



University Apprenticeship Guidelines

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Help, advice and guidance concerning the recruitment and employment of apprentices is available from the University Apprenticeship website at: www.apprenticeships.ox.ac.uk

1. Introduction

University of Oxford Apprenticeships provide skilled talent for support and management roles, at an appropriate level, across the University. Coordinated centrally by Personnel Services, Apprenticeships access a wide breadth of government-funded training frameworks and standards that provide highly effective development pathways for new and existing staff to support the skills required by the University.

An Apprenticeship is a work-based learning programme available to people of all ages, which enables the apprentice to be employed by the University, whilst studying towards a specific, recognised qualification. Apprenticeships are:

- a) supported by selected external Training Providers with training funded through our Apprenticeship Levy;
- b) of different lengths, depending on the skill types and levels required, from one to four years;
- c) allow a very wide range of professional areas to be supported with over 1,500 Apprenticeships currently available;
- d) have flexible entry levels, dependant on the role;
- e) available to existing employees, not just new recruits.

People are the foundation of the University's success and the quality of our academic, research, professional and support staff is critical to our future. In order for Oxford to remain a world leading institution for research and teaching we must continue to attract, recruit and support talented individuals and provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows staff to grow and flourish.

University Apprenticeships support our strategic people commitments to:

- **attract, recruit and retain the highest quality staff;**
- **work towards an increasingly diverse staffing profile;**
- **support staff in personal and professional development.**

The University Apprenticeship objectives are to:

1. increase both the scale and the variety of Apprenticeships, to meet the longer term talent pipeline for the University's skill requirements with new and existing staff;
2. improve equality and diversity in our workforce whilst enhancing community engagement and recognising our potential regional impact;
3. ensure high standards of quality learning from our external training providers;
4. provide consistency and equality of Personnel practice across the University for the management of Apprenticeships;
5. encourage departments to incorporate Apprenticeships into their strategic workforce planning.

2. Recruitment and Employment of apprentices

Funding: All large employers are required to pay the Apprenticeship Levy. The University currently pays around £3M a year into our Digital Levy Account. This money can solely be used to pay for government-approved Apprenticeship-based training and will not support the cost of salaries, administration or other non-mandatory costs.

The cost of the Apprenticeship-based training and assessment will be met centrally by the Apprenticeship levy through our Digital Account and paid directly to the Training Provider.

There are a wide range of government-funded Apprenticeships available to support the needs of the University. Details of all of these can be found at:

<https://findapprenticeshiptraining.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>

All new entrant apprentices sit outside of the **Headcount Cap restrictions**.

Eligibility Apprenticeships are available to applicants of all ages, although they are mostly intended to support the employment, training and development of people transitioning from education in to work.

However, existing staff can undertake Apprenticeship based training to support their own development where they will develop significant new skills. There are also funding rules around residency and prior learning; the proposed Apprenticeship Training Provider will be able to give advice on the details in each individual case.

Entry Level Required entry qualifications, as well as the length and selection of the most appropriate framework of training will be agreed for each Apprenticeship on a case-by-case basis, and will also depend on the specific job role and the department's needs. It is important that the entry qualifications meet the needs of the Apprenticeship being offered so as to inform the shortlisting process.

Details of the Apprenticeship to be undertaken will be set out in an Apprenticeship Learner Agreement, which will be issued with the Apprenticeship Agreement. The latest Learner Agreement template can be found here: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/templates>

Length Apprenticeships can last between one and four years, depending on the level and complexity of the framework being undertaken. For example, a Level 2 Apprenticeship in Customer Service could be completed in one year, whereas a Level 4 in Engineering may require four years. The length of an Apprenticeship should be set in accordance with the anticipated time required for the apprentice to gain enough job experience, their qualification(s) and work-place learning, which will eventually enable them to carry out the full duties of the post at the required standard.

Details of the different levels of Apprenticeships can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide>

Contractual Conditions New entrant apprentices are appointed under the terms and conditions specified in their Apprenticeship Agreement and their Apprenticeship Learner Agreement. Apprentices are also bound by the Handbook for Support Staff, with the exception of their pay progression and the policy on fixed-term contracts.

The Support Staff Handbook can be found here: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/staff-handbook-support-staff>

Whilst in the period of their Apprenticeship individuals are not permitted to take up paid employment **in any other University department or division**, unless they are within the last three months of their Apprenticeship. However, in the event that a suitable vacancy arises within the employing department within the last six months of the apprenticeship, departments may appoint the apprentice (if suitably qualified), using the recruitment without advertising guidance, and subject to the successful completion of their training. The guidance can be found here: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-without-advertising>

Further guidance related to managing apprentices as they approach the end of their Apprenticeship is outlined in **Appendix A**.

