Employing an Apprentice – What you need to know

What is an apprenticeship?
Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes designed around the needs of the employer which lead to national recognised qualifications. You can use apprenticeships to train both new and existing employees and there is currently government funding available to train apprentices. Anyone living in England, over 16 years of age and not in full time education can apply. There is no upper age limit, so an apprentice can be of any age.

What are the benefits to my department?
Apprentices can provide extra help during busy periods and are willing to carry out a wide range of tasks that will ultimately assist them in achieving their qualifications. They do not tend to have pre-conceived ideas on how to carry out tasks and can often bring a fresh approach and renewed energy to the department. Apprentices can become part of a succession planning strategy. You may also find that at the end of the apprenticeship your apprentice has become integral to your team and able to apply for permanent employment with the University.

Levels of apprenticeship
There are three levels of Apprenticeship available:

1 - Intermediate Level Apprenticeships (equivalent to 5 good GCSE passes)

Apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 2, Key Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based qualification such as a BTEC. These provide the skills the apprentice needs for their chosen career and allows entry to an Advanced Apprenticeship.

2 - Advanced Level Apprenticeships (equivalent to two A Levels passes)

Advanced apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based certificate such as a BTEC. To start this programme, the applicant should ideally have five GCSEs (grade C or above) or have completed an Apprenticeship.

3 - Higher Apprenticeships

Higher apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 4 and, in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation degree. This level of apprentice is currently only available in a small number of frameworks.

In some cases, apprentices can also progress to higher education including university degrees.
Types of Apprenticeships:
Below is a list of just a few of the apprenticeships available:

- **Business administration** (including marketing, payroll, customer service, sales, providing financial information, team leading and management)
- **Construction** (including crafts such as plumbing, electrical, painting and decorating)
- **Information and computer technology** (including IT users)
- **Commercial** (including hospitality, catering, facilities management, logistics, purchasing and supply management cleaning and environmental services)
- **Education and development** (including learning and development)
- **Arts, Media and publishing** (including photo imaging, digital media)

The University currently has apprentices in Business Administration and Electrical Maintenance.

Length of the apprenticeship
The length of the apprenticeship contract would normally be linked to the duration of the training. In most cases, this would be fixed-term for either one or two years. Some crafts apprenticeships, e.g. in electrical maintenance where there is a lot of technical training involved, may take longer.

Training:
As apprenticeships are work-based training programmes, most of the training is ‘on the job’. The remainder of the learning is provided by a local college or by a specialist learning provider.

Your link HR Manager/HR Officer, together with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will find the most appropriate training provider for your specific apprenticeship. For business administration apprenticeships we have, in the past, used The Colchester Institute and Catten College to deliver the training.

There are a number of elements to each apprenticeship and this is called the Framework. This means the apprentice will get a range of qualifications as they progress through their training. Each Apprenticeship framework has three main strands:

- a competence based element
- a technical element
- a skills element

In addition to the formal training above you must give your apprentices an induction into their role and provide on-the-job training. You may find the list of programmes and courses on the learning and development website helpful to find out what training the University has to offer.

If the apprentice is aged 16–18 years old, 100 per cent of the cost of the training will be paid for; if they are 19-24 years old, 50 per cent will be paid for; if they are 25 years old or over you may have to pay for the full cost of the training. This is paid directly to the organisation that provides and supports the Apprenticeship; in most cases this will be a learning provider.
**Employment:**
Employment will be fixed-term for the duration of the apprenticeship and must be for at least 30 hours per week, except in the minority of circumstances where the learner cannot complete the full 30 hours. In these cases employment must be for more than 16 hours per week.

Apprentices will receive the same annual leave as other support staff, that being 23 days. In addition to this, holidays with pay will be granted on the statutory public holidays (New Year’s Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, Spring Bank Holiday, Late Summer Bank Holiday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, or their equivalent) and on 3 other working days when the University is closed during the Christmas vacation.

Apprentices will not receive increments on an annual basis, as salary progression will be based on the successful completion of their training and the length of their apprentice programme.

Upon completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice may apply for any advertised University vacancies in the normal way. There is no guarantee of a permanent position upon completion of the apprenticeship.

**Salary:**
Each department funds the salary of the apprentice. The pay scales for different staff groups are outlined below:

**Business Administration Apprenticeship pay scale:**
- **Year 1** (whilst studying towards NVQ 2) – 70% of (Grade 2 SCP 2)
- **Year 2** (whilst studying towards NVQ 3) – 85% of (Grade 2 SCP 3)

**Crafts/Manual Apprenticeship pay scale**
- **Year 1** – (whilst studying towards NVQ level 2) - 65% of (Grade 1 SCP 1)
- **Year 2** – (whilst studying towards NVQ level 3) - 80% of (Grade 1 SCP 2), or minimum wage for appropriate age group whichever is the greater.

Should you have an apprentice in another area not covered by the pay scales above please contact your link HR Manager/Officer who will advise on the appropriate level of pay.

**Interviewing an apprentice**
Whilst you should ensure that an interview of suitable candidates does take place it is advisable for you to discuss your questions with your link HR Manager/Officer in advance of the meeting. It is important to remember that in most cases these may be young individuals who have recently left school/college with little, if any, prior work experience. Your questions may, therefore, need to focus on what they feel they have achieved at school, or during an outside hobby/activity. Some example questions are below:

- Why have you decided to apply for an apprenticeship instead of going to college/work?
- What interests you about this apprenticeship?
- Why do you think you fit the role?
- What do you think you will be doing in the role?
- Tell me about an achievement you have been proud of (either at school/hobby/previous work experience if applicable)?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Having looked at the duties of the job, what tasks do you think you will enjoy most/least?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you hope to do after the apprenticeship?
Also, don’t forget to allow the candidates to ask any questions at the end.

**The process for employing an apprentice:**

**Step 1:** Make sure you have permission for an apprentice

**Step 2:** Once you have permission, contact your link HR Manager/Officer who will discuss the specific role requirements with you and help you to identify a suitable training provider.

**Step 3:** Complete an apprenticeship vacancy template form and return the completed document to your link HR Manager/Officer who will proceed to advertise the vacancy for you.

**Step 4:** Vacancies will be advertised on the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website where suitable applicants can apply. There will also be a link to this website from the University vacancies page.

**Step 5:** If you wish, the training provider may be able to shortlist suitable candidates for you ready for you to interview. Alternatively, you may do this yourself.

**Step 6:** Contact those candidates who have been shortlisted and invite them for interview. A minimum of two individuals are required to interview the candidates. You should ensure that there is a gender balance on the panel.

**Step 7:** Offer the post to the individual who best meets the criteria for the role, following a discussion with your link HR Manager/Officer.

**Human Resources**

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