



Education & Skills  
Funding Agency

# Register of Apprenticeship Training Agencies - Guidance for Applicants

**June 2017**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) model is intended to support the delivery of a high-quality apprenticeship programme with employers who wish to use the services of an ATA to source, arrange and host their apprentices. This could be for several reasons including them not being able to fulfil or commit to the full framework or length of time needed, short term restrictions on employee numbers, or uncertainty about the value of an apprenticeship.
- 1.2 The distinctive feature of the ATA model is that it is the ATA that acts as the apprentice's employer and places them with a host employer. The host employer pays the ATA a fee for the apprentice's services; this fee being based on the wage agreed with the host (at least the minimum apprentice rate) and the ATA management fee.
- 1.3 All ATAs operating in England are required to apply to become a recognised ATA. The ATA recognition process was launched by NAS in April 2012 and provides assurance that ATAs deliver high quality apprenticeship programmes and operate in accordance with the ATA framework.
- 1.4 ATA recognition provides a safeguard to apprenticeships delivered under the ATA model, assuring learners, employers, providers and the public that the services they receive from ATAs are of a high quality. ATA recognition is built around the ATA framework.
- 1.5 To find out more about ATAs and the ATA framework go to the [ATA Web Page](#). To understand how ATA's operate under the new apprenticeship funding rules from May 2017 refer to the [Funding Rules 2017 to 2018](#) and Apprenticeship funding: rules and guidance for employers.
- 1.6 Aspects of the ATA delivery model will be regulated through the normal work of bodies such as the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, Ofsted and Awarding Bodies. The framework will set out standards against which other interested parties can make judgements. The Education and Skills

Funding Agency (ESFA) will review the model as part of its wider responsibility for apprenticeship development and quality.

- 1.7 If circumstances change and the host employer is unable to retain the apprentice, the ATA must find alternative and appropriate employment for the apprentice so that they can continue their apprenticeship.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The framework is intended to help all those involved in an apprenticeship, delivered through the ATA model make a judgement as to the extent to which their experience is reflecting the best practice available. For ATAs to be listed on the [National Approved Register of ATAs](#) they will need to demonstrate to the ESFA that they can operate in accordance with the framework.
- 2.2 It sets out the core features which underpin the ATA model and gives examples of the expected behaviour of apprentices, employers, training providers and others.
- 2.3 The ESFA encourages all ATAs to work with and support smaller employers to help them hire and employ apprentices in their businesses.
- 2.4 The ATA will not replace the traditional model of apprenticeship delivery based on direct employment of the apprentice, into a permanent job role, by an employer and linked to high quality training delivered by an accredited training provider.
- 2.5 The ATA is designed to create new apprenticeship opportunities not to displace existing programmes.
- 2.6 As with traditional apprenticeships, a focus of the ATA will be progression into permanent employment, whilst there is not necessarily a guarantee of a permanent job at the end of the apprenticeship, there is an expectation that the ATA will offer to support progression opportunities as the apprenticeship nears the end to make this the most likely outcome.

### **3. Key behaviours associated with an ATA Framework**

**3.1 An ATA is an organisation whose main business is employing apprentices who are made available to employers for a fee. They must be set up as a distinct legal entity. Report that the apprentices are employed by an ATA in the individualised learner record (ILR).**

- Being a separate legal entity established to recruit and employ apprentices with the intention of placing them with host employers to support the apprenticeship. The ATA will have ultimate responsibility for the welfare, health and safety, learning and employment of the apprentice.
- An ATA is not allowed to operate any other business functions.
- Operating a business model that offers sustainability over the longer term and is based on a commercial charge on the host employer and in some instances on the training provider. Income should not be dependent on ESFA participation funding.
- Having clear and robust systems to support their role as an employer. The workforce will include 16 to 18-year-old apprentices, an age group that requires greater support and structure. The systems should reflect this as well as the nature of the operating model.
- Offering a minimum of 30 hours a week of employment. Part time employment is only offered when relevant to the individual apprentice's personal circumstances. There will be a contract of employment clarifying all aspects of their employment. The length of contract should be based on the individual's needs and anticipated time required to complete the apprenticeship with scope for an extension to allow for any delay. An apprentice must not be employed under any form of self-employment.
- Agreeing a wage in conjunction with the host employer which must be at least the [legal minimum apprenticeship wage](#). In line with the ATA delivering a high-quality apprenticeship they should not be promoted as a minimum pay model.

