



Department
for Education

Strategic guidance to the Institute for Apprenticeships

May 2018

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Strategic Guidance to the Institute for Apprenticeships

2018-19

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section ZA2(9)(b) of the Apprenticeships,
Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, as inserted by paragraph 2 of Schedule 4
to the Enterprise Act 2016

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Sir Gerry Berragan
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151 Buckingham Palace Road
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6 April 2018

Dear Gerry,

STRATEGIC GUIDANCE TO INSTITUTE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS 2018/19

I am pleased to issue you with this strategic guidance for 2018/19. This gives you a high-level steer as to the Government's priorities for this coming year in apprenticeships and technical education reform, which you should have regard to in performing your functions (further detail at Annex C). I expect you to include this guidance as part of your business planning process and objective setting, and I look forward to receiving updates on progress through our regular conversations and review meetings.

The Institute has played an essential role over the last year, which I expect to continue: maintaining and improving the quality of apprenticeships over time; accelerating approvals processes; and providing objective, independent advice to government on future funding provision for apprenticeship training. Further detail on the apprenticeships policy framework is at Annex A.

In 2018/19, you will be expanding your remit to include responsibility for technical education; taking on responsibilities as part of the T levels delivery programme¹, which I have set out at Annex B.

¹ Set out in the Apprenticeships Skills Children and Learning Act 2009 as amended by Schedule 1 to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017

Your remit is England-only. There may be occasions where it would be beneficial for you to work with Devolved Administrations to address issues facing employers who work across borders. However, this is for you to determine, in accordance with your legislative remit and the priorities and objectives set out in your business plan.

Priorities for 2018/19

The Institute will continue to deliver against the apprenticeships reform programme as well as taking on technical education functions throughout 2018/19. It is up to you to allocate your resources effectively to successfully deliver your part in both programmes. I would also like you to consider the following priorities as you plan for delivery in 2018/19:

Improving quality	
A thorough process for approval and review	I would like you to continue to improve the quality of apprenticeships, through upholding robust approvals criteria; assuring the quality of end point assessments; and reviewing standards and assessment plans. Your reviews should make use of occupational maps and demonstrate how standards maintain their relevance to employers, are occupationally specific, and reflect the changing needs of skills, knowledge and behaviours in an occupation over time.
Funding quality	Continue to recommend funding bands for standards that support the delivery of quality apprenticeships.
Quality Alliance	You should continue to lead the Quality Alliance: monitoring and improving quality across the sector, and developing a shared quality strategy.
Continuous improvement	
Accelerate standards approvals	I would like to see further improvements following the implementation of your Faster and Better programme, particularly in reducing the time it takes to approve apprenticeship standards.
End Point Assessment	I would like you to work with End Point Assessment Organisations to encourage their continuous improvement in both the design and delivery of end-point assessment.
A positive experience	Provide a positive and timely response to employers and apprentices, mindful of their needs, and responsive employer and apprentice experience.
Supporting Government's strategic priorities	

Affordability	I would like your funding band recommendations to maximise the value for money of apprenticeships, and consider the overall affordability of the apprenticeships programme and the Government's 3 million starts manifesto commitment.
Addressing skills gaps	It will be important for you to prioritise standards so that they reflect the needs of the wider economy and fill key skills gaps, such as those addressed by the Industrial Strategy.
Technical Education	
A key delivery partner	Responsibility for the overarching T level programme currently rests with the Department, and the Institute will be its delivery partner. You will therefore need to work in partnership with the Department and other agencies to agree and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved, throughout the implementation phase and once T levels are fully operational.
Transition: procurement	The Institute already plays a crucial role in the introduction of T levels: providing ownership of the occupational maps that underpin the reforms and, through their route panels, advising and assisting in the development of outline content for T levels. In addition you will take over responsibility for procurement of T level qualifications following commencement of your functions.
Transition: Route Panels	You will work closely with the Department on the recruitment of the T level panels for those routes to be delivered from 2022, with a view to T level panels for 2022 outline content (and their relationship managers) ultimately operating out of the Institute. We have agreed that your 15 Route Panels, established as expert employer groups, will oversee both apprenticeships and T levels. These Panels will approve all outline content ² produced by T level panels, due for delivery from 2020 onwards.

Other functions

Research

I expect you to work together with the Department to coordinate research programmes to avoid duplication and provide value for money. You and the

² By way of advice and assistance to the Secretary of State until the Institute's substantive technical education powers are commenced.

Department will share emerging and final findings and agree appropriate publication and handling plans for any relevant research conducted.