Appointment to an Apprenticeship carries with it no commitment to a subsequent appointment with the University.

Poor performance: Failure to achieve the agreed learning milestones or any other disciplinary issue should be addressed through the normal HR processes detailed in the Support Staff Handbook at the earliest possible stage. However, the University Apprenticeship Manager must be consulted in all such cases, **before** any formal process is followed. Whilst the normal HR processes for University Support Staff apply to apprentices, there may need to be special consideration given in respect of the Apprenticeship and the University's commitment to provide training to that apprentice.

Periods of probation apply to apprentices as to any other member of University Support Staff.

Changes in the time period of employment for a new entrant apprentice are possible for a number of reasons, such as:

- exceptional performance and early completion of any training programmes may reduce the overall time to completion of the Apprenticeship;
- sickness, changes in personal circumstances, failure to achieve any academic milestones, or any other unforeseen circumstances, may result in an extension to an Apprenticeship being granted. The University Apprenticeship Manager should be contacted for further advice in all such cases.

Maternity and Adoption, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave: The entitlement to the family leave schemes applies equally to apprentices as to any other member of staff, subject to satisfying any qualifying criteria, whether for statutory or contractual benefits. Arrangements to suspend, extend or delay a course of training to enable this leave to be taken will also be made with the Training Provider(s), as appropriate, to enable the member of staff to complete their Apprenticeship.

Salary: New entrant apprentices are initially recruited at the first point within the Apprentice Grade. As an apprentice progresses through their Apprenticeship programme, subject to meeting the milestones, they will be promoted to the next Apprentice Grade point (as outlined below), and will be expected to take on more duties of their role accordingly. Towards the end of the Apprenticeship, it is expected that an apprentice will have gained the necessary experience and training to carry out the full duties of the post.

Apprentices will progress as follows:

- On appointment apprentices should be paid at: *Apprentice Grade Point 1*
- On successful completion of their first year and agreed milestone
Qualification this should rise to: *Apprentice Grade Point 2*
- On successful completion of the second year and milestone
Qualification this should rise to: *Apprentice Grade Point 3*

Where an Apprenticeship lasts longer than three years, successful apprentices may then be able to progress as follows:

- On successful completion of the third year and milestone
Qualification this should rise to: *Apprentice Grade Point 4*

For current rates of pay see: <https://finance.admin.ox.ac.uk/salary-scales>

Employer N.I. Contributions: Apprentices who are aged under 25 years are exempt from Employer N.I. contributions.

Incentive payments: Departments will be entitled to a £1,000 incentive payment for recruiting a 16-18 year old apprentice or 19-24 year old apprentice with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. This will be paid from the government to employers in 2 instalments – £500 after 3 months and £500 after 12 months. These payments are managed by the Training Provider and will be paid direct to the department.

Information on Education, Health and Care Plans can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help>

Courses of Study: All Apprenticeship-based training must be completed during the normal working week and will take up a minimum of 20% of the staff member's contractual hours. More information on this 20% 'Off the Job' training can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-off-the-job-training>

Day or block release (during normal working hours) to attend the course of study associated with the Apprenticeship will be agreed and granted in advance. This forms part of the apprentice's working time and is included in their working hours.

Fees and Expenses: The cost of the Apprenticeship-based training and assessment will be met centrally by the Apprenticeship Levy through our Digital Account and paid directly to the Training Provider.

Additionally, the apprentice's department will normally be responsible for the direct payment or the reimbursement of any non-mandatory course and examination fees which are not covered by the Apprenticeships Levy. There may also be fees to re-sit any mandatory exams for End Point Assessments. Apprentices are not to be required to contribute financially towards any part of their training or assessment.

The employing department is also responsible for the provision of the relevant books and equipment that may be necessary for the study of any approved subjects. **It is important that managers seek clarification of what these costs may be (if any) from the Training Provider before the Apprenticeship starts.** The University Apprenticeship Manager can advise on this.

Travel expenses incurred by the apprentice to attend their Apprenticeship training course(s) at a college or similar, which are over and above the costs of their normal travel to work, will usually be reimbursed by the employing department.