**3.2 An ATA will always aim to contribute to a high-quality apprenticeship experience. To ensure this they will make the quality of apprentice's working and learning experience central to all they do. This can be recognised by the ATA ensuring:**

- Where appropriate there should be independent advice and guidance (IAG) for the apprentice before embarking on an apprenticeship standard or framework.
- The host employer(s) offers the apprentice productive employment which supports the apprenticeship standard or framework. The majority of the apprentice's time should be spent in productive employment with a host employer undertaking real tasks and activities, not through simulated work place activity.
- That the host employer's vacancy should be clear from the outset and where possible offer productive employment for the length of the apprenticeship. Given that a feature of the ATA is that it allows employers who cannot commit for the full period to engage with apprenticeships there will be examples where the offer of productive employment is for part of the length of the apprenticeship. If the apprenticeship is with more than one host employer, then this information will be included in the vacancy description.
- Where it is clear from the outset that the vacancy cannot offer the range of productive tasks or the full period of the apprenticeship then the ATA (working with the training provider) should agree a combination of host employers to offer a structured apprenticeship programme.
- Where there is an interruption in employment with a host employer, there is an agreed period of continued employment with the ATA whilst suitable alternative arrangements are made with an appropriate host employer. If the apprentice is transferred to a new host employer the ATA is responsible for ensuring, there is no delay or disruption to the apprentice receiving their wage.

- An [apprenticeship agreement](#) is in place no later than the first day of employment with the ATA, covering all aspects of the training and including all parties (apprentice, host employer, provider and ATA).
- Training provision supports the employment opportunity offered by the host employer (the apprenticeship should be based on the job role not on the training available).
- The length of the programme should support the beneficial outcomes associated with apprenticeships, including those gained from working in productive employment. ATAs will encourage the development of apprenticeships driven by good apprentice training practice.

**3.3 An ATA will focus on the creation of the new apprenticeship opportunities with employers who wish to benefit from using the ATA model to engage an apprentice(s). They should complement not displace directly employed apprenticeships. This can be recognised by the ATA having:**

- A clear rationale for the services offered that they can share with employers.
- A clear engagement strategy and engagement criteria to secure host employers. There will be a focus on ensuring employers both understand, and are committed to apprenticeships and to supporting the apprentice for the period of the apprenticeship.
- Clear systems to ensure that host employers can give necessary and appropriate support to the apprentice during their apprenticeship.
- A focus on engagement with employers looking to recruit into future jobs rather than on employers who use the ATA as a source of temporary agency staffing or offering temporary work experience.
- A focus on securing employment for the apprentice at the end of the apprenticeship. This could be with the host employer, other employers linked with the ATA or through support on job search by the ATA.

- Systems in place to ensure that those applying for an ATA apprenticeship are encouraged to maintain their search for an apprenticeship if not successfully placed with a host employer within a reasonable period (including registrations with find an apprenticeship and other sources).

**3.4 An ATA will agree clear terms with all the employers, providers and apprentices that they work with. These terms should reflect best practice in the delivery of an apprenticeship. This will be recognised by the ATA having:**

- An engagement strategy and criteria to attract suitable apprentices.
- A clear process to recruit suitable apprentices based on a link with real vacancies and training opportunities. The find an apprenticeship system should be a key feature of the recruitment process.
- A clear process to match suitable apprentices with vacancies and training opportunities. The find an apprenticeship system can support this process.
- Ensure that the apprentice fully understands the position of the ATA and is clearly aware of the nature of the employment.
- Ensure that the apprentice is clear on the role and responsibilities of the ATA, training provider and host employer and who they should contact for support.
- Ensure that the apprentice is clear about their responsibilities in relation to the apprenticeship delivery.
- Systems in place so that should a hosting arrangement break down, the ATA should aim to find the apprentice a new host whose business activity compliments the training programme. During any such break the ATA is expected to maintain the employment and training programme for an agreed period. ATAs should have plans and provision to facilitate this.
- A formal agreement in place between the ATA and the host setting out the roles and responsibilities of both parties (there may be some variation depending on the sector and/or employer characteristics).



