

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Accessing the apprenticeship Levy

### General

#### Q What are apprenticeships for existing staff?

**A** Existing staff accessing an apprenticeship combine work with funded part-time study, allowing you to gain the practical work experience and valuable skills, and earn a nationally recognised qualification to be proficient in your role.

#### Q Does the Levy cover CPD for existing staff?

**A** Yes, it does! The apprenticeship can be higher or lower to a qualification an individual already holds, as long as it allows them to gain substantive new skills.

The programme needs to align to your current role for career development. **It cannot be used to enable a career change.** For instance, if an academic wanted to enrol on a gardening apprenticeship, they would need to secure a gardener post to be eligible.

#### Q What are apprenticeship standards?

**A** An apprenticeship standard is essentially the job role that the apprentice will be training for.

With the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, the government has also introduced over 800 Apprenticeship Standards. Each Standard is job-specific and identifies the key knowledge, skills, and behaviours for that particular job. In addition, each Standard requires an end-point assessment to ensure that the learner is fully competent by the end of their Programme.

Please visit the [Institute for Apprenticeships](https://www.institute-for-apprenticeships.org.uk/) to view a list of current apprenticeship standards.

#### Q What kinds of levels are there?

**A** The different levels of apprenticeships are outlined below:

Intermediate: entry-level with no experience

- Level 2, 12-18 months
- Equivalent to 5 GCSE A\*-C or 9 – 4.

Advanced: for those with some experience, looking to specialise

- Level 3, 18-48 months

- Equivalent to 2 A-Levels.

Higher (and degree):

- Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7, 24 months+
- Equivalent to Foundation degree and above.

An apprenticeship can take between one to four years to complete. The duration will depend on factors such as the level of the programme and type of standard, as well as the apprentice's ability and previous experience.

#### **Q When do apprenticeships start?**

**A** Some programmes - especially those who run in the traditional 'one day a week at college' format - start at set times of the year, typically in September. Some popular programmes will have a fresh cohort starting in January. Many learners, however, prefer to study more flexibly and many training providers offer this route. In those circumstances, it is likely that the learner can start at any time.

#### **Q How long does an apprenticeship last?**

**A** This is usually determined by the length of the apprenticeship standard (programme) but will be a minimum of 12 months.

#### **Q What is a Degree Apprenticeship?**

**A** Degree apprenticeships are a new type of programme, usually offered by universities. Learners achieve a full Bachelors or Masters degree as part of their programme.

#### **Q What happens if I need to take an extended period of leave during my apprenticeship e.g. Maternity/Sick?**

**A** You would need to undertake a Break in Learning, which can be granted in special circumstances (such as maternity or sickness) for a maximum of 12 months. After that period, you could then re-start your programme.

#### **Q How do existing members of staff apply for an apprenticeship?**

**A** They can apply at any time, via the form on the [Staff Development pages](#). It is vital that the manager's approval is sought: they need to give permission for the staff member to spend a proportion of their work time studying for their qualification (off-the-job training).

Once a staff member submits their application, it will automatically be sent to their manager to approve. It will then be reviewed by the Staff Apprenticeships Team in POD who will get in touch regarding next steps.

## Finances and Eligibility

### Q How is an apprenticeship funded?

**A** The University of York pays 0.5% of our pay bill to an apprenticeship levy account. You can draw on these funds to pay for the **training and assessment** associated with the apprenticeship.

It cannot be spent on:

- Salary Costs.
- Managerial (or other staffing) costs.
- Travel expenses and subsidiary costs.
- Work placement programmes.
- The cost of setting up an apprenticeship programme.

The Apprenticeship Levy is managed by the Staff Apprenticeships Team in POD.

### Q What are the eligibility criteria for apprenticeship levy funding?

**A** Individuals must satisfy the following criteria:

- Employment at York for a minimum of 30 hours per week (although employees on fewer hours can study over a longer period)
- Be over 16 years old.
- Have a contract of employment which covers the duration of the apprenticeship (a minimum of 12 months)
- Are not already undertaking another apprenticeship, or another DfE funded FE/HE programmes.
- Have been a UK or EEA resident for three years before the start of their Apprenticeship.
- The apprenticeship can be higher or lower to a qualification an individual (apprentice) already holds, permitting it allows them to gain substantive new skills.

For further details, see the full apprenticeship funding rules at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

### Q Can people with a degree enrol on an apprenticeship programme?

**A** Yes, so long as the apprenticeship will allow the learner to acquire substantive new skills and the learning content is materially different from any other qualifications they already hold. For example, an administrator with a degree in Geography could undertake a programme in Business Administration, as the learning content and skill set is materially different from their degree course.

### Q What if I have already achieved some of the Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs) for the standard (programme) I wish to undertake?

**A** If you have evidence of the KSBs that you already have, then your training provider would need to take a Recognition of Prior Learning check to ensure that you are eligible for the programme.

**Q Do apprentices have to be employed full time?**

**A** The expectation is that all learners - whether existing staff or appointed as an apprentice - are employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week. This is to ensure that they can undertake sufficient regular training and OTJ activity. Where a learner is employed for less than 30 hours per week, you must extend the expected duration of the apprenticeship to take account of this and it may require agreeing a flexible delivery method with the training provider. The Staff Apprenticeships Team can hold these discussions with the training provider on your behalf.

**Q Can a staff member's FTC be increased to meet the minimum 30 hours per week?**

**A** Yes, but this would need to be with the agreement of the learner and manager and the increase in salary and other on-costs would need to be met by the employing Department.

