



Submission in response to the Institute for Apprenticeships draft statement on Quality Apprenticeships

18 October 2017

Introduction

- 1 Gatsby is a foundation set up in 1967 by David Sainsbury (now Lord Sainsbury of Turville) to realise his charitable objectives. We focus our support on a limited number of areas:
 - Plant science research
 - Neuroscience research
 - Science and engineering education
 - Economic development in Africa
 - Public policy research and advice
 - The Arts
- 2 As part of our support for science and engineering education, Gatsby has a strong interest in the growth and promotion of the technician workforce. Technicians are the linchpins of the UK economy, delivering integral support for productivity in many of our country's high-growth areas, including the aerospace, chemical, information technology, engineering, and manufacturing industries.
- 3 Ensuring that we have a world-class technical education system that includes high-quality apprenticeships across the 15 technical education routes is an essential part of delivering a strong and aspirational technician workforce, which is critical for building the country's productivity and growth.
- 4 We welcome the draft statement on quality apprenticeships from the Institute of Apprenticeships, which provides a starting point for the vital discussion around how to ensure high-quality apprenticeships are available for individuals and the economy now and in the future.
- 5 Before quality can be measured, it is essential to establish what 'high-quality' apprenticeships look like in practice. Our response, which is structured around the headings provided in the draft statement, focuses on identifying what high-quality means.

What is an apprenticeship?

- 6 An apprenticeship is more than a job with training to industry standards. Historically in England, and as remains the case currently in most other countries, an apprenticeship is a route into an occupation that is generally aimed at young people entering the labour market. This sense of an apprenticeship as an introduction to an occupation is what distinguishes an ‘apprenticeship’ from ‘training’. As a consequence, one would expect an apprenticeship to cover a much greater breadth of knowledge and skills than would be needed for someone who is already employed within that role.

High-quality apprenticeships

- 7 Within the new environment, the responsibility of employers must move beyond an *intention* to enable apprentices to complete their training—employers must also commit to having the resources (including staff expertise) and willingness to supplement the off-the-job training apprentices receive with high-quality training in the workplace.
- 8 The Institute should provide greater clarity to distinguish the term ‘occupation’ from ‘job role’ and be more specific on how a ‘recognised occupation’ is defined. In particular, there does not appear to be a clear policy about the occupational status of optional pathways within apprenticeship standards. We would suggest that following the continental example, the standard should be considered to be the occupation whilst the pathways are specializations within that occupation. Currently, this is not the position taken by the occupational maps, but it is similar to the emerging policy around T-levels. There would be real value in trying to align the policy on how these pathways are described in terms of apprenticeships and T-levels.
- 9 In addition, there should be guidelines as to how much specializations should have in common in order to be part of the same occupation, and what proportion of an apprenticeship can be devoted to the specialization. Without clear guidance in this area, there is a risk that the pathways within an apprenticeship can be de facto the apprenticeship but without the breadth necessary to provide full occupational competence.
- 10 We think off-the-job training is essential and any calls to reduce the minimum required proportion of off-the-job training should be resisted. Occupations where there is no need (or only marginal need) for off-the-job training should almost certainly not be apprenticeships. As well as enabling the development of underpinning knowledge and understanding that is vital to occupational competence, off-the-job training offers apprentices personal and professional development experiences, such as the opportunity to learn from apprentices who work at other employers, that they do not necessarily receive as part of their on-the-job training.
- 11 In the past, much of the off-the-job training content would have been shaped by the technical certificate within an apprenticeship framework. With apprenticeship standards focussing on what is required to do the job and sometimes not identifying

the underpinning knowledge and skills that are involved in this, it has become harder to identify the off-the-job element of an apprenticeship. In other countries, the off-the-job element of an apprenticeship will frequently have a curriculum that is specified at a national or local level. We would suggest that the Institute consider inviting trailblazer groups to have the option of working with off-the-job training providers to develop a non-statutory off-the-job curriculum for each apprenticeship standard.

Quality indicators

- 12 In addition to measuring cumulative entry and achievement of apprenticeships by occupation, level, and age group, we would suggest adding gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic background. Measurement would be better split into *characteristics* of apprenticeships (covering occupation and level) and *demographics* of apprentices (covering age group and our suggestions above). We know that increasing the number of female apprentices in certain sectors is critical to meeting future skills shortages, and other similar needs could be identified by measuring demographics more comprehensively and regularly.
- 13 There is no doubt that wage gains are a measure of quality, but it is a rather simplistic measure without further contextualization. For example, an apprenticeship in social care could be providing better education and training than one in engineering, but this will never be reflected in salaries. The data needs to be contextualized by comparing the salary against the average for that occupation in a particular region.
- 14 Additionally, it is important to understand the proportion of apprentices who remain in the occupation that they were trained for after completing their apprenticeship. Although one would not necessarily expect this to be 100%, if very few apprentices remain in the occupation, then it should raise concerns about whether the apprenticeship is functioning properly.
- 15 We believe that the number of apprentices who go on to register with the relevant professional body is also a key indicator of quality and would suggest that, in addition to the other outcomes identified to be measured, the Institute should monitor these registrations.
- 16 Another important outcome measure should be progression, whether that is to a higher occupation or to further study. ‘Dead-end’ apprenticeships where there is no potential for progression following the apprenticeship damage the apprenticeship brand and public perceptions about apprenticeships, as well as causing potential harm to the careers of individuals pursuing them.
- 17 Unfortunately, although great strides have been made with the availability of matched datasets, the longitudinal education outcomes (LEO) data still do not provide any information about the final occupation of a learner. We suggest that the Institute should discuss this issue with the Department for Education, the Office for National Statistics, and HMRC to work towards resolving this.

- 18 Many of the recent reforms to apprenticeships risk placing too much focus on the outputs of rather than the inputs to apprenticeships. Consistently delivering high-quality apprenticeships across the 15 technical routes requires moving beyond minimum standards that must be met and paying attention to the training and progression of apprentices from the start of their apprenticeship through their entry to the labour market and beyond. Consequently, we think there would be value in conducting regular surveys of employers and apprentices asking their view on quality-related issues such as off-the-job training and salary and that the online approach to this proposed in the statement could be helpful.

Conclusion

- 19 Ensuring the quality of apprenticeships is essential to their future success as a key contributor to a high-quality technical education system. To achieve this aim, it is imperative to provide a clear picture of what high-quality means in practice for each aspect of apprenticeships. With a shared vision of what high-quality apprenticeships look like on the ground level, we can all work towards a future in which the measures proposed act as potential indicators rather than drivers of quality.

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