

YORK COLLEGE GUIDE TO FINDING AN APPRENTICESHIP

YORK
COLLEGE
&
UNIVERSITY
CENTRE



FINDING AN APPRENTICESHIP

Students often struggle to research apprenticeship opportunities. The key is to remember that you are looking for a job, so vacancies will come and go throughout the year. You therefore need to consider:

- what you are going to look for
- where you are going to look for it
- how often you are going to look

It is important to recognise that there is no one place that all apprenticeships are advertised: there is no 'silver bullet' and you may need to be prepared to do a lot of research.

Your planning can also include how you are going to use all or any of the resources below. Being methodical and searching regularly are important. Allocate time every week to search and to work on applications.

Be mindful that there can be peaks and troughs, with more apprenticeships advertised at particular times in the year. Some industries have business cycles or points where their recruitment needs drop or peak. All of this can impact on who advertises what and when. If you are struggling, stay positive – it may not be anything you are doing wrong.

Setting realistic targets (e.g. aim to send one application per week) might help you focus. Think about how you will keep track of who you have contacted, dates that applications open or when to re-contact an employer who may have an apprenticeship or work experience in the future.

WHAT DO I DO WHILE I AM LOOKING?

If you are not already in employment or already have an employer lined up to hire you, an apprenticeship can take a long time to find. Remember: you are looking for a job and that means you are not guaranteed to be offered an apprenticeship. You might need to apply for many apprenticeship vacancies over several months. You will probably be competing against other applicants.

Part of your planning should be what to do while you are looking, especially if you plan to continue looking after you have left college. For many students, a Level 2 or 3 course will be the ideal way to continue to learn whilst creating time to look for an apprenticeship. The more skills and experience you have, the more you can offer an employer.

GETTING TO WORK

Another key thing to consider is getting to work. North Yorkshire is a big rural county and employers can be located in the countryside or on industrial estates, with limited or no public transport. If you cannot drive, it could be beneficial to learn. This could be part of your planning and may significantly increase the number of employers you can reach.

WHERE AND HOW TO LOOK FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

There are a number of places and ways to look for an apprenticeship. This guide contains tools and resources to help you search. If you are looking for Level 4 and degree apprenticeships, you should also look at the York College Guide to Degree Apprenticeships, available from your progress coach and the careers service.



GOV.UK

GOV.UK FIND AN APPRENTICESHIP: FIND AN APPRENTICESHIP

(gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)

This is the government-run search and is linked to other websites like National Apprenticeship Service (www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/) and Amazing Apprenticeships (amazingapprenticeships.com/) or UCAS (www.ucas.com/apprenticeships), which contain additional information.

You need to look regularly, as apprenticeship vacancies will come and go. You will also need to become practised at searching for apprenticeships. The site works better if you search by location, level of apprenticeship and business category.

Note: Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships covering things like accounting, event management or marketing might be advertised as an apprenticeship in business support. If you are struggling, get help from your progress coach or the careers service. You can create a profile and add personal information, which can help speed up the process of applying for an apprenticeship. Be mindful that not all apprenticeships are advertised here, so you will need to look elsewhere as well. Finally, remember to update and manage your profile. You may need to tailor it to particular employers or job roles.



APPRENTICESHIP HUBS

Local city councils, working with the employment service, have regional hubs for promoting opportunities and hosting recruitment events. You can also sign up to some of these for a weekly bulletin with their latest vacancies:



Apprenticeship Hub (apprenticeship-hub.co.uk) – this resource provides information and lists local providers you can contact rather than directly advertising vacancies.

Apprenticeships in York – City of York Council (www.york.gov.uk/YorkApprenticeships)

Leeds Apprenticeship Hub | Inclusive Growth Leeds (www.inclusivegrowthleeds.com/leeds-apprenticeship-hub)

The Yorkshire Apprenticeship Service - Yorkshire apprenticeship job search, support & offers (yorkshireapprenticeshipservice.co.uk/) – this also covers West and South Yorkshire, so some content might be 'out of area'.

