



Herefordshire,
Ludlow & North
Shropshire College



County Training
part of Herefordshire, Ludlow
& North Shropshire College



HLNSC
Apprenticeships



2025/26
Apprentice Handbook

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a paid job with an accompanying skills development programme which allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge and real practical experience through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal 'off-the-job' training and the opportunity to practise and embed new skills in a real work context. So, not only will you gain valuable experience you will also be learning, studying and earning money at the same time.

Apprenticeships have been designed by employers to meet employers' needs for a particular sector or job role, and each apprenticeship defines the skills, knowledge, behaviours and formal qualifications that the apprentice needs to acquire in order to become competent in their chosen field, and to be awarded the status of fully qualified apprentice.

Apprenticeships are nationally recognised as a fantastic pathway into the career of your choice and Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College (HLNSC), including County Training, now offer apprenticeships in almost all industries. More information about Apprenticeships can be found on our website: For Apprentices - hlnc.ac.uk/apprenticeships

This handbook has lots of useful information that will help you to get the most out of your apprenticeship. If you need help with any aspect of your course or other things that are happening in your life, your college assessor is your first point of contact. They will be able to help you with most things and if they don't know the answer they will know someone who does. Don't worry, just ask.

What Apprenticeships are available?

The full range of available apprenticeships can be found on the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's website, instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards.

The range of apprenticeships we offer at the college can be found in our Apprenticeships Prospectus and on our website hlnc.ac.uk.

Information on **Apprenticeship Standards** can be found later on in this handbook.

What levels of Apprenticeship are available?

There are three levels of apprenticeship available for those aged 16 and over, dependent on the level and responsibility of the job role.

Level 2 Apprenticeships (equivalent to five good GCSE passes)

Level 2 apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 2 (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Apprenticeship Standard (see page 4). Achievement of a Level 2 apprenticeship may allow progression to Level 3. To start a Level 2 apprenticeship, you should ideally have 5 GCSEs (grade E/grade 2 or above).

Level 3 Apprenticeships (equivalent to two A Level passes)

Level 3 apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 3 (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Apprenticeship Standard. Achievement of a Level 3 apprenticeship may allow progression onto a higher or degree apprenticeship.

To start a Level 3 apprenticeship, you should ideally have five good GCSEs (grade C/grade 4 or above) or have completed a Level 2 apprenticeship.

Higher & Degree Apprenticeships

Higher & degree apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 4 or above (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Apprenticeship Standard. Higher apprenticeships at Level 4 and 5 can allow progression on to university degrees, and degree apprenticeships are also now becoming widely available in most sectors. To start a higher or degree apprenticeship, you should ideally have a relevant Level 3 vocational qualification or three good A Levels or have completed a relevant Level 3 apprenticeship.

How long is an Apprenticeship?

The minimum length of an apprenticeship is 8 months, but some apprenticeships will be designed to last two, three or four years. This will depend on the Apprenticeship Standard being followed, the level of apprenticeship, the specific occupational area/sector and your prior skill levels and achievements.

Once you start your apprenticeship you will be taken through an induction programme which will guide you through your training and the contents of your apprenticeship, including the studying of any formal qualifications. We will help and advise you throughout your apprenticeship and our team will help to make the process as painless as possible. Please do not hesitate to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

What can I do after I complete my Apprenticeship?

There are a number of routes that you can take after an apprenticeship. You can use the skills that you have developed to carry on and progress in your employment. You can also continue with the apprenticeship scheme to progress to the next level of apprenticeship, such as a Level 3 apprenticeship or a higher or degree apprenticeship.

What is in an Apprenticeship Standard?

Apprenticeship Standards have been developed by employer groups representing every sector of the economy and these Standards specify the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for an apprentice to become competent in a wide range of specific occupations, at all levels. The current list of Apprenticeship Standards available for each sector or job role can be found on the following website: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards>.

