



# Employers' Guide to Apprenticeships



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# Contents

**3**

**Welcome** from the  
Apprenticeship Team

**3**

What is an  
**apprenticeship**

**4**

Why hire an  
**apprentice?**

**8**

Frameworks and  
**standards**

**10**

Business **support**

**11**

Your **commitment**

**12**

Our areas of **expertise**

**13**

**NVQs** achieving  
workplace qualifications

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that all of the information contained in this guide is accurate at the time of printing, Leicester College is continually evaluating its services to meet the needs of students. As a consequence, training, fees, timings, resources and facilities may be subject to change without prior notice.



# Welcome from the Apprenticeship Team

The Apprenticeship Team is responsible for working with businesses locally in order to advertise your vacancies and help you to recruit talented people. With 94% of the businesses we surveyed saying they would recommend us to others, we're confident in the quality of our relationships with industry as well as in the rigour of our training programmes.

We offer a range of services to support your business, which include working with your apprentices and providing a trainer assessor to support their needs and to ensure that all parties have a positive experience.

We also keep our ear to the ground when it comes to changes in government funding for apprenticeships and other training programmes. That's why we've run free workshops addressing the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and its potential impact on you.

As the biggest apprenticeship provider in Leicester, we're able to offer wide-ranging expertise and work with an impressive range of industries (and offer hundreds of potential job roles). Our key training areas include business and customer services; childcare; construction; engineering; hairdressing; health and social care; hospitality; print; sport; and retail and warehousing.

**We look forward to working with you.**

**89% of employers said that training from Leicester College had positively impacted their business**



90% of apprentices stay in employment after finishing their apprenticeship.



# What is an apprenticeship?

## Myth busting

Apprenticeships aren't just for brand-new members of staff, and they're not just for school leavers either. In fact, having an existing employee begin an apprenticeship can be an extremely cost-effective way of retraining, retaining and upskilling your staff.

Apprenticeships aren't for low-skilled or unqualified workers. Instead, they offer a work training programme that's a genuine alternative to GCSEs, A levels, or traditional university study, with the focus being on training the apprentice and giving them the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in their chosen industry.

As their employer, you'll have a say in the type of training and qualification your apprentice will receive.

## So what is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are jobs which come with inbuilt professional training.

They are open to individuals who are 16 or over, including adults looking to retrain or gain a qualification in the industry in which they already work. The minimum wage for apprentices aged 16 to 18 is £3.50 per hour. The same rate applies if the apprentice is aged 19 or over and in the first year of the apprenticeship.

Apprentices over the age of 19 and in the second or subsequent years of their apprenticeship are entitled to the national minimum wage. However, some employers choose to pay above the minimum in order to attract talented people. Pay is dependent on the industry, location, and type of apprenticeship.

As a business, you will work alongside us as your training provider to support your apprentices' development throughout their apprenticeship programme.

It usually takes between one and four years to complete an apprenticeship, depending on the apprenticeship level.



## What levels of apprenticeship are there?

- Intermediate apprenticeship (level 2 – equal to five GCSEs at grade 4/C)
- advanced apprenticeship (level 3 – equal to two A levels)
- higher apprenticeship (level 4/5 – equal to a university-level qualification).

Each level comes with its own vocational qualification or business-appropriate training, meaning that apprentices are prepared for a career in their sector at the end of their apprenticeship.

If the apprentice lacks GCSE passes in English and maths, then they will study these subjects with us as part of the requirements of their apprenticeship.

In practice, the majority (around two thirds) of apprentices stay on with the same employer once their apprenticeship is over.

Retaining apprentices once they have finished their training allows them to continue contributing to your company and even mentoring the apprentices who come after them.



# Why hire an apprentice?

## Return on investment

With the nation's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) set to hire 202,000 new apprentices over the next year (source: Telegraph.co.uk), it's natural to examine the potential benefits for your business of doing likewise.

Apprentices can offer a fantastic return on your investment in their training. According to the Telegraph newspaper, 74% of smaller firms who employ an apprentice see an improvement in their productivity. Apprentices can also offer raw, untapped talent – especially from a younger generation who are more tech savvy than those who have gone before. And with businesses increasingly hiring apprentices to work in marketing, social media, and other digital or online-based roles, it makes sense to turn to the digital natives of the workforce.