NOTE: these sites all link to the main government website too.

JOB BOARDS

Websites like Indeed, Reed, Totaljobs and GetMyFirstJob. You can sign up, create a profile and upload a CV. You can arrange for opportunities to be sent to you by specifying search parameters and signing up to e-mail alerts. You can also try the local job centre/employment service. Some local publications will carry advertisements for entry level, trainee roles and apprenticeships. Again, make sure you manage your profile and check correspondence.



NETWORKING

Talk to family, friends, and teachers. Employers may send opportunities directly to tutors and curriculum teams within the college. College teams are very well connected to local employers. Your friends, family and parents will all work for employers that are likely to be able to offer an apprenticeship. Consider approaching them. Could you start with work experience or a placement?



EMPLOYER WEBSITES

Check the careers section of employer websites. You can sometimes sign up to receive information. Larger employers will have sections on their careers website about early careers and training or apprenticeship opportunities.



Remember to include major state employers, such as the NHS, the police, the armed forces and organisations like the National Trust or the Forestry Commission. Remember that employers will offer a wide range of apprenticeships. For example, Network Rail does not just have engineering apprenticeships. They will have them for IT, finance, project management, and so on.

Be creative – employers like Flamingo Land, Castle Howard or City of York Council may have all sorts of varied opportunities, even though you may never have thought of them.

The civil service tends not to advertise their vacancies or apprenticeship programmes on the government site (although they encourage everyone else to do so!). You should go to their website and see what is available in different departments.

Consider that many organisations have a 'talent pool'. You can add your details or send in an application and they will contact you, or you can apply, when there is a suitable vacancy.

RECRUITMENT FAIRS

There are regular recruitment fairs organised locally and nationally for apprenticeships by different organisations. Keep an eye out in the press, social media and careers service news items.



NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

Sponsored and promoted by the Department for Education and working with a massive range of employers, NAW occurs every February and will see fairs and information events nationally. You can search events near you and explore what employers have to offer at www.nationalapprenticeshipweek.co.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA

There are Facebook groups promoting apprenticeships in York and across the region. Check what is available and you can sign up to these.



Consider setting up a Linked-In account. You can network with employers and broadcast your interests, what you are looking for and your availability. This is a great way of connecting to people in business.

COLLEGE APPRENTICESHIP TEAMS

York College has a highly experienced and knowledgeable apprenticeship team who are happy to help with advice and information. They often have vacancies, where employers are looking to recruit college students. You can also look at apprenticeship information in other colleges.



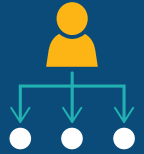
CAREERS SERVICE

All apprenticeship vacancies sent to the careers service are advertised on the careers newsfeed on the student portal. You can access this through the intranet or through the student app on your phone. It is worth keeping an eye on this for regular updates. We also post information about recruitment fairs, internships and work experience opportunities.



APPROACHING EMPLOYERS DIRECTLY

More on how to do this in the next section. This can be especially effective in industries like hospitality, construction, hairdressing and other trades. In these kinds of industries, personal and informal contacts often predominate, especially with smaller employers and sole traders, so it is important to visit an employer rather than rely on e-mails or wait for advertisements.



Remember, getting an apprenticeship can be challenging and being consistent and patient is crucial. Be aware that some apprenticeships are more difficult to find than others e.g. there are more apprenticeships in accounting than the funeral care sector.





APPROACHING EMPLOYERS DIRECTLY

It is essential to be proactive. Many employers do not advertise vacancies or may not have planned their future recruitment needs yet. You can focus on approaching employers for placements, work experience or internships. Building relationships with employers is an effective way to develop skills, experience and contacts. If you do very well, it is likely that when they are considering a recruitment need, you may be the 'name in the frame.' See the section below for more information on how to do this.

