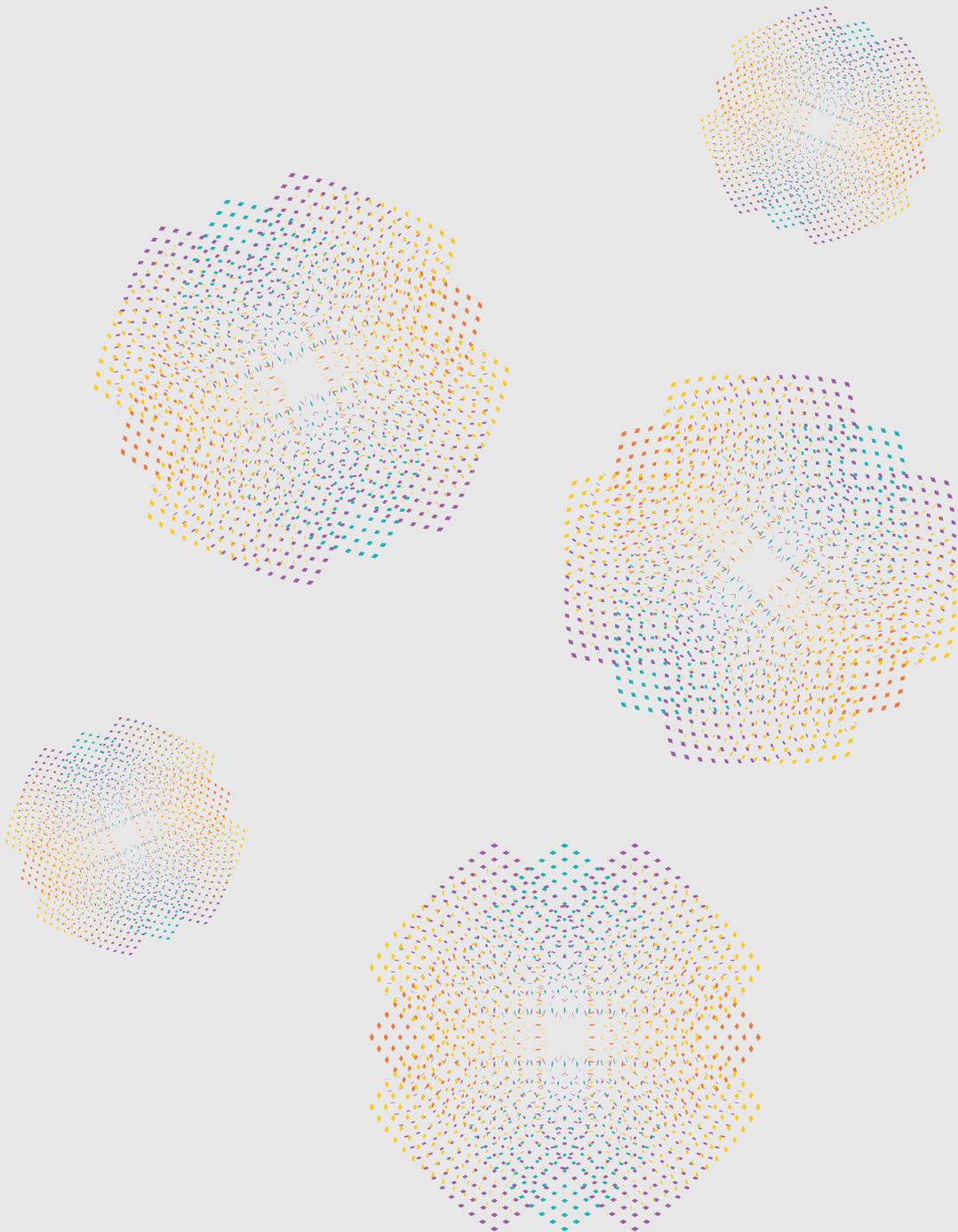


# DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS: REALISING OPPORTUNITIES



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Universities UK has been supporting universities to understand and engage with the development of degree apprenticeships. We work in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), GuildHE, the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC), the mission groups, and government agencies and departments. The survey underpinning the findings and recommendations set out in this report was supported by these partners and has been made possible by funding from the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund.

In March 2016 we published *The future growth of degree apprenticeships*, an assessment of university engagement with the very early stages of the development of degree apprenticeships. We identified considerable university interest and significant potential for degree apprenticeships to develop into another way in which universities can meet the needs of employers. We also considered what challenges there might be.

With support from HEFCE we have been able to conduct a follow-up study, drawing on an extensive survey of what universities are now doing and plan to do. The potential for degree apprenticeships to make a significant contribution to meeting employer skills needs and providing increased opportunities to young people is about to be realised. From a low base there is set to be significant growth over the next few years. There do, however, remain barriers to the growth of degree apprenticeships; we identify them here, and make recommendations as to how they can be overcome.

This report reflects the views of universities, and these views will have been informed by extensive discussions with employers. The key findings from the survey are summarised below.

### KEY FEATURES OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION

- There are **at least 60 universities** and other higher education institutions across England **currently implementing** or planning to implement degree apprenticeships for the next academic year (2017–18).
- The number of ‘standards’<sup>1</sup> approved for delivery has increased considerably, and **there will be more than 7,600 degree apprentices** by 2017–18.
- Universities will be providing degree apprenticeships across almost all of the available standards. Current growth is being driven by **chartered manager, digital and technology, and engineer-related** degree apprenticeships.
- As well as delivering existing standards universities are interested in **developing new standards in 43 industry areas. Growth will diversify** as more standards are approved, especially those for the **public sector**.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Standards’ show what an apprentice will be doing and the skills required of them, by job role. Standards are developed by employer groups known as ‘trailblazers’. Skills Funding Agency (2014) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

- More than **75% institutions** surveyed are **involved in** one or more **trailblazer groups** for the development of new apprenticeship standards, but also a significant number of institutions not involved in trailblazer groups would like to deliver the emerging standards. This shows **significant potential support for employers** in the design of new standards.
- **Degree apprentices are mostly based locally**, and institutions envisage that over the next three years there will be significant growth locally and regionally, and some growth nationally.
- **Universities are engaging with employers and local organisations**, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities, to help them implement degree apprenticeships. In particular, institutions work closely with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and national employers, employer groups and other delivery providers, especially further education colleges.

### **BENEFITS OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS FOR INSTITUTIONS**

- Universities have a clear and positive perception of degree apprenticeships, and **the more they engage with degree apprenticeships the more they appreciate the benefits.**
- Degree apprenticeships are a way to complement current **business engagement** activities. Institutions value the opportunity to create closer links with employers, strengthen existing relationships and build new collaborations.
- Degree apprenticeships could attract students that wouldn't have gone into traditional university programmes, helping institutions reach **widening participation and social mobility goals.**
- Degree apprenticeships are a way to ensure **higher education provision meets employers' needs.**
- Implementing degree apprenticeships allows universities to **access a new income stream.**
- Thanks to relationships between institutions and local employers, degree apprenticeships have the potential to **promote local growth** and development, and increase talent retention.
- Many universities are working closely with other training providers supporting the development of **new education partnerships.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure the success of degree apprenticeships, universities, government and higher education sector bodies should work closely together.

**Universities** should:

- build a strong case internally for degree apprenticeships, and secure the support of all relevant academic and support staff

- continue to explain and promote degree apprenticeships to employers, building on initial success
- use their extensive links with employers to support the development of degree apprenticeships
- consider working in partnerships with further education colleges both in the delivery and in administration of degree apprenticeships
- work with careers services and leaders in schools to promote degree apprenticeships

**Government** should:

- continue and increase efforts to publicise and raise understanding of degree apprenticeships
- ensure employers are made fully aware of the availability of degree apprenticeships through the National Apprenticeship Service, by integrating degree apprenticeships into the apprenticeship offer and ensure that they are also integrated into local apprenticeship hubs
- encourage and develop careers advice and guidance across the education sector to promote degree apprenticeships

**The Institute for Apprenticeships** should:

- ensure the apprenticeship system enables universities to deliver the degree apprenticeships employers demand
- make greater progress in developing a system that works for all providers and ensure higher education providers are as engaged, involved and supported as all other providers
- work towards streamlining the development of new standards, ensuring appropriate guidance for trailblazer groups on implementing and delivering degree apprenticeships
- work with the sector to ensure that appropriate and relevant data is collected on degree apprentices, building on the extensive data that is already collected in the higher education sector

**The higher education sector** should:

- encourage employers to engage with universities at the early stages of degree apprenticeship standard development
- work with Skills Funding Agency and Institute for Apprenticeships to develop processes that are relevant to providers of all types, and increase mutual understanding

## INTRODUCTION

Launched in September 2015, degree apprenticeships are a new and exciting opportunity to develop employer-focused higher education in England. They can play a role in meeting employers' skills needs, boosting local graduate retention and local growth, and increasing social mobility.

They open up opportunities for learners who might not have considered going to university to get a full Bachelors or Masters degree and work at the same time, offering a debt-free way to combine university education with invaluable work experience. Individuals pursuing a degree apprenticeship are employees, they earn at least an apprentice's minimum wage, and are likely to remain within the business after the end of the training<sup>2</sup>. Training costs are covered partly by the employer and partly by the government, which contributes 90% of course fees for non-Apprenticeship Levy-paying employers.

Thanks to their structure and the fact they are co-designed with employers to meet their particular skills needs, degree apprenticeships are a great way for employers to recruit new employees and upskills their workforce, reducing skills gaps.

Growth in degree apprenticeships is being driven in three key areas where there are skills shortages: management, digital skills and engineering. They have a role to play in driving economic growth and productivity as part of the government's Industrial Strategy. The growth of degree apprenticeship provision across England and the fact that the majority of apprentices are locally based means that they have a role to play in rebalancing economic growth and opportunities. They will become even more important after April 2017, when employers with a pay bill of over £3 million will start to pay an Apprenticeship Levy. With thousands of employers paying the levy (and those that don't getting generous government support) this could lead to a step change in employer interest in, and demand for, degree apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are available from level 2 up to levels 6 and 7, and potentially level 8, which would be equivalent to PhD. As shown in Table 1 below, they offer an alternative to traditional education routes.

