

DEFINING AN APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) wants more people to be work-ready and equipped with the right skills at the right time to support businesses and the economy, and reduce unemployment levels in Scotland.

Modern Apprenticeships are a well established and respected method of work-based learning. Work-based learning pathways in Scotland have been extended with the introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships for school pupils and Graduate Level Apprenticeships.

Employer leadership and involvement are vital to make apprenticeships work for business. The employer-led (SAAB) gives business the strongest platform it has ever had to directly influence Scottish Government policy thinking and the processes that underpin apprenticeship design and development.

The Board's establishment is timely with recent, key changes in the apprenticeship policy and jobs landscape including:

- The introduction of the UK Apprenticeship Levy
- Increased targets for the number of apprenticeships funded by Scottish Government
- The diminishing role and coverage of some Sector Skills Councils (or approved Standards Setting Organisations) - in ensuring apprenticeships match industry needs
- The changing structure and nature of jobs in industries which requires apprenticeships to keep pace with future skills needs

These changes make it more essential than ever that the integrity, quality and robustness of the apprenticeship system in Scotland is maintained and strengthened.

One of SAAB's first tasks is to develop a definition of an apprenticeship – in the form of key principles - which provides clarity for everyone and to ensure that it meets future needs. I am delighted to launch this consultation to support that work. It sets out the key principles we view as critical to the integrity of apprenticeships in Scotland and to the development of a workbased learning system that benefits individuals, employers and the economy.

Please take this opportunity to contribute your views which will be used to inform our policy recommendations to Scottish Government.

David Whitehouse

Chair of the SAAB Frameworks and Standards Working Group on Defining an Apprenticeship

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT 2

The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) was established in 2016 to give employers and industry a leading role in apprenticeships in Scotland; enabling better alignment of industry demand with apprenticeship design and development. Employers are the heart of SAAB and are integral to our vision for a truly demand-led, responsive and adaptive system. For further details of the work and membership of SAAB, visit the SAAB page on the [SDS website](#).

SAAB is responsible for providing advice and making recommendations – from an employer perspective - on apprenticeships in Scotland to support Scottish Government policy.

SAAB has identified elements that contribute to a successful system in Scotland and reviewed some best practice in other countries. This work has been carried out to develop a set of key principles for apprenticeships in Scotland. Some of the principles identified are already in place, while others could potentially bring significant change.

We believe that a definition is needed to:

- Provide clarity on what apprenticeships are and what differentiates them from other qualifications and methods of training and learning
- To ensure that Scottish apprenticeships are recognised as robust, industry-led and quality assured work-based learning programmes which provide transferable skills across the UK and internationally

Six principles have been agreed by SAAB and will be used as the basis to define apprenticeships in Scotland. A further eight principles are proposed, and these form the basis for the consultation questions.

We are seeking contributions from a wide range of stakeholders to help shape these principles, and to offer views on how any necessary change might be achieved. We are asking respondents to be aspirational in their views and identify opportunities for excellence in apprenticeships in Scotland.

In responding to these questions, we would like stakeholders to consider Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Level Apprenticeships, as well as Modern Apprenticeships.

Responses will be collated and analysed to inform SAAB's policy recommendations to Scottish Government on employer requirements for an overarching definition of apprenticeships in Scotland.

DEFINING AN APPRENTICESHIP: SIX UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES 3

The following six principles have been discussed and agreed by SAAB and will underpin our recommendations on the definition of apprenticeships in Scotland.

Principle 1. Apprenticeships and Employment

All post-school apprentices are employed¹.

Employer demand and employment status are fundamental to the success of an apprenticeship and are what clearly differentiates it from a 'training programme'. The apprentice must be employed in a genuine job and not solely for the purpose of delivering an apprenticeship.

- An apprentice must be an employee from the first day of their apprenticeship
- An apprentice must be paid at least a wage consistent with the law for the time they are in work and in off-the-job training
- The job role must provide the opportunity for the apprentice to gain and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve their apprenticeship

Principle 2. Apprenticeships and Occupational Pathways

Each apprenticeship is a programme of work-based learning designed to develop competence in a defined occupation and apprenticeship pathway.

To develop competence, an apprentice must be employed in a clearly defined occupation or job. Whilst generic or cross-sectoral skills – such as entrepreneurialism and business improvement – can enhance an apprenticeship and support development of a wider skill set, they do not develop occupation-specific competence.

Principle 3. Availability and Investment

Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of sectors where there is demonstrable industry demand.

Apprenticeships can support the development of skills and competency across a wide range of sectors, including niche industries where employee numbers may be low, but are essential to retain specialist or traditional skills. There needs to be a strong business case for public funding investment for development of frameworks.

¹ This applies to all apprenticeships with the exception of Foundation Apprenticeships, which are delivered in the senior phase of school. They require significant work experience over a sustained period to satisfy the competence requirements for the award.

DEFINING AN APPRENTICESHIP: PRINCIPLES FOR CONSULTATION

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Principle 4. Equality of Opportunity

Apprenticeships support equality of opportunity and are designed to ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

We firmly support the values of inclusion and diversity. We are committed to equality of opportunity within apprenticeships, and to ensuring that all individuals achieve their full potential, regardless of their personal characteristics, beliefs or experiences.

