Mark has now worked for the company for 13 years and his role keeps expanding in light of his experience and knowledge gained with each project. Syspal are keen to support Mark further in his studies so that he continues to learn and maintain new and up-to-date practices for long-term efficiency within manufacturing. Emma concludes "apprentices have a vital part to play in any manufacturer's future to maintain up-to-date processes. Mark has grown within the time he has been here and the wealth of knowledge he brings weekly from college helps all levels of the company."

Syspal Ltd is a privately owned fabrication engineering company founded in 1975. They specialise in stainless steel and aluminium products providing a range of standard and bespoke equipment for a wide range of industries.

Case Studies

Mark Macklin—Franklin Hodge Industries



Mark attended Kingstone High School in Hereford and did really well with his GCSEs, achieving 11 at Grades A/B or C, but he had no idea what he wanted to do as a career. With little advice or guidance he decided to stay on in 6th Form (mainly because this is what all his friends were doing) where he spent a further 2 years completing AS and A levels in Maths Mechanics, Physics, Computing and Biology. Once again, on achieving good A Level results, Mark still had no idea what he wanted to do and it was only by chance that he heard that Hereford Group Training Association were coming to do a talk about apprenticeships, so he decided to attend the session to find out more.

Knowing hardly anything about apprenticeships, Mark was interested to know that he could use and develop his IT skills in an engineering apprenticeship by specialising in CAD (Computer Aided Design) so he decided to apply and was successful in obtaining an engineering apprenticeship placement at Franklin Hodge Industries, based in Hereford.

The first year of Marks apprenticeship was spent full time in Hereford Group Training Association's training centre where he learned all the basics of engineering, welding, sheet metal work and CAD & Design Engineering, but, he was paid as an employee for the whole of his training period. In the 2nd year of his apprenticeship, Mark worked 4 days a week with his employer, Franklin Hodge Industries and attended college 1 day a week, again, whilst earning a salary. After a further 2 years study, Mark achieved his Advanced Apprenticeship and qualified as a CAD Engineer, achieving a HNC in Mechanical Engineering.

Mark is now working full time at Franklin Hodge, producing the designs and drawings for water storage tanks that Franklin Hodge manufacture. Mark said that the 4 years were hard work but he really enjoyed his apprenticeship and has learned valuable hands on skills and gained high level qualifications.

He would like to have a year off now after 6 years of studying but would be keen to progress and complete a Foundation Degree in engineering which he could then top up to a full degree. This would be possible through a higher apprenticeship which Mark could complete, whilst still employed.

Although Mark could have achieved all this without his 'A' levels and saved 2 years extra study, he did find that his IT and Maths skills helped. The benefits of completing the apprenticeship are that Mark has a job that he loves, works for a very supportive company (his supervisor had also completed an apprenticeship, so was able to offer him lots of help and support) and more importantly, he has been able to earn a decent wage from day 1 of his apprenticeship.



Where to go for further information, advice and guidance...



About Lifelong Learning Networks

Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) focus on progression into and through higher education for vocational students. They aim to create new learning opportunities; forge agreement across institutions on how qualifications are valued; and produce publicity to help people understand how they can progress through the system. Networks will clarify existing progression opportunities and engage in collaborative curriculum development in order to meet the needs of the vocational learner

For further information contact:

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire LLN has now ended, but the information it has produced, including possible local progression routes for those with advanced apprenticeships can still be accessed via www.widerhorizons.org.uk, or for those in Herefordshire via www.unicourseshereford.org.

Aimhigher...

www.aimhigher.ac.uk

Aimhigher is a national programme which aims to widen participation in higher education (HE) by raising the awareness, aspirations and attainment of young people from under-represented groups and by strengthening progression routes into HE from vocational courses including apprenticeships.

Jointly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Education (DfE) until July 2011, the Aimhigher programme operates across 45 area partnerships throughout England. Aimhigher encompasses a wide range of activities to engage and motivate students and young people aged 13-30 years, from all walks of life, who have the

potential to progress to HE but are under-achieving, undecided or lacking in confidence. The programme particularly focuses on young people from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, some minority ethnic groups and disabled learners.

Aimhigher offer information, advice and guidance to potential HE students and their teachers, families or employers so that learners are well advised about their future.

For more information contact:

Hilary Fox - Aimhigher Impartial HE Guidance

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Employers

To find out what your next steps are to recruiting an apprentice, or if you would like to talk to someone about Apprenticeships, please visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk Alternatively you can call 08000 150600

Apprentices

To find out what your next steps are to becoming an apprentice or to check out current apprenticeship vacancies in your area visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk Alternatively if you would like to speak about Apprenticeships with a careers adviser face-to-face, contact your local Connexions centre (if you are aged 13-19 years).

Connexions (for ages 13-19)

Visit www.connexions-direct.com and click on the local services tab to find your nearest centre or call 080 800 13219

Next Step—The Adult Careers Service (age 19+)

Search online for Next Step or visit direct.gov.uk/nextstep and use the map or the links to get information about your nearest Next Step office, or call free on **0800 100 900**. Lines are open 7 days per week, 8am – 10pm.