

# Apprenticeships – Guidance for Employers

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Finishes and interiors sector employers offer Apprenticeship places because they recognise their effectiveness at increasing productivity, improving business performance and ensuring a committed and competent workforce.

Recruiting apprentices enables these employers to fill the skills gaps that exist within their current workforce, as apprentices begin to learn sector specific skills directly from day one; developing specialist knowledge that will positively affect the bottom line. In addition to eager, motivated staff who are committed to on the job training and development, industry research has highlighted numerous direct and indirect benefits of Apprenticeships for both recruiting new apprentices and for training the workforce:

- 80% Companies who invest in apprentices have reported a significant increase in employee retention
- 77% of employers believe Apprenticeships make them more competitive
- 76% of those employers who employ apprentices agree they make their workplace more productive
- 81% of client’s favour using a company which takes on apprentices
- 92% of employers who employ apprentices believe that Apprenticeships lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce
- employers who employ apprentices rely on their Apprenticeships programme to provide the skilled workers that they need for the future
- Apprenticeship programmes allow training to take part at the workforce with little disruption to business operations
- flexible, bespoke assessment procedures can be designed to ensure that key business operations are not affected, whilst assessors are on-site

- in terms of the return on investment linked to Apprenticeships, many employers see that their apprentices make a valuable contribution to the business during their training period

## Recruiting and Managing an Apprentice

You can speak with your local college at the start of the academic year and present your opportunity to them, but this will only account for a small pool of people. You must widen your opportunity coverage.

The FIS skills team will guide you through widescale advertising and application attraction, but here are some easy steers for you to follow.

- design your apprenticeship job specification and general apprenticeship vacancy advert for distribution.
- all apprenticeship opportunities must appear on the government apprenticeship website. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- to upload your apprenticeship opportunity to the UK government website you must complete a AVOL (Apprentice Vacancy On Line) template and send to CITB for upload.
- maximise coverage by uploading vacancy to FIS Job Spot. The FIS will lead a digital social media recruitment campaign additionally across all platforms.
- ensure the vacancy appears in your own website and social media channels where applicable.

Bear in mind if your head office is in a different region to the contract that requires apprentices, you should advertise in the site zones. For example, if you are based in Oxford and your contract sites are in central London, it will be very difficult to get an apprentice to site via public transport for a 7.30am start time.

Alternatively, the CITB have dedicated Apprenticeship Officers who can walk you through the whole process. You can find your local Apprenticeship officer by phoning 0344 994 4010.

The Apprenticeship Officer will discuss your requirements and advertise your vacancy via the National Apprenticeship Service website. The Apprenticeship Officer can also provide a list of suitable candidates to pick from, especially if you haven’t recruited an apprentice before. They can also set up interviews and support the interview process.

## **Shared Apprenticeships Scheme**

The Shared Apprenticeship Scheme allows apprentices to complete a full apprenticeship programme by working with a number of different employers, to gain the skill they require to become qualified.

A collaboration between CITB and various regional partners; it has been established in response to industry demand, as a way of providing contractors with an opportunity to support and benefit from offering work experience and training.

Benefits for the employer:

- the apprentice is employed by the Shared Apprenticeship Scheme, so employment responsibilities will be taken care of and the employer is re-charged for the time the apprentice is working.
- the flexible nature of this scheme can provide a business with the chance to secure new contracts and at the same time provide an opportunity for an apprentice.
- a focused selection process gives an employer the opportunity to select the correct person for the company.
- a business can benefit from a significant saving of the costs normally associated with recruitment.
- the apprentice will be fully supported by CITB representatives, who are committed to helping them complete their qualifications and become successful tradespeople.
- at the end of the scheme, or at any point during the process, an employer has an option to take over the apprentice and employ them directly.

## **Apprenticeship format changes**

It is expected by September 2020 all apprenticeship in the old framework formats will be discontinued and withdrawn from all listings and replaced by the new standard format also known as Trailblazer Apprenticeships.

The major differences between the two formats are that standard apprenticeships are created for industry by industry and have an end point assessment (EPO).

The FIS skills team launched the new Trailblazer Standard L2 Interior Systems Installer Apprenticeship is available now and will have full national coverage across the England and Wales in 2020. [Add in the url link](#)

Apprenticeship in Scotland adhere to the current Modern Apprenticeship standard.

## **Higher Apprenticeships**

Higher apprenticeships provide an opportunity to gain Level 4 qualifications or above, with most apprentices gaining an NVQ Level 4, HND, or foundation degree.

A higher apprenticeship can take from one to five years to complete, and involve part-time study at a college, university, or training provider.