Hiring an apprentice often means you have the opportunity to train someone from scratch, and by working with further education colleges such as Leicester College, appropriate candidates can be found for you from among our thousands of learners. In many cases, you will pay your apprentice the lower apprenticeship rate of the national minimum wage, which reflects your investment in the apprentice's ongoing training.

## Financial support

Since the introduction of the government's apprenticeship levy, financial support for smaller companies has increased substantially. From May 2017, companies with a wage bill of less than £3million can claim back 90% of the apprentice training costs, or 100% if the apprentice is aged between 16 and 18 years old. Those who hire young people who have been in care may also be eligible for a £1,000 grant.

If you have a very small business (fewer than 50 employees) you could also be eligible for the AGE 16 to 24 government grant. Employers can be awarded this grant of £1,500 up to five times in total, subject to certain criteria.

We will work with you every step of the way to ensure you get the financial help to which you're entitled.

As of April 2016, employers are no longer required to pay employer National Insurance contributions for apprentices under the age of 25 on earnings up to the upper earnings limit

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## Skills gaps

We can help you find new employees to fill the skills gaps in your business. Apprenticeships can be flexible – while they are governed by frameworks and standards to ensure consistency, in practice a variety of different job roles can be mapped onto an existing apprenticeship standard, meaning that you can hire an apprentice to meet the skills shortage in your business.

Equally, by investing in your staff, you will be supporting the needs of your business and ensuring long-term growth. Bringing in an apprentice will mean your organisation will gain another productive employee (or keep one that it already had), and both smaller and larger firms find that hiring apprentices works out to be a really cost-effective option for acquiring more skilled staff.





Small business?  
You may get a  
£1,500 grant to help  
cover the cost of starting  
a new apprentice aged  
16 to 24 years old



# Frameworks and Standards

## Search and Recruitment

If you have employed apprentices before, you will know that apprenticeships are designed around what are known as “apprenticeship frameworks”. However, this is changing.

The old apprenticeship frameworks have been undergoing a process of conversion to new apprenticeship standards. Since May 2017, 350 standards have been or are currently being developed by employer groups known as “trailblazers”. These are already available in a massive range of apprenticeship areas – everything from accountancy and actuarial standards to rail design and welding.

For the most up-to-date information on the new standards, see [www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards). More standards will be published as they are developed and approved, and both frameworks and standards will continue to exist side by side during this transition period.

The new standards, as well as the new funding system, have been designed to improve the quality of apprenticeships for both employers and apprentices. The standards are designed by employers themselves, and their rules are shorter and simpler to understand than the old frameworks.

We are recognised for our expertise in apprenticeships, and we are working at a national level on the new reforms – so we are perfectly placed to keep you updated on all developments.

## Blazing a new Trail

The government is currently working with employers and training providers to review current practices for apprenticeships. This includes how the frameworks are constructed, working towards more concise qualifications, and reforming the traditional funding format for apprenticeships.

The government has recognised the need to reform apprenticeships so that they reflect modern business and support the needs of the employer as well as offering more control over training delivery for their apprentices.

As a large provider of training and a recognised expert in apprenticeships, we are working at a national level on these new reforms. We are therefore excellently placed to keep our employers informed of any development or changes to their current apprenticeship format.



# Business support

Working with us as your training provider means that you will have experts on hand to support you, as well as an effective and experienced network of people to ensure your apprentice succeeds. We'll also assign you a dedicated account manager as your single point of contact for your work with us.

The aims of the support we offer are not only to make the process of hiring and managing an apprentice simple and stress free, but also to increase your staff retention; help you to recruit high-quality apprentices; plan for your business' staffing needs into the future; and increase your organisation's productivity.

## How can we help you?

Part of this support package is delivered by our Levy Co-Ordination Solution Service, which will help you negotiate the new apprenticeship funding arrangements. The rest is provided by our team of trainer assessors and College-based staff. Some of the help we will offer you could include:

- consultation to identify the effect of the levy on your business
- developing a new "trailblazer" for your sector if you can't find an existing apprenticeship

standard to meet your needs

- a free apprenticeship recruitment service
- advertising your vacancy on our apprenticeships site and in College
- advice on complying with government rules
- management of the digital apprenticeship service
- a flexible apprenticeship training delivery system to meet shift patterns
- managing and delivering the GCSEs/functional skills requirements of the apprenticeships
- management development programmes tailored to your needs
- an e-portfolio/online study platform for apprentices.

