

APPRENTICESHIPS

An overview of the
Department for the
Economy's Apprenticeship
Programmes



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Geilleagair

Apprenticeships

SECTION 1

APPRENTICESHIP OVERVIEW

The Department for the Economy's Apprenticeship programmes include training across a wide range of vocational areas for people aged 16 and over.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a job that combines work and professional study.

As an apprentice you will be a new employee undertaking a role that requires a substantial amount of learning and skills development. You should be working within a NI based or UK national company with operations in Northern Ireland. Apprenticeships provide the opportunity of working with experienced staff to learn and develop your skills whilst gaining industry relevant qualifications.

As an apprentice, you receive 'off the job' training, usually on a day release basis with a training provider, further education college or university. This time of directed learning enables participants to work towards achieving vocational qualifications, Employee Rights and Responsibilities (ERR) and essential skills such as Communications, Application of Number and Digital ICT.

Your training provider will meet with you and your employer to discuss your training needs and develop a training programme for you, this is called a Personal Training Plan and is tailored to each individual.

Both your provider and employer will be with you every step of the way throughout your apprenticeship to support you and ensure you are making progress.

You will typically spend four days per week with your employer and one day per week learning with your training provider. Your employer must pay you your hourly rate for the time you spend undertaking directed training. Directed training is paid as part of your contracted hours. For Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) qualifications your training pattern will be dictated by your employer.

You must be employed for a minimum of 21 hours per week to be eligible for an apprenticeship programme.

SECTION 2

BECOMING AN APPRENTICE

ApprenticeshipsNI

Level 2 (comparable to GCSE level) and Level 3 (comparable to A-Level).

Currently there are over 100 ApprenticeshipNI frameworks.

Popular apprenticeship areas include:



Dental Nursing



Pharmacy Care



Food and Drink



Construction



Engineering



Vehicle maintenance and repair

TO MAKE IT HAPPEN



<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>

To see the full list of frameworks available use the QR code above.

Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs)

Level 4 to 7 (Foundation degree to Bachelor or Masters degree).

Almost 100 HLA qualifications to choose from.

To note: Apprenticeships, including Higher Level Apprenticeships, take a minimum of two years to complete. Depending on the framework, or qualification, some take much longer. This will depend on the apprenticeship or higher level apprenticeship undertaken.

Eligibility Check:

To take part in an apprenticeship programme you need to:

- Have reached the minimum school leaving age in Northern Ireland (16 years)
- Be about to take up paid employment in Northern Ireland or have been employed by your current employer for less than six months
- Be working a minimum of 21 hours per week on a permanent contract
- Meet all the entry requirements of your chosen apprenticeship
- Under Common Area Travel arrangements, residents of the Republic of Ireland may be eligible

You may need to meet other eligibility considerations, if you are a non-EU national, a public sector worker and if you have already achieved a qualification on the framework you wish to participate on.

How much you get paid

There is a legal minimum wage (including apprentice rate) that is set by HM Treasury. For the most up to date information please see:



**National Minimum
Wage and National
Living Wage rates -
GOV.UK**

<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>





Benefits for Apprentices:

Earn While You Learn

- Get paid as you gain valuable skills and qualifications — no tuition fees, no student debt.

Real-World Experience

- Learn on the job, work with professionals, and build practical skills that employers want.

Support & Confidence

- Receive guidance from mentors, grow your independence, and build confidence in a professional setting.

Inclusive & Impactful

- Apprenticeships are open to everyone and let you make a real contribution from day one.

SECTION 3

INFORMATION FOR THE EMPLOYER

Are you ready to Invest in your talent? If your answer is 'Yes', then consider employing an apprentice today.

Take on an apprentice to discover fresh talent and thinking to meet your business needs and grow together.

Funding for Apprenticeships

The Department funds the off the job training element of apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships.

Employer Incentive

On achievement of the full apprenticeship framework, and issue of an ApprenticeshipsNI Full Framework Certificate, an Employer Incentive will be paid to the employer. The level of funding is determined by the apprenticeship framework funding band depending on the complexity and level of the apprenticeship undertaken.

HLAs do not include Employer Incentive Payments.



What do I pay the apprentice?

Your apprentice will earn a wage agreed upon recruitment. It is important to remember that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) Regulations apply and that there are specific rates for apprentices and for different age groups.

The NMW is the minimum amount that workers in the UK are entitled to be paid. NMW rates are reviewed each year.

The Apprentice Rate does not apply to HLAs.

Benefits for Employers

- **Grow Your Talent:** Train your own skilled staff with expert support.
- **Boost Skills:** Access almost 200 pathways for a future-ready workforce.
- **Save Costs:** Benefit from £48m+ public investment in training.
- **Improve Performance:** Gain productive employees with relevant skills.
- **Support SMEs:** Get tailored help to hire your first apprentice.
- **Drive Innovation:** Co-design cutting-edge skills with sectoral partners.



Next Steps

Scan to find out more at the NI Direct Apprenticeships Homepage

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>



www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships



www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/apprenticeships-explained



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