**Table 1: Levels of apprenticeship<sup>3</sup>**

Apprenticeship name	Level						Equivalent educational level
	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Degree							Bachelors or Masters degree
Higher							Foundation degree and above
Advanced							2 A-level passes
Intermediate							5 GCSE passes at grade A* to C

The degree apprenticeship model builds on the extensive experience universities already have in providing online, distance, weekend and blended learning, engaging

<sup>2</sup> Universities UK (2016) "The Future Growth of Degree Apprenticeships" <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/downloads/FutureGrowthDegreeApprenticeships.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/overview>

with employers and supporting work-based learning. It is this experience that has enabled universities, working with employers, to rapidly adopt degree apprenticeships as part of their offer to employers and students.

As a new initiative as yet untested with employers, universities have had to both engage with and understand new processes and approaches and test demand for this type of provision. It is clear from our survey that universities are overwhelmingly rising to the challenge. They have invested time, energy and expertise into understanding degree apprenticeships and their new processes and requirements, and talking to a wide range of employers about the potential of degree apprenticeships. And employers are responding: the confidence universities have in predicting future demand is built on employer demand.

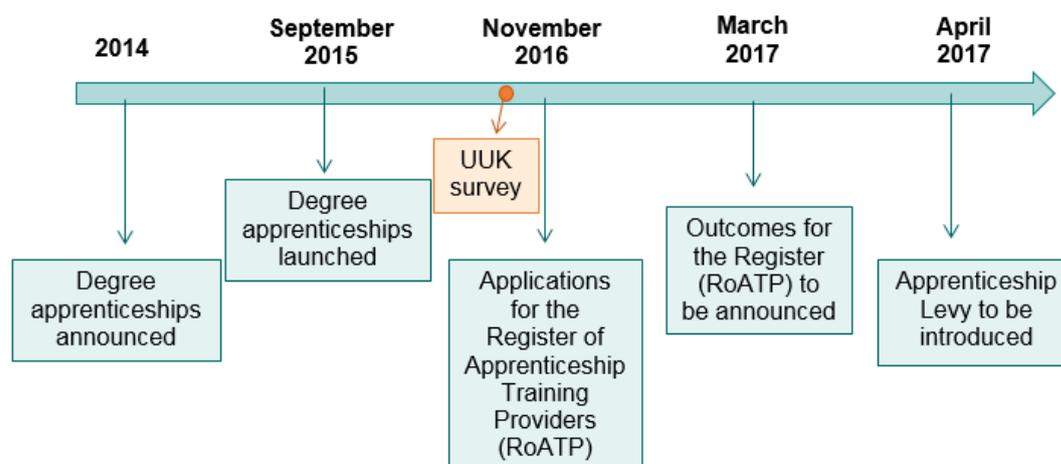
The successful development and provision of degree apprenticeships has demonstrated how universities can bring together teams across their organisation, including employer engagement, teaching and learning, quality assurance and widening participation teams to respond quickly to employer demand. It has also shown how they can use their links with schools and in the regional economy to provide a whole service to employers, adding tremendous value and ensuring the success of degree apprenticeships.

As well a way of engaging with employers, degree apprenticeships are also an opportunity to engage with local stakeholders and partners to help meet local skills needs. The results of our survey show that apprentices are predominantly locally or regionally based, and so they have the potential to boost local graduate retention and help rebalance economic growth across England.

‘If you engage with the apprentice scheme properly, then there are many benefits – and what might surprise some people is that they extend beyond the apprentices themselves. Of course, you benefit from apprentices being part of your organisation because they see things differently with new perspectives. More than that, though, their enthusiasm and fresh thinking can invigorate the teams that they are part of – people who may have got used to their current routines or ways of doing things can be given new impetus through the introduction of apprentices to their team.’

**Brendan Robinson, Lead Sponsor of the Quantity  
Surveying Apprenticeship, TfL**

**Figure 1: Timeline of degree apprenticeship development in England**



## **1. THE UUK SURVEY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

In July 2016 Universities UK was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to survey higher education institutions as providers of degree apprenticeships. This was part of a wider research project which also involved the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) mapping demand and supply in the sector. UUK has worked on the supply side, surveying institutions on their level of engagement with degree apprenticeships, asking for numbers of provision, motivators and challenges to implementation. The AGR asked similar questions to employers.

This research builds on UUK's March 2016 report, *The future growth of degree apprenticeships*. That study, conducted by CFE Research, explored progress in developing degree apprenticeships and identified key lessons and challenges to provision.

Our survey findings show that universities are ready to meet the expected demand from employers. Furthermore, they have a clear and positive perception of the potential of degree apprenticeships for themselves, employers, individuals and society as a whole.

It is clear from our survey that degree apprenticeships have the potential to be a success story for universities, for government but more importantly for apprentices and employers.

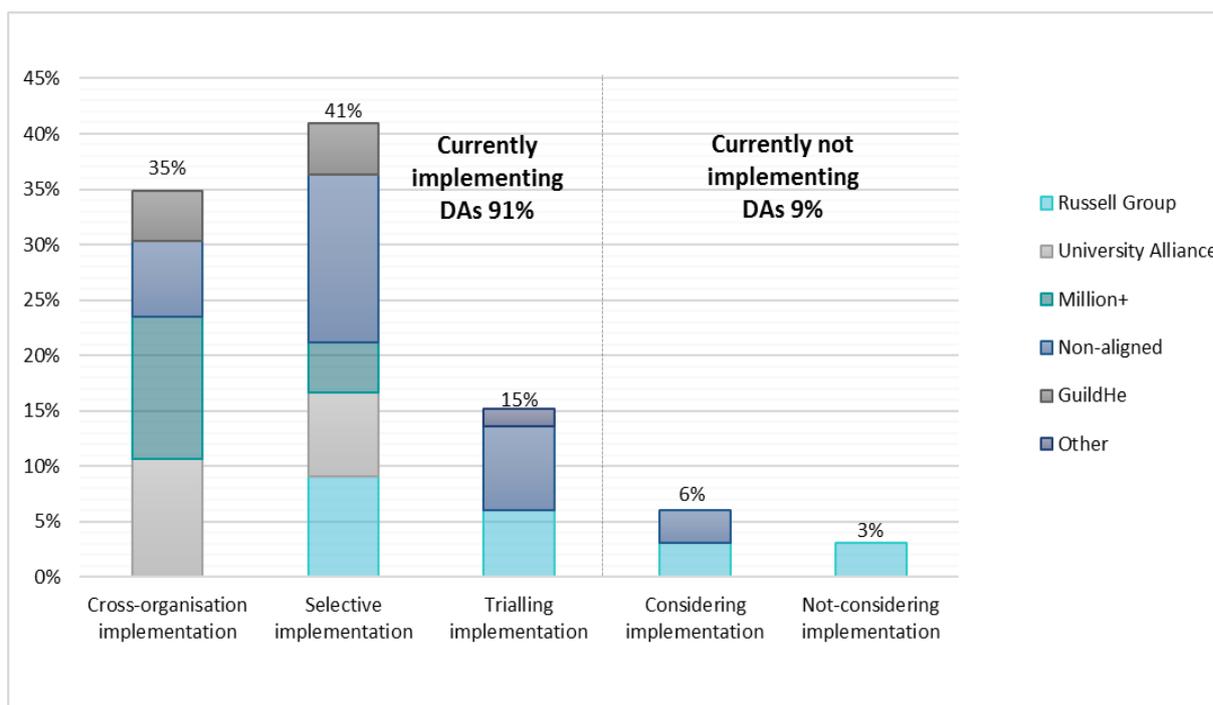
## SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

Sixty-six organisations<sup>4</sup> – universities and other higher education institutions across England – took part in the survey. A broad and diverse range of institutions responded, with each English region represented and the various mission groups of universities<sup>5</sup>.

The level of response from institutions to the survey, both in terms of the diversity of institutions that responded and the balanced spread across all regions of England, gives us confidence that the results of the survey are representative of the sector and form a sound basis for conclusions and recommendations.

Most of the responses were from institutions that are committed to delivering degree apprenticeships. Overall, 91% of the institutions surveyed are actively engaging with degree apprenticeships: 23 institutions have a cross-organisation approach to degree apprenticeships, 27 a selective one, and 10 are still at the trialling stage. We also received responses from a small number of alternative providers and further education colleges, 13 in total, but as this report is focusing on degree apprenticeships the focus is on university provision.

**Figure 2: Institutions' approach to degree apprenticeships**



There are active institutions spread evenly across all English regions. In terms of mission groups University Alliance and MillionPlus members are among the most active providers. The majority of Russell Group institutions that responded to the survey are engaged with degree apprenticeships. They are either considering, trialling or selectively implementing degree apprenticeships (86%) so they are at an earlier stage of implementation compared to other institutions. While analysis by mission

<sup>4</sup> See Annexe 1 for the complete list of institutions.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on mission groups and representative bodies, please refer to Annexe 2.

group gives some indication of how different institutions are engaging, it should be borne in mind that the majority of universities in England do not belong to a mission group and are classified as ‘non-aligned’.

While the response rate from institutions was high and representative of both the spread of institutions and regions, it is clear that there are even more institutions implementing degree apprenticeships than responded to the survey. 85% of the institutions previously part of UUK research on degree apprenticeships participated in the survey, as well as 13 of the 18 universities which received funding as part of the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund Phase 1 (DADF1).

## **DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION**

To gain a comprehensive view on developments related to degree apprenticeships, we asked about:

1. Current degree apprenticeships available for delivery
2. Future degree apprenticeship standards provision
3. Working with trailblazer groups on new standards
4. Working with employers
5. Where apprentices are based
6. Partnerships with local organisations

### **i. Current degree apprenticeships available for delivery**

For the delivery of any apprenticeship, regardless of level, an approved standard and assessment plan need to be in place, having gone through the trailblazer process<sup>6</sup>. We wanted to find out what institutional plans for delivery of these standards are.

In October 2016 there were 18 level 6 and 7 standards approved for delivery (see Table 2). With the exception of licensed conveyancer, 17 of these will be offered in 2017–18. Forty-nine (77%) of the institutions surveyed will be delivering one or more of the approved standards, showing the breadth of provision being planned.

Table 2 shows the rapid growth expected from the modest numbers enrolled in 2015–16. According to the survey, there were at least 640 degree apprenticeship starts in 2015–16, a figure consistent with recent statistics from a House of Commons briefing paper<sup>7</sup>. In 2017–18, all but one of the standards (licensed conveyancer) will have recruited apprentices. Overall, growth in numbers from 2015–16 to 2017–18 is expected to be just over 650%. While almost all standards will have some provision, it is clear that a large proportion of the overall growth is driven by three key standards/areas. The chartered manager degree apprenticeship represents 36% of all apprentice numbers by 2017–18, the digital and technology solution professional represents 33%, and the engineering-related degree apprenticeship standards (10 in total) represent approximately 20%.

