

# YORK COLLEGE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING APPRENTICESHIPS: THE BASICS

YORK  
COLLEGE  
&  
UNIVERSITY  
CENTRE



## WHO CAN DO AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Anyone aged 16 or over, who has left school, can become an apprentice. Students can secure apprenticeships when they leave school at 16 and many more apply for apprenticeships while they are at college or after they leave. You can also apply for apprenticeships as an adult.

The range of apprenticeships has expanded far beyond traditional trades, like construction or engineering and even traditional professions like law, accounting and the NHS have also developed apprenticeship routes.

Apprenticeships have entry requirements and should not be considered either an easier alternative to college or only for students who do not suit A levels. Many students are likely to benefit from considering whether the apprenticeship route is right for them.

Non-UK nationals and those on refugee schemes can sometimes apply to do apprenticeships depending on the type of visa they hold. Rules around this can be complex and students in these categories should speak to the college Apprenticeship Team.

## WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

It is important to be clear what an apprenticeship is. An apprenticeship is a job role with a structured training plan. You will be doing a full-time job, earn a wage and gain practical skills and qualifications.

Apprenticeships are sometimes confused with things like work experience, internships, work placements or even courses, but these are very different. They are usually unpaid, undertaken for a specific amount of time and do not lead to a qualification.

Many apprentices normally spend one day per week in training but sometimes will do a 'chunk' of training over a longer period, known as 'block release', or even online training. There will be assessments and you will usually need to build a portfolio of evidence. A key contact will come out regularly to check on your progress, plan your learning and work with the employer to support your development.

Your learning will be organised around training while at work in your job role as well as 'off the job' training that could include theory and assignments.

### KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- The key to an apprenticeship is employment: you cannot be an apprentice without being employed in a job role. The job role has to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard.
- Apprenticeships are specific to particular job roles (e.g. being a plumber, social media marketing or business support), so it is essential that you are clear about what you are looking for.
- If you are not sure what you want to do, apprenticeships may not be the right route for you. An employer is recruiting you to work and train to do a job. It is not an opportunity to 'try out' different careers.
- If you apply for an apprenticeship that you have seen advertised, you may be competing against other applicants and you will need to convince an employer that you are

the best candidate. You therefore need to give serious thought and consideration to how you demonstrate your skills and suitability to be considered. This might include having a professional CV, being prepared for interviews, considering appropriate appearance and behaviours and the expectations that an employer will have.

- Be prepared to travel. Employers are based in many locations and may be some distance away. Not all of them have public transport options. You may need to give serious thought to how you will get there.
- Be mindful that an apprenticeship is a full-time job. You will be at work or in college usually 5 days a week and work through the college holidays. The legal holiday entitlement is 28 days.
- Remember that when you are training in college or with a training provider, you are at work. Things like misbehaviour or non-attendance can be addressed by the employer through disciplinary processes.

## ROUTES INTO APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are usually secured in one of the following ways:

- **Applying to an apprenticeship you have seen advertised.** This is just like looking for a job and you should approach it accordingly.



- **Being in employment already** and your employer sets up an apprenticeship for you.

- **Informal recruitment.** This could include opportunities with relatives or employers connected to your family, friends or even college tutors, or you approach employers directly. You might start out on a T level work placement or do regular work experience. There is more information on this below.



If you are already in employment, it is worth exploring with your employer, if you can do an apprenticeship. An employer may not even be aware that an apprenticeship programme exists for certain job roles, or they may not know who to contact to set one up. There are a range of incentives for employers to take on apprentices. The college Apprenticeship Team can help advise employers.

York College offers a range of apprenticeships and the Apprenticeship Team can work with your employer to identify the correct programme and set up an apprenticeship. You can find more information here: <https://www.yorkcollege.ac.uk/apprenticeships>

Finding an apprenticeship can be challenging. More information on how to search for one is available in the **York College Guide to Finding an Apprenticeship**, available from your progress coach and the careers service.

## SKILLS-BASED RECRUITMENT

Employers look for professionalism, enthusiasm and willingness to learn, alongside any relevant technical abilities and more general employment skills like evidence of ability to manage time, work collaboratively or deal with clients.