Annual reporting

At the end of the financial year, you must report to the Secretary of State on how you have carried out your core functions, and what you have done as a result of the strategic guidance, your framework document and any other statutory notices issued. The Department will publish the report and lay it before Parliament.

You must agree objectives and reporting criteria with the Department in the first quarter of the financial year. These should reflect the priorities set out in this guidance and in your business plan. I will meet with you frequently to discuss progress once a quarter (or more frequently as the need arises) and you will also need to provide regular performance updates to the Department.

A key delivery partner

The ongoing apprenticeship reforms and the impact of the T level programme on the further education landscape will require you to work closely with other delivery partners in the system. You should continue to build strong relationships with Government, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofqual, Ofsted and the Office for Students (OfS), through collectives such as the Quality Alliance, to make sure that their aims and approaches complement each other. The roles and responsibilities of each organisation are set out in the Accountability Statement, published on the gov.uk website.

I expect you to work with other organisations who do not have a statutory role, but represent groups with significant involvement or interest, such as professional bodies, providers and assessment organisations.

Best wishes
Anne Milton

Rt Hon Anne Milton MP Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills

Annex A: Apprenticeships policy framework

Policy criteria for apprenticeships

1. The following represents the policy criteria for apprenticeships, and constitute the basis on which we expect the Institute to uphold high standards of quality.

AN APPRENTICESHIP OCCUPATION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is proposed by a group of employers recognised by the Institute and reflective of those who employ people in the occupation, including small employers• Is transferable:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Meeting the standards of a range of employers rather than the needs of one employer○ In demand in the labour market○ Transferable to a range of other employers and secures long term earnings potential, greater security and capability to progress• Is sufficiently broad, deep and skilled:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sufficiently skilled in terms of breadth and depth to require employment and training of at least a year's duration with 20% of the time in off-the-job training• Provides full occupational competence for new entrants:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The occupation and occupational profile fully define occupational competence for a new entrant to the occupation• Is recognised and stands alone:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Recognised by relevant professional bodies and/or regulators○ Recognised by a range of employers and people practising the occupation○ One occupation relates to one level only at 2 to 8○ Aligns with an occupation within the relevant Occupational Map
APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are short, concise and clear and written to the Institute's format• Define full competence in an apprenticeship occupation so that, on completion, the new entrant to the occupation is able to carry out the role in any size of employer across any relevant sector.

- Align with regulatory requirements and **professional recognition** and enables the individual to apply for this
- Are **based on a clear occupational profile** setting out the duties carried out by employees in the occupation and including the skills, knowledge and behaviours which will be applied in the workplace and are derived directly from the duties
- **Standards form the basis of outline content for T levels**

END-POINT ASSESSMENT PLANS:

- **Deliver valid and accurate judgements of occupational competence.** The assessment methods must be fit for purpose and appropriate to the content of the occupational profile. They must include assessment mixture of valid assessment methods that will lead to a synoptic End Point Assessment (EPA) that truly measures occupational competence. This is underpinned by having at least one synoptic assessment method.
- **Apprenticeships should be graded** using at least one level (merit or distinction) above a pass for the EPA as a whole.
- **Produce consistent and reliable judgements** – the assessment methodology and tools used must ensure that employers can have confidence that apprentices assessed in different places, at different times, by different assessors have been judged in the same way and are the same standard of occupational competence.
- **Ensure independence** of the organisation delivering the assessment and of the individual assessors making assessment decisions. For integrated Degree Apprenticeships the organisation does not have to be independent but the individual assessor must be.
- **Feasible, manageable, and affordable** within the constraints of funding policy
- **Enables End Point Assessment Organisations to make reasonable adjustments** for conducting an EPA in compliance with equality legislation.
- **Quality Assurance.** Each assessment plan should set out methods of internal quality assurance which each assessment organisation will need to undertake to ensure quality and consistency. Each plan should identify the method of external quality assurance proposed and the proposed organisation which will deliver it. External quality assurance proposals should be based on the Institute's guidance and the organisation identified should be appropriate and free of conflict of interest.

Quality and Assessment policy

2. The Department is responsible for setting government policy concerning apprenticeships quality and the assessment market. I expect the

Institute will continue to work with the Department in advising where it considers policy needs changing and improving.

Level 6+ apprenticeships³

3. The Institute should ensure that the approach to degree qualifications in Level 6+ apprenticeships aligns with the wider apprenticeships policy on mandatory qualifications. You should make sure that the grading system is effective and delivers appropriate judgements of occupational competence. You should also confirm Level 6+ apprenticeships are sufficiently occupationally specific and assigned to the correct occupational levels and in due course review this content in existing level 6+ apprenticeships.