The ATA should have systems in place to withdraw the apprentice where the host does not discharge their roles and responsibilities appropriately.

- Made clear the key role the employer plays in the delivery of the apprenticeship. The host should understand their role in supporting the apprentice and where necessary be supported by the ATA and training provider to ensure work place activity is appropriately linked with training.
- Clear agreements in place with host employers to ensure that moves between host employers can be managed. This will include an agreed notice to be given by the host employer.
- A strategy and systems in place for selecting high quality training providers (providers must be approved on the ESFA's Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers).
- Agreements in place with all associated providers to ensure roles and responsibilities.
- The ATA must ensure it has systems in place with its training providers to monitor and ensure the ILR completed for all its apprentices is complete and complies with the ILR requirements for coding correctly ATA apprentices.
- When an apprentice is employed by an ATA and hired out to employers, this is recorded on the ILR as follows:
  - Code LDM130 is recorded in the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring fields against all aims that are part of the apprenticeship.
  - The employer number of the ATA is returned in the Employer identifier field within the apprentice's employment status record.
  - The delivery location postcode records where delivery of each aim takes place, for example if a competency aim is delivered at the host employer's workplace then this location is recorded for that aim.

- The [2016 to 2017 provider support manual](#) contains a section that describes how providers should complete the ILR for apprentices employed by an ATA, including a couple of examples (see section 12.1.4, page 70).
- Systems in place to monitor the quality of the apprenticeship experience from the perspective of the apprentice, host and training provider. The ATA should be able to evidence the success of the apprenticeship programme measured in terms of successful completion and progression into a job.

**3.5 ATAs must make themselves aware of and comply with all relevant Employment Law and Regulations including those included in the Employment Agency Regulations. ATAs will show they have:**

- Clarity on their status in relation to Employment Agency Standards Regulations and the Employment Agency Standards inspectorate.
- Governance structures that will include access to appropriate expert advice.
- Risk strategies that include the position of their apprentices and how they can be best protected.

## **4. Applying to the Register of Apprenticeship Training Agencies**

### **4.1 Step 1: Consider your readiness to apply**

- Organisations should carefully consider the reasons why an ATA is required before establishing one:
  - Is there a sufficient sustainable demand from businesses in your sector(s)/geographical area?
  - Can demand be met through the traditional route of direct employment of apprentices?

- As with all apprenticeships, host employers should offer apprenticeships which lead to real jobs? Not just filling short-term labour gaps?
- The ESFA encourages ATAs to provide apprenticeship opportunities for SMEs
- **The ATA is not a ‘temporary work’ business** but rather a means to manage and give real flexibility to the delivery of a high-quality apprenticeship. This flexibility also applies where employers may not be able to offer all aspects of a framework but linking them with other host employers allows the full range to be covered.
- For the apprentice the ATA gives another route into an apprenticeship which can offer them the opportunity to experience a range of employers and increased security around the continuation of their apprenticeship.
- The ATA should provide the apprentice with an opportunity to progress where appropriate to advanced, higher and degree-level apprenticeships.

#### 4.2 Step 2: Familiarise yourself with the process

- All applicants to the register will need to complete the online application form.
- Applicants to the Register must be legal entities.
- Applicants are required to enter the organisation Employer Reference Number (ERN) on the application form. This can be obtained from the [EDS website](#). If you are unsure how to obtain an ERN please speak to the learning provider you will be working with to provide you with a ERN.

#### 4.3 Step 3: Create a user account on the Bravo Solution portal

- We use the [Bravo Solution portal](#) for the register as it is the most suitable platform we have for managing the application process efficiently.

- If you have not previously used the Bravo Solution portal, you will need to create a user account to access the documents and online application form. You can create a user account at any time and it is a simple process.
- **If your organisation already uses the portal, then you can use your current username and password.**
- **If you are not sure whether your organisation already has a username and password, please contact [help@bravosolution.co.uk](mailto:help@bravosolution.co.uk) rather than attempting to create another account.**
- The name of the organisation you enter on your Bravo Solution account must be your organisation's full legal name, as registered with Companies House (if applicable). This is critical as your organisation will appear on the register under the name the application is made in.

