



University
of Exeter

Degree Apprenticeships Guide for Teachers and Advisers



Apprenticeships: general information

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a real job with training. It allows trainees to earn while they learn, alongside gaining nationally recognised qualifications.

Apprenticeships can last between one and six years. They are available at different levels, as follows:

	Level	Equivalent to
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelors or masters degree

Apprenticeships involve a partnership between an employer and a training provider (such as a college, university or other training organisation). However, applying for an apprenticeship is usually like applying for a job, rather than a college or university course. The recruitment process is managed by the employer, although the training provider may have some involvement.

What types of apprenticeship are available?

Most job sectors offer apprenticeship opportunities in the UK – each with a range of specific roles.

These include:

- Business (e.g. accounting, marketing, human resources, recruitment and sales)
- Construction (e.g. building, plumbing and quantity surveying)
- Digital and IT (e.g. information security and software development)
- Law (e.g. paralegal, legal executive or solicitor)
- Healthcare (e.g. dental nursing, youth work and various NHS roles)
- Engineering (e.g. civil engineering, mechanical engineering and electrical engineering)
- Media (e.g. journalism, live events and costume design)
- Finance (e.g. investment operations and financial services) much do apprentices

How much do apprentices earn?

There are legal minimum wages for apprenticeships. These depend on age and length of time on a programme. As of April 2025, these are as follows:

Aged 16-18	£7.55 per hour (Apprentice rate)
Aged 19 or over and in your first year	£7.55 per hour (Apprentice rate)
Aged 19-20 and have completed first year	£10.00 per hour (National Minimum Wage)
Aged 21-22 and have completed first year	£12.21 per hour (National Minimum Wage)
Aged 23+ and have completed first year	£12.21 per hour (National Minimum Wage)

How are apprenticeships structured?

Apprentices spend most of their time working. However, they must undertake 'off-the-job' training for a minimum of six hours per week. A range of activities count as off-the-job training. This includes pre-reading, attending academic sessions and working on assignments/projects. The specific structure and activities involved will depend on the apprenticeship.

Are apprenticeships regulated?

The government Department for Education (DfE) has overall responsibility for the quality of apprenticeships. Several public bodies work with them to support this aim. These include The Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and Ofsted.

How are apprenticeships different from school leaver programmes, internships and work placements?

Apprenticeships are formal, long-term jobs with an employment contract. This means they're covered by employment law. They lead to recognised qualifications and are most suited to those with a clear idea of what sector they'd like to work in.

Like apprenticeships, school leaver programmes are real, paid jobs with training. They're usually intended as an alternative to university, requiring A levels or

equivalent. Apprenticeships can, of course, be an alternative to university, but as they're available at different levels, they're undertaken by people at other stages of life, too. School leaver programmes may involve gaining qualifications (e.g. professional finance qualifications). A key difference is that apprenticeship training is funded by the government and must follow set national standards. School leaver programmes are unique to each employer – they decide how to structure the training.

Internships are less clear cut. Increasingly, interns are paid. However, an intern's legal rights depend on whether they're classed as a volunteer, a worker or an employee. Internships don't tend to lead to qualifications. They can be useful for gaining experience and helping people decide what career path interests them.

Some college or university courses involve work placements. These can be short-term (lasting a few days or weeks) or longer-term (e.g. sandwich degrees that involve a year in industry). With short-term placements, you're unlikely to be paid. With sandwich placements lasting one year, you'd have an employment contract and be paid a salary. Again, work placements are generally aimed at helping people to gain experience and decide on a career path.



How does a degree apprenticeship compare to a full-time university course?

The most obvious difference is that degree apprentices earn a salary and don't have to pay university tuition fees. They're employees from day one, but they still gain a recognised degree awarded by a university.

Degree apprentices spend most of their time in the workplace, so won't be on campus as often as a full-time student. However, they can still tap into university facilities and support services.

Doing an apprenticeship means narrowing your options down to one job role. Therefore, aspiring apprentices should be clear about their career aims. Someone who wants to keep their options open would probably be more suited to a full-time university course.

Degree apprenticeships have more of a practical focus. Although there are vocational degree courses, higher education is still more about academic learning and research.

Degree apprenticeships are available across a wide and growing range of job sectors and roles. However, as higher education is more established, it offers a bigger choice of programmes with a greater number of places available.

Degree apprenticeships at the University of Exeter

What degree apprenticeships does the University of Exeter offer?