It is also essential to expand the range and number of the employers that you consider and think creatively. For example, if you are looking for an accounting apprenticeship, you do not have to work in a firm of accountants. The NHS or a law partnership will need accountants too. If you are interested in 'business,' what aspect of it appeals most – marketing, procurement, logistics, law, human resources, sales, event management etc.? Remember what we said at the start about apprenticeships being specific. You need to give some thought to this in terms of gaining specific experience or pitching your approach to a company.

YOU CAN IDENTIFY AND APPROACH EMPLOYERS BY:

USING GOOGLE MAP SEARCHES

Search for specific types of employers in a particular area e.g. 'accounting firm Harrogate.' Using the map function will bring up a list of employers, with their contact details and websites. You can research and plan to approach them. Consider adjacent areas e.g. if you live in Harrogate, you can also look at Knaresborough or Leeds.

Remember what we said about thinking creatively - consider other employers in a different industry or professional area that need the skills you offer and provide experience. This is a great way of making information come to you.

CONTACTING EMPLOYERS

You can do this by telephone, e-mail or in person. Try to get the name of the best person to speak to. Ensure correspondence is professional standard. Get advice or help with drafting this, if you need it. If going in person, ensure your dress and overall appearance are professional and appropriate to the environment.

DOING YOUR RESEARCH

Make sure you have looked at the website of any employers that interest you. Be aware of things like the history of the company, what they do, current projects, their vision and ethos. Consider what skills, experience and values you can offer.

NOT GIVING UP

Some firms will not be able to accommodate work experience or be ready to consider apprenticeship recruitment. If they say no, ask if there is a better time of year to speak to them or when they do their recruitment planning. Is there someone specific that you should contact? Ensure you diarise a call-back or re-visit: this needs to go into your planning. You need to develop confidence to 'ask one more question.'

HAVE A PORTFOLIO READY

It can help if you have examples of work or projects that you have already done that are neatly organised and ready-to-view, ideally though your phone or a link that can be sent.

SKILLS-BASED RECRUITMENT

Employers look for professionalism, enthusiasm and willingness to learn, alongside any relevant technical abilities and more general skills like time management or teamwork.

Apprenticeships aim to develop:

KNOWLEDGE

Awareness and understanding of the field you have chosen to work in. Specific knowledge about the industry sector.



SKILLS

Practical, technical and transferable skills relevant to the job role, the working environment and the industry you are in. Transferable skills include things like communication, teamwork and problem-solving.



BEHAVIOUR

Enthusiasm and Professional Conduct: A keen interest in the field and the employer you are approaching. Approaching the apprenticeship, study and the job role you are doing in a mature way and adopting appropriate professional behaviours.



Prepare a strong CV and cover letter highlighting your skills (note – not all employers accept CVs). Practice for interviews to highlight your abilities and practice answering questions. Prepare questions to show you have researched.



FINAL TIPS



BE PROACTIVE



PLAN AHEAD



SET GOALS



**ALLOCATE
ENOUGH TIME**



STAY FOCUSED



**UNDERSTAND
THE EMPLOYER**

TWO THINGS TO AVOID:

Feedback from both employers and the college Apprenticeship team is that both the following things are especially frustrating and undermine an application.

Applicants not replying to employers' contact attempts.



Be sure to respond even if it is to say you are no longer interested. Monitor correspondence on any accounts or profiles you set up on jobsites and social media.

Parents contacting employers on behalf of students or getting involved in the application process.



WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The information in this guide is relevant to all levels of apprenticeships but more detailed information on higher level and degree apprenticeships can be found in the York College Guide to Degree Apprenticeships, available from your progress coach and the careers service.

You can also visit the Skills England website skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships where you can find information on the types of apprenticeship and what you can study.

You can also talk to the Apprenticeship team, your progress coach, tutors or book a careers appointment with the careers team.