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<sup>6</sup> The new apprenticeship system is designed to be employer-led, with standards developed by employer groups known as ‘trailblazers’. Professional bodies, training providers and awarding organisations are also involved in supporting trailblazer groups, to ensure the suitability of standards.

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons (2016) *Apprenticeship statistics: England* briefing paper: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SNO6113/SNO6113.pdf>

**Table 2: Level 6 and 7 standards provision**

<b>Numbers of provision for each academic year</b>	2015 –16	2016 –17	2017– 18	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>% of TOTAL</b>	<b>Growth *</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Chartered manager	102	855	1821	<b>2,778</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>1,685%</b>	43	67%
Digital and technology solution professionals	411	723	1399	<b>2,533</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>240%</b>	33	52%
Engineer – all subjects	101	367	1023	<b>1,491</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>913%</b>	25	39%
Manufacturing engineer	89	172	352	<b>613</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>296%</b>	10	16%
Electrical/electronic systems design and development engineer		48	112	<b>160</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>133%</b>	6	9%
Embedded electronic systems design and development engineer		18	132	<b>150</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>633%</b>	6	9%
Product design and development engineer		5	120	<b>125</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>2,300%</b>	8	13%
Systems engineering Masters-level		49	62	<b>111</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>27%</b>	6	9%
Control/technical support engineer		30	75	<b>105</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>150%</b>	5	8%
Outside broadcasting engineer		35	65	<b>100</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>86%</b>	6	9%
Aerospace engineer	12		55	<b>67</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>358%</b>	4	6%
Nuclear scientist and nuclear engineer		10	40	<b>50</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>300%</b>	3	5%
Aerospace software development engineer			10	<b>10</b>	<b>0.01%</b>		1	2%
Chartered surveyor	25	50	160	<b>235</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>540%</b>	8	13%
Chartered legal executive		37	155	<b>192</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>319%</b>	6	9%
Relationship manager (banking)		42	94	<b>136</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>124%</b>	3	5%
Solicitor	1	17	118	<b>136</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>594%</b>	10	16%
Senior compliance/risk specialist		30	80	<b>110</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>167%</b>	2	3%
Licensed conveyancer							0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>2,121</b>	<b>4,850</b>	<b>7,611</b>		<b>658%</b>		

\*Where data is available, growth is computed using numbers from 2015–16. When provision is equal to 0 in 2015–16, growth is computed using values for 2016–17 (this also applies for solicitor).

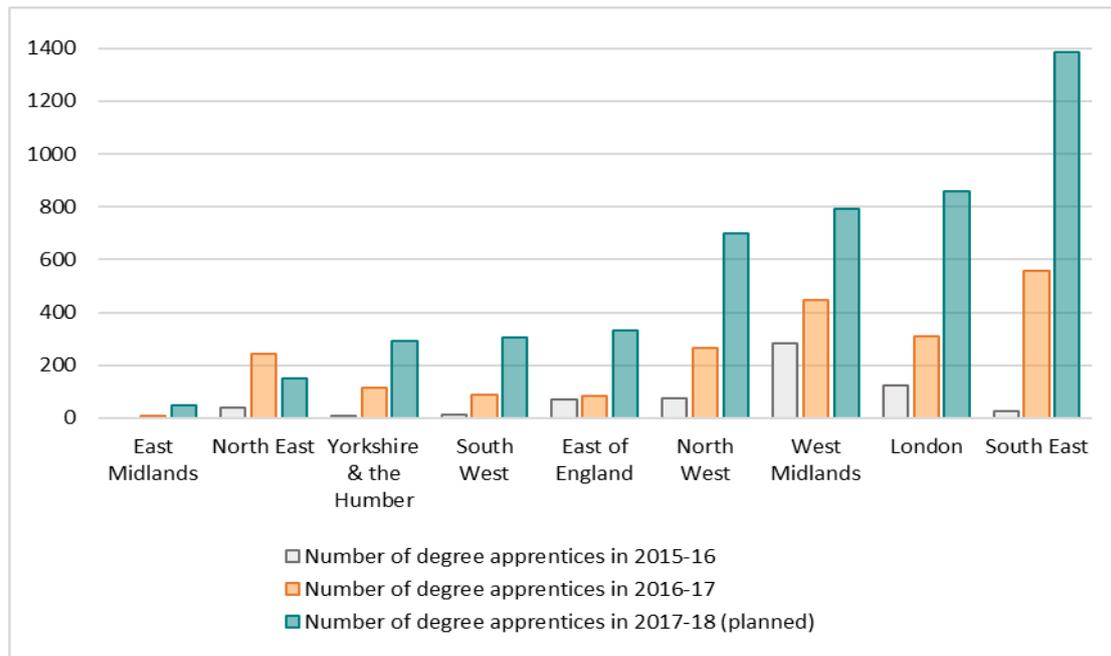
Chartered manager and digital and technology solutions are the two most implemented standards across each English region, with at least 43 and 33 institutions, respectively, providing them. These standards are among the first developed and approved; many more will follow in a range of industries. Given their structure and adaptability to different sectors, chartered manager and digital and technology have successfully managed to attract apprentices employed in a variety of organisations and are being delivered by a wide range of institutions.

The third most implemented individual standard is manufacturing engineer, with 10 different institutions planning to deliver provision in 2017–18. Table 2 combines all

engineering standards to demonstrate the importance of this broader subject area to future growth. In total there will be 25 institutions delivering these apprenticeships.

The South East sees the largest number of apprentices (29%) in 2017–18, followed by London (18%), the West Midlands (16%) and the North West (14%). The only region that seems to be lagging behind is the East Midlands, but it should be noted that only 20% of UUK members based in the East Midlands responded to the survey.

**Figure 3: Regional breakdown of provision**

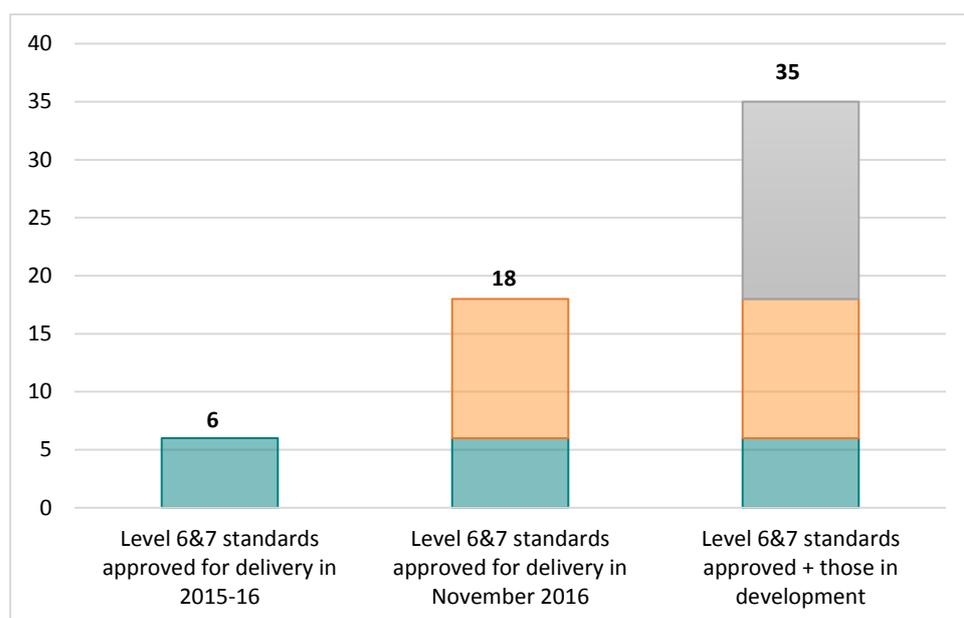


Numbers in the North East appear to be lower in 2017–18 than they were in 2016–17, but data is missing from one of the main providers in the region.

## ii. Future degree apprenticeship standards provision

As well as identifying significant growth in the delivery of degree apprenticeships where there are standards already in place, we also expect to see an increase in the number of degree apprenticeship standards available for delivery. It is safe to assume that the numbers of expected degree apprenticeships where standards exist will be added to by apprentices studying the new standards once they are approved.

**Figure 4: Cumulative number of standards**



We have already seen an increase in degree apprenticeship standards from six in 2015–16 to 18 now. We know that there are at least 17 standards at the trailblazer stage that have already been identified as degree apprenticeships<sup>8</sup>, but there could be many more. Should these new standards be approved for delivery, they point to a greatly increased choice for employers and apprentices in future.

