



Healthcare Science Apprenticeship Standards

Science Council submission

The Science Council is a membership organisation of learned societies and professional bodies, and currently has 41 member organisations drawn from across science and its applications (<http://www.sciencecouncil.org/our-members>). Collectively member bodies represent almost 500,000 individual members, including scientists and senior executives in industry, academia and the public sector. The Science Council awards the professional qualifications of Chartered Scientist (CSci), Registered Scientist (RSci) and Registered Science Technician (RSciTech). Many of our member organisations work within the health sectors.

A summary of our concerns is below.

- In principle the Science Council very much welcomes the proposal to establish Healthcare Science Apprenticeships. The health sectors are the leading employers of scientists in the UK.
- In our view the proposed standards are not yet sufficiently developed to be rolled out and applied across all healthcare science areas and further development and piloting would be appropriate.
- The Science Council believes it is essential that the quality of qualification standards are maintained and benchmarked across disciplines and employment sectors. Indeed, current guidance from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the development of apprenticeship standards in science states that they must link to professional registration where they exist in the occupation, including Registered Science Technician (RSciTech).¹ It is not clear how the standards for Healthcare Science Apprenticeships will be consistent with this guidance and link to professional registration standards in science and other science-based apprenticeships.
- You will be aware that the quality and brand of apprenticeships in science remain a key issue of concern to both employers and students. It is therefore essential to benchmark standards of science apprenticeships to ensure credibility and underpin transferability across the professions and across employment sectors. Our recommendation is that the Healthcare Science Apprenticeships should therefore be linked to a qualification recognised by the Science Council, in a discipline relevant to their job role.
- The Science Council agrees with the Institute of Biomedical Science that the use of the term 'Level' is unclear. There needs to be consistent language and terminology used across all apprenticeships to ensure that young people are able to accurately compare opportunities across different employers and employment sectors.
- A key concern is that the required minimum 12 month duration will not be of sufficient length for all learners to develop the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge required in a transferable qualification.
- The proposed duration is out of step with the standards being developed for other science-related apprenticeships, with the minimum duration being between 18 and 24 months. The apprenticeship standard for the Laboratory technician 'Trailblazer' for

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366063/bis-14-p194b-Guidance-for-developers-of-apprenticeship-standards-and-related-assessment-plans.pdf

example has been set at a minimum of 18 months. Even the length of time required for some non-science related apprenticeships is at least 18 months, for example in Butchery and Housing Management.² We are therefore concerned that the reduced length of time for the proposed Healthcare Science Apprenticeships is likely to lead to the impression that they are at a lower standard and less rigorous than those in other areas of applied science and other areas of the economy.

- The Science Council shares the concerns raised by the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine and the Institute of Biomedical Science regarding the length of the consultation period and the time of year the consultation took place. Such an issue requires lengthier consideration and wider consultation with the relevant stakeholders than has been granted.

The Science Council has been working with Government and other stakeholders to develop standards for science apprenticeships for science-related Trailblazers. We are disappointed that we were not contacted directly regarding the proposed standards for the Healthcare Science apprenticeships. We were only made aware of the consultation at the beginning of January 2015 by one of our member organisations.

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² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>