
Making Apprenticeships Work

The Employers' Perspective

◆ Executive Summary

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Making Apprenticeships Work

Apprenticeships have never enjoyed a higher profile. Politicians believe they can deliver productivity gains and reduce skills shortages and youth unemployment, although they are split on what the future of apprenticeships should look like.

The Industry Skills Board (ISB), facilitated by The City & Guilds Group, is a diverse group of employers that was set up to look at the wider skills agenda, develop an analysis and understanding of what constitutes best practice and ensure this is communicated to policymakers. With the political and media spotlight on apprenticeships and the Government committed to creating three million starts by 2020, the ISB set out to look at how we can implement and build on the current reforms to put quality at the heart of apprenticeships and make them a sustainable route to excellent careers.

Making Apprenticeships Work sets out a 25-point action plan that Government, business, employer groups and the education sector can take to make apprenticeships work effectively for all involved. The recommendations are largely focused on matters related to the implementation of policy rather than on policy itself.

Making Apprenticeships Work builds on recent research by the City & Guilds Group into the skills landscape¹ and how learning should be structured and delivered². It also endorses and does not duplicate the findings of the Demos Commission on Skills and an inquiry into apprenticeships and traineeships for 16 to 19 year-olds undertaken recently by the Education Select Committee. Finally, it draws on nine months of informed discussion by ISB members, all of whom are employers who have been directly involved in delivering apprenticeships. The report does not extend to apprenticeships for the 25+ age group, degree apprenticeships or other related issues such as wages and wider vocational education. The ISB intends to return to these later.

In the report, ISB employers and the City & Guilds Group set out a strategic plan covering four areas, along with three detailed action plans. The report considers:



Putting quality at the heart of apprenticeships



Access



Employer commitment



Leadership

Putting quality at the heart of apprenticeships

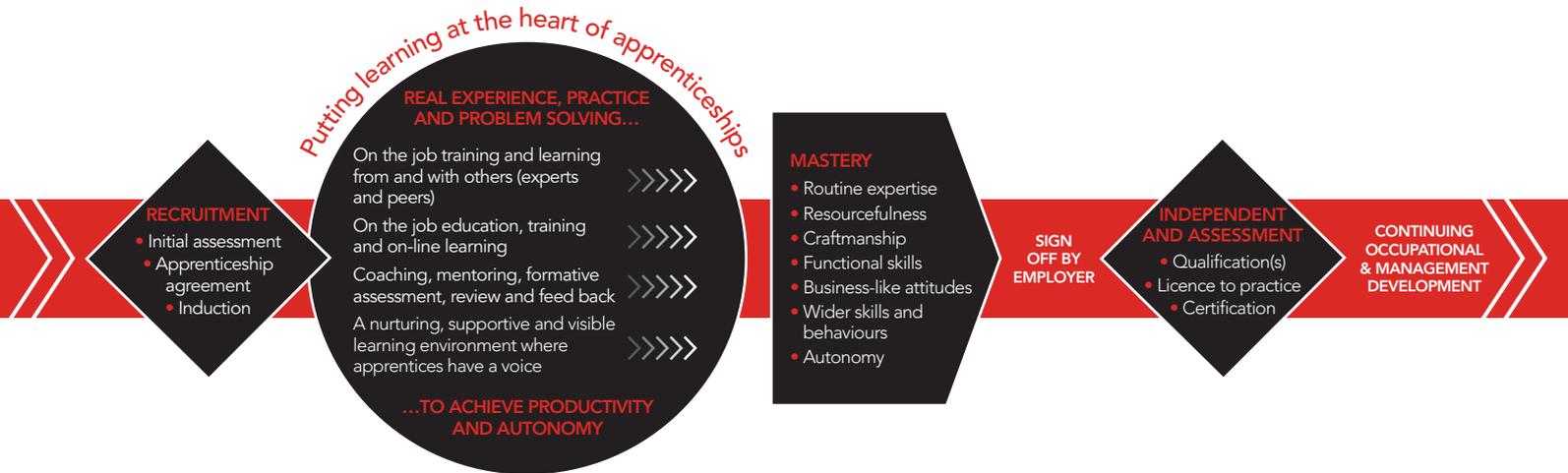
The ISB has developed a model for quality, learning and assessment that is based on the experience of ISB members (see page 3). The group recommends that employer groups create progression pathways to higher levels for every sector where possible. Actions include:

1. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) should adopt policies and an overall framework for the components of a quality apprenticeship, with Ofsted inspections based on the same framework.
2. BIS, employer groups and the City & Guilds Group should put training and learning (especially workplace learning) at the heart of policy and action for apprenticeships.
3. BIS should hold to its policy on a single apprenticeship for each occupation and build on this to encourage a wider range of apprenticeships to be offered.
4. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) should modify arrangements for breaks in training so that apprentices in high quality seasonal industries can continue their training on return.
5. Employer groups and assessment organisations should use new governance arrangements to drive up standards in apprenticeships.
6. The end assessment Standard should reflect full productivity, autonomy and mastery.
7. The independent assessor role should be higher level than that of a trainer, coach or assessor in the current system. End assessors should be highly occupationally competent.
8. Employer groups and providers should offer and promote different mixes of training and learning methods to enhance employer choice and allow employers to take on more or less of the training and learning themselves.
9. Every apprentice should embark on continuing training and development once they complete their apprenticeship and all sectors should produce progression pathways where this is possible.
10. The Government should include occupation in destination outcomes from apprenticeship and FE courses.

¹ Sense & Instability: three decades of skills and employment policy, the City & Guilds Group, October 2014

² Remaking Apprenticeships: powerful learning for work and life, the City & Guilds Alliance, December 2014

Quality Apprenticeship Model



- Success rates for new Standards should be calculated based on achievement of end assessment measured against entries for assessment, with early leavers monitored separately.

Employer commitment

The ISB proposes giving employers involvement and responsibility for the two big levers capable of increasing employer commitment; licence to practice and the proposed apprenticeship levy. It recommends the extension of licence to practice on an employer-led voluntary basis occupation by occupation. It also sets out how the apprenticeship levy should operate, and looks at how apprenticeships can be better supported in the public sector. Actions include:

- The Government should work to reach the point where apprenticeships are fully integrated and become a normal entry route into all public sector employment.
- Action should be taken to increase the availability of 16 and 17 year-olds for the core apprenticeship trades.
- A national employer-led governing body should take forward a concerted but voluntary extension of the licence to practice.
- The apprenticeship levy should be based on a virtual account (similar to a bank account) and it should be made easier for larger numbers of employers to opt for direct funding.
- It should continue to be possible for providers to subcontract to levy paying employers.
- Oversight of levy expenditure policies should be passed to an employer-led governing body and quality should be made a strong focus of action here.

Access

The ISB is concerned about inadequate careers guidance in schools and problems around access. It proposes actions to strengthen recruitment into apprenticeships, and recommends that employers increase the proportion of apprenticeships offered as vacancies and that a UCAS-style application process is established. It also calls on the government, colleges and providers to help those on full and part-time vocational courses to progress onto related apprenticeships to complete their training.

The ISB sets out the following actions:

- Careers advice should provide clarity about career destination and the routes to get there, and about the implications of graduate versus non-graduate employment and of specific degree courses.
- A UCAS-style operation should be put in place to strengthen access to apprenticeships for young people expecting to leave full time education in years, 11, 12 and 13.
- Research should be conducted into making careers advice more focused on preferred career destinations.
- BIS should encourage and incentivise providers and employers to increase the proportion of apprenticeships offered as vacancies.
- Colleges should embrace and offer programmes that start with a full-time vocational course and then include the next step of apprenticeship training. The Government should incentivise this.
- More effort should be given to helping young people who take vocational courses in further and higher education to secure the employer-based training after completion.

Leadership

The ISB looks to ensure that apprenticeship policy is governed by employer-led structures, with a smaller supplementary role for Government. Actions include:

- At the national level, many decisions relating to apprenticeships should be taken by an employer-led governing body. This should function separately from Government, with certain decisions remaining with Government.
- At the sector or occupational level we should build on the Trailblazer employer group model but integrate this with the new form of Industrial Partnership and/or Sector Skills Council.

Conclusion

The ISB and the City & Guilds Group believe that apprenticeships can become a sustainable and universally respected high-quality and high volume route to excellent careers for young people, provided a small number of policy changes and a greater number of operational matters are addressed. This is a pivotal moment in the history of apprenticeships, and it is crucial that business leaders, policymakers and the education sector take action to make the apprenticeship system work as well as it should do.

Industry Skills Board Members

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City & Guilds Group

Compass Group

Ginsters

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McDonalds

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