### To create a user account on the Bravo Solution portal

1. Type <https://education.bravosolution.co.uk> into your internet browser.
2. Select '**Click Here to Register**'.
3. A pop-up will appear. This is the '**User Agreement**', which you will need to read and accept to continue. Please then click on 'Next' at the bottom of the page.
4. At the next screen, please enter your Organisation Details and User Details.
5. Please then click on 'Save' at the top of the screen.
6. You will receive an email with your unique password (this is sent by Bravo Solution to the email address you entered as part of your registration details).

7. You will be able to change your password once you have logged in.

#### **4.4 Step 4: Locate the application form and documents**

- You will be able to apply to the register at any time. On the last working day of each month, we download and review all the applications we receive during that month. During this time, the application form and documents may be unavailable for a short period.

#### **Where to find the application form and documents**

1. Type <https://education.bravosolution.co.uk> into your internet browser.
2. Input your username and password and click 'Go'.
3. Click on the 'PQQs Open to All Suppliers' link.
4. Click on the PQQ titled Register of Apprenticeship Training Agencies
5. Click on the 'Express Interest' button at the top of the page. This will move the PQQ into your 'My PQQs' page.
6. Access the documents by clicking 'Buyer Attachments' in the 'PQQ Details' box.

#### **4.5 Step 5: Complete your application – technical steps**

## How to complete the application form

1. Type <https://education.bravosolution.co.uk> into your internet browser.
2. Input your username and password and click 'Go'.
3. Click on the 'My PQQs' link. Register of Apprenticeship Training Agencies
4. Click on 'My Response' under 'PQQ Details'.
5. Click 'Create Response'.
6. Follow the on-screen instructions, technical tips and detailed guide to help you complete the online form.

- A fresh version of the application form is available at the start of each month. When you have started to complete the form, you will need to submit it by the current closing date stated on the portal. If you choose not to submit it by the current closing date, you will lose the work you have done to date and will need to start again with a new form. We therefore suggest that you do not start an application unless you are confident you can complete and submit it by the next closing date.
- If you are completing the application form for the first time, you may want to download it into a Word document before you start to complete it on-line. Where the answers are on a drop-down menu, you will not be able to view these in the printed version of the Word document. Please note that it is not possible to complete that document and then upload it to the portal or submit it by email.
- If you have more than one evidence document to upload against a question, you will need to zip these documents into one file and then

upload the zip file in the space provided. A zip file is an archiving system that allows you to pack together one or more files into a single file or folder. When uploading a zip file, please make sure it is not password protected.

- Please consider the format of the files you submit. For example, we can read Microsoft files and PDF documents. We are unable to open Mac equivalent files or extensions. **Please only use letters and, if necessary, numbers to name your files. Please do not use any special characters, such as the full stop, percentage sign, brackets or an ampersand, in your file names as this may stop us from being able to download your files. Please keep your file names short.**
- As part of the security aspects of the portal, it will log you out 15 minutes after the last entry you make. You should continuously save your application as you complete it to avoid your work being lost.
- We cannot access any of your submission until after the closing date nor can we see anything you have partially or fully submitted until this time. You can submit a partially completed application form during the timeline if you complete it in full before the monthly closing date, otherwise your form will be incomplete and will not be reviewed.
- You can change any of the answers at any time before you submit the application form. Whenever you wish to change the answer to a question, the current answer is displayed. If you wish to change any of your answers after you submit the application form, you can un-submit it, make your changes and re-submit. You can do this as often as you wish up to the monthly closing date. However, you should be aware that the portal will only retain the last submission you make as it over-writes the previous one.
- The portal is managed by a third party. If you believe that the portal has not been available and this has delayed your submission, we can access availability data and, based on the timing of your attempts to submit, a judgement can be made as to whether an

availability issue affected your ability to submit by the deadline. Our judgement will be final.

- Where we ask for answers to be given in text format, these are restricted to 2,000 characters per text box. We define a character as: a number; letter; punctuation mark; space; or carriage return.
- It is important that you provide all the information asked for in the format and order specified. Please note that numeric fields will not accept text, spaces or symbols.