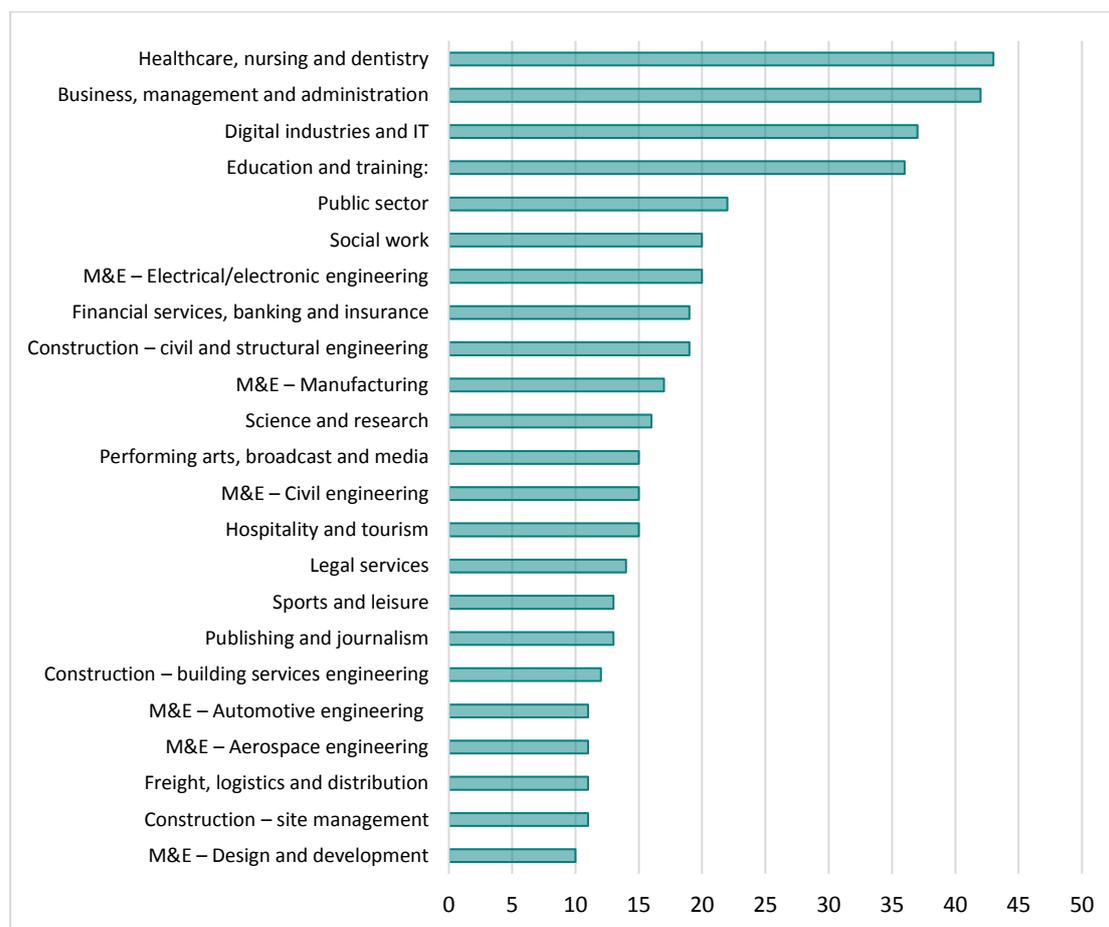
To have a better understanding of where potential growth might be, institutions were asked to identify sector categories where they are planning to deliver degree apprenticeships but where standards are either in development or do not yet exist.

Overall, the survey findings show a high level of interest in developing standards in a breadth of categories, with a cluster of organisations gravitating towards a few specific sectors.

Institutions appear to be keen to deliver degree apprenticeships in 43 different areas. If standards were to be developed, this would translate into degree apprenticeships in most of the sectors of the English economy: from transport to construction, agriculture, manufacturing and services.

<sup>8</sup> Skills Funding Agency (January 2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-list-of-occupations-available>

**Figure 5: Sector categories of interest for the development of degree apprenticeships**



Note: M&E = Manufacturing & engineering

Some of the areas generating the greatest interest are in the public sector, most notably healthcare, nursing and dentistry, education and training, public sector, and social work. Many universities already have long-standing professional provision in these areas and play a key role in developing their workforces. The number of institutions interested in these areas is equivalent to the numbers delivering or planning to deliver chartered manager, and digital and technology solutions degree apprenticeships. 72% of institutions are interested in standards in healthcare, and 60% in education and training. This points to the potential for significant growth in these areas.

An example of where universities are working closely with the public sector to develop degree apprenticeship standards to meet their training and development needs is the work being done by the University of Cumbria with the police. Their partnership shows the benefits of employers engaging with providers at the very early stages of standards development. The university has been able to help the police to identify their skills needs, support the creation of the trailblazer group and bring in other universities as part of a consortium. The university has been supported by the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund (DADF1) managed by HEFCE (for more information on the DADF see Annexe 3).

### **CASE STUDY: THE UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA**

The University of Cumbria is a modern university with a focus on vocational learning, in particular on teaching and nursing, with strong relationships with employers. The university has expanded its offer by building on connections with businesses and increasing placement opportunities, and it is now looking to widening the support it can offer employers by delivering degree apprenticeships.

Since March 2016, the university has been supporting the development of a police constable degree apprenticeship by joining a trailblazer group comprising the College of Policing as the professional body, an employer group headed by Thames Valley Police, and a consortium of 10 higher education institutions it heads itself. This is part of a wider project aimed at formalizing education in policing across the country and aligning it with higher education.

Traditionally, police training has been delivered at Level 3. The move from Level 3 training to Level 6 reflects the evolving nature of police work, the skills needed and the need to meet future challenges, however this recognised across the service and within higher education.

Thanks to the funding provided by DADF, the university is able to lead a consortium of 10 higher education institutions as part of the trailblazer group working on the creation of a police constable standard, an assessment plan, a national curriculum, and a degree apprenticeship specification document. The trailblazer group is currently discussing delivery and assessment methods and would like to see the standard approved and ready for launch by the beginning of 2018.

This strong partnership working between the police services and the university sector, with guidance and support from the College of Policing, has enabled a shared vision to emerge and be realised.

### **iii. Working with trailblazer groups on new standards**

There are currently at least 17 degree apprenticeship standards in development. The new apprenticeship system is designed to be employer-led, with standards developed by employer groups known as 'trailblazers'. Professional bodies, training providers and awarding organisations are also involved in trailblazer groups, to ensure the suitability of standards<sup>9</sup>. Being part of a trailblazer group allows institutions to inform and support the design of the standard and engage with employers throughout its development, enabling more effective provision once it has been approved.

Providers are working with employers to design degree apprenticeships in a breadth of occupations, but again, the majority of those surveyed are focusing on the

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

development of standards in the digital industries, education and training, and nursing.

There are currently more than 100 occupations in which trailblazer groups are developing standards at all levels, and 75% of the institutions surveyed are involved in one or more of them. This further demonstrates the high level of interest in degree, higher and other apprenticeships.

As well as their involvement in existing trailblazer groups, institutions expressed their interest in delivering degree apprenticeships that might arise from 66 of the available trailblazer groups. In 42 cases, there are at least five providers interested in delivering degree apprenticeships in these trailblazer areas.

Thirty-seven institutions would be willing to provide new standards in the digital industries, 35 in business, and 32 in education and training. Advanced manufacturing and engineering, and nursing follow closely with 31 and 30 institutions interested, but there are another seven standards in development which could be offered by more than 20 providers.

**Table 3: Standards in development by trailblazer groups**

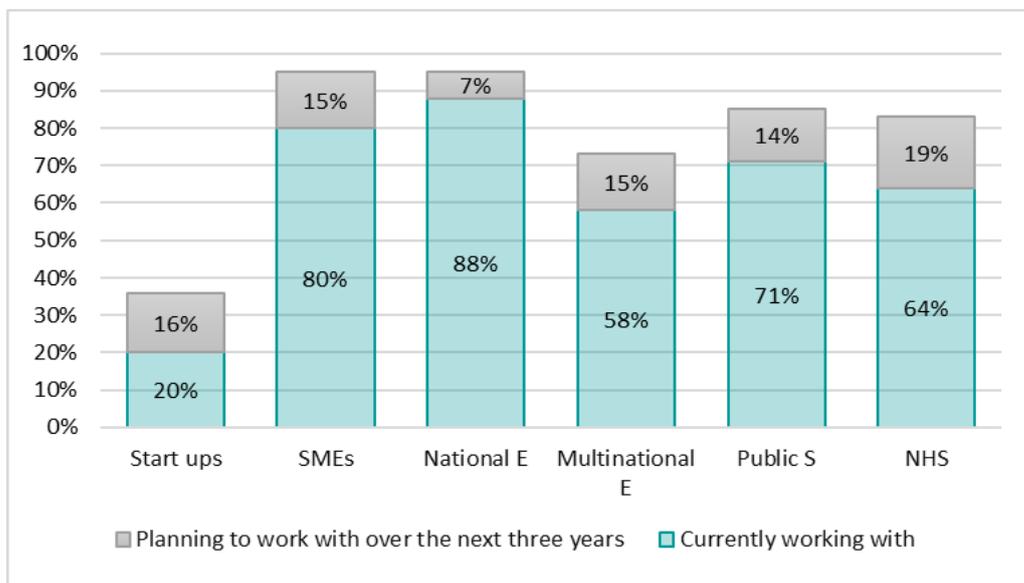
<b>Standard</b>	<b>Number of institutions interested</b>	<b>Number of institutions involved</b>
Digital industries	37	17
Business	35	7
Education & training	32	17
Advanced manufacturing and engineering	31	6
Nursing	30	15
Healthcare science	29	7
Engineering and advanced manufacturing engineering	28	3
Project management	25	3
Business innovation & growth	24	1
Early years	24	5
Police service	24	6
Civil engineering	22	5

These numbers are another indication of the level of interest in future degree apprenticeships. Once new standards are approved, apprentice numbers will increase, making degree apprenticeships an important part of the apprenticeship market. In nine of the 12 areas set out in Table 3 there are more than four times the number of universities interested in providing the standard as there are engaged with the trailblazer.

#### iv. Working with employers

Degree apprenticeships are designed by employers for employers and the apprenticeship system as a whole is evolving to become more employer-driven. Our survey identifies that increased opportunities to work with employers and deepen the relationships they already have are major motivators for university involvement in the development of degree apprenticeships. Universities have many links with thousands of employers, from research collaboration to programme design and from knowledge transfer to internships and placements. In supporting the development of degree apprenticeships universities have activated these links and relationships but also generated new links. Our survey demonstrates the strength and range of these partnerships.

**Figure 6: Employers' engagement**



All universities are working with employers; the overwhelming majority are working with a wide range of employers, and this is set to increase.

Figure 6 shows the types of employers that universities are working with: national (88%), SMEs (80%) and the public sector (71%). There are also good levels of engagement with the NHS and multinational employers, while only 20% of providers are currently working with start-ups. This is likely to be because those smaller companies are not in a position to commit to employing degree apprentices for the necessary length of time.

The numbers of partnerships with all types of employers are expected to increase in the next three years, with the number of institutions working with national employers and SMEs expected to approach 100%.

#### v. Where apprentices are based

When asked where their apprentices are currently based, 52% of the institutions said they are mostly based locally, and 36% that they are mostly based regionally. Degree

apprenticeships are a regional and local phenomenon, with 40% of survey respondents reporting that they do not have any apprentices based nationally.

Furthermore, all institutions expect to have at least some growth at the local and regional level over the next three years, and 66% of respondents expect significant growth at the local level. There will also be some growth nationally (57%), but, once again, the focus of degree apprenticeships is predominantly local.

