

WHTC Apprenticeship Guide

This guide has been written to help support you in your application to the apprenticeship of your choosing. It contains the following information relevant to apprenticeships to help you decide where to apply and put together the best application that you possibly can:

1. What is an apprenticeship?
2. Going to University v Doing an Apprenticeship
3. Apprenticeship Levels
4. Degree Apprenticeships
5. Key Sectors and Employers
6. Useful resources

1. What is an apprenticeship?

On an apprenticeship, you're employed to do a job while studying for a formal qualification. Usually, this means you will spend four days a week working and one day a week at a college. Apprenticeships can take anywhere from a year to four years to complete, depending on the level, with longer apprenticeships tending to result in higher level qualifications. By the end of your apprenticeship, you'll have gained the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in your chosen career.

What you'll learn depends on the role that you're training for. However, apprentices in every role follow an approved study programme, which means you'll gain a nationally recognised qualification at the end of your apprenticeship.

To start an apprenticeship, you'll need to be:

- 16 or over
- Living in England

- Not in full-time education

Apprenticeships can be undertaken in a huge number of different sectors and industries, from agriculture, law, and engineering to education, retail, and art. In exchange for working as an employee on a relatively low wage, you will be trained to learn new skills to enable you to progress in your career. The usual method of entry is through a standard application and offer process, i.e. candidates apply for a specific position and successful candidates are offered an apprenticeship. Note this is different to applying for university – there is no centralised ‘apprenticeship portal’ for you to apply through.

As part of your agreement with the company, you will be required to attend all of your training courses, as well as complete any coursework alongside your employment. Failure to do so could result in you losing your job as well as your place on the course.

Most employers will anticipate you staying at their company after you’ve completed your apprenticeship, and there will often be substantial promotion and salary opportunities as a result. 64% of apprentices stay with the same employer after completing their apprenticeship. However, the qualifications gained will enable you to apply to jobs anywhere in your chosen field with ease.

Myth 1: Apprenticeships are for people who don’t do well at school

Apprenticeships are simply an alternative route into skilled employment. They are a great way to earn while you learn, gain vital work experience and set yourself on a fast-track to a successful career. Many degree apprenticeships are just as hard to get into, and just as prestigious, as top degree courses

Myth 2: Apprenticeships are only available in manual industries

While this might once have been the case, apprenticeships are now available in over 1,500 occupations across 170 industries, ranging from nuclear to fashion, law, banking and defence.

Myth 3: Apprentices will never earn very much

Apprentices must receive at least the national minimum wage (currently £3.40 per hour for 16-18 year olds), though many employers choose to pay more. In the long-term, individuals with an advanced apprenticeship earn between £77,000 and £117,000 more over their lifetime than similar individuals with Level 2 qualifications. Those completing a higher apprenticeship could see increased earnings

of an estimated £150,000 over their lifetime. You will also start earning while your peers at university are still studying and you will have no student debt!

2. Going to University v Doing an Apprenticeship

It can often feel as if it is a choice between going to university or completing an apprenticeship. It's important to remember that you are able to apply to **both apprenticeship providers and universities** and that both routes have their advantages and disadvantages.

Going to University

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows you to target a broader range of careers than you can through an apprenticeship ✓ You're able to pick from thousands of courses, enabling you to really tailor your learning experience for the next three years ✓ You'll acquire a range of soft skills that are applicable to any job role ✓ Gives you time to figure out your future if you're still unsure of what career you want | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Student loans and tuition fees ✗ No guarantee of a job at the end ✗ Have to wait longer to enter the world of work and apply your knowledge practically |
|--|---|

Doing an Apprenticeship

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You'll be gaining valuable on-the-job experience and earning money as you study ✓ No tuition fees or student debt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Get to focus on a specialism ✓ Start your career straight after leaving school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ The training and skills you gain are specific to a particular industry or role, meaning that you'll likely have to retrain if you want to move sectors ✗ Not available for certain career choices i.e. medicine ✗ You might feel suddenly thrust into the world of work as you'll be expected to behave as an employee from day one |
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3. Apprenticeship Levels

The qualification you gain, your promotion prospects and your salary all depend on what level apprenticeship you do. It's important to be aware of what level apprenticeship is suitable for you before applying to them.