Each Apprenticeship Standard defines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for that particular job role or occupation, and each Standard is accompanied by an Assessment Plan, which details how you will be assessed against the Standard.

However, all Standards will contain the following:

1. Skills & Competencies

The Standard will define the range of skills and competencies that you need to practise and acquire in order to do the job to a specified standard. These skills are largely acquired and practised in the workplace and the College will allocate an assessor, who has the relevant industry experience and background, to carry out formal or informal assessment of your skills and provide you with feedback.

2. Knowledge & Understanding

The Standard will define the knowledge and understanding that you will need to acquire and apply in order to carry out your role effectively and become occupationally competent.

3. Behaviours

The Standard will define the behaviours that you will need to demonstrate in order to become occupationally competent. This may include behaviours such as good attendance and punctuality, good communication, problem solving or customer service skills etc.

4. Maths and English

Virtually all Standards require you to achieve qualifications in English and maths prior to the end of your apprenticeship.

Apprentices who are 19 years or under at the start of their apprenticeship, and who do not have prior qualifications in English and maths at Level 2 (e.g. GCSEs at grade C/ grade 4 or above), will be required to study these subjects as part of their apprenticeship. Apprentices who are 19 years or older at the start of their apprenticeship can be opted out of the English and maths requirement if their employer agrees to do so.

English and maths Functional Skills are practical, applied literacy and numeracy qualifications, relevant to both young people and adult learners. They will help you to develop and apply important skills such as communication, analytical and presentational skills.

Functional Skills are assessed by examination and normally require you to attend college for one teaching session each week, per subject, until such time as you have passed. Regular test windows are available throughout the academic year.

5. End Point Assessment

Each Standard has a detailed assessment plan that sets out how you are going to be assessed against each of the above elements of your apprenticeship.

Some Standards may require the achievement of formal and recognised qualifications as part of the Standard. Other Standards may require you to pass formal skills and knowledge assessments at certain points in your apprenticeship before you can move on to the next stage, and these are known as Gateway Assessments.

The range and type of assessment methods vary significantly between Standards, but all Standards will contain an end point assessment. This is an assessment that takes place at the end of the apprenticeship and is designed to assess the apprentice against all elements of the apprenticeship; skills, knowledge and behaviours. The end point assessment is carried out by an independent end point assessment organisation, and it will typically be spread out over a number of days.

You need to pass the end point assessment in order to become a fully qualified apprentice.

The assessment methods employed to assess you throughout and / or at the end of your apprenticeship could be one or more of the following:

Portfolio/Log-Book	Written or online knowledge tests
Observations	Practical Test/Assessments
Presentations	Projects
Assignments	Interview/viva/professional discussion



What is expected of me?

Being clear in your understanding of your commitment and obligations under the rules of the apprenticeship programme is especially important. This may be your first experience of the workplace and/or learning or you may be consolidating years of experience through a recognised apprenticeship. As a responsible apprentice you will need to be able to demonstrate that you are committed to your apprenticeship programme and that you are prepared to play an active part in your development.

You will be expected to act and behave in a professional manner at all times, both at work and at college, which includes a commitment to full attendance, punctuality and responsible and respectful behaviour.

Reporting illnesses and absences

If it is a college day, you must ring or get a message to the college before 8.30am on your first day of sickness. You must also inform your employer. If it is a work day then you just need to inform your employer. You must try to give some details of how long your illness will last. Failure to phone in may result in a loss of money for that day.

If you are absent for five or more days you must provide a self-certification note to your employer and college assessor. However, if you are off for a period of more than seven days (including weekends) you must provide a medical certificate. Any apprentice who has incurred a period of four week's sickness may be suspended from the programme for up to six months but may re-apply to be reinstated on the programme after having been deemed fit for work. Any apprentice who has incurred a period of four weeks of consecutive working days of unauthorised absence is terminated from the programme.

Punctuality

If you are consistently late without good reason your employer may deduct money from your wages. This may also lead to disciplinary procedures being taken against you. Persistent lateness on college days may result in your employer being informed and you being subject to the college's disciplinary policy.

