



# Degree Apprenticeships Consultation

## Science Council response

### Change 1 – Better supporting graduate-entry occupations

- 1) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in 'Change 1'? [agree/neutral/disagree]

*Neutral*

- 2) Do you agree or disagree with the proposed evidence base (as outlined in point 1 above) on which the Institute will evaluate whether an occupation is a graduate occupation suitable for a degree apprenticeship? [agree/neutral/disagree + optional free text box]

The evidence base seems appropriate and it right that there is scope for other robust data to be included. The views of apprentices themselves could be drawn on as an additional evidence source as policy changes will likely have significant impacts on apprentices' careers. It is important for the Institute to be clear about the criteria it uses in determining whether data would be suitable and exercise appropriate care in developing criteria to minimise any unintended consequences.

- 3) Is there any other evidence the Institute should consider in its evaluation of whether an occupation is a graduate occupation suitable for a degree apprenticeship? Please note if any suggestions made are specific to a sector or occupational route. [free text box]

Professional bodies and the Science Council can provide a key role with supporting the IfATE in this area. The Science Council is made up of a membership that consists of 36 professional bodies in the sciences which collectively represent a significant proportion of the scientific community, and so is well placed to communicate the sectors' needs. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with IfATE in this area.

Ongoing monitoring is important to ensure that an apprenticeship for any given occupations continue to provide results that are in the best interests of both the sector and apprentices. We are also aware that some professional bodies have had previous experience of trying to operate within the qualification rules set by the IfATE, yet found it very difficult to mandate a qualification even when, in their view, it was in the best interests of the sector.

- 4) Are there any reasons why you think this proposal will not achieve its intended objective? [free text]

It is pleasing to see the IfTAE recognise the importance of qualifications at degree level. These qualifications provide much detail and clarity in respect of the knowledge requirements of the apprenticeship programme, and so it seems a sensible development to enable this to happen in an easier fashion.

The Science Council's professional awards of CSci, CSciTeach, RSci and RSciTech require a qualification or an equivalence, and at present some of the available apprenticeships without a mandated qualification do not provide the equivalence. We are therefore encouraged to see that qualifications will be easier to include, and therefore not disadvantage apprentices who didn't do a qualification in getting professionally recognised.

It is unclear however why degree apprenticeships are being considered separately to apprenticeships generally. For the strength of the apprenticeship brand, we would suggest that all apprenticeships, regardless of level, should be treated the same in respect of mandating qualifications appropriate to the knowledge requirements. If different policies are created for degree level and sub-degree level,

there is a risk of this policy decision reinforcing the often held notion that academic qualifications are superior to technical education.

## Change 2 - Integration of on-the-job and off-the-job training

5) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in 'Change 2'? [agree/neutral/disagree]

*Neutral*

6) Are there any reasons why you think this proposal will not achieve its intended objective?  
(free text)

Ensuring that the on and off the job training are mutually reinforcing is essential to any successful apprenticeship scheme. However, it may be useful for the IfATE consider the following as they develop this further:

- Linking the learning aims of the programme to a professional qualification will ensure that learning aims are occupationally specific, which would ensure all learning, whether on the job or off the job, is linked to the occupation. The Registered Scientist (RSci) award, for example, is a competency award that requires a foundation of knowledge and has been designed by peers within the sector.
- It is important to ensure that the integration the on and off the job training does not lead to important science aspects being overlooked, especially in relation to topics which may not be relevant to the immediate job role in hand, but are relevant to the wider occupation and onward progression. This is particularly important given the increasingly multi-disciplinary nature of many science occupations.
- Degrees that operate within a degree apprenticeship should meet professional bodies accreditation requirements. Many professional bodies have very well established and respected degree accreditation programmes that employers, learners and HEIs value.
- Measures need to be in place for individuals who, through no fault of their own, are unable to complete their apprenticeship programme (i.e. redundancy). Without the employer involvement, the individual's apprenticeship programme would cease and preventing the apprentice's degree progression. Measures might include 'step off' qualifications or 'banking' of achieved learning which can be transferred to a new employer/training provider.

7) Are there any additional ways in which you think the objective to integrate on- and off the-job training can be achieved? (free text)

The degree element of the programme should have scope to be broader than what is defined by the knowledge, skills and behaviours listed within the apprenticeships. Degrees in the sciences are widely respected due the breadth and depth of knowledge they contain. This is incredibly important for onward progression and being able to operate in a multi-disciplinary fashion, which is highly valued by employers in the sciences. We would therefore urge allowances to be made for a suitable breadth and depth of knowledge to be taught, that may not be immediately relevant for the individuals' job role, but is essential for future career progression.

## Change 3 - Alignment between apprenticeship KSBs and degree learning outcomes

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in 'Change 3'? [agree/neutral/disagree]

*Neutral*

- 8) Are there any reasons why you think this proposal will not achieve its intended objective?  
(free text)

Similar to the points outlined in the previous sections it may be useful for the IfATE consider the following :

- KSBs within the apprenticeship standard need to be broad enough to ensure appropriate apprentices are equipped with the knowledge they will need for career advancement and to contribute to the success of UK science.
  - It could be beneficial to create a mechanism which would enable apprentices' views to feed into policy developments in a meaningful fashion. Apprentices are a key stakeholder in apprenticeships and so it is important that their views regarding how their degree could be impacted are considered, especially considering that the degree award will be the property of the apprentice rather than the employer.
  - Degree apprenticeships should meet professional body accreditation requirements. It is important that the description of the KSBs within standards does not prevent this from happening.
- 9) Are there any additional ways in which you think the objective to align the learning outcomes of the apprenticeship and degree can be secured? (free text)

*No response*

#### **Change 4 - Integration of assessment**

- 10) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in 'Change 4'? [agree/neutral/disagree]

*Neutral*

- 11) Are there any reasons why you think this proposal will not achieve its intended objective?  
(free text)

In the sciences there are currently a limited number of End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs). Those EPAOs tend to deliver assessments at multiple levels, including degree. There is a risk that removing their ability to deliver assessments to degree could cause their business models to become unviable, therefore presenting risk that apprentices on level 3 or 5 programmes may not be able to complete. It may be useful to carry out impact analysis of this risk prior to implementation of this proposal.

- 12) Are there any additional ways in which you think the objective to integrate the assessment of degree apprenticeships can be secured? (free text)

*No response*

#### **Change 5 - Participation of an independent assessor with occupational expertise**

- 13) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal set out in 'Change 5'? [agree/neutral/disagree]

*Neutral*

- 14) Are there any reasons why you think this proposal will not achieve its intended objective?  
(free text)

It is reassuring that proposal aims to ensure impartiality in the assessment decision. It may also be useful to consider further measures such as:

- A policy put in place for monitoring of conflicts of interest.
- Considering how the payment of assessors may present a conflict, for example if it comes from a higher education institution.
- Avoiding any potential over reliance on one or two assessors.

15) Are there any requirements that the Institute should lay out for the appointment of independent assessors with occupational expertise? (free text)

Assessors should be professionally qualified through a chartered award such as Chartered Scientist (CSci), as this provides an independent verification that someone possesses and applies knowledge commensurate to a level 7. In order to achieve a chartered award individuals need to demonstrate a high level of knowledge and prolonged experience of applying that knowledge in the work place. A condition of the award is also that individuals are professionally active and committed to ongoing development. This could also provide the added benefit that an assessment of the apprentices' eligibility to apply for professional awards such as Registered Scientist (RSci), could be made within the End Point Apprenticeship assessment.