There are seven undergraduate degree apprenticeships that are suitable for 6th form and college leavers (the others require prior employment in the field). These are:

- Civil Engineering (BEng)
- Digital and Technology Solutions (BSc)
- Financial Services Professional (BSc)
- Accounting Finance Manager (BSc)
- Operations Manager (CertHE)
- Project Management (BSc)
- Mine Management (BEng)

We're a well-established provider of degree apprenticeships and the first Russell Group provider to be inspected by Ofsted. We received a 'good' rating across the board, with the inspection report stating, 'Leaders demonstrate high aspirations for their apprenticeship programmes... an increasing number of apprentices enrol through non-traditional entry routes'.

How are University of Exeter apprenticeships structured?

The exact amount of time spent with the employer and at the University depends on the programme and employer. Most of our apprentices are contracted to work around 40 hours per week. Apprentices study via a combination of day release (one day a week – now usually online) and block release on campus for 3-5 days per term.

What employers do you work with?

We work with over 400 employers across the UK. These include:

- NHS
- UBS
- JP Morgan
- Amazon
- Laing O'Rourke
- Met Office
- Bloomberg
- Babcock
- Environment Agency

Do apprentices need to live near the University campus?

Not necessarily. Our employers operate in a variety of locations. For example, JP Morgan apprenticeship are based in London and Bournemouth. Civil engineering apprenticeships can be based at construction projects and consultancy offices all over the country.

What's the application process for University of Exeter degree apprenticeships?

As with all apprenticeships, applications must be made directly to the employer, and not via the UCAS application system.

This means applicants can apply to as many apprenticeship vacancies as they wish. Likewise, there's nothing to stop applicants applying for university courses via UCAS at the same time.

Application steps:

1. Search for relevant vacancies. Many can be found on our [degree apprenticeship webpages](#). Employers will also advertise on their own websites and other apprenticeship/job search platforms, such as the government [Find an Apprenticeship](#) service UCAS also has a dedicated section of their webpages for Degree Apprenticeships. Most degree apprenticeships recruit in the spring for a September start.
2. Apply to relevant opportunities through company websites.
3. When an applicant is shortlisted, they'll be invited to the next stage of the selection process, e.g. an interview (as with all jobs, employer recruitment processes can vary). We'll check with the employer whether applicants meet University eligibility requirements.
4. Successful applicants can then apply to the University for their place on the relevant degree apprenticeship course.
5. Once the University application has been reviewed, applicants will be notified of the outcome via an email from the University's central admissions team. They'll receive either a conditional or unconditional offer.
6. After accepting the offer and completing additional paperwork, they can register as a University of Exeter student and start their apprenticeship.

Degree apprenticeships can be competitive. Candidates shouldn't be discouraged if they're not successful. When this happens, it's a good idea to try and get feedback, so they know where they could improve. It's also recommended they get support with their applications and interview techniques, e.g. from a careers adviser.

What are the entry requirements for a University of Exeter degree apprenticeship?

Employers will set their own requirements in terms of skills and experience required. Our academic entry requirements are equivalent to those for campus-based degrees. While a degree apprenticeship is an alternative to a traditional degree, it's not an easier option. Academic requirements for individual programmes are on the [relevant webpages](#).

What type of student are we looking for?

Our degree apprenticeships are exciting and demanding, so we're looking for exceptional, engaged and motivated people who are passionate about their chosen industry. We expect strong communicators and team players with a desire to learn both in the classroom and on the job. You'll need to set yourself high standards and be able to juggle the pressure of both work and study. Expect to be challenged as you build knowledge and skills. However, you'll be well supported too.



Where can I find more information?

There's a wealth of information on our degree apprenticeship webpages. This includes pages aimed at aspiring apprentices and a section for teachers, parents and supporters. We also attend University of Exeter open days.

The University's School and College Engagement team can deliver presentations on degree apprenticeships to students. To find out more and make a booking request please visit [exeter.ac.uk/teachers](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/teachers) to go straight to our booking system or contact us at outreach@exeter.ac.uk.

UCAS has a wide range of information and support for potential apprentices: [UCAS.com/apprenticeships/degree-apprenticeships](https://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/degree-apprenticeships). There is also a guide

for parents as well as lists of potential employers and vacancies. UCAS has a particularly useful 'Explore Industries' section. Researching the sector, can be key to focusing research as well as supporting where they may consider completing work experience before they apply.

Each apprenticeship is distinctive, and each vacancy will be different. Early research as well as signing up for vacancy alerts is important. Employers advertise degree apprenticeships throughout the year and there is no application cycle like there is with university.

There are also some QR codes on the back page of this brochure, which will take you to some useful websites.



The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) **occupational maps** is a good resource to explore apprenticeships in different sectors.



Amazing Apprenticeships – A leading organisation in the education sector, founded to tackle misconceptions about apprenticeships and promote the benefits.



The **University of Exeter** Degree Apprenticeship webpages.



The Government “**Find and Apprenticeship**” webpage is a great place to search for opportunities.



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