Apprenticeship Briefing

February 2026

Rule Changes 2025 – Minimum Duration/Hours

- 8 Months minimum duration from 1st August 2025.
- Duration does not link to Off The Job hours.
- Off The Job Hours now published against every individual standard.
- Eligible Apprenticeship Programmes – minimum 187 hours OTJT.
- RPLE (Recognised Prior Learning and Experience) must be discussed and applied to training hours.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-rules-2025-to-2026

Changes to a Growth & Skills Levy

- **1st January 2026** - Level 7 apprenticeship standards funded only for 16-21 years and under 25 for care leavers & those with an EHCP (with a few exceptions i.e. nursing)

- Growth & Skills Levy - Apprenticeship Units **from April 2026** – 1st wave available in critical skills areas such as Digital, Engineering, Advanced AI.

Immediate funding change:

SME's co-investment model of 5% contribution continues but aged under 25 years will be fully funded by the government.

1st April funding change:

Levy payers – no 10% top up to funds by government, 25% contribution expected if levy runs dry, levy funds expire after 12 months instead of 24 months.

Changes to the Structure of an Apprenticeship Standard

What to look for:

- **Assessment Plans** replace End Point Assessment Plans.
- No more End Point Assessment; replaced by **Apprenticeship Assessment.**
- End Point Assessment Organisations replaced by **Assessment Organisations.**
- Gateway replaced by **Gateway to Completion** (existing structure: on-programme training, gateway, end point assessments).
- **Assessment –** refers to Assessment during the course of the apprenticeship or towards the end and which contributes to the final grade.
- Grades will be a **Pass** or **Distinction**, no more Merit.

Assessment Plan Changes

Already published:

- In Feb 25, DFE, Published **Apprenticeship Assessment Principles.**

https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/24599908217746-Apprenticeship-Assessment-Principles

- Changes to Apprenticeship assessment 2025-26 (DFE)
- Interim '**General Requirements**' document, Skills England, final version due **Spring 2026**

Implementation

- Expert pool – brings together the draft plan.
- Approved.
- Plan published.
- Assessment Organisations organise and create assessments.
- Assessment Plan goes live for delivery

Target for roll out 2026 – 1st assessment plans created and approved (Assistant Accountant, Early Years Educator, Data Technician) awaiting decision for delivery.

https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0795-in-revision?view=epa

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New Assessment Plans – Knowledge & Skills

Mandatory Qualifications:

Will be allowed for one of the following reasons only:

- Qualification is regulatory or a legal requirement to operate in the occupation.

- Qualification required for professional body membership.

- Qualification has currency in labour market and would disadvantage an apprentice without it.

New Assessment Plans - Behaviours

- **Employers** responsible for **behaviours** (part of the components of the 'completion to gateway' stage.
- **Providers** and **Assessment Organisations - not required to assess or quality assure** employer judgements.

Further guidance to be published from Skills England.

Foundation Apprenticeships – Would they benefit you?

- 8 months in duration – minimum of 187 GLH's

- Employer recruits as an Apprentice

- Paid through the Skills & Growth Levy

- Contains assessments

- Level 2 programmes

- Currently 7 available, **2 Digital Sector specific**

- Delivery was available from 1st August 2025

https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/?types=FoundationApprenticeship

Digital Foundation Apprenticeships

Available for the sector, introduction to career pathways and roles!

Hardware, network and infrastructure foundation apprenticeship

FA0004
Version: 1.0

☑ Approved for delivery from 29 Apr 2025   ↗ Level 2   🕐 8 months   💳 Max funding: £4,000

Hardware, network and infrastructure operatives are found in organisations large and small, in all sectors, and within public, private and voluntary organisations.

Software and data foundation apprenticeship

FA0005
Version: 1.0

☑ Approved for delivery from 29 Apr 2025   ↗ Level 2   🕐 8 months   💳 Max funding: £4,000

Software and data operatives are found in organisations large and small in all sectors and within public, private and voluntary organisations.

https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/?types=Foundation Apprenticeship&routes=digital

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Advanced Apprenticeships - Available Now

Information communications technician

ST0973
Version: 1.2

☑ Approved for delivery from 04 May 2021   ↗ Level 3   ⊙ 18 months   ▭ Max funding: £15,000

Deliver efficient operation and control of the IT.

Software development technician

ST0128
Version: 1.1

☑ Approved for delivery from 16 Dec 2016   ↗ Level 3   ⊙ 18 months   ▭ Max funding: £15,000

Building simple applications for use in larger software developments.

Digital support technician

ST0120
Version: 1.1

☑ Approved for delivery from 11 Apr 2019   ↗ Level 3   ⊙ 15 months   ▭ Max funding: £13,000

Maximising the effective use of digital office technologies, productivity software and digital communications in organisations.

Advanced Apprentices currently attend weekly classes at the Newcastle campus.

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Higher Apprenticeships - Available Now

Software developer

ST0116
Version: 1.2

☑ Approved for delivery from 12 Nov 2014   📈 Level 4   🕐 24 months   💳 Max funding: £18,000

Building and testing simple, high-quality code for software.

https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0116-v1-2

Network engineer

ST0127
Version: 1.4

☑ Approved for delivery from 12 Nov 2014   📈 Level 4   🕐 24 months   💳 Max funding: £19,000

The broad purpose of the occupation is to install networks, maintain them, and to offer technical support to users, where necessary.

https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0127-v1-4

Level 4 Higher Apprentices currently attend classes at the Newcastle campus, joining HND classes which support their training plan.

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Your Recruitment and Skills Needs

- Apprenticeships, short training modules, upskilling, new recruits?

Any Questions?

For Further Information: apprenticeships@nscg.ac.uk