Supervision and Mentoring: All apprentices must have an assigned line manager, who at the start of the Apprenticeship will be required to organise, with the support of the Training Provider, a programme of work-based training which will enable the apprentice to successfully attain any agreed qualifications. The line manager is not expected to deliver all of the work based training in isolation; other members of staff may be involved in the training but the line manager will provide consistency and support throughout the process

It can be particularly useful for an apprentice, who may have limited experience in the workplace, to be assigned a mentor who is not ordinarily involved in the apprentice's day to day work. This person can be an ideal sounding board to offer advice and guidance in a wide range of matters.

The line manager and the mentor should not be the same person.

The line manager has a vital role in supporting the apprentice and the Training Provider in developing and evidencing opportunities for learning and assessment in the work place, in order to enable the apprentice to meet the agreed learning outcomes.

Training in the coaching and mentoring of apprentices is available and is arranged termly by the University Apprenticeship Manager. Staff involved in supervising apprentices are encouraged to attend this course. Please contact the University Apprenticeship Manager for further details.

Appointment beyond Apprenticeship: At the successful completion of an Apprenticeship, (i.e. having gained a formal qualification and performing at the required level in the role), Personnel Services will issue a graduation certificate formally recognising this achievement. These are presented at an annual Graduation Ceremony.

Whilst the University cannot and does not guarantee a subsequent appointment with the University following the completion of an Apprenticeship, the employing department may be able to offer further employment to their apprentice, for which the apprentice may qualify and progress into automatically. In order to qualify for an automatic appointment (where one is available) to a post in the department, the apprentice must normally have:

- completed the appropriate training period;
- attended the course of study and attained the appropriate qualification(s); and
- demonstrated satisfactory competence in the role.

If there is a suitable post available and the apprentice has satisfied the division/department as to their competence to perform at the requisite grade, they may be considered for appointment to the post without the post being advertised more widely.

In such cases, departments should follow the University's guidance on 'Recruitment without advertising ('direct appointments')', found at: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-without-advertising>

Where a suitable post is available to which the apprentice is successfully appointed, a new, standard contract of employment should be issued to the individual. Where there is no break in continuous service with the University between the appointments, the start date of the Apprenticeship will be used as the date of the continuous service with the University. Continuous service is used for the purposes of certain entitlements, such as the University's sick pay scheme.

Apprenticeship Graduation and Annual Awards for outstanding achievement: Every year (usually in March) apprentices, both new entrants and existing staff, who have successfully completed their Apprenticeship in the preceding year are invited to attend a graduation ceremony. This is held in the Sheldonian Theatre to reflect the importance the University places on Apprenticeship-based qualifications.

At this event the University also recognises the outstanding achievement and contribution of our apprentices and managers by awarding prizes to the top performers in a range of categories. Applications and submissions are invited to be considered and information will be circulated to apprentices and managers across the University well before the closing date each year.

3. Developing Existing Staff through an Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship-based training can also provide an exciting opportunity to train and develop existing staff. Apprenticeships are open to staff of all ages and experience, who may have:

1. moved to a new role within their existing employment; or
2. taken on new responsibilities; or
3. seen changes to the work they are required to perform.

Existing staff stay on the same terms and conditions and retain the same salary but can access professionally-delivered, nationally-accredited training courses.

The need for this training and development should be identified either at the time an existing member of staff takes on a new role or additional responsibilities, or through the effective use of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process. These training needs can then be incorporated into a departmental training plan.

Apprenticeship based training can be funded through the Apprenticeship Levy and details of the huge range of available course can be found at:

<https://findapprenticeshiptraining.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>

The University Apprenticeship Manager can advise on suitable training pathways and Training Providers.

Existing staff undertaking Apprenticeship-based training have their FTE for headcount purposes reduced to 80% to enable departments backfill the time the member of staff will be training either by increasing the hours of another member of staff or (if there are a number of staff across the department undertaking this kind of training) employing temporary staff to provide cover.

More information on Apprenticeship-based training for existing staff, how it works and the application form can be found at: <https://www.apprenticeships.ox.ac.uk/wld>

4. The Straightforward Route to Recruiting a New Entrant Apprentice

Planning: Departments should consider how Apprenticeships may help to address any difficulties that might have been experienced in relation to recruitment and retention within the department (e.g. hard-to-fill posts, roles with high staff turnover, or highly specialist areas of work). These needs should be considered as part of the department's Strategic Workforce Planning.

The University Apprenticeship Manager should be contacted for advice on the appropriate level of an Apprenticeship and to help a department identify the most suitable training framework and Training Provider.