The 'levels' of apprenticeships correspond to the National Qualifications Framework. You can see here, how these levels compare to A-levels and degrees: [What qualification levels mean: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/what-qualification-levels-mean)

You can progress your career and work all the way up through the higher and degree levels apprenticeships for some roles and career areas. However, if you are already qualified to take a higher level of apprenticeship, there is no point wasting time with lower levels.

If you are in Y11 currently, then you can apply to intermediate or advanced apprenticeships instead of sixth form.

If you are a Sixth Form student, you should be looking at higher and degree apprenticeships as an alternative to university.

Intermediate Apprenticeships

Also known as Level 2 apprenticeships, these are generally considered to be the same level as five GCSE passes. They take anywhere from a year to 18-months to complete. They will cover the basics of the sector that you've joined, with a specific focus on practical skills.

These are typically taken by students who choose not to pursue full-time education after completing their GCSEs. Entry requirements vary, with some employers asking for two or more GCSEs, although you may not need any formal qualifications.

At this level, your apprenticeship will be designed to train you for work to the best of your ability rather than focus on increasing your responsibility straight away, but this doesn't mean you won't have any. You'll learn key employability skills as well as get specialised training with the company you work for.

An intermediate apprenticeship is a great way to begin your career and can offer a way into careers as different as childcare worker, mechanic or pharmacy assistant, among many others

Advanced Apprenticeships

Advanced apprenticeships are also called Level 3 apprenticeships, and generally considered to be the same level as two A level passes. They will typically take around two years to complete.

As an advanced apprentice, you'll be working full-time with an employer and spending time studying towards a qualification with a training provider or at college. Your apprenticeship will be designed to slowly start giving you more responsibility the further you get through your qualification and the more comfortable you get with your organisation. You could be managing areas of your team as an advanced apprentice!

To get onto an advanced apprenticeship, it is likely that you will need some formal qualifications. You could have done an intermediate apprenticeship, got more than 5 GCSEs or some A-level passes.

Advanced apprenticeships are normally offered by large companies, although they are offered by some medium-sized businesses. Examples of the kind of jobs you can train for with an advanced apprenticeship include vehicle technician, event planner or customer service advisor.

Higher Apprenticeships

Higher apprenticeships are the level after advanced apprenticeships and could offer you a variety of qualifications. They range from the equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree (level 4) all the way to postgraduate (level 7).

If you do a higher apprenticeship, you'll have support from your manager, workplace mentor and tutor. After your initial induction period, you will be given a lot of responsibility as a higher apprentice, with continued support. You could be managing teams, projects or processes at your company within the first few months of your placement!

For 20% of the week, you will be either at work studying or at college, university or a training provider working towards your qualification. The rest of your week you'll spend doing your job, supported by your workplace mentor.

Higher apprenticeships will typically lead to careers typically associated with graduate schemes such as accountant, HR consultant or data analyst.

4. Degree Apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are similar to higher apprenticeships, but differ in that they provide a direct opportunity to gain a full bachelor's or master's degree.

Degree apprenticeships combine working with studying part-time at a university. Apprentices are employed throughout the programme, and spend part of their time at university and the rest with their employer. This can be on a day-to-day basis or in blocks of time, depending on the programme and requirements of the employer.

They can take between three to six years to complete, depending on the course level.

Degree apprenticeships are still quite new, so there are a limited number of vacancies. It's anticipated that the number of vacancies will grow over the next year or two.

Degree apprenticeships are currently offered in the following sectors:

- Business and administration
- Childcare and education
- Construction
- Creative and design
- Digital
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Health and science
- Legal, finance and accounting
- Protective services (e.g. police)

As with other apprenticeships, you won't have to pay for your training or tuition – your employer will cover the costs, including the costs of your degree. You'll have to plan ahead to cover your living costs, however, as degree apprentices aren't eligible for student loans. However, you'll receive at least the apprentice National Minimum Wage on your course.

Unlike applying to regular degrees, there's no fixed deadline for degree apprenticeship applications. Organisations will advertise their degree apprenticeship roles as and when they become available. This will typically be around January or February time but some organisations may open applications earlier. So you need to be alert to make sure you don't miss the deadlines!!

Because degree apprenticeships aren't organised through a central body like UCAS you will have to search for and apply to them directly. You can find degree apprenticeships

advertised on [The Government's official apprenticeships page](#), [UCAS](#) and job-search websites like [Rate My Apprenticeship](#)

5. Key Sectors and Employers

Finance

Many of the UK's biggest financial institutions offer banking apprenticeships. The majority of these are aimed at those who have completed their A-levels. Higher apprenticeships are the most common but some companies have recently started offering degree apprenticeships.