Keeping appointments

Your college assessor will need to carry out progress reviews with you and your employer at least every 3 months and to also carry out a number of assessments and observations in the workplace during the length of your apprenticeship programme. These workplace visits will be arranged and agreed in advance. If you have to change a scheduled appointment, then you need to give your assessor as much notice as possible. If you do not attend or are not present for scheduled appointments then the college may charge your employer for missed appointments. Continually missed appointments may result in disciplinary action being taken or you being withdrawn from the apprenticeship programme.

Depending on your apprenticeship programme and your prior qualifications, you may also be required to attend college on additional days to complete your Functional Skills qualifications as part of your apprenticeship. Failure to attend these days may also result in the college charging your employer for costs incurred, and persistent failure to attend may result in disciplinary action being taken or you being withdrawn from the apprenticeship programme.



What can I expect from the college?

Our aim is to ensure you have all the information and support necessary for you to successfully complete your apprenticeship with us. The key person will be the college assessor, who will guide you through the programme from start to finish. The college assessor will carry out assessments or observations in the workplace and set you targets through formal progress reviews. They will act as the link between your employer and the college and will be your first point of contact if you have any questions, issues or concerns. In some cases the responsibilities of workplace assessment and carrying out progress reviews will be split between two people.

Other key people may include college teaching staff who will deliver any college based qualifications and a workplace mentor allocated to you by your employer.

At each stage of your apprenticeship you can expect the following from us:

Prior to the start of the apprenticeship

- Advice and guidance on the right apprenticeship for you, and support in helping you to secure an apprenticeship with a suitable employer
- An initial assessment in maths and English to ensure you are on the right level of apprenticeship and to identify any numeracy or literacy needs
- The identification of any additional support requirements for those apprentices with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- An initial Health & Safety Risk Assessment carried out on your employer before you start your apprenticeship to ensure that you are being placed within a healthy and safe environment

At the start of the apprenticeship

- Issue of a contract of employment from your employer and the production of a Training Plan by the college. The Training Plan is signed by all parties, and sets out clearly what you need to achieve in order to complete your apprenticeship. It will include a training and assessment plan which identifies the time spent at work in 'on-the-job' training and time spent away from work in off-the-job training
- An induction into the apprenticeship programme, including a workplace induction carried out by your employer and, where applicable, a college induction into any college-based courses.

During the apprenticeship

- You can expect to experience a high quality apprenticeship training programme, taking into account your needs and those of your employer and delivered by a professional and highly competent delivery and assessment team at the college, with relevant vocational expertise
- Regular progress reviews (at least every 3 calendar months) to review your progress at work and at college and to set targets for the next period. The progress review will also monitor and respond to any concerns and issues you may have in respect of health and safety, equality and diversity, and safeguarding. See the relevant sections in this handbook for more information
- Regular assessment of your knowledge and skills, based on industry standards. Assessment can take one or more of the following forms:

Observation: Direct observation of you performing a task to required standards in the workplace or in college.

Portfolio: A portfolio contains evidence of tasks completed, consisting of job write-up, photos, witness statements etc. These will be assessed against the relevant standards by the college appointed assessor.

Questioning: Knowledge and understanding may be assessed via on-the-job or off-the-job questioning by the assessor or by written questions and answers.

Assignments and exams: You may also be required to produce assignments or to sit internally or externally set exams in order to evidence knowledge and understanding

- We will carry out a formal survey of all apprentices once a year in order to gain feedback on how we as a college are doing. Please take the time to complete this survey fully and provide us with your honest feedback and suggestions for improvement.

At the end of the apprenticeship

- At the end of the formal training period, an End Point Assessment will be carried out by an independent End Point Assessment Organisation
- We will provide you with certification of any qualifications achieved, including any End Point Assessment, and you will be issued with the apprenticeship completion certificate
- We will offer further advice and guidance on your options for further progression, e.g. progressing on to the next level of apprenticeship, if available and suitable.