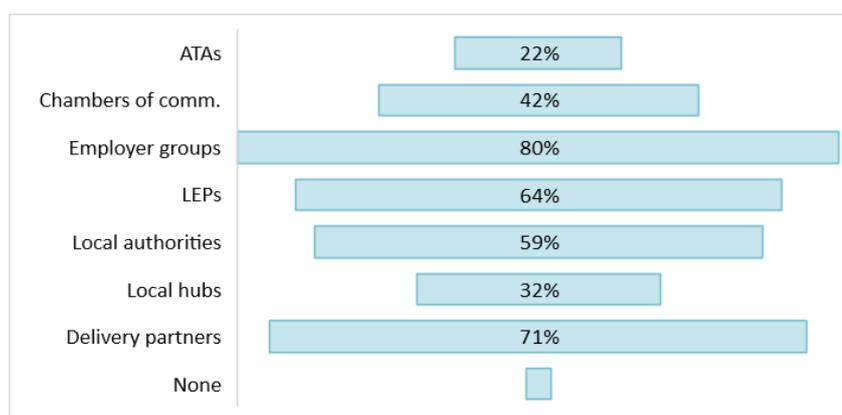
The local and regional focus of apprenticeship provision is reflected in the value that universities place on the ability of degree apprenticeships to meet local and regional skills needs (see section 2(ix), page 23).

#### vi. Partnerships with local organisations

The local and regional significance of degree apprenticeships is reflected in the extent to which universities work with local partnership organisations.

There is significant engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities and chambers of commerce. There is less engagement with Apprenticeship Training Agencies (businesses specifically set up to source employers and candidates interested in engaging with apprenticeships<sup>10</sup>), and local hubs, but this may well reflect the limited number and varied availability of such organisations across England. There is strong engagement with employer groups, as would be expected. It is interesting to note that there is considerable evidence of partnerships with local delivery partners. This points to the potential for local collaboration and partnerships with further education and other providers to meet local skills needs.

**Figure 7: Partnerships with local organisations**



The work of the University of Lincoln demonstrates the value that degree apprenticeships can have in targeting local employment needs, widening participation and improving local graduate retention. Similarly to the University of Cumbria, the University of Lincoln and partners have secured funding to aid the implementation of degree apprenticeships from DADF1.

<sup>10</sup> Skills Funding Agency, *Apprenticeship Training Agency – Recognition Process Guidance* [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/402349/Recognition\\_Process\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/402349/Recognition_Process_Guidance.pdf)

## **CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN - NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FOOD MANUFACTURING**

The National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) is a satellite campus of the University of Lincoln, based in south Lincolnshire in the heart of the UK's largest cluster of food manufacturing businesses.

The university has a history of delivering level 2, 3 and 5 apprenticeships and is currently looking at the development and implementation of degree apprenticeships in food science (level 6). Its aim is three-fold:

1. To retain talent in the region, by giving young students the opportunity to study locally while being employed and earning a debt-free degree
2. To offer progression routes for individuals already working in food businesses in the region, driving up aspirations
3. To address the higher level skills shortage many local firms suffer

Degree apprenticeships are a central part of the University of Lincoln's mission, and the institution is actively engaging with LEPs, the district council and the county council to promote these new programmes.

The NCFM is also working with more than 250 businesses, 50% of which are based locally. To better address their needs, it has opted for an open provision of degree apprenticeships. This means that apprentices from different employers can study together on the same course, enabling small businesses to have apprentices even if their individual demand is small.

The NCFM has promoted degree apprenticeships to young people in schools and colleges, using live vacancies to attract them into the sector by changing perceptions of apprenticeships and encouraging employers to see progression routes for their own employees. Regular employer consultation events, including industry masterclasses, trailblazer consultation events and Skills Funding Agency events have proven invaluable. Universities have provided support employers including advertising literature, recruitment screening, interview attendance and skills gap analysis to identify longer-term succession planning.

Furthermore, current apprentices are promoting degree apprenticeships in their old schools, to show current students how people coming from their background can successfully enrol in degree apprenticeships and obtain a degree – and a job – without leaving their community. Indeed, employers have developed a strong loyalty to their apprentices, who are likely to continue within the same business after the end of the programme.

## 2. THE BENEFITS OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

As well as surveying institutions about the details of their degree apprenticeship provision, we also wanted to understand what universities perceived the benefits to be. Institutions were asked to assign a score from highly relevant (5) to not relevant (1) to a list of 11 potential benefits of degree apprenticeships, drawn from previous research and interviews. Ten benefits out of 11 scored 4.00 or higher.

**Table 4: Benefits of degree apprenticeships**

		<b>Score (out of 5)</b>
1	Increased business engagement and closer links with employers	4.59
2	Social mobility, widening and diversifying participation	4.43
3	Delivery of HE provision that develops the skills employers require	4.41
4	Offer to students where fees are paid by employers and government	4.38
5	Delivery of HE provision that meets local/regional skill needs	4.32
6	Access to a new student market	4.22
7	Access to a new income stream	4.19
8	Promotion of local growth and development	4.17
9	Delivery of HE provision that meets national skill needs	4.10
10	Potential for developing wider partnerships with employers on research	4.03
11	Potential for developing partnerships with other training providers	3.49

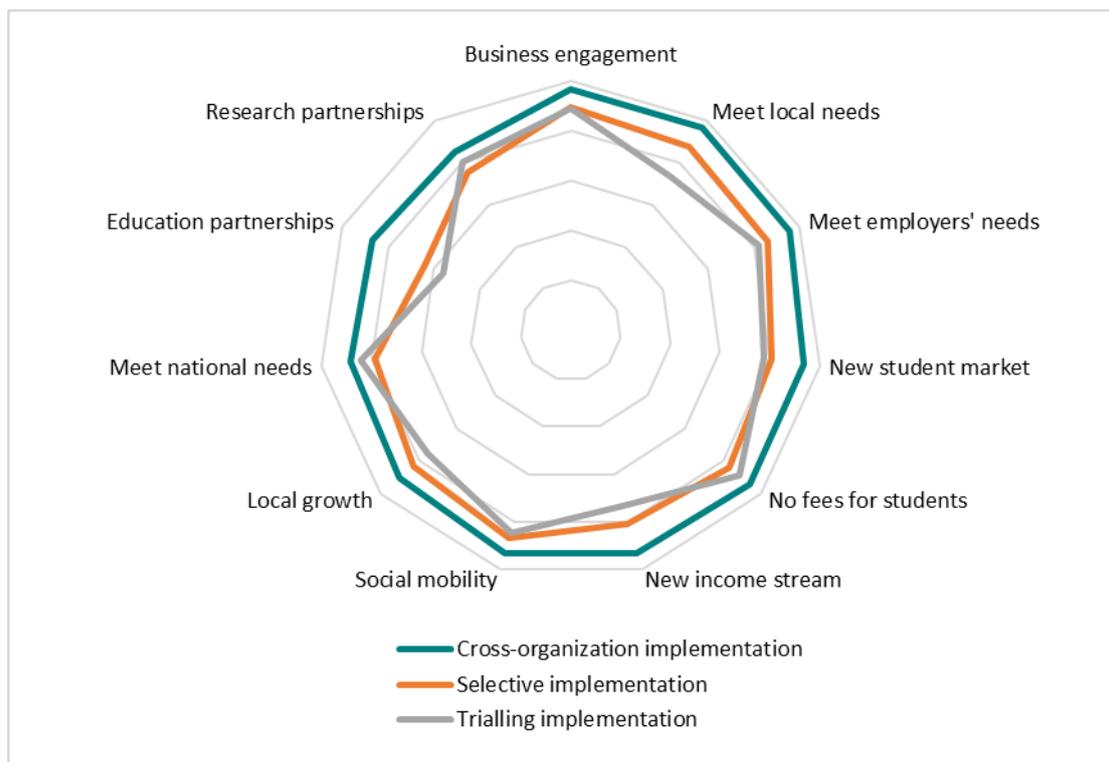
There is general agreement on these 11 points being highly relevant benefits of degree apprenticeships, and the more institutions engage with degree apprenticeships, the higher the score they assign to each of them.

Furthermore, while this survey outlines the perspective of universities as providers, it is clear that many of the described benefits extend to apprentices, employers and the local economy.

Considering what strategies universities are adopting, the scores from institutions with a cross-organisation strategy are generally higher than those from institutions at the trialling stage (Figure 8). For the former group, eight benefits are scored 4.5 and above, and even the lowest-ranked scored 4.00 or higher. It is clear, then, that universities clearly recognise the many benefits of degree apprenticeships.

Mission groups have differing views on the most relevant benefits of degree apprenticeships for institutions. There is overwhelming agreement, however, on the importance of degree apprenticeships to increasing business engagement and creating closer links with employers. This was rated as the most important benefit regardless of strategy or institutional type. Similarly, social mobility and meeting employers' skills needs are also two of the top benefits of implementing degree apprenticeships.

**Figure 8: Benefits of degree apprenticeships based on institutional approach**



**vii. Degree apprenticeships can improve business engagement**

With degree apprenticeship being employer-driven and designed specifically to meet their skills needs, engaging with the development of degree apprenticeships is bound to increase engagement between universities and employers. The survey shows the value universities place on being able to work more with employers, being able to deepen existing relationships, and have conversations with employers about their skills needs and how universities can meet them universities.

Universities already work with thousands of employers, both national and SME, in many different ways and on a number of projects to improve students’ employability and promote local growth and development. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy from April 2017 will provide the opportunity to strengthen existing collaborations.

‘Degree apprenticeships are a step, a foot in the door to build relationships with employers. They are a way to complement existing efforts to increase links with businesses. Degree apprenticeships are an opportunity to get in touch with those employers that haven’t had the chance to work with us in the past. UWE has the opportunity to stand out and get known by businesses which will help our students, develop wider collaboration and increase our local impact.’

**Dr John Lanham, Assistant Vice-Chancellor at UWE Bristol**

Therefore, it is not surprising that increased business engagement is the most cited benefit of degree apprenticeships regardless of the institutional approach, with a very high score (4.83) among institutions with a cross-organisational strategy. Institutions from all mission groups, notwithstanding their different characteristics and goals, agree on the positive role degree apprenticeships play in business engagement.

The University of Exeter is a Russell Group institution that is proud to engage with degree apprenticeships as a way to create closer links with business and industry. Doing so aligns with their business engagement and regional skills strategies.

### **CASE STUDY: THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER**

The University of Exeter is actively engaging with degree apprenticeships to promote widening participation, business engagement and the creation of skills relevant to national as well as local and regional employers.

