



MODERN

 APPRENTICESHIPS

MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS IN SCOTLAND:
OVERVIEW OF POLICY AND PRACTICE



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MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS IN SCOTLAND: OVERVIEW OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

Purpose

This document confirms the role of Modern Apprenticeships in the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning agenda. It provides an overview of the policies and practices underpinning effective management and delivery of Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of a large number of stakeholders, and sets out the minimum content of training and funding mechanisms that are in place to ensure effective delivery.

The document is designed to inform both practitioners, and those with a policy interest in vocational training about Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland.

Background

In common with the rest of the United Kingdom, Scotland has a relatively modest record of raising workforce skill levels, compared to our major international competitors, although levels have been rising in recent years. Modern Apprenticeships were introduced in Scotland (and elsewhere in the UK) in the mid 1990s to raise the number of young adults - the mainstay of the future workforce - with skills at intermediate level - the equivalent of at least upper secondary education. Since then, Modern Apprenticeships have undergone a number of changes both in terms of policy and delivery. They have evolved to provide quality training opportunities for people of all ages, helping to ensure that both new recruits and existing employees have the right skills required to tackle real jobs, and that employers have committed, highly trained employees. The Department for Education and Skills and the devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland have also implemented changes to Modern Apprenticeships.

INTRODUCTION

Apprenticeship is a simple concept: it builds knowledge, skills and expertise, and tests competence. This is done through incorporating 4 particular features that, together, distinguish them from most other forms of education and training:

- **First, they involve on-the-job training provided by the employer as well as off-the-job training at an FE college or training centre. This gives employees experience and practical application of the day-to-day pressures and conventions of working life.**
- **Second, they allow an employee to earn while learning. This is a hugely attractive feature to people who do not want to study full-time and would otherwise not learn.**
- **Third, they closely involve employers, giving them an opportunity to fashion the training of their apprentices to their own needs, and give apprentices the chance to engage in a continuing relationship with an employer.**
- **Fourth, they reflect competence at the end of the Apprenticeship in the form of a certificated work-based qualification.**

Modern Apprenticeships are recognised as an important tool for developing skills at intermediate level - the level that is key to raising competitiveness in all sectors of the Scottish economy.

Apprenticeships involve a wide range of parties: young people and adults and those who advise them; employers and the agencies that support them; public and private training providers which provide relevant off-the-job training; and national organisations concerned with setting standards and recognition. The Scottish Executive plays an important role holding devolved responsibility for policy on government-funded training provision.

Given this broad range of interests and interlocking roles, and the recent changes to the programme, this document sets out to confirm the parameters and essential content of Modern Apprenticeships, and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Scottish Executive

Ultimate responsibility for policy and financial support of Modern Apprenticeships rests with the Scottish Executive's Enterprise & Lifelong Learning Department.

The Enterprise Networks

Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise are responsible for delivering and providing funding contributions for training through the network of local enterprise companies. They are accountable to the Executive for their performance, agreed annually against national and local priorities that are underpinned by policies set out for the enterprise network in A Smart, Successful Scotland (www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/enterprise/smart-successful-scotland.pdf).

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)/former National Training Organisation (NTOs)

SSCs (recognised on a UK-wide basis by the Sector Skills Development Agency), former NTOs or other non-SSC sector organisations are responsible for promoting Modern Apprenticeships and encouraging recruitment of apprentices amongst employers in their sector. It is for them to develop and review, in consultation with employers in their sector and the relevant awarding body, the structure and content of MA Frameworks. They have some discretion to set the appropriate level of Core Skills expected to be achieved within the MA. All Apprentices must be registered with the relevant SSC, former NTO or other non-SSC sector organisation. Final certification issues from these bodies on completion of the Apprenticeship.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) or their equivalents form the central component of MA Frameworks, although other qualifications that can be quality assured in Scotland may be included (Along with other SVQ awarding bodies). The SQA is responsible for developing, reviewing and certificating SVQs, based on the national occupational standards and assessment strategies which underpin the qualifications. This process should involve the SQA liaising closely with SSCs, former NTOs and other relevant employer representative organisations contracted as standards setting bodies. Accreditation of the SVQs falls to the SQA's independent Accreditation Unit.

Employers

Employers help shape relevant training to ensure it meets the demands of the job. They, or their appointed training provider, must enter into a training agreement with the Apprentice. They must ensure that the on-the-job training elements are provided as set out in the agreement, and must support the Apprentice throughout the apprenticeship period.