While the nature of each role will vary, you'll likely join a team within one of the bank's business functions, such as customer relations, specialist product sales, operations, risk or digital transformation. You could be handed your own personal or corporate banking product portfolio, and be involved with delivering solutions to clients. A high degree of flexibility is expected, and you'll need to be proactive in collaborating with colleagues.

Examples of top financial institutions who offer apprenticeships include:

- [Barclays](#)
- [HSBC](#)
- [Lloyds](#)
- [NatWest](#)
- [Santander](#)
- [Bank of England](#)
- [JP Morgan](#)
- [Morgan Stanley](#)
- [Zurich](#)
- [Lloyds of London](#)

Accountancy

Accountancy is a highly-skilled profession where formal qualifications play a vital role in career progression. This makes an apprenticeship in accountancy an appealing choice, as it can fast-track you to chartered accountant status.

Depending on the level of apprenticeship and the job role, you could be involved in a variety of financial activities, from managing bills and expenses to payroll and taxes. You will often be given the opportunity to specialise in a certain sector, such as compliance, tax or risk.

Accounting careers can be split into two key areas: management accounting and financial accounting. The difference between management accounting and financial accounting is that the former provides information to people within a company, while financial accounting provides information to those outside of it, such as shareholders. As a result, management accounting will often focus on particular products, while financial accounting will cover an entire organisation. Both of these areas have their own specialist fields which you can choose to specialise in.

As part of your training, you will have to complete an accredited qualification. There are a variety of these available, but the most popular qualifications include:

- **AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) accounting course** – made up of four qualifications across three levels (levels 2-4), they combine industry knowledge and practical work skills
- **ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) qualifications** – they comprise of two levels: Fundamentals and Professionals. The modules cover a variety of topics from corporate and business law to audit and assurance
- **ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales) chartered accountant status** – also referred to as the ACA, this qualification consists of 450 days of practical work experience and the completion of 15 exam modules
- **CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) business finance award** – oversees the widely recognised CGMA (Chartered Global Management Accountant), which requires you to have already gained the postgraduate-level CIMA Certificate in Business Accounting

The organisation that awards your apprenticeship will depend on the company you are employed by. The AAT qualification is typically the minimum level expected of an accountant, but to ultimately become a chartered accountant, you'll have to progress to the ACCA, ACA or CIMA qualifications.

Alternatively, you may choose to pursue an apprenticeship in actuarial work, particularly if you enjoy problem-solving and have strong maths skills. This role will see you use statistical formulas to assess risk. For example, you could work for a life insurance company, working out the average life expectancy of different demographics to determine if the policy premiums should be changed.

Employers who are able to offer accountancy apprenticeships include:

- [Aviva](#)
- [Deloitte](#)
- [EY](#)
- [JP Morgan](#)
- [KPMG](#)
- [Mazars](#)
- [PWC](#)

Business

Business apprenticeships focus on helping an organisation to run effectively and can encompass a range of functions. Available schemes include business administration, business development, consultancy and management, although some schemes may also touch on legal, finance and other related routes.

Companies who offer business related apprenticeships include:

- [KPMG](#)
- [Nestle](#)
- [Aon](#)
- [Accenture](#)
- [PWC](#)
- [Deloitte](#)
- [IBM](#)
- [Unilever](#)
- [EY](#)
- [Sky](#)
- [Visa](#)

This is by no means a comprehensive list. Business administrators, advisers, developers, managers and consultants are needed in almost every sector so make sure to research companies that you're interested in to see what they have available. There are a number of roles offered for business-related apprenticeships and it's important to know what kind of role you're applying for:

- **Business administration apprenticeships** train candidates for important support roles within an organisation. You might be typing up meeting documents, faxing and photocopying confidential files and compiling financial data in spreadsheets. Advanced apprenticeships will equip you for working as a personal assistant, while higher apprenticeships will lead to office manager or business development roles

- **Business development apprenticeships** teach you how to think creatively to improve the success of an organisation. Responsibilities include helping a team to implement their ideas and research into new products and marketing. Completing a higher apprenticeship in this area could lead to a career as a business development manager or project manager
- **Management apprenticeships** will equip you with a range of transferable skills and lead you to a career as a senior manager or head of department. On a day-to-day basis you may brief teams, resolve problems, source supplies, monitor work, agree budget, manage conflict and plan and implement change.