Once a suitable Apprenticeship opportunity has been identified:

In order to enable a consistent and a fair approach to Apprenticeship recruitment, departments should use the Apprenticeship Job Description template, available at <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/templates>. The Apprenticeship Manager can assist with the writing of the job description for an apprentice.

Advertising and attracting the best candidates: Once approval to recruit an apprentice has been given, the Apprenticeship job should be advertised with recruitment support from the Training Provider. The provider can access the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) site where all Apprenticeships across England are advertised. Once the advert is live on the NAS we can use that link in our University advert and post on our site in the usual way.

Social media plays a huge part in recruitment, especially with young people and Departments are encouraged to use their existing social media channels to promote the Apprenticeship opportunity. Further advice on placing advertisements should be sought from the University Apprenticeship Manager.

Advertisements should be appealing and inspiring, clearly highlighting the opportunities available. Apprenticeship job adverts should accurately reflect the job, by stating the specific duties of the post. Accurate, thorough and well-written adverts will help to attract suitable applicants, with the skills and knowledge at the appropriate level for the Apprenticeship being advertised.

The Training Provider will assist departments in the identification of suitable candidates during the recruitment exercise, checking eligibility and suitability while offering support to the unsuccessful candidates. This will enable a more efficient shortlisting process.

Selection and Appointment: The advice on selection and appointment should be followed, and can be found at: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-process>
In addition, departments need to take into account that many apprentices are recent school leavers, who tend to be new to the workplace, so the selection process can be as much about introducing them to what you do, as about selecting the best candidate. Departments should consider running a small assessment day; the University Apprenticeship Manager can advise on the various ways that this can be done.

Once the most suitable candidate, who meets the needs of the role as set out in the essential criteria in the job description, has been identified, an offer should be made. All standard and appropriate pre-employment checks should be completed in line with the University's policy on pre-employment screening. Further details are available at: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>

All apprentices should be issued with an Apprenticeship Agreement, which contains specific terms and conditions that apply to apprentices and should be produced via CoreHR.

Apprentices are also bound by their Apprenticeship Learner Agreement, which sets out the details of their study, the qualification(s) they will achieve and the timescales of their milestones. The template for this is available at: <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/templates>, and should be issued with every Apprenticeship Agreement.

The University Apprenticeship Manager can assist with the completion of the documents above.

Apprenticeships – End of Contract (Guidance for Departments and Apprentices)

As the end of the Apprenticeship approaches, departments need to think about the next steps and the course of action for their apprentice. Departments should provide support to their apprentices accordingly towards the end of the Apprenticeship and encourage their apprentice to think about their future career, and whether they wish to pursue it within the University.

The appropriate HR contact (e.g. the HR lead) within the department should meet with the apprentice three months before the end date of their Apprenticeship in order to explain what support and guidance can be offered to them by their department. The HR lead will normally be the apprentice's nominated facilitator to guide them through this process. At this meeting the HR lead should discuss the likelihood of there being a position available to the apprentice within the department following the completion of their Apprenticeship. If there is a suitable job available to the apprentice, then the normal procedures for evaluating the job and offering employment should be followed. In cases where there is no further employment available to the apprentice, the HR lead should explain this clearly, and support should be offered in helping to redeploy the apprentice into another position within the University, if possible.

Whilst the University cannot and does not guarantee a subsequent appointment following the completion of an Apprenticeship, it is hoped that the skills and experience the apprentice has acquired throughout their Apprenticeship can be retained within the department. Where an apprentice successfully attains their qualification(s) and can demonstrate satisfactory competence in their job, and where the opportunity exists, they can be directly appointed into the job for which the Apprenticeship was intended, by following the guidance above in the section 'Appointment beyond Apprenticeship'.

In cases where a subsequent appointment cannot be offered with the University, departments need to think about the ways in which they can assist their apprentices in finding new employment opportunities, where possible. The department may wish to consider providing general support with job searching to their apprentice, in areas such as CV writing skills, and how to apply for positions, either within the University or externally. The apprentice's mentor or supervisor, or the department's HR lead may be the most appropriate individuals to assist with these activities.

The University of Oxford Temporary Staffing Service can provide an excellent opportunity within the University and should be considered as an option. More details can be found here: <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/temporary-staffing-service>

Whilst apprentices are placed into fixed-term Apprenticeship appointments, they are not considered to be fixed-term employees, and are excluded from the provisions of the Fixed-Term Employee Regulations. Therefore, the University's procedure for the end of fixed-term contracts does not apply to apprentices. More information about fixed-term contracts can be found at: www.gov.uk/fixed-term-contracts/what-counts-as-a-fixed-term-contract