What can I expect from my employer?

In taking on and supporting an apprentice there are certain obligations that an employer needs to commit to.

Employment and working hours

- You must be paid a wage that is at least the national minimum wage for apprentices, which is dependent on age, set by government and reviewed annually. The current minimum wage for apprentices can be found under gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates. Your rate of pay may exceed this, at the discretion of your employer, and will take into account your abilities, age, skills and experience, and the market rate for the job concerned. Many employers choose to pay significantly above the apprentice minimum wage in order to secure and retain the best apprentices
- All apprentices must have a contract of employment and receive a pay slip, or other evidence of payment
- There are no minimum working hours stipulated for apprentices, but you will need to meet the minimum off-the-job training hours as stipulated in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard, and therefore your apprenticeship may take longer to complete if you are on part time hours. Contractual and paid working hours must include time spent on off-the-job training, including for English and maths where applicable

- Apprentices are entitled to paid holidays from their first day of employment. The minimum statutory entitlement is currently 20 days annually plus bank holidays (based on 1.0 FTE). Where possible, holidays should not be taken during college term-time or other planned delivery dates, as this may compromise your progress and achievement. Holiday pay will be accrued in accordance with the terms of your employment contract
- Rules around apprentice pay and conditions can be found at: Become an apprentice: What you'll get on the gov.uk website
- Your employer should allow you to join a recognised trade union if you so wish. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) offers free, confidential and impartial advice on all employment rights issues.

Releasing for off-the-job training and progress reviews

Your employer will support and enable you to spend the required amount of your contracted time engaged in “off-the-job” training activities, away from the immediate pressures of the workplace”, and based on the off-the-job training hours requirement as stipulated in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.

Off-the-job training is training received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's paid hours, for the purpose of achieving their apprenticeship. It is not training delivered for the sole purpose of enabling you to perform the work for which you have been employed. It can include training or other learning activities that are delivered at your normal place of work and can include the following:

- Workplace Induction
- Workplace shadowing
- Workplace mentoring
- Workplace training
- Industry visits / conferences / seminars
- Assignment / portfolio writing
- Online learning activities
- Revision for exams and assessments

We will ask you to keep a record of your hours spent on off-the-job training, and your assessor will support you to complete this.

In many cases, you will be required to attend college in order to gain certain skills and undertake assessments, and such attendance will also count towards your off-the-job training requirements. Your employer will need to release you on the agreed days or times and the College expects apprentices to ensure their attendance at college is as high as possible.



Off-the-job training that takes place at college normally takes the form of day or block release to develop your knowledge and understanding and/or practical skills, or to study for any formal qualifications that are specified as part of the apprenticeship. Depending on individual requirements, you may also be required to attend college in order to complete the functional skills qualifications as part of your apprenticeship. Functional Skills are assessed by examination and normally require the apprentice to attend college for one teaching session each week, per subject, until such time as they have passed. Regular test windows are available throughout the academic year.

The attendance requirements for any college based off-the-job training will be made explicit within your Training Plan at the start of the apprenticeship.

Your employer will also release you to attend the progress reviews that are carried out by the college assessor, and wherever possible the employer, work supervisor or mentor should also be present at these reviews in order to better support your progress and to identify and discuss any areas of concern or of good practice and to be involved in the setting of targets.

The college will inform the employer at the earliest opportunity of any issues relating to your attendance, punctuality or behaviour whilst at college.

Induction

Employers must provide apprentices with a full workplace induction, covering subjects such as health and safety, fire procedures, sickness, holidays and complaints.

Mentoring

Providing you with a workplace mentor is a requirement for some Apprenticeship Standards and optional for others, but if you are allocated a workplace mentor, there are many positive outcomes. The mentor can act as a role model and let you see, first hand, the level and standard of professionalism you should be aspiring to.