Each apprenticeship framework submitted for approval must provide information on the sector's employment demographics, actual or perceived barriers to access and measures to improve participation from under-represented groups. SAAB will work with partners to develop advice on approval criteria which identify any impact on different groups and provide options to remove potential barriers.

Principle 5. Documentation

Apprenticeship Framework documentation is clear, accessible and in an easy to understand format.

Apprenticeship frameworks in Scotland are currently set out in long documents and include information such as registration, recruitment and selection, and health and safety requirements. SAAB will advise on how framework documentation can be reviewed to simplify the information for employers and stakeholders.

Principle 6. Relationship to Occupational and Professional Standards

Apprenticeship frameworks are based on occupational standards and integrate professional standards where necessary. They are designed to develop the apprentice's technical and meta-skills.

Occupational and Professional Standards are critical because they define the skills, knowledge and understanding needed by an individual within a given industry to perform competently at a specified level.

They allow recognition and transfer of skills and competence across sectors and borders. Apprenticeships and their associated qualifications must reflect occupational, and where relevant, professional standards to maximise the value of the apprenticeship to employers and individuals.

The following eight key principles are also proposed and form the basis for the consultation questions. Explanatory comments have been included to highlight some current practice and key issues. Responses from the consultation will assist in further refining these principles; the consultation survey can be found [here](#).

Principle 7: Framework Design Process

The requirements of an Apprenticeship are set out in a framework document defined by industry which adapts to emerging and future needs.

Apprenticeships are designed for industry, by industry. To be fit for purpose, the process for designing the apprenticeship framework's requirements must ensure that industry input represents the needs of the whole sector: from large multi-national companies to SMEs and micro businesses.

Framework design should also be informed by an understanding of the practicalities of delivery; therefore input is needed from other stakeholders such as Awarding Bodies and Training Providers as necessary. The processes that support the development of frameworks need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing industry needs.

Principle 8: Qualifications and Pathways for Progression

Apprenticeships offer internationally recognised, accredited technical and professional qualifications, at SCQF levels 5 to 12, with clear pathways for progression.

In Scotland, the mandatory qualification requirements are set at different levels for Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level Apprenticeships and these are accredited and recognised on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)².

In some sectors, there is also a requirement to gain **professional** qualifications (for example, some financial services).

Generic or cross-sectoral skills can also contribute to a successful, robust and future-proofed apprenticeship system. For example, Modern Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 5-7 include five Core Skills³ which are deemed most likely to be needed in a work environment while Technical and Professional Apprenticeships at SCQF Levels 8-11 include Career Skills units, to reflect work based requirements at a higher level.

Careers Skills include units such as "Negotiate in a Business Environment" and "Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your organisation". Other examples of generic or cross-sectoral skills could include project management, commercial awareness, analytical skills, and leadership.

²The SCQF supports understanding of the range of qualifications in Scotland and how they compare to each other. <http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/>

³The five Core Skills are: Communication, Numeracy, Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving and Working with Others

Principle 9: Framework Content and Assessment

Each Apprenticeship framework describes the required content and method of learning and the associated assessment methodology.

In Scotland, competence is assessed throughout the apprenticeship and although some sectors consolidate learning through an end test or skills test (e.g. construction), there is no requirement for consolidation across all apprenticeships.

In other countries, there is a more blended approach. A report undertaken by SEMTA ⁴ in 2017 reviewed the assessment approaches for apprenticeship systems judged internationally as being of high quality (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands). All of the systems reviewed – apart from the Netherlands – require apprentices to pass written examinations as well as tests of their practical competence at the end of their training.

An end test will not be necessary for all sectors, but consolidation of learning can be important for identifying if the apprentice has gained the necessary skills, competencies and behaviours for that sector. Consolidation of learning can be applied through a wide range of methods including appraisal, 360 degree feedback and reflective accounts.

Principle 10: Common and Specific Elements

Each apprenticeship is designed to develop transferable skills across the sector.

There are over 80 apprenticeship frameworks across a wide range of sectors in Scotland, designed to be transferable within a sector, rather than company-specific.

Apprenticeship policy and the current model in Scotland should mitigate against apprenticeships which are too job or task specific, but there may be an opportunity to look at developing a core and options model. This would include core elements – common to all apprenticeships at that level within the sector – and specific requirements which reflect differing occupational pathways across the sector.

This could further support transferability of skills by combining common learning elements applicable to a range of jobs across the sector, with specific elements which focus on individual occupational pathways.

⁴SEMTA (2017). The Role of Qualifications and End Point Assessment in Apprenticeships: An International Comparison. Available online at: <http://semta.org.uk/images/pdf/Role-of--Qualifications-and-End-Point-Assessment-in-Apprenticeships-March2017.pdf>

Principle 11: Supporting the Apprentice in the workplace

Each apprentice is supported in the workplace by a trained mentor and in their learning and assessment by a qualified trainer/ educator/ assessor.

