

Apprenticeship Approvals Group
**CHAIR'S END OF
YEAR REPORT
2024**



From Ruth Jennings,
Chair of the Apprenticeship
Approvals Group (AAG).

This year has seen the AAG continue to deliver development driven by and for industry, with future skills in mind.

The challenging operating background we experienced in 2023 has continued into 2024. But the AAG - with the support of our employers and partners - has been thriving, pushing forward with our programme of work and effecting real and lasting change.

All of this has added into a tough operating environment, but one through which the AAG has illustrated resilience and a pragmatic approach, whilst continuing with business-as-usual mindset.

The quality lens

Building on our stage gate work from last year, six new apprenticeship frameworks have now been developed using our new employer-led approach.

Our approach continues to develop as we look to continuously improve across all areas, keeping quality at the heart, ensuring development that is right for our apprentices and the industries they work in.

The additional pathways added to the Digital Technology Graduate Apprenticeship in particular reflecting employer need.

These are:

- Digital Technology at SCQF Level 6
- Digital Technology at SCQF Level 8 – additional pathways
- Engineering at SCQF Level 7
- Aquaculture at SCQF Level 5
- Aquaculture at SCQF Level 7
- Driving Goods Vehicles at SCQF Level 6

AAG has also had the opportunity to review, challenge and refresh seven frameworks.

These are:

- Youthwork at SCQF Level 6
- Youthwork at SCQF Level 7
- Fashion & Textiles at SCQF Level 7
- Hairdressing & Barbering at SCQF Level 5
- Hairdressing & Barbering at SCQF Level 6
- Custodial Care and Practice at SCQF Level 6
- Science Industries Quality Technician at SCQF Level 6

Eight of these frameworks have already been approved, with a further 6 due to be signed off within the next 6 months.

I also want to highlight the stellar work ongoing around self-funded development, particularly activity supporting the equestrian sector.

The AAG continues to respond as industries evolve. We have already seen a number of changes to industry requirements as we continue to build back post-Covid and translate our ways of working.



Developing key sectors

The opportunity around developing the Operational Department Practitioner Graduate Apprenticeship programme has been key this year. It is delivering development to a key sector, at a pace and timeline that works for the industry and the talent challenges it faces.

Following decisions implemented by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), to adjust the entry level requirement for Operating Department Practitioners to degree level, an urgent response was needed to adapt the previous Diploma programme into a Graduate Apprenticeship. In order to ensure no interruption to the pipeline of talent, the new GA required to be in place for academic year 24/25.

Demonstrating the agility of the employer led approach, and in direct collaboration with HEI, HCPC and Trade Unions, this has been achieved.

This not only protects the talent pipeline but widens the opportunity for recruitment through the existing workforce.

Building for the future

This year has seen a number of complex areas of industry work on transforming their development. The outcomes of that work is likely to play out throughout 2024 and beyond. This is across a number of diverse areas including aquaculture, engineering, construction, plumbing, transport, service, fashion, textiles and hospitality.

As we continue to support development activities, the range of sectors AAG supports will further extend to include into energy, business administration and management.

The frameworks we will work on next are:

- Modern Apprenticeships in Service (Customer Service, Retail and Travel) at SCQF Level 5 & 6
- Hospitality at SCQF Level 5
- Professional Cookery at SCQF Level 5 & 6
- Construction: Design & Contracting at SCQF Level 6
- Land-use (TBC)
- Accounting (TBC)

Along with supporting the critical employer and wider stakeholder engagement to make sure we deliver skills for the future for both our apprentices and businesses, to support them to thrive. We will also be supporting the review of the 'Definition of Apprenticeship', to ensure our governance continues to be future fit.

Continuing collaboration

Our joined-up thinking and unity with the wider SAAB groups, a unique industry-led platform with partners from the public, private & third sectors and the voice of unions, employer & professional membership bodies, as well as Higher and Further Education institutions, will continue to be an asset to AAG and the governance structure as we build even more quality into what we do.

It was especially gratifying to connect in with a number of passionate stakeholders as part of the development process - from the brilliant TEG members and chairs, to the sectors skills groups and providers - all supported by the brilliant SDS team.

This has really helped us to unpick areas of opportunity to debate and agree the right outcomes.

I want to thank all of my fellow AAG members for your passion, commitment and attention to quality outcomes. Your focus on impact and always doing the right thing is awe-inspiring. Especially when it comes to giving your time over and above your AAG duties, for example those on the Short Life Working Group for self-funded Apprenticeships.

Other key milestones:

- Standardising statements within the framework re Core Skills and Delivery of training
- Implementing the new Stage Gate Governance approach – feedback from members informing minor amendments to information presented.
- Continuous Improvement Activity:
 - Monthly Development Manager Update
 - Focus groups with key stakeholders in the apprenticeship process

We have seen changes in personnel this year, and I extend my thanks to those who have moved on from AAG for all their input over their time with us.

Over this next year I look forward to seeing the outcomes of our programmes deliver skills that the nation needs, while supporting the shaping of the system as we head into review activity.