### 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.

You should consider how you demonstrate your existing skills, knowledge and behaviours as part of your application for an apprenticeship and when approaching an employer.

## APPRENTICESHIP LEVELS

It is essential to recognise that apprenticeships recruit for knowledge, skills and behaviours, rather than just prior levels of qualifications, so it is not automatically the case that you can start an apprenticeship at the next level up from wherever you currently are. In order to acquire essential foundation skills, you may need to move sideways or step back to a lower level. For example, you should not assume that if you have done GCSE (Level 2), that you should be able to start on a Level 3 apprenticeships. If you have done A levels (Level 3), you may still need to look at a Level 2 apprenticeship.

### THERE ARE APPRENTICESHIPS AVAILABLE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS (SEE BELOW):

- Level 2 (Intermediate) – equivalent to GCSE.
- Level 3 (Advanced) – equivalent to A levels, A BTEC Extended diploma or a T Level.
- Level 4 (Higher) – equivalent to the first year at university.
- Level 5 – equivalent to a two-year foundation degree.
- Level 6 – equivalent to final year at university
- Level 7 – equivalent to a postgraduate Masters degree

For many training routes, you will need to complete more than one level of apprenticeship.

Where you have experience or prior qualifications, it can sometimes be possible to reduce the length of your apprenticeship.

For more information on degree apprenticeships (Level 5, 6 & 7), read the [York College Guide to Degree Apprenticeships](#), available from the careers service or your progress coach.

The college Apprenticeship Team are able to provide more detailed information on entry requirements and the appropriate starting level of an apprenticeship for you.

## LEVELS OF STUDY

|         |                               |                                    |                            |                                       |
|---------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| LEVEL 7 | MASTERS<br>MA, MSc, MBA       | POSTGRAD<br>DIPLOMA                | POSTGRAD<br>CERTIFICATE    |                                       |
| LEVEL 6 | DEGREE WITH<br>HONOURS BA/BSc | BA/BSc TOP UP                      |                            |                                       |
| LEVEL 5 |                               | DIPLOMA OF<br>HIGHER EDUCATION     | FOUNDATION<br>DEGREE<br>FD | HIGHER NATIONAL<br>DIPLOMA            |
| LEVEL 4 |                               | CERTIFICATE OF<br>HIGHER EDUCATION |                            | HIGHER NATIONAL<br>CERTIFICATE        |
| LEVEL 3 | AS & A LEVELS                 | EXTENDED DIPLOMA                   | DIPLOMA                    | ACCESS TO HIGHER<br>EDUCATION DIPLOMA |
| LEVEL 2 | GCSES                         |                                    |                            |                                       |

## MATHS AND ENGLISH REQUIREMENTS

It is important not to see apprenticeships as a way of avoiding doing Maths and/or English.

Apprenticeships have entry requirements and many will specify that you should already have passed Maths and English or they may require particular grades. If you have not passed GCSE Maths and/or English at Grade 4, you will usually need to continue studying these subjects in order to pass your apprenticeship.

Be mindful that employers and apprenticeship training providers can set their own requirements, based on their recruitment needs. If you are unsure, you should speak to the college Apprenticeship Team.

## ROLE OF THE COLLEGE APPRENTICESHIP TEAM

The college apprenticeship team helps set up apprenticeships with students and employers. They have considerable knowledge and expertise and do the following:

- Provide information, advice and guidance about apprenticeships
- Work with employers to promote apprenticeship vacancies and support with recruitment
- Manage the complex administrative and funding side of an apprenticeship programme

Employers do advertise vacancies with the college Apprenticeship team, so it is always worth checking out the apprenticeship section on the college website. You can do this here: <https://www.yorkcollege.ac.uk/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-vacancies>. New vacancies appear regularly, so be sure to keep checking. You can sign up to get regular updates by e-mailing: [apprenticeships@yorkcollege.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@yorkcollege.ac.uk).

However, they do not search for apprenticeships for you. You need to be active in your search and consider how and where you are going to look for one.

More information is available in the companion guide to this one, the **York College Guide to Finding an Apprenticeship**, available from your progress coach or the careers service.

