

# BESPOKE SADDLER APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD

## Occupational Profile: Bespoke Saddler

Set within an industry steeped in tradition, the Saddlery trade supports the pursuit of excellence in its traditional craft skills whilst also embracing innovation and technology. The Bespoke Saddler is a fundamental occupational role in the saddlery trade and is an integral part of an industry that contributes over £8bn to the British economy. Bespoke Saddler is a broad description of someone who produces Saddles or Bridles and provides a comprehensive repair service to saddles and other equestrian equipment. All will be capable of producing a standard or bespoke product that is cut and made to a unique pattern or measurement for a horse.

Many of the skills are carried out by hand in order to produce an item that fits precisely to a customer's requirements. Hand crafted products form the heart of the British Saddlery industry and have an international and iconic reputation.

Bespoke Saddlers have practical skills in the manufacture of equestrian products including measurement and pattern construction. The skills involved in Bespoke Saddlery cover a wide area of expertise that includes craft, technical, creative and design. These skills are fundamental to the Bespoke Saddlery industry and ultimately have to be employed with great precision, to high standards of excellence and within realistic time constraints.

Upon completion of this standard the apprentice will be competent in both Saddle and Bridle making.

## Core Skills & Knowledge: Saddle and Bridle making

WORK ASPECTS	SKILL A Bespoke Saddler will be able to:	KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING A Bespoke Saddler will know and understand:
Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safely select, use, maintain and store equipment and materials; for example, correct storage of patterns, sharpening tools, purchasing materials and stock control.</li> <li>Identify and minimise hazards and risks in the workplace through safe working practice.</li> <li>Maintain comprehensive records relating to the manufacture and repair of saddlery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to safely interpret instructions based on customer's requirements.</li> <li>Effective use of equipment and safe working methods.</li> <li>How to decide if a repair is viable in terms of safety and cost.</li> <li>The importance of keeping accurate records relating to the sale, manufacture and repair of saddlery.</li> </ul>
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss and advise on the type of bridle / saddle leather for a specific use.</li> <li>Work as part of a team within a company.</li> <li>Carry out effective customer care.</li> <li>Develop and maintain good communication skills with all staff in the company in order to ensure a productive work environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diplomacy and effective communication skills.</li> <li>The role of the saddler with the customer.</li> <li>A range of bridle / saddle types and suitability of style to individual customers.</li> <li>Industry terminology and its use in the workplace.</li> <li>How to cost out work and then communicate the options to customers.</li> </ul>
Work practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise purchasing of materials and stock control.</li> <li>Prepare materials and fittings for the bridle / saddle.</li> <li>Have overall responsibility for the finish and suitability of the completed bridle / saddle.</li> <li>Follow clear instructions from relevant colleagues in order to meet customer requirements.</li> <li>Follow and maintain work procedures to ensure safety requirements are met.</li> <li>Implement efficient and effective use of resources, time and materials.</li> <li>Maintain the quality of workmanship in order to achieve company standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leather characteristics and behaviour.</li> <li>The importance of timely workflow to the business.</li> <li>The principles of manufacture for a range of bridle components such as brow bands, nosebands, cheeks, reins and headpieces.</li> <li>The principles of manufacture for a range of saddle making processes such as webbing the tree, blocking the seat, seaming and producing patterns.</li> <li>Basic principles of saddle and bridle fitting.</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the correct materials and fittings and use appropriately.</li> <li>Recognise faults in leather and fittings.</li> <li>Prepare materials and fittings.</li> <li>Identify the correct threads for both hand and machine stitching for a range of saddlery products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The history of British Saddlery.</li> <li>How the saddlery industry has evolved to benefit equestrianism both in the UK and overseas.</li> <li>The characteristics of a variety of different leathers and fittings and their suitable application.</li> <li>The manufacturing processes of traditional wooden saddle trees to current British Standards.</li> <li>Alternative technical advances in materials and construction.</li> </ul>
Preparation of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use measurements of the horse to produce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to interpret data relating to the</li> </ul>

components	<p>a cutting list showing both cut and made up measurements, the amount of leather and fittings required and include the necessary patterns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut, edge, stain, prick, mark and skive all components.</li> <li>• Assemble in readiness for stitching.</li> </ul>	<p>anatomy of the horse to produce bespoke measurements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of their product and work on the welfare of the horse.</li> <li>• Use measurements of the horse to create a cutting list for cut and made up measurement including all necessary patterns.</li> <li>• How to maintain tools, equipment and work safely.</li> <li>• The order of assembly and thread requirements.</li> </ul>
Hand and machine stitching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double hand and single/back stitch.</li> <li>• Machine stitch a variety of different materials used in bridle and saddle manufacture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The balance between hand stitching to a high standard in an acceptable time and cost to the business.</li> <li>• How to use and care for machinery.</li> <li>• How to make the necessary adjustments required machining a variety of differing materials.</li> </ul>
Finishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (When bridle making), block all keepers.</li> <li>• Punch the appropriate size and style of hole.</li> <li>• Clean and polish all edges.</li> <li>• (When saddle making), flock panels smoothly, evenly and to the correct specification.</li> <li>• Assemble the finished product.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to produce a finish that meets craft standards.</li> <li>• The style and size of hole in relation to the fittings and bridle/saddle type.</li> <li>• The need for high standards of workmanship to be achieved.</li> </ul>

## Behaviours

Bespoke Saddlers will be expected to demonstrate:

- Adherence to appropriate Health & Safety procedures within the workplace;
- A commitment to maintaining high standards of precision and excellence as appropriate to the craft;
- A focus on the requirements of the customer;
- An ability to work effectively both individually and as part of a team;
- A strong work ethic and commitment in order to meet the standards required;
- A recognition and appreciation of equality and diversity in the workplace.

## Entry requirements

Individual employers will set the selection criteria for their Apprenticeships but typically a prospective candidate will have 12 months practical experience and will demonstrate skills in cutting, preparation and finishing leather products as well as being able to double hand and single/back stitch. Other relevant or prior experience may also be considered as an alternative.

## Qualifications

Apprentices will be required to complete the industry recognised Level 3 Diploma in Saddlery (Bridle and Saddle Making) as a mandatory part of this Standard.

Candidates without Level 2 English and Maths will need to achieve this level prior to taking the end point assessment of the apprenticeship.

## Link to professional registration and progression

The Society of Master Saddlers UK Ltd. will recognise the completion of this standard with the invitation to apply for membership as a *"Provisional Individual Qualified Bespoke Saddler"*. Once a minimum of four years industry experience has been completed that award will be upgraded to their *'Individual Qualified Bespoke Saddler'* category of membership.

Qualified Bespoke Saddlers are required to be skilled in both Bridle and Saddle making specialisms but could specialise in one of these areas in future employment.

**Level** - This is a Level 3 apprenticeship.

**Duration** – Typically 2 years.

**Review** - This standard will be reviewed in 3 years or when significant change is required.