## **Claim Funding**

Employers can claim a CITB Apprenticeship Grant for employed apprentices, following approved construction-related apprenticeship programmes of two years or more. To do this, employers must be registered with CITB and up to date with any levy payments.

A Grant is paid for attendance at college, the achievement of a VQ and an apprenticeship standard or framework (until framework withdrawal), up to a maximum of £6,000 for a two-year course or £10,250 for three years.

- The CITB Annual attendance grant means each year you can claim £2500 per apprentice.
- You can also claim the CITB Achievement Grant of £600 on completion of the apprenticeship framework. For a two years apprenticeship that's a minimum of £5600.
- Achievement of an End Point Assessment (EPA) of a new apprenticeship standard (England only) classified as an intermediate apprenticeship means employers can claim an increased CITB £3500 achievement grant.
- The CITB have recently offered £500 to small employers who either pay no levy, or pay the reduced rate of levy, for every apprentice that has started college or with another training provider, from 1 August 2019. (Subject to the eligibility criteria)
- Finally, you can still claim up to £10,250 in CITB grants as CITB Levy payers over three years to help cover the costs of taking on an apprentice, this has remained unchanged since the introduction of the Government Apprenticeship Levy.

Grant is available for:

- construction-related occupations only
- apprenticeships run by a CITB Managing Agency
- apprenticeships run by other managing agencies. You will need to contact your local CITB office for an application form as soon as possible to ensure that you get your grant
- approved specialist occupations where training leads to the achievement of a Vocational Qualification (VQ)

To claim this grant:

- employers must use an approved work-based learning provider
- the apprentice must be registered onto an approved apprenticeship scheme within 20 weeks of the start date of training
- employers will need to complete and submit further grant claim forms at various stages throughout the apprenticeship

**The Government Apprenticeship Levy and CITB Levy are not like for like.**

The Government Apprenticeship Levy is the mechanism where funds to cover apprenticeship training costs are generated from large employers, rather than from general taxation. This levy is only designed to cover training fees.

Only employers that **pay** more than £3m in wages are liable to pay the apprenticeship levy. Levy-paying employers contribute 0.5 per cent of their pay bill into a fund each month, which can be reinvested in apprenticeship training for their business.

The CITB Levy is used to support construction employers to make sure industry has the skilled workforce it needs. This includes supporting employers with the costs of having an apprentice, such as wages, travel, tools etc.

The CITB levy is in place to cover these apprentice costs as well as a wide range of other benefits to you, such as; funding for skills initiatives, grant support for training, promoting the industry to keep a flow of incoming talent, research to identify what skills needs are coming and to develop quality standards.

**First time apprenticeship onboarding**

Here are some of the basic points to consider:

- present your apprenticeship proposal once you have identified your apprenticeship need.
- if you are an Apprentice Levy Payer, register and activate your 'Digital Apprenticeship Service' (DAS) account.
- prepare accordingly for the recruitment process.
- prepare for pre interview candidate requirements, such as basic literacy and numeracy testing.
- prepare your apprentice for their first steps on site.
- prepare your site supervisor(s) for onsite apprentices.
- understand and prepare for the 20% off site educational requirements
- think ahead and plan for apprenticeship retention
- ensure you are demonstrating and promoting your commitment to any section 106 contractual criteria and social value.

**Transfer of apprenticeship levy vouchers.**

There are **two** main reasons an employer would seek to apply for the transfer of apprenticeship levy vouchers.

The first being you have maximised your current apprenticeship levy funds and are seeking to take on more apprentices. Secondly you are a non-levy paying employer seeking to employ apprentices and wish to draw down vouchers from the supply chain.

In our sector you can draw down apprenticeship levy vouchers from Sir Robert McAlpine, Saint Gobain (including British Gypsum) and Encon Neville Long.

To apply for the transfer of apprenticeship levy vouchers, the eligibility criteria is as follows:

- must be in their supply chain
- must have 50 or more employees

**What transfers can pay for**

Transferred funds will be used to pay for the training and assessment cost of the apprenticeships agreed with the receiving employer. Sending and receiving employers need to know that:

- funds are paid monthly for the duration of the apprenticeship
- only levy-paying employers can make a transfer

- any employer can receive and use transferred funds
- sending and receiving employers must be registered on the apprenticeship service
- a transfer can only be used to pay for training and assessment for apprenticeship standards
- transfers can only be used for new starts, except where the apprentice is changing employer and an agreement to continue their apprenticeship with their new employer is through a transfer of levy funds

For further information and guidance please contact [skills@thefis.org](mailto:skills@thefis.org)

**The FIS Skills team monitor changes to funding status, eligibility changes and government apprenticeship levy policy changes continually. This document is live and will be updated accordingly in real time.**