Training Providers

The largest single group of organisations involved in the provision of Apprenticeships is private training providers, who provide a range of expert services to employers who employ Apprentices. Training providers include Further Education Colleges: colleges are keen to expand their current provision of MA training.

Training providers are required to enter contracts with the Enterprise Networks to agree provision of appropriate training and funding throughout the course of the Apprenticeship. They must adhere to contractual agreements in order to ensure funding obligations are met. They must agree an Individual Training Plan for an Apprentice with both the employee and employer.

Careers Scotland

There is an important role for Careers Scotland to play in Modern Apprenticeships, including helping to redress the relatively low level of awareness about Apprenticeship opportunities. Careers Scotland provide all age guidance to help individuals make a balanced choice about their career options. Within schools, a particularly important role for School Guidance Teachers is to ensure that school pupils have the information to help them make an informed choice about their future. It is important that Modern Apprenticeships are equally valued with other further learning and career options, and that they are regarded as an excellent grounding for a career in their chosen occupation.

Modern Apprenticeship Implementation Group (MAIG)

The Modern Apprenticeship Implementation Group is a group of key Modern Apprenticeship stakeholders who endeavour to ensure a cohesive and clear approach to the development of the Modern Apprenticeship initiative in Scotland. The Group comprises representatives from the Scottish and Highland and Islands Enterprise Network, Scottish Executive, Sector Skills Alliance Scotland (SSAScot), the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation Unit and Careers Scotland.

The group is generally charged with creating an environment in which the value of Modern Apprenticeships to the labour market is recognised and availability and take up of Modern Apprenticeships is maximised. More specifically the Group is responsible for:

- the endorsement/re-endorsement of MA Frameworks for use in Scotland;
- advising Scottish Executive and the Enterprise Networks on the development and delivery of MA Frameworks; and
- overseeing the generic marketing thrust of Modern Apprenticeships.

Funding and delivery mechanisms

The Enterprise Networks contract with an employer or training provider to ensure that the apprentice receives appropriate training throughout the Apprenticeship period. The contract also sets out the arrangements and agreed level of the funding contribution to be paid by the Enterprise Networks to the employer or training provider. Typically, funding is drawn down from LECs by the employer or training provider at set stages of training, including an initial payment at the outset, further payments on achievement of specific milestones, and a final payment on completion of the apprenticeship.

Continuous development

Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise play a pivotal role in securing the continued success of Modern Apprenticeships. This extends beyond effective administration and delivery of training provision. It is concerned with ensuring continued high quality training provision that keeps abreast of changes in technology and industry requirements, as well as with UK and international standards. It also includes promotion and marketing, especially amongst employers and young people.

Content of the Modern Apprenticeship

A Modern Apprenticeship aims to provide employees with the knowledge, understanding and competence required to work at a relatively high skill level in their chosen occupation. The means of achieving this will be set out in the MA Framework that is developed and owned by the relevant SSC, former NTO or other relevant employer representative organisation. These organisations, in consultation with employers in their sectors, are responsible for designing the content of the training. Training will involve a balanced programme of activity, including on-the-job and off-the job training, and study for a relevant Scottish Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or above (SCQF6 or above). The SVQ is accredited by the SQA Accreditation Unit and SVQ providers are approved by the relevant Awarding Body.

Core Skills: Modern Apprenticeships are developmental. It is therefore essential that apprentices achieve all Core Skills - Numeracy, Communication, Information Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others. These Core Skills must be achieved at a minimum of Intermediate 1 (SCQF 4). Where an SSC, former NTO or other relevant employer representative organisation deem that a lower level is appropriate (Access 3), it is required to justify its case to the Modern Apprenticeship Implementation Group (MAIG).

Separate assessment and certification of each Core Skill is required unless the SSC, former NTO or other employer representative organisation can provide evidence to MAIG that the Core Skill is embedded within the mandatory units of the S/NVQ(s) at level 3 in the framework. Evidence would normally be in the form of a mapping of the Core Skill units (at performance criteria level) against the S/NVQ units (also at performance criteria level).

Other qualifications: The MA Framework also identifies other sector-specific qualifications that are considered necessary to ensure that training meets the standards required by the sector.

Languages: Surveys of business needs for language suggest that UK exports would be improved if our national capability in modern languages were greater. Of the top 12 countries to which Scotland sends manufactured exports, only one is primarily English-speaking. In addition, as the service sector expands, there is a greater need for international communication skills both in Scotland and abroad. Where business needs include the use of a foreign language, the SSC or former NTOs have an option to encourage learning in this area as part of the MA Framework.