The institution launched its first degree apprenticeship, in digital and technology solutions, in September 2016 and is now engaging with employers to develop new programmes tailored to industry needs, both in terms of content and delivery method.

The university's strategy is based on developing high-quality programmes, using innovative delivery methods in areas aligned to existing education provision where there is clear demand from industry. This involves working with large corporate partners to develop and deliver 'customised' programmes and consortia of employers to create programmes where apprentices benefit from the shared experience of multiple professional perspectives.

Exeter works with employers of varying sizes, with strategic collaborations with major employers at the heart of their approach (IBM were among the inaugural cohort for digital and technology solutions). However, given the make-up of the business landscape across Exeter and Devon, a regional approach targeting small employers is a further key component of their strategy as it progresses into its second year. The university has engaged with a large number of companies, building on existing links, promoting apprenticeships through events held by local authorities, and utilising networks such as the Devon and Cornwall Business Council.

Degree apprenticeships are inherently attractive to SMEs, thanks to a 90% government contribution toward course fees. However, these businesses face challenges recruiting high-calibre people, as well as supporting them through the programme and ultimately retaining them. The University of Exeter has been working closely with all of its partners to address these challenges, in particular by offering a match-making function to direct highly qualified applicants to employers' vacancies.

Following an extensive advertising campaign on public transport across the south of England, the institution has been able to direct over 200 interested students to partner businesses, leading to high levels of good-quality applications even to the

smallest employers. In addition, the university allocates dedicated academic mentors to each apprentice, with a remit to liaise closely with their employers as well as ensuring progression and retention at the end of the four-year programme.

Locally, business engagement for the digital and technology solutions programme has been supported by a number of organisations and networks, primarily through the provision of speaking slots at breakfast briefings and similar events. In particular, the university is currently working with GradSW, a regional graduate recruitment organisation that is both promoting current vacancies in the area to potential apprentices, and promoting the university's programmes to employers in their network.

### **viii. Degree apprenticeships can drive social mobility**

Many of the institutions surveyed recognise the potential role of degree apprenticeships in improving social mobility. Many institutions are working with employers to use the development of degree apprenticeships as an opportunity to provide local opportunities to students who might not have considered getting a degree.

Universities already have strong links with many schools and have experienced teams able to support employers to reach potential apprentices, their teachers and in some cases their parents. The effective collaboration between universities and employers in promoting degree apprenticeships plays a crucial role in ensuring degree apprenticeships enhance social mobility.

‘We see degree apprenticeships as attracting back the part-time students, especially the mature learners and those from lower socio-economic groups who are traditionally debt adverse. It will give them a huge step up into the local jobs market.’

**Viki Faulkner, Head of Apprenticeships, University of Brighton**

Furthermore, degree apprenticeships could suit that student cohort traditionally more inclined towards an applied method of study.

‘I've always been a fan of learning something and then going and doing it. So studying in a university environment and then putting it to use in the workplace helps to make it more concrete in my mind. Having a job alongside work was important to me. I've always had a job since I began college, so I would have had a job while studying either way, but working in a field that relates to what I'm learning is great.’

**Nadia Johnson, Digital & Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship, Thales UK and Manchester Metropolitan University**

Widening participation is one of the top three most important benefits for institutions at the trialling stage and for those implementing degree apprenticeships in some departments/faculties. Social mobility scores the highest (4.65) among institutions with a cross-organisation strategy, and it is one of eight benefits overall rated above 4.5.

Manchester Metropolitan University is working closely with employers to make its degree apprenticeships more accessible; in particular it is promoting widening participation through its digital and technology solutions degree apprenticeship.

#### **CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

Manchester Metropolitan University has been delivering apprenticeships since 2011. In 2015, it was among the first institutions to launch degree apprenticeships and it now has more than 300 apprentices working with 57 different employers. The university has an institution-wide approach to degree apprenticeships, with programmes in digital and technology, business and management, and many more in the pipeline.

The academic staff have been hugely impressed by the apprentices, who are undertaking the challenge of combining working and learning. They have a strong work ethic and are very enthusiastic and motivated. Apprentices at Manchester Met come from different backgrounds and join the course for different reasons, some attracted by the combination of working and learning, others by the possibility of earning while gaining a debt-free degree.

Since September 2015, apprentices have been able to study the digital and technology solutions programme, a degree apprenticeship specifically designed to address acute skills gaps in the IT industry. Students attend the university every Monday for an intensive day of lectures, and spend the remainder of the week at their workplace, where they are strongly encouraged to apply what they have learnt.

The course has been particularly successful in attracting female students to computer science. Compared to national figures, the digital and technology programme at Manchester Met has a considerably higher percentage of women enrolled, and in its first year almost 50% of students on the programme were female.

By allowing students who might not necessarily have A-levels in maths and physics to apply, the course is open to a larger pool of students. Where necessary, students are given additional support in those key areas during an induction week.

The university is working closely with employers to advertise degree apprenticeships. It is also reaching out to local schools and colleges, including schools with traditionally low rates of university enrolment, and are organising apprenticeship information evenings to allow potential students to meet employers and current apprentices. The university also provides an online platform where students who register an interest are regularly updated on new vacancies posted by employers.

**ix. Degree apprenticeships will help to develop the skills employers require**

In recent years, the government has devoted a lot of attention to apprenticeships as a way to boost the country's productivity and meet employers' needs. The new Industrial Strategy recognises the importance of skills and apprenticeships to enhancing productivity. Degree apprenticeships will enhance provision of the higher level skills essential to future productivity and economic growth. One example of this is the proposal in the South West England and South East Wales Science and Innovation Audit for increased support for degree apprenticeships to facilitate future economic growth in the region.

Institutions as training providers are committed to helping employers meet their skill shortages by delivering appropriate and tailored learning. The more institutions engage with degree apprenticeships, the more important it is for them to ensure their provision meets employers' needs, in particular at the local level.

'The university is committed to ensuring that the residents of Devon and Cornwall are able to acquire the skills they need to benefit from local growth. We are also committed to ensuring that businesses that invest and grow in our region are able to secure the flow of talent that meets their needs.'

**Professor Tim Quine, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education),  
University of Exeter**

**x. Further benefits of degree apprenticeships**

Alongside the possibility of widening participation and building closer relationships with employers and meeting their skills needs, degree apprenticeships could also have a positive impact on university finances.

By broadening the university offer and attracting new students, degree apprenticeships present a new income stream for institutions. Institutions with a cross-organisation approach to degree apprenticeships see the greatest benefits here, as the wider the offer of degree apprenticeships, the bigger the potential income stream.

Local growth and the opportunity to ensure higher education provision that meets local needs are also important. With most apprentices based locally or regionally, institutions could promote development in their communities. Once again, this is particularly relevant for organisations with a broader approach to degree apprenticeships. On the other hand, institutions at an earlier stage of implementation attribute relatively more importance to meeting national, rather than local, needs.

Overall, the more engaged with degree apprenticeships institutions are, the higher the value they attribute to each of the benefits. This suggests that that institutions, once involved, recognise the wide range of benefits degree apprenticeships can offer.

The potential for education partnerships with other providers and for research partnerships with employers are rated as less important than the other benefits. This is the case regardless of the institutional engagement with degree apprenticeships and mission group.

Developing partnerships requires strong and sustained collaboration with key stakeholders and this will be most likely when apprenticeships become established in institutions. Indeed, in the survey, institutions with a longer history of implementing degree apprenticeships tended to assign a higher score to both types of partnerships.

### 3. ENSURING THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

From previous chapters it is clear that institutions are enthusiastically engaging with degree apprenticeships. The initial interest expressed by universities when degree apprenticeships were first introduced has translated into significant investment in and development of provision.

With any new initiative there are bound to be challenges; developing new provision and systems can take time. It also takes time to raise awareness of any new initiative among providers, employers, apprentices and others. It is important to understand what challenges and barriers there might be and how these can be overcome.

#### WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS?

As well as the benefits, institutions were asked about the relevance of a list of potential challenges to the implementation of degree apprenticeships. These can be grouped into four categories: those arising from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and its rules, those related to employers and individuals, those internal to the institution, and those related to the lack of degree apprenticeships in key occupational areas.

**Table 5: Challenges to degree apprenticeships**

	<b>Challenge/barrier</b>	<b>Score (out of 5)</b>
1	Uncertainty of employers' demand for degree apprenticeships	3.51
1	Lack of degree apprenticeships in key occupational areas	3.51
3	SFA data return requirements for degree apprenticeships	3.32
3	Lack of awareness of degree apprenticeships among individuals	3.32
5	Uncertainty of individuals' demand for degree apprenticeships	3.30
6	SFA apprenticeship contractual requirements	3.24
7	Lack of awareness of degree apprenticeships among employers	3.16
8	SFA funding rules	3.13
9	Difficulty of delivering degree apprenticeships to multiple employers	2.95
10	Uncertainty of quality assurance oversight of degree apprenticeships	2.84
11	Registering with SFA as an Apprenticeship Training Provider	2.79
12	Requirement to create programmes flexible and adaptable to different needs	2.67

13	The reputation of apprenticeships	2.65
14	Uncertainty of how to deliver degree apprenticeships	2.32
15	Lack of support from senior management and academic staff	2.10
16	Degree apprenticeships do not fit with current institutional priorities	1.87

Overall, challenges have lower absolute scores compared to benefits, and there is a greater variety of concerns depending on level of engagement and mission group.

Universities at the trialling stage are relatively more concerned about every challenge, but their main concerns are different from those of institutions with a cross-organisation strategy. Those who are in the initial stages of their strategy see the uncertainty in demand and lack of awareness as the biggest issues. Universities at a more advanced stage of implementation identify uncertainty around quality assurance oversight and the absence of degree apprenticeships in key occupational areas as their biggest challenges but are also more likely to rate Skills Funding Agency (SFA) processes as an important challenge. The recognition from ministers that HEFCE and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) are responsible for the external quality assurance of degree apprenticeships has helped dispel some of this uncertainty.