Additionally, throughout the year we hold a range of highly successful careers, jobs, and apprenticeships fairs, which aim to match skilled candidates to your vacancies. It's always free for businesses to have a stand at these fairs.

**84% of employers say they are satisfied with the programme**





# Your commitment

## New funding arrangements

A new apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017. What this means in practice is that all employers with a wage bill of over £3 million a year are asked to contribute or "co-invest" 0.5% of their total pay bill towards apprenticeship training (minus a £15,000 annual levy allowance).

All employers, whether or not they pay the apprenticeship levy, are able to access funding for their apprenticeships through a digital apprenticeship service account. Funds are taken from the account each month to pay Leicester College for the training provided. Money in the account must be used to pay for apprenticeships, and any unspent funds will expire after 24 months.

If you do not pay the levy, you won't need to use the digital apprenticeship service to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment until at least 2018. When you are asked to start using the digital apprenticeship service to pay for apprenticeship training, we will work with you to prepare. Under the new funding system, the employer and the training provider (Leicester College) agree a price for the apprentice's training, and the government will pay for two thirds of the cost while the employer pays the remaining third.

There are also further financial incentives for smaller businesses or for those who hire employees in certain other circumstances, including refunds for the training of younger apprentices. This ability to negotiate the price of your apprentice's training gives you greater control of your costs and greater freedom to hire talented people.

95% of employers  
said that they would  
recommend  
Leicester College



# Our areas of expertise

## What apprenticeships are available?

Each apprenticeship is different: you can advertise for different roles depending on what the needs of your business are. However, while job titles are different, apprenticeships will still follow the rigours of an assigned framework or standard.

This ensures that all apprentices receive a quality experience consistent with others' at the same level. What often happens in practice is that we will help you identify the needs for your business and match your vacancy to an existing apprenticeship standard. In some cases where there is no standard available, we can work with you to create one

## Types of apprenticeship roles

We most frequently advertise apprenticeships in the following sectors:

- Administration and reception
- bricklaying
- carpentry
- childcare
- business admin
- dental nursing
- digital marketing/social media
- electronic engineering
- fitness instructing
- hairdressing and barbering
- health and social care
- hospitality service
- IT engineering
- legal business
- motor vehicle maintenance and repair
- motorcycle mechanic
- painting and decorating
- pharmacy services
- plastering
- plumbing
- retail
- screen printing
- sport
- warehousing.

**Businesses report an average increase in productivity by £214 a week when they hire apprentices**



# NVQs achieving workplace qualifications

NVQs are National Vocational Qualifications. They are designed to demonstrate a learner's occupational competence. As well as forming part of an apprenticeship, NVQs can also be studied as standalone qualifications.

An NVQ offers an existing employee the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification which shows that they are able to perform a role to a recognised standard. NVQs are available at different competency levels, meaning that employees can progress and achieve higher-level qualifications over time.

NVQs are developed with industry needs in mind, so they are specific to a certain job role or industry. They are assessment-based qualifications, which are generally delivered at work. Employees are assessed on a combination of practical tasks and a portfolio of evidence. During the course of the NVQ, one of our team will visit your employee to offer them guidance as they complete their qualification.

## Other available training options

We can also offer your non-apprentice employees alternative training programmes based around your business' needs. We can offer you a consultation on your employees' training requirements and the ways that these can be met in a cost-effective way with minimal impact on your organisation.

We also offer highly subsidised or free (depending on the type of course and the subject) distance learning programmes, which allow employees to complete their training in their own time. With around £39billion invested every year in England by employers in training their staff, it's important to make it count. With Leicester College, you can be reassured by the fact that we are a large and respected further education college with qualified and experienced staff.

Speak with our team today to discuss what types of workplace training we could offer you. Call the Apprenticeship Team on 0116 224 2240.

82% of employers said their apprenticeship had improved their ability to do the job and 79% said that their career prospects had improved





# Apprenticeship Careers Fair

We have two Apprenticeship Fairs  
a year.

Keep an eye on our website for further  
details [leicestercollege.ac.uk](http://leicestercollege.ac.uk)

As of April 2016,  
employers are no longer  
required to pay employer  
National Insurance contributions  
for apprentices under the age of  
25 on earnings up to the upper  
earnings limit





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**St Margaret's Campus**

St John Street  
Leicester  
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**Freemen's Park Campus**

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