Engineering

Apprenticeships are available across virtually every area of engineering, from aerospace to transport. Engineers are essential in almost all sectors, so make sure that you don't miss out on opportunities by researching the companies you're interested in to see if they offer any relevant schemes.

What's involved in an engineering will depend on the type and level of apprenticeship taken. For example, the content of an aircraft engineering apprenticeship will be different from a broadcast engineering apprenticeship.

Generally, engineering apprentices take on an operator role, involving anything from installing telecommunications systems, assembling car engines, fitting and testing machinery, to demolishing buildings or checking commercial or RAF aircraft.

Through the course of your apprenticeship you may be required to complete a professional qualification. This will depend on the area you're working in, as well as your employer. You may also be required to become a member of a chartered body, particularly if you want to be assessed for registration as a Chartered Engineer or an Incorporated Engineer.

There are a range of companies that offer apprenticeships related to engineering across a variety of sectors. Examples of potential employers include:

- [EDF](#)
- [Amey](#)
- [BAE](#)
- [BT](#)
- [Rolls Royce](#)
- [Sky](#)
- [Toyota](#)
- [TUI Group](#)

- [Jaguar Land Rover](#)
- [BBC](#)

Healthcare and Pharmacy

Roles in the healthcare and pharmacy sector typically require a degree due to the nature of the role. However, there are a few apprenticeship opportunities also available in this sector.

Recent years have seen the introduction of degree-level nursing apprenticeships. Completing one of these apprenticeships typically takes four years and will see you obtain a Bachelor's degree and full Registered Nurse status upon completion.

However, this is currently only offered to existing healthcare support workers and assistant practitioners. If you are wanting to complete a nursing degree apprenticeship after Sixth Form, you will first need to complete a Level 3 nursing associate apprenticeship, which will take approximately a year.

With regards to pharmacy, the majority of apprenticeships offered are Level 2 or Level 3 apprenticeships which will enable you to work as a pharmacy assistant or technician. It's important to note that you will not be able to be a registered pharmacist with these qualifications, as a Master's degree in pharmacy (MPharm) is required for this.

If you are interested in this sector but don't want to work as a pharmacist, there are a few more options available to you which will enable you to develop your skills in this sector.

[GSK](#) offers a range of advanced, higher and degree apprenticeships, including their pharmaceutical technical programme, laboratory science programme and research and development manufacturing science scheme.

At [AstraZeneca](#) you can take part in the laboratory scientist pathway, which is a higher apprenticeship and takes three years to complete. Alternatively, you could choose a research and development degree apprenticeship at [Unilever](#)

Marketing and HR

Marketing

Marketing apprenticeships are available across a range of areas, such as digital marketing, social media and public relations (PR). As with other apprenticeships, most sectors will require some form of marketing, so it's a good idea to check any companies you're already interested in.

Marketing apprenticeships typically take up to two years to complete and are delivered by combining classroom learning and on-the-job experience. You'll typically be assessed in the workplace at the end of your course, having built up a portfolio of evidence of the knowledge you've gained.

What you'll do day-to-day will vary depending on the company you work for and your role. However, it might involve:

- Market research – collecting and analysing data, using tools such as Google AdWords and Analytics
- Developing communications with clients and customers through a range of channels
- Utilising social media from a business perspective
- Planning and budgeting for campaigns

It's a good idea to make sure your apprenticeship offers a Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) accredited qualification to ensure that you'll be gaining the latest and most informed teaching. This is also a qualification that will be well-recognised and will allow you to advance your career at other companies.

Marketing apprenticeships are offered at companies like [BT](#), [Nestle](#), and [Coca-Cola](#) amongst others.

HR

HR (or Human Resources) is the department responsible for dealing with the employee side of businesses, such as recruitment, payroll, employment policies and employee benefits. They are an essential department for medium- and large-sized businesses, and many smaller employers will have some form of HR department, meaning that you have plenty of employment opportunities once you've completed your apprenticeship.

Working in human resources involves engaging with a range of people, dealing with challenging situations and issues as they arise. You'll need a motivational attitude, approachability and a good understanding of workplace policies and culture. Completing a HR apprenticeship is an ideal way to develop these skills.

Initially, it's likely that you will have to complete a Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship. This will last between 18 and 24 months and will see you use HR systems to keep records, help the business make HR changes and work in a range of areas including recruitment and retirement.