**Figure 9: Challenges to degree apprenticeships based on the institutional approach**



**Table 6: Top 3 challenges for institutions with different approaches to degree apprenticeships**

	<b>Cross-organisation implementation</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Selective implementation</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Trialling implementation</b>	<b>Score</b>
1	Lack of DAs	3.91	Lack of DAs	3.81	Uncertainty of employers' demand	4.44
2	Quality assurance	3.83	Uncertainty of employers' demand	3.74	Uncertainty of individuals' demand	4.33
3	Students don't know	3.70	Students don't know	3.74	Students don't know	3.67

Among the mission groups, Russell Group institutions tend to rate the SFA and its regulations as a greater concern. The registration process and data return requirements are big concerns for this group, respectively scoring 4.82 and 4.73.

Non-aligned and GuildHE institutions consider the lack of awareness among individuals and employers as the greatest barrier to degree apprenticeships, whereas for MillionPlus and University Alliance members the biggest issue is the lack of degree apprenticeships in key occupational areas (3.92 and 4.08 respectively).

### **i. Challenges for institutions**

Degree apprenticeships require a high level of coordination within institutions. They are more successful when they align with institutional objectives and academic staff recognise their benefits. Having a team specifically working on degree apprenticeships makes them easier to implement, as it provides the expertise and focus needed to navigate the requirements of development and delivery.

In previous research conducted by UUK, institutions identified lack of support from academic staff, uncertainty over how to deliver degree apprenticeships, and a mismatch between degree apprenticeships and other institutional priorities as potential obstacles to implementation.

These issues appear to be much less prevalent now. While institutions that are trialling degree apprenticeships rated concerns about lack of support from academic staff quite highly, those institutions that have more advanced strategies rated this as one of the more minor challenges. This could indicate that academic staff become increasingly supportive to developing this provision over time.

Another institutional challenge is basic understanding and adoption of the degree apprenticeship model. For those institutions considering the implementation of degree apprenticeships, uncertainty about how to deliver them is a middling concern (rated seventh). For all other institutions it is one of their lowest concerns. This

indicates an institutional confidence in being able to build on existing experience, expertise and systems to deliver the degree apprenticeship model.

In our March 2016 report a number of recommendations were made to universities to ensure the successful development of degree apprenticeships. These included engaging with academic staff to raise awareness and build provision, coordinating development across the university, and developing a strong business case aligned to institutional strategy. It appears universities are adopting all of these approaches to make a success of degree apprenticeships.

***Recommendation 1:*** *Universities considering and trialling degree apprenticeships should consider the advice outlined in this report and the March 2016 report and take advantage of the support offered by the University Vocational Awards Council.*

## **ii. Awareness of degree apprenticeships among employers and individuals**

We have surveyed institutions on their expected plans for the development of degree apprenticeships. None of this expected provision will come to fruition without sufficient demand from employers and apprentices. As a new option for apprenticeships, awareness of degree apprenticeships among employers has naturally been low.

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy is clearly generating considerable employer interest in apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships, yet there remains a general perception among institutions that awareness among individuals and employers is still too low. This is creating major concerns, especially among those training providers that are trying to develop degree apprenticeships.

The government's efforts to promote apprenticeships such as the 'Get in. Go far' campaign are welcome and some areas of England have established local apprenticeship 'hubs'. But the results of our survey suggest that more needs to be done to raise awareness.

***Recommendation 2:*** *The government should increase efforts to publicise and improve understanding of degree apprenticeships and their fundamental role in supporting social mobility and raising productivity.*

***Recommendation 3:*** *The government should ensure employers are made fully aware of the availability of degree apprenticeships through the National Apprenticeship Service, by integrating degree apprenticeships into the apprenticeship offer and ensuring they are integrated into local apprenticeship hubs.*

It is crucial to raise awareness, especially among those employers that will not pay the levy. Degree apprenticeships could play a key role in reducing skills gaps and skills mismatches, and employers – in particular SMEs – should be made aware of

this opportunity. Furthermore, degree apprenticeships could be a successful alternative for many students who otherwise would not consider university a viable option.

Employers are also concerned about the lack of awareness of degree apprenticeships among individuals. To counteract this problem, universities and businesses are working together to promote degree apprenticeships. Universities are already investing considerable effort into building on their existing relationships with thousands of employers, and forging new ones, to raise awareness of degree apprenticeships. Once the opportunity is explained to employers, universities are finding considerable interest which is reflected in the expected increase in numbers. The work of universities and employers will be enhanced by the increased national publicity we recommend. Careers services are an essential route for the promotion of degree apprenticeships.

***Recommendation 4:*** *Universities should continue to explain and promote degree apprenticeships to employers, building on initial success, and work with employers and key bodies.*

***Recommendation 5:*** *Universities should use their extensive links with employers to support the development of degree apprenticeships.*

***Recommendation 6:*** *Universities should work with UCAS, careers services and leaders in schools to promote degree apprenticeships.*

***Recommendation 7:*** *Government should encourage and develop careers advice and guidance across the education sector to promote degree apprenticeships.*

## **CASE STUDIES: HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG EMPLOYERS AND INDIVIDUALS**

### **UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND**

To promote higher and degree apprenticeships and help organisations understand how to use their levy the University of Sunderland has been working directly with employers, running workshops, events with the EEF manufacturing organisation and business breakfast seminars. A team at the university has also been hosting advice sessions with employers on how to develop new talent or upskill their existing employees. The university's campaign has generated high levels of interest within the region for higher and degree apprenticeships, as was shown by the hugely successful higher and degree apprenticeship launch event, attended by HRH the Duke of York.

Thanks to the strong partnerships developed with regional employers, the university is now ready to respond to the introduction of the levy by offering higher and degree apprenticeships in digital and technology, and chartered manager from May 2017, and in healthcare-related subjects from September 2017.

### **LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY**

Leeds Beckett University is undertaking a number of initiatives to promote degree apprenticeships and raise awareness of their benefits across the city region. It is working with sector-specific organisations and local authorities, and contacting companies directly. Through the local authority the institution is promoting apprenticeships to 28,000 parents and hosting a series of seminars to provide parents with information regarding the opportunities apprenticeships provide to their children. In addition, it is working with organisations such as the Tech Partnership and Chartered Management Institute to promote apprenticeships to major employers in the region.

Leeds has a vibrant technology community and many of the companies are relatively new and growing very quickly. Working with the local authority and using existing contacts, the university has contacted all these companies and met with them over last summer to share plans on degree apprenticeships implementation. Employers enthusiastically responded to the call, and the first apprentices will start at Leeds Beckett in September 2017.

### **UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON**

The University of Brighton has been working with a range of local organisations to raise awareness among employers. As an active member of the Sussex Chamber of Commerce, the university recently gave a presentation about skills and training needs to over 80 employers at the Sussex Chamber of Commerce Construction Forum. Furthermore, the university is working closely with Brighton & Hove Council, Apprenticeships East Sussex, Sussex Council of Training Providers, LEPs, colleges and further education providers to raise awareness among employers and show them that apprenticeships can be a ladder of progression.

Degree apprenticeships sit at the heart of 'Practical Wisdom', the university's 2016–2021 strategic plan that is training 34 apprentices and planning to take on more next year, in a range of sectors, from management to health and construction.

### **iii. Ensuring that there are enough standards to meet demand**

The uncertainty over employer demand is often related to the lack of degree apprenticeships in key occupational areas.

'A major concern for us is the unknown demand from employers. We are prepared to deliver a number of apprenticeships but will only do so if there is demand. The number of apprenticeship standards needs to widen to catch more employers.'

**Jonathan Woodhead, Policy Adviser, Birkbeck, University of London**

The number of degree apprenticeship standards currently available is just a small percentage of all the standards institutions would be interested in delivering (although there are a larger number in development). Indeed, it is apparent that the

more institutions engage with degree apprenticeships, the more standards they would like to offer – but they are restrained by the current availability and the current process for standards development and approval. We imagine that employer interest will grow significantly as the levy comes in and the number of available standards will become a key issue for employers as well.

It is vital that there is a clear and rigorous process for the development of standards and that employers, who lead on the development of standards, identify a coherent and focused standard that relates to a relevant occupation. However, it is also very important that consideration is given to either streamlining or reducing the amount of time it can take for a standard to be developed and approved. Both institutions and employers have raised concerns about timescale, clear and consistent feedback and effectively responding to employer demand. Frustration could simply increase if there is greater promotion and advertising without an increase in the necessary number of standards in place. Support to improve the process could include increased guidance and advice, and better networking between trailblazers to share good practice; but as a priority the new Institute for Apprenticeships needs to consider how processes can be made clearer and more streamlined. The issue has been recognised in the recent IfA draft operational plan and this is a key area for the IfA to deliver on quickly.

***Recommendation 8:*** *The Institute for Apprenticeships should work towards streamlining the development of new standards, ensuring that trailblazer groups are provided with appropriate guidance and advice, and delays in the development and approval of standards are minimised.*

Establishing a trailblazer is clearly the responsibility of employers and it can take time to bring together the relevant employers, ensure they understand the process and reach agreement on a standard and the associated assessment plan. Universities can provide considerable help to employers when they come together to form a trailblazer, not least in terms of assessment and delivery design. Put simply, early university involvement makes it easier and quicker for employers to recruit their degree apprentices. Our survey shows that many universities are involved in supporting trailblazers but there are many more who would like to deliver and could also engage with trailblazer groups. The work that UVAC is doing to bring together universities in a provider group to support the social work trailblazer is a good example.

***Recommendation 9:*** *There should be greater encouragement to employers to engage with universities in a systematic way from the early stages of degree apprenticeship standard development.*

#### **iv. Challenges for quality assurance and the Skills Funding Agency**

As with any new development and any new systems there will be challenges for providers who are unfamiliar with them. As this survey shows, building on experience and expertise, universities are confident that they can deliver the degree

apprenticeship model. At the time of the survey, the 60 institutions currently implementing degree apprenticeships were in the process of applying to the new Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP). University success in getting on the register will determine how much of the expected degree apprenticeship growth can be realised.

It has been particularly challenging to engage with the unfamiliar systems of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). For some processes it might simply be a case of understanding a new system and the success of universities in getting on the previous register of training providers demonstrates that to some extent universities can work with the unfamiliar SFA systems. However, the systems relating to apprenticeships operated by the SFA have clearly been designed for the further education sector and the SFA needs to adopt an approach that recognises and accommodates the changing nature of provision that is developing in response to employer demand. On the previous register universities had to fill in a form that referred to Ofsted inspections when HEFCE and the QAA have been recognised as the external quality assurers for universities. Universities had to ‘translate’ their systems into a ‘language’ the SFA could recognise and then be assessed by an organisation with very little experience of the higher education sector. Through collaboration with the SFA some of these challenges have been addressed, however this was a ‘bolt on’ approach when it should have been designed in from the outset.

