

## Introducing an Apprenticeship Scheme

### Introduction

Technicians play a vital role in the support of teaching research and infrastructure within the University. Analysis has shown that recruitment is difficult for some roles and development opportunities limited. Staff turnover is high in some areas. The introduction of apprenticeships can help to mitigate these issues, whilst providing for succession and the introduction of new skills. A commitment to apprenticeships can also help to improve the equality and diversity of the University's workforce and demonstrate engagement with the local community.

These notes have been prepared as background information for Departmental Administrators. The funding and legal positions change regularly and details must be checked with school HR teams. Guidance here does not replace usual HR policy and practice.

### *Apprenticeships*

The typical three-year apprenticeship is called an 'Advanced Apprenticeship' and consists of (at least) one *technical* certificate (undertaken through day release at FE college), a *vocational* qualification (which accredits tasks undertaken in the workplace) and, where necessary, key skills (at Level 2 in literacy and numeracy). There are also core units on health and safety, and employment. Advanced Apprenticeships are at the same level as A Levels, (Level 3), so recruits will need 'good' GCSE passes or equivalent.

Some more basic apprenticeships are at Level 2 (i.e. equivalent to good GCSE level (grades A-C)) and recruits would be expected to have lower grade GCSEs (Grade D or below).

There are also Higher Level 4 apprenticeships equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education. For these courses, apprentices would normally either have completed relevant A Levels, or have come through from a Level 3 apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships do, of course, extend into many areas relevant to employment in the University, not just the technical roles. Full details of the apprenticeship standards and frameworks, the length and levels of the courses, are available from the training college websites or e-mail [tdap@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:tdap@admin.cam.ac.uk). Courses usually involve day release to the training provider and last anything from 1-4 years.

Although apprenticeships are open to those of all ages, the government's policy focus is on school leavers and this is reflected in the funding formula: employers need to pay for the training courses of older apprentices. Salary is always the responsibility of the employer. Note that existing employees can also be considered for apprenticeships as part of career development.

### *Organisation*

This document is intended as a basic guide to establishing an apprenticeship programme within your institution.

1. Business case

It goes without saying that the institution needs to have a clear rationale for establishing the post(s). Elements to consider include: difficulty in recruitment; institutional resilience (i.e. extra support is needed in some form to protect a research-critical service); succession planning; development of new services; and increasing demand for services.

2. Setting up an Apprenticeship.

- a. Use the 'standard package' at <http://www.ppd.admin.cam.ac.uk/courses-and-programmes/technician-development-and-apprenticeship-project/apprenticeships>.

This provides a generic role description with an associated salary scale approved by Grading and Reward. This is a generic role profile. A draft advertisement and further details are included. Funding arrangements will need to be agreed with the Department or School as appropriate. The role description should then be e-mailed for approval to [tdap@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:tdap@admin.cam.ac.uk), stating clearly any modifications for the particular Apprenticeship (e.g. IT duties if it's an IT apprenticeship) or duration (if not three years.) Once approved, the role can then be set up for advertising. Apprentices form a separate Job Group on RAS and can be set up in much the same way as Research Associate posts. See the RAS manual for full details, noting that the default approval route is the same as your School (or equivalent) uses for normal Assistant Staff posts. The critical point is that the salary framework cannot be automatically included on the Job Opportunities website, so must be included in the advertisement and further details. Note that all apprentices start (whether Level 2 or 3) at point 9. The maximum is point 17 for a third year and only point 13 can be used as an intermediate stage.

The pattern for approving advertisements will depend on the particular School (or equivalent).

This package has the benefit of being seen to be 'fair' across the University and is recommended. The package is aimed at a three-year Advanced Apprenticeship at NVQ level 3 (i.e. A Level equivalent). It can be cut down for a Level 2 package (good GCSE equivalent) over a shorter time period.

- b. If you wish to pursue any other route, such as under-filling an existing role with a training requirement (but not a formal apprenticeship), then you should consult your HR team.
3. Confirm the funding. Note that the basic salary costs as in 2a (above) correspond to about £50k over three years (2014 rates). Extra should be allowed for textbooks, tools, PPE etc. If the FE College provision is some distance from Cambridge, you may need to consider some form of travel support.
4. Consider the appropriate FE College provision. Advice is available but choice of provision is critical. It is important to do this early so that the college can be included in the selection process and to check that the course is running. Note that the anticipated funding changes for apprenticeships may well place more onus and power onto the employer. Make sure you are clear which approved Standard or Framework the apprenticeship is running under: the FE College will be able to tell you this. Any college contracts need to be checked carefully, especially in regard of obligations on the employer. The appropriate HR Business team must be consulted.
5. Advertisement and Selection. An advertisement during the Lent term is advised, given that by then GCSE candidates will have mock examination results and career choices will be becoming clearer. The recruitment process should follow the usual University procedure and include the FE training provider / college.
6. Offer and appointment. It is advisable to make offers conditional on appropriate GCSE passes (as per the advertisement) and on acceptance onto the college course. The employment contract should be discussed with the School/ NSI HR team. The offer letter cannot be automatically generated through RAS. Use Form HR18. You should note that there are slightly different terms and conditions for apprentices compared to usual assistant staff contracts.
7. Management and Supervision. Careful thought needs to be given as to the day-to-day supervision of the apprentice, line management and top-level management. Experience suggests these are rarely found in the same person. It is vital that a senior manager monitors overall progress (against the college reports and comments from the line manager or

supervisor) on a regular (e.g. termly) basis. This manager needs to have sufficient influence to change things at the college or in the institution if necessary. Line management is needed to ensure co-ordination across placements within the institution.

The precise protocols for review meetings will need to be determined according to local context, but the 'standard package' does require a review to determine whether a salary increase should be confirmed (there is no automatic annual increment).

Institutions may wish to consider the best form of mentoring apprentices and by whom. A former apprentice who is still with the institution might be suitable.

The key point is that the standard local practice for the management of assistant staff may need modification for an apprentice.

8. Risk management. Experience suggests that it is wise to consider the risk of the apprentice deciding the role is not for them (motivation and performance); issues with settling to a pattern of regular work (especially for school leavers); issues with supervision. Risk mitigation tactics will need to reflect the particular circumstances of the employing institution. It may be possible for some redeployment to be considered, but HR must be consulted before any precipitate action (e.g. dismissal) is considered.
9. The end of the apprenticeship. Some apprentices will be made aware relatively early on that there is a further, possibly permanent, post for them. There is nothing to stop appointment to a permanent post during the course of the apprenticeship, for example an underlying substantive post. (Fair recruitment must be considered: consult your HR team). If redundancy is likely at the end of the fixed-term post, the appropriate HR procedure (for ending fixed-term contracts and redeployment) should be followed and the apprentice recommended to other departments and institutions as appropriate, paying careful attention to the details in the contract.

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### Other sources of information

Cambridge Regional College. <http://www.camre.ac.uk/> Course search on front page; see the Introduction (above) above for explanation of levels)

General information on Apprenticeships. <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>