**Q Do existing staff need to move onto an apprenticeship contract and pay scale?**

**A** No, as long as the programme aligns to their current role they will remain on their existing terms and conditions. If someone wants to study for a programme that does **not** align to their current role, they would need to secure a relevant job and would then move onto the terms and conditions for apprentices. For instance, if an academic wanted to enrol on a gardening apprenticeship, they would need to secure the vacant gardener post and move onto the terms and conditions for apprentices, including pay, pension, and a fixed term contract.

# The Apprenticeship Programme

## Q How will it be structured/delivered?

### A i. A period of training of at least twelve months, with an end-point assessment

The duration of the programme will depend on factors such as the level of the programme, the type of standard and your ability and previous experience. Throughout the apprenticeship, there will be additional requirements, such as building a portfolio of evidence to meet the standard's criteria and passing an end-point assessment for successful completion.

### ii. 20% off-the-job training

Approximately 20% of your working week (a minimum of 6 hours per week on average) takes place at a college, university, in online learning, or at a specialist training provider to enable you to learn new skills, knowledge and behaviours that you can then apply to the apprenticeship that you are working towards and your role. This may be a block release or one day a week or 2 half days as agreed with the training provider and your line manager.

## Q What is off-the-job training and what does it look like?

### A Essentially, these are activities within the apprentices' role, away from their day-to-day job and the apprentice gets to learn and practice their skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to complete the programme.

The time spent on off-the-job training should be at least 20% (a minimum of 6 hours per week on average) and is part of working hours.

Examples include:

- Training Provider: Virtual tutorials, practical (college-based) workshops.
- Delivered at the place of work: mentoring, work shadowing or practical training in different departments, delivering a project, attending courses, lectures or workshops off-site as long as the training is directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard.

Activities which are part of the apprentice's day-to-day job do not count towards off-the-job training.

See the [definition of off-the-job training](#) and some [myth-busting facts](#) provided by GOV.UK

## Q As an apprentice, do I have to organise the time required for the 20% 'off-the-job' training?

### A This would need to be planned and agreed with your manager. It is your manager's responsibility to protect the agreed time required for your 'off-the-job' training.

**Q With current workloads being high and staff stretched to capacity, it's difficult to know what one can 'stop doing' to accommodate the required 20% 'off-the-job' training?**

**A** What you 'stop doing' needs to be identified and agreed with your manager. While capacity will be reduced in the short term, the long-term benefits are worth it. By upskilling, you're investing in your - and your organisations - future. The 20% 'off-the-job' training will help fill identified skills gaps in your team and target opportunities for growth.

**Q What is the End Point Assessment?**

**A** An End-point assessment takes place at the end of an apprenticeship, to ensure the learner has reached the necessary levels of knowledge, skills and behaviours and is ready to undertake their qualification.

**Q What is a Training Plan?**

**A** Training Plans replaced Commitment Statements. They are produced by the training provider and signed by the learner, employer, and training provider. This three-party statement sets out how the learner will be supported to achieve their qualification.

The Staff Apprenticeships Team signs on behalf of the university.

**Q What is an Apprenticeship Agreement?**

**A** An Apprenticeship Agreement exists between the employer (the university) and the learner. It is a formal document that sets out the Apprenticeship Standard and the duration of the programme. It is co-signed by the learner and the Staff Apprenticeships Team.

The Staff Apprenticeships Team signs on behalf of the university.

## Managers of existing staff apprentices

### Q Who monitors the learner's training progress?

**A** The training provider is key: they should hold regular reviews with the learner and include you in some of those discussions. You should be holding regular one to one meetings, where you can discuss your team member's progress and any concerns.

### Q Who liaises with the training provider?

**A** The training provider will liaise with you in relation to the progress of your learner. The Staff Apprenticeships Team in POD liaises with the training provider on all central activity, such as initial enquiries, setting up the payments and signing contracts. POD can also step in if a problem with the training provider is not resolved.

### Q A Grade 4 team member wants to sign up to a programme that would potentially qualify them for a higher grade, on completion. What does this mean?

**A** As long as the programme is relevant to the learner's current role, they should be eligible to study for it. However, you will need to ensure they understand that they are accessing the training purely for developmental purposes and undertaking the opportunity will not result in a re-grade. The development may prepare them for a progressive role but is no guarantee of promotion: it should, however, enable them to compete in an open recruitment exercise with more chances of success.

### Q One of my team members is interested in accessing a programme (standard). Do I still need to give them 20% 'off-the-job'?

**A** Yes, this is a statutory requirement and is there to ensure the learner achieves the right level of knowledge, skills, and behaviours for their Standard. Your support is crucial in enabling this time to happen.

### Q What are the manager's responsibilities?

**A** Apprenticeships are development opportunities that require commitment from both the individual doing the apprenticeship and their manager. The support from the manager is crucial for the staff member to be able to complete this qualification. Lack of support is one of the main reasons for staff withdrawing from an apprenticeship.

Please refer to the [Apprenticeships at York: Managers' Handbook](#), for further information.

**Q What happens if line managers change during the course of the programme?**

**A** Please inform the [Staff Apprenticeships Team](#) as soon as possible so that the learner receives continuous support.

**Q What if a staff member leaves during the apprenticeship?**

**A** If a staff member terminates before the successful completion of their apprenticeship, then the [Staff Apprenticeships Team](#) must be notified as soon as possible. This is to ensure that the levy payments to the training provider are stopped, and no overpayments are made.

**Q What happens once my staff member finishes their qualification?**

**A** Please notify the [Staff Apprenticeships Team](#) as soon as your staff member has finished their apprenticeship and send a copy of their certificate for their record.

**Q My learner attends College regularly for their training, but it's closed during the Summer. Should they be coming into work on the day when they'd usually be at College?**

**A** Yes. As they will not be required at College, they should work in their usual place of work (whether that's working from home or on campus). However, they will still be accruing OTJ time during the holidays and should record these hours and activities as they usually would.