‘The issues around the procedures for registering on the SFAs RoATP are a huge barrier. Measuring quality using Ofsted guidelines for providers that are not familiar with or managed by Ofsted is a challenge.’

**Sarah Tudor, Director of Business Engagement, Staffordshire University**

‘The SFA bureaucracy is worrying and is heavily skewed towards FE providers.’

**Robert Partridge, Director of Student Opportunity, University of Leeds**

Some institutions have partly addressed these issues by creating partnerships with further education colleges, which have experience and understanding of SFA processes. These partnerships reflect the partnerships that are developing in relation to provision.

***Recommendation 10:*** *In the short term while IfA/SFA systems move to a provider-neutral position, universities should consider working in partnership with further education colleges in both the delivery and administration of degree apprenticeships.*

Some of the issues that have been raised by universities include requirements for data reporting, sub-contracting rules, funding rules, and provider support where the presentation, description and operation of these systems have clearly been targeted towards part of the provider base rather than the full range of providers. Despite

degree apprenticeships being in existence for two years now not all SFA systems have caught up with the changed landscape. The key information collection system is still called 'FE choices', a title that lacks credibility with both employers and degree apprentices. Universities have extensive data collection processes in place and the SFA processes should build on these.

It is clear that the systems in place need to reflect the changing nature of provision and providers and be relevant to all providers, not just further education or higher education. They also need to be rigorous, transparent and fair. In the same way that the systems have been new to universities, working with higher education is new to the SFA. The best way forward is to work with the higher education sector to enhance the SFA's understanding. HEFCE, UVAC and UUK have all been working with the SFA to achieve this. This partnership working needs to go further and become embedded in the work of the SFA and subsequently the IfA, and reflected in their processes. A senior member of SFA staff should be tasked with leading effective engagement with the higher education sector and a programme of both individual support and collective engagement be identified. UUK stands ready to help both the SFA and the new Institute for Apprenticeships to work with the sector to ensure that degree apprentices are the success employers want. A first step in this direction would be to ensure university involvement in the new IfA Board.

***Recommendation 11:*** *The SFA and IfA should work with the higher education sector to develop processes that are relevant to all providers and increase mutual understanding. In view of the significance of degree apprenticeships, a university should be represented on the IfA board.*

***Recommendation 12:*** *The SFA and IfA should make greater progress in developing a system that works for all providers and ensure higher education providers are as engaged, involved and supported as all other providers.*

***Recommendation 13:*** *The SFA and IfA should work with the sector to ensure that appropriate and relevant data is collected on degree apprentices, building on the extensive data that is already collected in the higher education sector.*

### **SUPPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL**

The University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) is a not-for-profit organisation set up by the higher education sector to work on matters related to higher level vocational learning.

UVAC is working closely with training providers, employers and government bodies to ensure a successful implementation of higher and degree apprenticeships.

UVAC is:

- engaging with members to facilitate the introduction of higher and degree apprenticeships and promote their value

- organising webinars and events to provide step-by-step support to institutions interested in providing higher and degree apprenticeships, or expanding their offer
- liaising with government bodies to ensure regulation around apprenticeships enables universities to respond to employer demand for higher and degree apprenticeships
- supporting trailblazer groups' work with universities to develop and implement new higher level apprenticeship standards

The most up-to-date information on higher and degree apprenticeships, and support available to the higher education sector, is available on the UVAC website, [www.uvac.ac.uk](http://www.uvac.ac.uk).

For more information, please contact Adrian Anderson ([a.anderson@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:a.anderson@bolton.ac.uk))

It is welcome that ministerial statements consistently recognise the statutory duty of HEFCE to assure any and all prescribed higher education and that HEFCE, working with the QAA, provides external quality assurance for degree apprenticeships. We do, however, recognise that more work needs to be done to explain the relevant higher education systems and processes and their relationship to degree apprenticeships. Institutions will already have processes in place, and external quality assurance will already encompass such activities as co-designed curricula, work-based learning, assessment, and working with employers. The relevant processes and guidance, both internal and external, need to be clearly outlined and developed to take account of degree apprenticeships, where this might be necessary. HEFCE is currently working directly with the SFA, Department for Education, Ofsted and IfA to inform and clarify future developments.

***Recommendation 14:*** *Building on an established and proven higher education quality assurance system, HEFCE, QAA and institutions should work with the SFA and IfA to outline the relevant processes for the quality assurance of degree apprenticeships.*

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Universities, working closely with a wide range of employers and local partners, have invested considerable energy and resources into developing degree apprenticeships.

Degree apprenticeships offer a wide range of benefits, providing opportunities for young people, meeting the skills needs of employers and reinforcing partnerships between universities and employers. Employers want them and universities want to provide them.

We are on the verge of a significant success story, one that will promote local opportunities and growth, improve productivity and contribute to the Industrial Strategy.

Now is the time for the government and the new Institute for Apprenticeships to ensure that their policies and processes support the success of all apprenticeships and meet the needs of all providers.

## ANNEXE 1: PARTICIPANTS IN UUK SURVEY

The following higher education institutions participated in the UUK survey.

<b>1</b>	Anglia Ruskin University	<b>34</b>	The University of Cumbria
<b>2</b>	Arden University Limited	<b>35</b>	The University of East Anglia
<b>3</b>	Aston University	<b>36</b>	The University of Essex
<b>4</b>	Bath Spa University	<b>37</b>	The University of Kent
<b>5</b>	Birkbeck, University of London	<b>38</b>	The University of Lancaster
<b>6</b>	Birmingham City University	<b>39</b>	The University of Leeds
<b>7</b>	Bishop Grosseteste University	<b>40</b>	The University of Liverpool
<b>8</b>	Brunel University London	<b>41</b>	The University of Reading
<b>9</b>	Buckinghamshire New University	<b>42</b>	The University of Sheffield
<b>10</b>	Canterbury Christ Church University	<b>43</b>	The University of Surrey
<b>11</b>	City, University of London	<b>44</b>	The University of Warwick
<b>12</b>	Coventry University	<b>45</b>	University College London
<b>13</b>	King's College London	<b>46</b>	University of Bedfordshire
<b>14</b>	Imperial College London	<b>47</b>	University of Brighton
<b>15</b>	Leeds Beckett University	<b>48</b>	University of Chester
<b>16</b>	Leeds Trinity University	<b>49</b>	University of East London
<b>17</b>	Liverpool John Moores University	<b>50</b>	University of Exeter
<b>18</b>	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Science	<b>51</b>	University of Gloucestershire
<b>19</b>	London South Bank University	<b>52</b>	University of Greenwich
<b>20</b>	Manchester Metropolitan University	<b>53</b>	University of Hertfordshire
<b>21</b>	Newman University, Birmingham	<b>54</b>	Keele University
<b>22</b>	Oxford Brookes University	<b>55</b>	University of Lincoln
<b>23</b>	Queen Mary University of London	<b>56</b>	Newcastle University
<b>24</b>	Ravensbourne	<b>57</b>	University of Nottingham
<b>25</b>	University of Roehampton	<b>58</b>	University of Oxford
<b>26</b>	Sheffield Hallam University	<b>59</b>	Plymouth University
<b>27</b>	Southampton Solent University	<b>60</b>	University of Portsmouth
<b>28</b>	Staffordshire University	<b>61</b>	University of Sunderland
<b>29</b>	Teesside University	<b>62</b>	University of the West of England, Bristol
<b>30</b>	The Open University	<b>63</b>	University of West London
<b>31</b>	The University of Birmingham	<b>64</b>	University of Winchester
<b>32</b>	The University of Bolton	<b>65</b>	University of York
<b>33</b>	The University of Bradford	<b>66</b>	York St John University



## ANNEXE 2: REPRESENTATIVE BODIES AND MISSION GROUPS EXPLAINED

### REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

Universities UK and GuildHE are the two officially recognised representative bodies for UK higher education.

Universities UK is the voice of universities, helping to maintain the world-leading strength of the UK university sector and supporting our members to achieve their aims and objectives.

GuildHE members include major providers in professional subject areas ranging from arts and music to agriculture, education and health. For more information visit [www.guildhe.ac.uk](http://www.guildhe.ac.uk)

<b>Universities UK (109 HE institutions in England)</b>	<b>GuildHE (23 HE institutions in England)</b>
<b>57% response rate</b>	<b>35% response rate</b>

### MISSION GROUPS

Mission groups are voluntary associations of universities with similar characteristics and values, and a shared mission.

The Russell Group (<http://russellgroup.ac.uk>) comprises ‘pre-1992’ universities, including the ancient universities.

MillionPlus ([www.millionplus.ac.uk](http://www.millionplus.ac.uk)) and University Alliance ([www.unialliance.ac.uk](http://www.unialliance.ac.uk)) are a mixture of pre- and post-1992 universities.

‘Non-aligned’ universities are members of Universities UK that do not belong to any mission group.

<b>Russell Group (20 universities in England)</b>	<b>MillionPlus (15 universities in England)</b>	<b>University Alliance (19 universities in England)</b>	<b>Non-aligned (51 universities in England)</b>
<b>70% response rate</b>	<b>87% response rate</b>	<b>74% response rate</b>	<b>39% response rate</b>

## **ANNEXE 3: SUPPORT FROM THE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP DEVELOPMENT FUND**

The HEFCE Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund (DADF) provides £8.5 million to support new degree apprenticeships.

With the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, the DADF will become instrumental in supporting institutions to create high-quality provision for students and employers. It will do this by:

- establishing capacity and expertise to deliver degree apprenticeships
- facilitating networking among institutions for the successful development of new standards
- positioning universities and colleges at the core of apprenticeships provision
- creating more learning opportunities for individuals

The first phase of the project has seen 18 institutions granted funding for the development of programmes starting in the 2017–18 academic year. Funding will be used in many different ways, from design to marketing and staff training.

The enthusiasm of universities to develop degree apprenticeships is demonstrated by the fact that the fund was heavily oversubscribed, with almost 70 institutions<sup>11</sup> applying to the fund.

For more information on the DADF see [www.hefce.ac.uk/kess/apprentice/dadf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/kess/apprentice/dadf)

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Education (2016) 'Millions invested in degree apprenticeships' – press release <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-invested-in-degree-apprenticeships>

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