



Apprenticeships: a parents' guide



THE **CHARTERED BODY** FOR THE
PROJECT PROFESSION



Foreword

You want the best for your children's future, yet the education system can seem far more complex now than when you were a student. To help you understand more about the opportunities available APM, the chartered body for the project profession, has produced this short guide.

Apprenticeships are a great idea whose time has come again. The word 'apprenticeship' now covers more careers than ever before. New forms of funding, new standards and a new emphasis on quality have all played a role in opening up more 'earning and learning' routes for young people.

Apprenticeships are now a valid alternative to university – an important difference being that they don't carry the debt of a traditional, on-campus degree. There has been a growth in degree apprenticeships since their launch in 2015, with growing numbers understanding the value of learning whilst in a full-time, paid job.

Apprenticeships are learning programmes designed by employers, for employers who are looking to recruit keen, want-to-learn talent. As a result, you can be sure that apprentices gain relevant knowledge and qualifications to prepare them for a successful career in their chosen sector. They also develop the transferable skills to ensure a breadth of opportunity in future.

Apprenticeships will help to reshape many professions – including our own of project management, which will this year offer great opportunities with its own degree apprenticeship. APM is proud of its commitment to supporting this route to high-skill, high-value training which will develop project professionals of the future.

There has never been a better time to take a closer look at apprenticeships.

Sara Drake

Chief Executive, APM

About APM

The Association for Project Management (APM), the chartered body for the project profession, is committed to developing and promoting project and programme management. In 2017, APM was awarded a Royal Charter as part of its strategy to raise awareness and standards in the profession. The receipt of a Royal Charter marks a significant achievement in the evolution of project management.

APM has more than 25,000 individual members, and 500 organisations participating in the Corporate Partnership Programme, making it the largest professional body of its kind in Europe.

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Post-16 education and training

The education landscape continues to evolve. Vocational and professional options, such as apprenticeships and T levels, are more visible than ever before with more opportunities than in previous generations.

The way that companies are recruiting their so-called 'early careers' talent is also changing. Employers now view apprenticeships as valuable programmes not just for those new to a business, but also for those in the company with several years' sector experience.

Thankfully, recruiting employers don't want to see every applicant with a set of GCSEs and A levels, plus a degree. More learners are mixing academic and vocational qualifications, even those applying for university. It is clear that there are many ways to begin a career - and it is also clear that the traditional route of A levels and a degree is not the best option for everyone.

It is well-known that the cost of going to university has increased significantly in a single generation – at the same time as the number of people graduating rises. For some, this is an investment in their children's future and the price won't affect the application decision; for others, it creates a reason to research alternative options and make an informed choice about next steps.

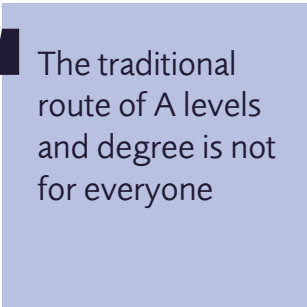
Apprenticeships have traditionally been associated with particular sectors such as engineering, plumbing and other manual trades.

The range of companies now offering apprenticeships has increased hugely and even well-established professions such as accounting and law now have apprenticeship pathways.

This APM guide explains why apprenticeships are now part of the decision-making process for more parents, carers and children considering what to do after school, college – and even university.

You will discover some key comparisons between apprenticeship and university routes, with case studies from current and former apprentices working in project management across different sectors.

The real-life examples show how pursuing an apprenticeship scheme can be a successful career choice.



The traditional route of A levels and degree is not for everyone

Case study

Gareth Beauvoisin
HR Project Co-ordinator
BAE Systems



When I was at school, university was presented as the only route available and academic students were actively discouraged from considering apprenticeships. Professional apprenticeships in areas like business, marketing or project management were not mentioned at all. After graduating from university, I found it almost impossible to get a job, as the majority of roles required experience.

Eventually, I was able to join the BAE Systems Project Management Apprenticeship Scheme. A few of my new colleagues were surprised when I told them I already had a degree and asked if I felt I'd taken a backwards step. In fact I never felt that way at all and can honestly say I learned more in the first six months of my apprenticeship than in three whole years of university.