Providing learning opportunities and supporting skills development

To demonstrate competency in the workplace you may be required to collect evidence to demonstrate that you are competent in a range of different activities and skills. As part of the apprenticeship recruitment process, we will advise your employer on the range of tasks and activities that you will need to undertake in order to develop your skills, and check that your employer has the range and scope of work available to evidence this.

Your allocated college assessor will discuss and agree the best way of providing this evidence to achieve the national standards. This will involve identifying naturally occurring opportunities to practise and demonstrate skills in the workplace or organising activities specifically to demonstrate particular skills. The college assessor will work with your employer to help them to deliver the training required and to create the opportunities necessary for you to develop your skills and achieve your apprenticeship.

Much of the training will take place within the workplace itself. This will typically involve you developing your skills through observing others perform activities, practising such activities yourself and learning from your peers and more senior colleagues. The more learning opportunities that you can access, the greater the range of skills you are likely to acquire, which will be of benefit to your apprenticeship.

Health & Safety

All employers should take all the necessary steps to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of all persons participating in an apprenticeship is of the same standard as that required in relation to any of its employees under current relevant health and safety legislation in Great Britain.

You are entitled to the same protection under the law as any employee, but you also have a legal duty to obey safety rules at your workplace and at college.

Protective clothing and safety equipment must be used at all times where specified. If special protective equipment or safety equipment is necessary, then it must be provided free of charge to you by the employer.

You also have a duty of care to your employer and other employees in the work place. This applies also when at college.

If you have an accident you must report it to your workplace supervisor and make sure it is recorded in the accident book. Any accident, however minor, must also be reported to your college assessor immediately.



Equality & Diversity

Your employer is obliged to comply with current equality legislation and not to discriminate under the 'protected characteristics' of sex, disability, marital status, race (including national or ethnic origins), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, religion or belief, age, pregnancy/maternity and ex-offenders with a spent crime.

All employers are required to have a policy/complaints procedure for harassment.

Safeguarding & Prevent

Safeguarding you, both at work and at college, is important to us. Safeguarding means:

- The promotion of your health and development
- Ensuring your safety and care
- Ensuring you are offered the best life chances
- Protection from abuse and neglect
- Prevention of bullying and harassment
- Protection from radicalisation and terrorist ideology

The term 'safeguarding' relates to both children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding encompasses the apprentice's health and safety, welfare and well-being. The prevention against exposure to terrorism and extremist views applies to all, regardless of age or background. We will monitor and respond as appropriate to any safeguarding concern raised or brought to our attention by either the employer, the apprentice or a third party.

If you have any concerns about your safety, well-being or rights then please contact:

- Your contact at the College (i.e. college assessor or member of teaching staff)
- One of the College's Safeguarding team – details on our website hlnc.ac.uk/safeguarding

If you have concerns about someone's safety or about their involvement in extremism or terrorist activity, please contact the college as above.

- In an emergency contact West Mercia Police on 999 or the antiterrorist hotline on 0800 789 321, in confidence, to share your concerns with specially trained officers
- The College's Designated Senior Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Bev Jackson Tel: 07962 609734 Email: b.jackson@hlnc.ac.uk
- The College's Safeguarding Manager and Deputy DSL is Nicola Butler Tel: 01432 365523 or 07790 833601. Email: n.butler@hlnc.ac.uk
- If you wish to access independent or 24/7 out-of-hours support please contact our support service Health Assured on 0800 028 3766

Complaints & Issues

If you should have cause for complaint or wish to raise a concern, then you should speak with your college assessor or a member of our college Employer Engagement Team in the first instance. If you are still not satisfied then you can follow the college's complaints procedure which can be found on our website – Policies and Performance - HLNSC. Complaints can also be escalated to Apprenticeship Service Support on 08000 150 600 or <mailto:helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk>

Further Benefits

We hope that you have found this guide helpful and we wish you every success in your apprenticeship.

As a college apprentice you will be enrolled as a student at the college and as such you will have full access to the same range of resources and support services as any other student, including things like the library services and online resources. You will have a college IT account and email account.



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