#### **4.6 Step 6: Complete the application form - content**

- The application form has several different types of questions:
  - Questions about your organisation
  - Financial management and compliance
  - Details and declarations, you must make for us to be able to consider your application
- The rest of this section follows the layout and order of the application form itself. Please read it before you begin to fill in the form, and then have it open as you work through the form.
- You will need to provide factual answers to these questions. Although you will need to provide accurate responses, we will not refuse your application based on your response to any of these questions unless we have evidence that any of your responses has been given in a deliberate attempt to deceive us.
- These questions are straightforward. If you are unclear about any of the terms used in the questions, you should look online for official definitions of the terms and respond according to those definitions.

#### **4.7 Step 7: Submit your application to us**



- After you complete your application, submit it using the ‘Submit Response’ button at the top of the page before the current deadline for submission of the application form.

## 5. What happens next?

- 5.1 After you submit your application we will review it and make a decision. During this time, you will not be able to make changes to your application.
- 5.2 We will inform you through the Bravo Solution portal about the expected time it will take for us to review your application. This will be dependent on the number of applications received during each month.
- 5.3 For questions where we will review your responses, including the financial health assessment, your responses must provide us with assurance that you are suitable to join the register.
- 5.4 For each group of questions, we have summarised below the basis for reviewing your application.

Questions	
Organisation	We will not refuse your application based on your response to any of these questions unless we have evidence that any of your responses has been given in a deliberate attempt to deceive us.
Compliance and financial management	We will refuse your application if any of your responses fail the compliance and financial management requirements.
ATA details and declarations	We will not refuse your application based on your response to any of these questions unless we have evidence that any of your responses has been given in a deliberate attempt to deceive us.

- 5.5 We may consider information we already hold, which other government bodies hold, or which is publicly available, when considering your responses.

## **6. Feedback**

- 6.1 We inform all applicants about the outcome of their application. We strongly advise that you wait for feedback on your initial application before making another application.
- 6.2 If your application is unsuccessful, we explain why in writing. We ensure feedback is clear and consistent. For example, we say that you have been unsuccessful due to the outcome of the financial health assessment.
- 6.3 We are unable to offer a detailed debrief service to any applicant in addition to the written feedback.
- 6.4 An unsuccessful application may not preclude you from making another application. However, you should reflect on the feedback we give you. If it is something that cannot be easily or quickly rectified, you should carefully consider your timeframe for re-application. If it is something that cannot be rectified at all, you should not re-apply.

## **7. Publication of the register**

- 7.1 We publish the [register on GOV.UK](#) at and update it regularly.

## **8. Removal of organisations from the published register**

- 8.1 We may remove you from the published register if we have evidence that you no longer meet the requirements. If the reason we remove you from the published register is something that cannot be easily or quickly rectified, you should carefully consider your timeframe for re-application. If the reason is something that cannot be rectified at all, you should not re-apply.
- 8.2 We may remove you from the register if we are unable to make contact with your organisations from the contact details submitted by you as part of the

application process. Therefore, you must ensure any changes to your ATA contact details are communicated by email to [ATA.applications@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:ATA.applications@sfa.bis.gov.uk) during the year or during your annual refresh on the register. There is no appeals process for being removed from the register for failure to advise the agency on change of contact details.

## **9. Appeals and complaints**

**9.1** We do not have an appeals process for the register. If you are unsuccessful in your application or we remove you from the published register and you believe you have been treated unfairly, you can make use of our published [complaints procedure](#).

## **10. Help and support**

**10.1** We have a message board within the 'Register of Apprentice Training Agency' section of the Bravo Solution portal. You should use this to ask questions about the process.

**10.2** A dedicated email address for general ATA questions is available at [ATA.applications@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:ATA.applications@sfa.bis.gov.uk). We will normally respond to emails or messages within 5 working days.

**10.3** The sole purpose of the register is to maintain a list of organisations who have met our requirements. The register is not part of a procurement for services. We will not be contracting with organisations on the register. The decision to select an organisation on the register will be made by individual employers.

**10.4** There is no link between this register and any other registers that the ESFA operates.

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