In the years since I started my apprenticeship, I've been involved in projects that directly support the UK armed forces and help them to protect what really matters. The business has always encouraged me to undertake new challenges and, to be honest, many of them scared me at the time, but with the support of my mentors I've been able to overcome the challenges and really develop my self-confidence, something I previously struggled with.

The vast majority of my friends from university never secured a job related to their subject area. Many feel that the whole experience offered incredibly poor value for money. If you're unsure about whether to go to university or undertake an apprenticeship, I've done both and I'd definitely recommend the apprenticeship route. It allows you to earn a wage, gain real life experience and build a network of contacts. On some schemes, including the BAE Systems Project Management Apprenticeship Scheme, you can even study for a degree with no student debt.

My original university degree was almost entirely theory-based and didn't teach the skills that I would need in the workplace, so I was pleasantly surprised to find the BAE Systems Project Management Apprenticeship Scheme offered integrated degree study and work placements, with both supporting each other. I could learn something in a lecture and be implementing it the next day, or have real-world examples to discuss in seminars.

Since completing my apprenticeship, I've worked in two further roles, using what I learned on a regular basis. I even secured my current role via the contacts I made while I was an apprentice. I hope to continue to develop my career with BAE Systems and look forward to mentoring and supporting future apprentices.

Apprenticeship basics

What is it?

An apprenticeship is a work-based programme that is delivered within a full-time job. Available at a range of levels, it can set a foundation for a career or demonstrate capability at a higher level. In many professions, including project management, an apprenticeship includes a professional qualification relevant to the role.

For example, in an IT, financial services or media company, there are apprenticeships that include a professional qualification from the Association for Project Management (APM). There are also apprenticeships with qualifications from other professional bodies in areas such as accounting, law and marketing. These show that apprentices are not just those who want to work in manual trades.

How long does it last?

All apprenticeships have to last at least one year although many run for two or more years. They are available at different levels, and since 2015 there have been degree apprenticeships. These blend academic and professional study with a full-time paid job. Importantly, the employer pays for all apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships. There is no study debt or student loan required.

Degree apprenticeships can last up to five years, depending on the subject area.

Apprenticeship levels

Apprenticeship level	Qualifications at the same level	Minimum duration
Level 2	GCSE	12 Months
Level 3	A level / BTEC National	12 Months
Level 4	First year of Bachelors degree / Foundation degree	12 Months
Level 5	Second year of Bachelors degree / Foundation degree	12 Months
Level 6	Final year of Bachelors degree	12 Months
Level 7	Postgraduate degree	12 Months

An apprenticeship can set a foundation for a career or demonstrate capability at a higher level.

Case study

Ben Hawkins

Project Management Trainee Apprentice
Lloyds Banking Group



Ben Hawkins joined Lloyds Banking Group in November 2017 on the Project Management Apprenticeship. Although university was his first choice at high school, Ben changed his mind when he realised the benefits an apprenticeship could offer.

During high school, university had always been the place I saw myself going to. It felt like the natural progression after sixth form. But after realising the benefits of an apprenticeship the only pull left for going to university was the experience of it and the idea that I might be missing out.

It's true that on an apprenticeship, the company pays for your study fees.

My family were really supportive of my decision. I had spoken about it with them throughout and they agreed that an apprenticeship would be the right option for me.

A lot of my friends have also now gone on to do apprenticeships.

The application process at Lloyds Banking Group was very rigorous and ensured that I was tested at every stage – with good reason, as the business invests a lot in apprentices and it wants to make sure it gets the right people. It's worth it.

One thing that stood out for me when I got onto the Lloyds Banking Group apprenticeship was that there were quite a lot of university graduates also on the scheme. I expected the majority of people to be a similar age to me but most were older. This shows that even after completing university an apprenticeship can still be the right move.

I think that apprenticeships are a great alternative to university. They give you an opportunity to learn and gain a qualification while earning money, as well as invaluable on-the-job experience.