4. I also expect the Institute to work collaboratively with the Office for Students as it develops its approach to quality assessment and its data strategy, to maintain quality throughout the transition to the new HE regulatory framework from AY 2019/20.

³ As set out in the statutory notice on L6+ apprenticeships, issued February 2018.

Annex B: Technical Education policy framework

General

1. Upon commencement of the technical education provisions in Schedule 1 to the Technical and Further Education Act 2017, the Institute will have responsibility for approving technical education qualifications that form part of T levels, as well as determining the additional steps towards occupational competence. This will include making arrangements to secure the availability (see Procurement section below) and approval of qualifications. You must also publish a list of approved qualifications.
2. The Secretary of State will have responsibility for issuing T level certificates but may choose to delegate this function.
3. The Institute should work with the Department to establish a steady state process to ensure the continued relevance and currency of T levels.

Occupational maps

4. The Secretary of State has responsibility for determining the framework of routes within which technical education provision and apprenticeships sit. The Institute has responsibility for identifying the occupations that populate each of the routes, publishing these in the format of occupational maps.

Relationship Management

5. On commencement of the relevant provisions of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017, responsibility for those T level panels working to 2022 delivery will transfer to the Institute. The Institute will therefore work closely with the Department in recruiting those T level panels.
6. The Institute and the Department will conduct a “lessons learned” exercise following the finalisation of outline content due for the 2020 delivery to determine any changes to the process used to develop outline content. Aside from these agreed changes, on taking on the function the Institute should adopt the same processes for the development of outline content as that has been used for T levels due for 2020 delivery.

7. In taking on responsibility for Relationship Management of T level panels, the Institute should work to the timetable as set out by Government in the T level Action Plan.⁴

Procurement

8. In giving advice to the Secretary of State, you should be aware of the commercial strategy for the first wave of T levels, and play an active part in developing the wave 1 procurement approach. You will need to develop your own commercial strategy for waves 2 and 3. Any changes to the procurement approach should be based on lessons learnt during wave 1.
9. I expect you to run the procurement function for technical education qualifications in accordance with the process agreed at the point your legal functions are commenced and to evaluate responses against the criteria set out in the ITT. You should select a winning bidder for development and delivery of a technical education qualification through an evaluation panel, and determine what documents will be relevant for the purposes of the transfer of copyright.
10. Following award of the contracts, you will be responsible for determining the process for approving technical education qualifications, including what should happen in the event that a qualification fails to meet the approval criteria. Once approved, you should carry out contract management and undertake performance monitoring, but it is up to you as to how you wish to carry out this monitoring.

Assurance

11. It will be important for you to continue working with Ofqual to explore options for a joint assurance system for technical qualifications, compatible with your statutory remits (once commenced). Details will be included in further guidance if/when a joint proposal is agreed.

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650969/T_level_Action_Plan.pdf

Annex C: Legal basis for the Institute and Guidance

1. The strategic guidance is a 'statutory notice' to which the Institute must have regard and is given by the Secretary of State under section ZA2(2) to the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended by Schedule 4 to the Enterprise Act 2016). Under ZA2(9) of the 2009 Act, a copy of this notice will be laid before Parliament and published on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>. The Institute is legally obliged to report on its activities once a year through its Annual Report.
2. Strategic guidance enables Government to give the Institute steers and advice – at a high level - about elements of policy that it considers fundamental. The Institute is an independent organisation, able to choose how to operationalise that advice.
3. The Secretary of State is able to update and reissue this guidance at any time, usually only when further clarity or policy changes are required. We will endeavour to keep changes to once a year; however, we may need to provide an update in autumn 2018 to account for the transfer of further responsibilities for technical education.
4. The Institute has a number of core functions set through legislation:
 - setting quality criteria for the development of all apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, irrespective of level for occupations which the Institute considers appropriate;
 - reviewing, rejecting or approving (and publishing) standards and assessment plans;
 - for each standard, describing the occupation and the outcomes which a person will be expected to attain to successfully achieve the standard;
 - maintaining and publishing occupational maps in relation to the 15 occupational routes; and
 - ensuring all end-point assessments are quality assured, including quality assuring some itself.
5. In addition, the Institute will provide advice and assistance to the Secretary of State in relation to:
 - funding provision for apprenticeship training; and
 - the matters set out in set out in this document in relation to the development of the first wave of T levels ahead of the relevant provisions of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 being commenced.