Recognition of prior learning

It is important, in all cases, to ensure that duplication of effort is minimised and that an Apprentice's prior achievement of relevant qualifications are recognised. To this end, training providers should, wherever possible, reflect prior achievement in the Individual Training Plan, e.g. where an Apprentice holds a National Qualification with the appropriate core skills profile, he/she does not require to complete the Core Skills in that subject area.

Quality of frameworks

All MA Frameworks require to undergo continuous improvement, which reflects specific sectoral needs. This requires the SSCs, former NTOs or other relevant employer representative organisation to work closely with employers, the SVQ Awarding bodies and the SQA Accreditation Unit for SVQs; and also with appropriate awarding bodies for development and recognition of other relevant industry-specific qualifications.

Review of frameworks

The SSCs, former NTOs or other relevant employer representative organisation must review their MA Framework within 9 months of a change to the central SVQ(s) in the framework and to present an updated framework to MAIG.

MA agreement

Central to every successful Apprenticeship is the relationship between each employer and apprentice. Every Modern Apprenticeship involves a signed Apprenticeship agreement between an employer and an apprentice. Before signing the agreement employers should satisfy themselves of the ability of applicants to complete the Apprenticeship successfully, and applicants should be fully aware of the commitment entailed by Apprenticeship. In some instances the apprentice's parents or guardians may also be party to the agreement.

Appointed training organisations

Where the employer does not wish, or is not accredited, to undertake direct delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship, they may appoint an appropriate training organisation accredited to manage and undertake delivery on their behalf.

Individual training plan

To ensure the understanding of the Modern Apprenticeship process by all parties involved, an Individual Training Plan is set up prior to the commencement of training. The employer or their appointed training organisation agrees with the apprentice an Individual Training Plan covering the period of the Apprenticeship. The plan provides for on-the-job training with the employer, and where appropriate, off-the-job learning arranged by the employer or their appointed training organisation.

Age restrictions

The minimum age for entry to a Modern Apprenticeship is 16 years: there is no upper age restriction. However, the enterprise network has discretion, within its budgets, to decide appropriate levels of training provision and funding contribution, taking into account market priorities. Under a UK-wide government training guarantee, funding is prioritised for 16-17 year old apprentices.

Training routes

The SSC, former NTO or other relevant employer representative organisation should provide details in the MA Framework of recognised training routes that are available to complete the Modern Apprenticeship. These routes will detail the on-the-job training with the employer, and where appropriate, the off-the-job learning arrangements. In addition, the SSC former NTO or employer representative organisation should demonstrate where the MA fits in the range of training and career pathways within their occupational sector.

Duration

One of the recognised strengths of Modern Apprenticeship is its flexible duration. Apprenticeships have no fixed timespan, and reflect individual employees' abilities, aptitude and experience, as well as the complexity of actual training involved and the sector requirements.

The SSC, former NTO or other relevant employer representative organisation have discretion to state the minimum timescales for expected completion of an Apprenticeship. This should take account of the different training routes, both off- and on-the-job, set out in the MA Framework.

Technical certificates

Technical Certificates are being developed in England to improve the recognition of the Apprentice's underpinning knowledge. In Scotland, this knowledge should be recognised in the qualifications already included in MA Frameworks. But there may be circumstances where Technical Certificates would respond to employer demand or enable easier progression for the Apprentice into higher learning. In these circumstances, Scottish equivalents to Technical Certificates can be considered where they add value to the MA Frameworks and can be quality assured in Scotland (e.g. a Scottish Progression Award).

Registration

It is important for SSCs, former NTOs or other relevant employer representative organisations to monitor activity in their sector. They must register all MAs to do this and to trigger funding mechanisms with the enterprise networks. SSCs, former NTOs or other relevant employer representative organisations are required to collate a minimum level of statistical information, including registrations, certifications, gender, age and ethnic origin profiles.

Certification

At the conclusion of training, a Certificate that recognises completion of the MA Framework is issued from the relevant SSC, former NTO or other relevant employer representative organisation.

Future developments

The Modern Apprenticeship initiative will continue to develop to meet individual and business needs. This document, which is produced by the Scottish Executive in consultation with the stakeholders mentioned in it, will be updated overtime to reflect future developments.