However, there is no right or wrong decision when it comes to choosing between an apprenticeship or going to university. It depends on the person.



Apprenticeship or university?

For many students and parents, the prospect of a full-time job as an apprentice with qualifications included is an attractive one. Here are some other areas to consider.

University is the right option for some – indeed, it's the only option for a small number of roles where there is no apprenticeship currently available. Moreover, some companies continue to use their graduate scheme as a leadership programme, whereas their apprentices will likely fulfil a middle manager role.

Yet in other cases, companies are replacing their graduate schemes with high-level apprenticeship programmes, so it is more important than ever to make an informed choice based on preferred roles, sectors and companies.

Competition and jobs

Graduate schemes are more established than apprenticeship programmes in most companies. As such, there is keen competition for places.

There are many sectors, including project management, where apprenticeships have only recently launched in comparison. These will, in the short term at least, be less competitive than graduate schemes, but we expect apprenticeships to become more competitive over time as more people realise their value – and more successful former apprentices go on to take senior roles in companies.

The apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017. A key result of the levy is that larger companies have to invest in apprentices, whether these are existing members of staff or new joiners from school, college or university.

These larger companies are driving the growth of degree apprenticeships in a wide range of areas including project management.

Personal development

'Earn while you learn' is a phrase that could have been designed for apprentices. They are full-time members of staff, receiving high-quality learning and development to enhance their career. While a professional qualification is valued by many, the programme also includes soft skills – including how to present, how to network with others and how to be resilient.

Networking

Building networks in and out of a business is an essential way to progress your career at any stage, and apprentices are given this opportunity from day one. Excitingly, there are opportunities for 'reverse mentoring' - this gives the apprentice access to a senior executive who can offer advice and guidance; in return, the executive understands more about millennial mindsets and social media channels.

Costs

The cost of graduating from university with a typical degree (three years, full-time, on campus) comes with a debt, on average, of just over £50,000* according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Conversely, apprentices have no debt from their studies and their salary will increase over the course of their programme. It is not unusual to see apprentices with three years' experience earning more than those who have just graduated from university.

It is also worth remembering that many CEOs are not graduates.

*Institute of Fiscal Studies report, Higher education funding in England: past, present and options for the future, 2017

Apprenticeship or university?

	Apprenticeship	University
Qualifications	Apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships, often contain relevant professional qualifications	Degrees can contain relevant learning but rarely include professional qualifications. Graduate schemes usually contain these qualifications
Costs	Apprenticeships are employer-funded programmes for those in full-time, paid roles. There are no costs to the apprentice	Graduates from English universities have an average debt of £50,800*
Duration	Apprenticeships last 1-5 years, depending on the level and sector	Degrees last 3-7 years, depending on the subject
Starting salary	Apprenticeship starting salaries vary by sector, location and company size; the average starting salary was £282 per week**, or just over £14,500 per annum. Some sectors offer starting salaries exceeding £20,000	Graduate starting salaries vary by sector, location and company size; figures also depend on whether a graduate is on a formal scheme; graduate starting salaries range from £15,000 to more than £40,000
Work experience	Full-time employment	Optional placements and internships
Development	Soft skills, technical knowledge. Apprentices and graduates can both lead a business – ultimately it's down to ability and drive	Soft skills, academic knowledge. Apprentices and graduates can both lead a business – ultimately it's down to ability and drive

* Institute of Fiscal Studies report, Higher education funding in England: past, present and options for the future, 2017

** BIS Research paper No 15, Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2016: England

Apprenticeships in project management

The Level 4 Associate Project Manager apprenticeship is available in England. It usually takes two years to complete and contains a professional qualification from APM.

The new Level 6 Project Manager degree apprenticeship has now been launched. Those completing it will receive an APM professional qualification, an apprenticeship certificate and a BA/BSc Project Management degree.

For learners in Scotland and Wales there is a Level 4 Higher Apprenticeship in Project Management.

The Associate Project Manager standard is one of the most popular apprenticeships available, in the top 10% of those taken around the country.