Mentoring is an important part of high quality apprenticeships. Mentoring can ease the transition into (or within) the workplace by helping young people to understand their role in the workplace; how to contribute to the success of the business; and how to develop their own career pathway. A recent study ⁵ noted the benefits of mentoring to businesses, including improved communication between the apprentice and the employer and improved quality and relevance of the training.

Mentoring can be undertaken by a range of people such as a dedicated mentor; a work colleague or peer support; or a training provider or assessor, depending on the size of the business. Currently, while promoted as good practice, there is no requirement for apprentices to be allocated a trained mentor.

Principle 12: Type of Learning and Duration

Apprenticeship learning is work-based and delivered to fit the requirements of the apprenticeship framework, the needs of the business and the individual's pace of learning.

Off-the-job training

The key focus of apprenticeships is on work-based learning to develop competency, skills and knowledge, with the content of learning defined by employers to meet the skills needs of the sector.

Countries such as Germany and Switzerland, and more recently England, also mandate off-the-job learning in addition to work-based learning. Off-the-job learning is defined as learning which is completed outside of the normal day to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of an apprenticeship. It is much wider than learning delivered in a training centre of college or formal qualifications and can encompass activity such as simulation exercises, shadowing and industry visits. It must, however, be directly relevant to the apprenticeship and add value.

In Scotland, off-the-job learning is mandatory only for those apprenticeships where industry specifically requires it (e.g. engineering). Some sectors specify formal off-the-job learning to deliver underpinning knowledge; others do not require taught learning but may deliver additional training outside the workplace or outwith the apprentice's normal working duties. For some apprenticeships, there will be no off-the-job learning and all learning will be delivered on the job.

⁵ "The role of mentoring in supporting Apprenticeships". Andy Hirst, Christina Short and Sini Rinne, Cambridge Policy Consultants, Research paper 20 April 2014. Accessed at: <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/research-paper-20-role-mentoring-supporting-apprenticeships>

Minimum Duration

There are set durations for Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Level Apprenticeships.

Scottish Modern Apprenticeships have retained the original premise of ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of the employer and the apprentice, and thus only a few sectors mandate a minimum duration. There are some indicators of duration for Modern Apprenticeships: each framework set out an estimated duration for the average learner and the number of SCQF Credit Points can also be used as a proxy to estimate learning hours. While these are a useful guide, they may not fully recognise how long it can take to consolidate learning, embed skills and fully develop competence in the workplace.

Other countries (including Germany and Switzerland) have a minimum duration for apprenticeship. It is recognised, however, that the apprenticeship and education systems in these countries are very different from Scotland.

A minimum duration may have benefits to both the apprentice and the employer, by giving the apprentice wider experience in the business and support to embed new skills.

An apprenticeship should include achievement of the mandatory components, enable the embedding of skills and competence and support the transition from being an apprentice to becoming a skilled worker.

Principle 13: Apprenticeship Agreement

Employer and apprentice roles and responsibilities are clearly set out in an apprenticeship agreement.

An apprenticeship agreement would be a standardised document, additional to the contract of employment, which sets out the relative roles and responsibilities of employers and employees during the completion of an apprenticeship.

Employers have a fundamental role in supporting apprentices' learning. Employer input and commitment is essential to ensure that the apprentice achieves competence in the role for mutual benefit. The role of the employer is to transfer skills, knowledge and experience to the apprentice and provide learning opportunities in the workplace and, if required, allow time away to undertake any off-the-job learning.

The apprentice should understand the content of the apprenticeship, and the learning required to successfully become competent and achieve the apprenticeship. They should also be able, and willing, to commit to the requirements of the apprenticeship. This can include, for example, attending courses, keeping records, contributing to the review process, undertaking assessments and keeping their employer informed of progress.

Principle 14: Quality Assurance

Apprenticeships are underpinned by robust quality assurance processes from design to delivery

A range of organisations are involved in the quality assurance of apprenticeships, from the development of underpinning standards, and approval of apprenticeship frameworks, to the delivery of training. Each organisation has – and will continue to have – a distinct role, but there may be opportunities to share best practice and adopt more collaborative working.

HOW TO RESPOND

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You can respond to this consultation online [here](#)

You will first be asked to complete a Respondent Information Form. The Respondent Information Form lets us know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public.

Your response can be added to, saved, or amended at any time during the consultation, but please ensure your final response is submitted before the consultation closes.

Responding by other means

We want our consultation to be accessible, and welcome a diverse range of responses.

If, for any reason, you are unable to submit your response through our online form, please contact us by emailing apprenticeships@sds.co.uk to arrange responding in an alternative format.

Deadline

The consultation was published on 20 November 2017 and will close at midnight on Wednesday 20th December 2017.

Next Steps

After the consultation has closed, all the responses received will be analysed to help inform the definition of an apprenticeship and any associated changes required. Where permission has been given, we will make all responses available to the public at the SAAB page on the [SDS website](#). We aim to publish these responses in early 2018.

Enquiries and complaints

If you have any feedback about the consultation process or how this consultation has been conducted you can email your comments to: apprenticeships@sds.co.uk