After this you will be able to complete a Level 5 HR Consultant/Partner Apprenticeship. This is the equivalent of a foundation degree and will allow you to improve your decision-making and influencing skills ahead of taking on leadership duties.

A third HR apprenticeship, for the role of HR Professional, is currently in development. This will be a degree apprenticeship delivered at level 7, equivalent to a Masters degree.

Apprenticeships in HR are available at a range of companies, as all large employers will have an HR department in some form. However, it's worth checking out companies like [GSK](#), [BPP](#) and [Nomura](#) to get an idea of what to expect on your apprenticeship.

Legal

Law apprenticeships offer the opportunity to enter the legal profession through four broad levels: legal administration/support, paralegal, chartered legal executive or solicitor.

A legal administrator supports lawyers and paralegals at a firm by performing administrative duties such as greeting visitors, conducting legal research, managing schedules and drafting legal documents. In order to become a legal administrator, you will be required to complete a Level 2 or Level 3 apprenticeship, designed to teach you about secretarial work in a legal environment, with a focus on either legal information processing or legal studies. This will take between 15 to 18 months to complete.

Paralegals play an important part in legal teams, often mirroring the work of a trainee or recently qualified solicitor. They will be responsible for writing reports, conducting legal research, taking witness statements and attending meetings with experts or claimants. By completing a Level 3 Paralegal Apprenticeship, you'll get an introduction to law and practice, legal research and client care skills. This takes two years to complete and will enable you to progress onto higher level apprenticeships.

Chartered legal executives are qualified lawyers who specialise in a particular area of law, for example, family law or personal injury law. As a chartered legal executive, you'll provide legal support and advice to clients on your specialised area of law. You'll take instructions from clients and advise on necessary courses of legal action. You will only be qualified as a chartered legal executive once you have completed a Level 6 Chartered Legal Executive Apprenticeship. This takes five years to complete and is only available for individuals who have already completed the Level 3 Paralegal pathway, or other relevant Level 3 qualifications.

Solicitors provide legal support, advice and services to clients, who can be individuals, private companies, public sector organisations or other groups. Working in private practice, in-house for commercial organisations, in local or central government, or in the court service, they may specialise in certain areas of law such as property, family or finance. Solicitors do not represent individuals in court – if a trial is held, then the solicitors help prepare the case for the barristers.

In order to become a solicitor, you will need to complete a Level 7 Solicitor Apprenticeship. This typically takes six years to complete, as it covers all the content of a law degree and Legal Practice Course (LPC). Once you've completed the apprenticeship and passed the Solicitors Regulation Authority's (SRA) centralised assessment you'll qualify as a solicitor.

This Level 7 apprenticeship is offered by a range of leading law firms such as:

- [Addleshaw Goddard](#)
 - [BCLP](#)
 - [Borges Salmon](#)
 - [CMS](#)
 - [Dentons](#)
 - [Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer](#)
 - [Kennedys](#)
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6. Useful Websites

[Rate My Apprenticeship](#) – the UK's leading job resource for young people seeking apprenticeships. This is where the majority of companies will advertise their apprenticeship opportunities

[Not Going To Uni](#) – an amazing resource for anyone leaving full-time education who isn't sure what path they want to go down. Provides links with employers, blog posts from current apprenticeships and job opportunities.

[Government Website For Apprenticeships](#) – the official government website for apprenticeships. Offers advice on choosing an apprenticeship and lists current opportunities

[UCAS](#) – not just for applying to university! The UCAS website can also offer you advice on choosing apprenticeships, finding potential employers and have regular talks about how to apply to apprenticeships

[Prospects](#) – one of the most useful websites out there for anyone seeking further information about their future options and the world of work. Allows you to search based on areas of interest, suggests potential employers and offers advice on writing CVs and cover letters

[Unifrog](#) – an online platform that we have subscribed to as a school that enables you to search and save a range of roles and opportunities. You build your own profile, list your skills and accomplishments and can set up shortlists of university courses and apprenticeship opportunities. It's also incredibly useful if you're looking for work experience opportunities

[Uptree](#) – a free professional networking platform designed to help you get started in the world of work. Get work experience, find apprenticeships and other opportunities, and help take the first steps towards your dream career

[Multiverse](#) – a recruiter specifically for apprenticeships. Helps match employers with apprentices based on your interests, skills and career aspirations. Useful for finding apprenticeship opportunities year round!