

2019/20

Handbook for employers



Welcome Pack 2020

Employers

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a genuine job with an accompanying assessment and skills development programme. It is a way for individuals to earn while they learn, gaining valuable skills and knowledge in a specific job role. The apprentice gains this through a wide mix of learning in the workplace, formal off-the-job training and the opportunity to practice new skills in a real work environment.

Apprenticeships benefit employers and individuals, and by boosting the skills of the workforce, they help to **improve economic productivity**.

The apprenticeship programme

Apprentice standards consist of:

- + **ON PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT**
Enables the apprentice to demonstrate their workplace abilities and prove that they can do specific job-related tasks.
- + **OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING**
Training which is received by the apprentice, during

the apprentice's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement. By normal working hours, we mean paid hours excluding overtime.

- + **ENGLISH AND MATHS FUNCTIONAL SKILLS LEVEL 2**
Needs to be achieved if the apprentice hasn't already got GCSEs (grade C or level 4 or above).
- + **GATEWAY**
Towards the end apprenticeship, the apprentice will be 'signed-off' as ready for the end point assessment – this sign-off is known as the 'gateway'. This indicates that the apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviours are at the level required to attain their apprenticeship and they have completed all on mandatory programme elements including functional skills English and Maths.
- + **END POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)**
Separate to any qualifications or other assessment that the apprentice may undertake during the on-programme stage of the apprenticeship. The assessment will be graded (in most cases), and the Independent Assessment

Organisation (IAO) and assessor must be independent of, and separate from DSS.

On programme

- + **THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)**
Once your apprentice has completed the on boarding process, their trainer/coach will work on an individual training plan (ILP) that will take into account any prior learning. This will also include agreed dates, modes and methods of delivery of the off-the-job training.
- + **PROGRESS REVIEWS (PRS)**
Progress reviews are an essential part of the apprenticeship programme as they inform the overall progress the apprentice is making across all components of the apprenticeship. PRs enable a three-way discussion on skills, knowledge and behaviours being developed and areas for further improvement. Formal Progress Reviews should be planned every eight weeks with the apprentice, the trainer/coach and line manager. These will need feedback from the line manager, and they will need to sign the progress review.

Induction

A well-planned induction is essential if the apprentice is to fully understand the apprenticeship programme. The apprentice should complete the induction either online or face to face. The induction, as a minimum, will include the following:

- Role of the apprentice, employer and trainer/coach
- Breakdown of the apprenticeship standard
- On-programme assessment
- 20% off-the-job
- On-the-job
- Progress reviews
- Smart Assessor (online portfolio) – log on and navigation
- Gateway
- End Point Assessment
- Grading - grades that can be achieved
- Appeals procedure and code of conduct

Intervention, Support and Safeguarding

+ INTERVENTION OFFICER AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

All apprentices are supported to achieve their full potential through individual and agreed learning from induction, whilst on programme and when progressing. To support apprentice's progress further, the Intervention Officer will work with them to:

- offer additional learning support through one to one working;
- identify and support additional learning needs or disabilities;
- offer individual support for

any apprentice at risk of not making the planned progress to successfully achieve;

- support with any personal issues or concerns;
- support in the development of personal, behaviours, social and employability skills;
- create a sense of value, respect and wellbeing as well as a positive attitude to learning and increasing motivation;
- raise awareness of issues such as safeguarding, keeping safe and British values
- offer in depth careers information, advice and guidance and progress routes at the end of their apprenticeship.

+ SIX-WEEK SIGN-OFF

The intervention trainer will liaise with the new apprentice's line manager to complete a 4-week probation in the first four weeks of the start of an apprenticeship. The feedback from the employer about the apprentice's behaviour plays a significant role prior to confirming the apprentice to the job and/or the apprenticeship programme in the 6th week of the apprenticeship start. The employer's feedback enables the intervention trainer to put in early interventions if needed and thus support the apprentice.

+ SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES

Whilst apprentices, as employees, are not covered by safeguarding as defined in The Children's Act 2004, you still have a duty of care to ensure that the apprentice is studying and learning in a safe and healthy environment. We have arrangements in place for referrals of any safeguarding concerns, and these are documented as part of the progress reviews.

Smart Assessor

+ TRACKING AND MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF APPRENTICES

Our e-portfolio system is used to track the progress of each apprentice so that they achieve on time. Where an apprentice is deemed to be making insufficient progress, the trainer/coach will agree on an improvement plan with the apprentice and their line manager.

Each apprentice's progress is risk assessed using the RAG rating as follows:

- Red – Indicates the apprentice is off track and intervention is required as there are significant risks to the progress being made by the apprentice
- Amber – The apprentice is on track
- Green – The apprentice is ahead

+ OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING AND ABSENCE

All apprentices are accepted on the basis that they attend the agreed off-the-job training and work placement training, as outlined in the training plan. This training could be virtual, at the workplace or at DSS premises. All training sessions will be issued and recorded on Smart Assessor. Subsequently, the apprentices are required to complete and maintain time logs on Smart Assessor accurately and in a timely manner.

Persistent or regular absenteeism is a disciplinary offence and may lead to dismissal from the programme. If an apprentice is removed from the programme, then they are no longer an apprentice, and national minimum wages rules apply.

If the apprentice is not able to attend training, we require you or the apprentice to contact us.

We appreciate that business needs are paramount so if there is an occasion when the apprentice is needed at work instead of attending, then please notify us so this can be accommodated. DSS will contact you on any day that the apprentice does not attend and inform you of their absence.

We will also embed in these reports the KPIs relevant to each employer and customise the frequencies of the reports.

Quality

All apprenticeship learning and training is subject to internal and external inspection.

- + **INTERNAL INSPECTIONS**
Internal inspection will be conducted through DSS's own quality assurance processes. This includes regular observations of all processes and in particular, the quality and effectiveness of all learning sessions and reviews. At periodic intervals, the views of the apprentice and employer will be sought.
- + **EXTERNAL INSPECTIONS**
External inspection will be through Ofsted.

Reporting a concern

If you are concerned that the apprentice is at risk, please contact the DSS designated safeguarding officer at safeguarding@digitalskilluk.com or 0208 532 3413.

+ COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

Digital Skills Solutions is committed to providing you with the best possible service. If you have a complaint, then we want to hear it so we can put it right. All complaints are monitored by senior management, and action is taken to improve the quality of our services. Please visit our DSS website to make a complaint.

Contact

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