Companies and apprenticeships

Apprenticeships and graduate schemes are both examples of early careers programmes. Both help companies to grow new ideas, understand their younger and prospective customers better and have better succession planning in place.

The apprenticeship levy has seen larger companies work harder to attract school and college leavers, and some have supported the development of degree apprenticeships too.

Companies of all sizes offer apprenticeships. You can find them across the country in businesses ranging from tech startups to established corporations.

The examples in this guide, from a range of sectors, show why companies support apprenticeships.

Careers in project management

Project management is becoming a more popular first-career choice for young people. Offering a portable set of skills that can be applied in sectors and locations in the UK and around the world, project management is a temporary, group activity that requires strong technical and people skills. From huge sporting events to infrastructure projects and business change programmes, project management gives you the opportunity to drive improvement and, put simply, get things done.

Useful links

APM

apm.org.uk/apprenticeships

Features more information on apprenticeships that contain APM professional qualifications. APM's free Student membership is also available to project management apprentices. For more information on project management apprenticeships contact apprenticeships@apm.org.uk

The National Apprenticeship Service

Apprenticeships work for people of all ages and backgrounds and can transform lives. Apprentices gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed, in some cases up to degree level, while working and earning.

The National Apprenticeship Service supports the delivery of apprenticeships in England. It offers free impartial advice and support to employers looking to recruit for the first time or expand their apprenticeship programmes.

This includes simplifying the process of recruiting an apprentice through the support of employer focused teams. Through the Find an apprenticeship site on GOV.UK employers can advertise their vacancies and potential apprentices can apply.

Call **0800 015 0600** or search for apprenticeships on **GOV.UK** to find out more.

Get In Go Far

getingofar.gov.uk

Features information for employers, potential apprentices, parents and teachers. There is also a vacancy matching service.



Picture courtesy of Sellafield Ltd



Chelsea Riley, pictured on site with Connor Dixon, Joe Bold and Sam Blair who was on the first cohort of Trailblazer Associate Project Manager apprenticeships.

Case study



Chelsea Riley

Sub Project Manager, Sellafield

I wasn't sure what apprenticeships really entailed when I was at school. At the time, we were strongly encouraged to apply for universities. However, I'd like to think that apprenticeships are now promoted more within schools especially as there will soon be a degree apprenticeship in project management. As it was, university didn't appeal to me due to the cost of attending and I wanted to start earning money as soon as I could.

After getting my A levels I worked in a pharmacy for two years, during which time I received my dispensing assistant qualification. I then decided to apply for an apprenticeship at Sellafield. I found the application process beneficial, as I really pushed myself and gained a lot of confidence. When I told my friends and family that I had got a place on the programme they were really happy for me and excited for my future.

My friends who went to university are all impressed at how much I have achieved on the scheme. Some of them wish they had known more about apprenticeships before applying for university. Ultimately it is a personal choice but my apprenticeship has also put me through university. I now have a Foundation degree in Project Management and, through the Project Academy at Sellafield, I am now studying my BSc Project Management from the University of Cumbria. So by doing my apprenticeship I'm getting the best of both worlds, earning while learning. I gained confidence throughout the scheme and learned how to manage my time appropriately and also how to manage people.

I am currently working as one of the Sub Project Managers on a major construction project on the Sellafield site, which includes helping with project solutions, managing substations, actively managing early warnings and compensation events and raising project notices and presenting to senior management when necessary. Although I am still in my apprenticeship I'm trusted to deliver my own scope of work but always have a level of supervision that ensures I'm working within my level of competency.

My apprenticeship helped me get this role by showing I was capable of managing work on the project in a six-month placement. I then had the opportunity to stay for the final year of my apprenticeship, which proved that the project manager had trust in me.

Association for Project Management

Ibis House, Regent Park
Summerleys Road
Princes Risborough
Buckinghamshire HP27 9LE

Tel (UK) 0845 458 1944
Tel (Int) +44 1844 271 640
Email info@apm.org.uk
Web apm.org.uk