

Adding value to apprenticeships with skills competitions activity

Provider information note

This note sets out how new apprenticeships can work with skills competitions to benefit employers and apprentices. It explains the opportunities to use apprenticeship funding to support involvement in competitions, looks at how it can be done and how you can support employers and apprentices. WorldSkills UK are also looking at how apprenticeship end-point assessments could in future be designed to use competitions methodology.

Apprenticeships

The apprenticeship reforms have changed the way apprenticeships are delivered and funded in England. Aimed at any individual over the age of 16, apprenticeship standards will be available in over 550 occupations with 170 now ready for delivery. Apprenticeships prepare young people and adults for future employment with the opportunity to progress by developing the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Each approved standard, which contains an occupational profile and details of the skills, knowledge and behaviours required, is accompanied by an assessment plan containing information about the end-point assessment methods e.g. observation/practical assessment, showcase or professional discussion. End-point assessment is synoptic and must be undertaken by an independent organisation selected by the apprentice's employer.

The apprenticeship funding rules make provision for competition activity to be a funded element of the apprenticeship programme, either as part of the on the job delivery or the off the job training element.

Skills competitions

In the UK, WorldSkills UK, run competitions at regional and national level, selecting the best competitors for the biennial WorldSkills and EuroSkills competitions. The Skills Show hosts the WorldSkills UK national competitions. There is also a wide range of local and regional competitions, run by colleges, providers and employers within their industries.

Taking part in competitions helps participants not only demonstrate the knowledge and skills level required for a particular standard but also the behaviour expected within the workplace, in accordance with the values of the employer and industry. The successful work environment is all about performance and good performance keeps a workforce in employment with the possibility of high achievement bringing rewards in terms of promotion and progression.

Providers that embed competition activity within their curriculum delivery also report increases in quality improvement. The competition culture can improve performance of learners and produce results above national benchmarks.

Integrating competitions into apprenticeship delivery



Funding

The apprenticeship funding rules published in April 2017¹ lists taking part in a skills competition as an eligible cost:

“Funds from an employer’s digital account, government-employer co-investment or the additional transitional funds paid for 16 to 18 year olds on frameworks must only be used for activity directly related to the apprenticeship. These funds must only be used to pay for training and assessment, including end-point assessment, to attain an apprenticeship that is eligible for funding up to the limit of the funding band. This includes the following: Costs of an apprentice taking part in a skills competition if the employer and provider have agreed that participation in the competition directly contributes to helping that individual achieve the apprenticeship standard.”

The funding rules also state that attending competitions can count towards the apprentice’s off-the-job training, which must make up a total of 20% of the apprentice’s working hours.

Designing an apprenticeship programme and contracting with employers

Successful providers have early discussions with employers on how skills competitions can be integrated with and complement apprenticeship delivery. Proposals should be closely aligned to employers’ business needs and include identified, well-defined benefits. Contracts with employers should clearly identify the commitment and resources needed to support competition activity including any time an apprentice will be away from the workplace. Providers may want to use these plans as evidence to support the delivery of off the job training.

On-programme delivery

Training, whether on-the-job or off-the-job, should be agreed and cross referenced to **Skills Competition Briefs**,²³ local inter-provider competitions or industry designed tests and may

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2017-to-2018

² **Skills Competition Brief** - see the World Skills UK website for the brief for each competition which sets out the assessment criteria for judging). www.worldskillsuk.org/worldskills-uk-competitions/find-a-competition

also support your apprentices in preparing for the end-point assessment and achievement of the apprenticeship standards.

Attendance at skills competitions can be funded as part of the off-the-job element of an apprenticeship, which should account in total for 20% of the apprentice's time.

Mapping the competition brief to the required on-programme assessment methods ensures focussed on-programme activity that can be supported by the employer. Regular apprentice reviews, involving the employer will ensure each learner has completed the pre-requisite requirements to advance through the gateway, pass the end-point assessment, achieve the standard and participate in a skills competition.

Gateway

An important feature of apprenticeship standards is end-point assessment, when an apprentice has the chance to demonstrate their competence in the role. Before they can attempt end-point assessment they will need to meet the **gateway** requirements which are set out in the standard and accompanying assessment plan. This may include any mandatory qualifications for the standard, meeting any English and maths requirements, and confirmation from the employer that they are ready for **end-point assessment**.

Working with you and the timeline specified in the standard, employers will decide when their apprentices are ready to take the end-point assessment.

End-point assessment

End-point assessment requirements are set out in the assessment plan. It is the employer's responsibility to select an apprentice assessment organisation (AAO) from those listed on the register of apprentice assessment organisations. Once the employer has selected an AAO you will need to contract with them as funding for end-point assessment is currently channelled through you. The AAO will need early engagement with the employer and you to confirm the detail and logistics of the end-point assessment service they will offer.

There may be some commonalities between end-point and competition assessment criteria and/or instruments/tools and between the methods they use, which may allow an apprenticeship to cross over with competition participation. You should work with your employer to put in place a training plan that works for both the apprenticeship and the competition.

WorldSkills UK is seeking to pilot the crossover of end-point assessments with competitions methodology. For example, the use of observed, practical assessment for a group of apprentices being assessed simultaneously, a method commonly used in competitions, could be of benefit in apprenticeship end-point assessment.

How to get involved in skills competitions

For more information on skills competitions and how to integrate them into your apprenticeship offer to employers please contact getintouch@worldskillsuk.org (0800 612 0742) or go to the WorldSkills UK website <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/>

Ofsted's perspective reports.ofsted.gov.uk/

Inspection reports highlight some of the benefits of participating in skills competitions:

“Students benefit from high-quality work experience. Innovative use is made of commercial and community work experience opportunities and skills competitions to extend students’ experiences and develop strong skills to prepare them for work.”

East Kent College, January 2017

“Automotive apprentices gain the skills to compete successfully at national ‘auto-skills’ competitions.”

Nova Training, August 2016

“Staff provide a programme of additional activities that helps learners to develop their personal, social and employability skills. This programme includes visits to exhibitions, trade shows and European cities, and participation in national competitions.”

Central College Nottingham, February 2016

“A high and increasing number of learners, particularly in engineering and catering, are successfully winning recognition for their exceptional skills in regional and national competitions. A very high number of learners make tremendous progress in developing the skills employers seek. “

Exeter College, Feb 2014

“Competition work lets learners demonstrate their skills, as well as developing more advanced skills through the challenge for those who are more able.”

Weston College, January 2014

“Teachers make good use of local and national skills competitions to raise students’ aspirations..... Students regularly take part in skills competitions such as WorldSkills which give them a good opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding.....Teachers make good use of local and national skills competitions to boost students’ confidence, improve their practical skills and raise their aspirations.”

College of North West London, November 2015

Why providers should get involved

Providers who engaged with employers to enter learners onto skills competitions at local, regional and national levels as part of their apprenticeship, have reported benefits such as:

- improved staff CPD opportunities
- increasing staff aspiration and ambition for their students
- increased cross team working
- enhanced employer engagement
- enriched teaching and learning opportunities
- supports journey to excellence/outstanding
- increased achievement rates
- improved profile with employers and local community

“At Nova we believe that competition stretches and challenges staff and learners in a way that promotes development and raises ambition beyond usual levels seen in apprenticeships.”

Julie Fearn, Operations Manager ESFA Contract, Nova Training

“We have found teaching through competition better prepares students for the workplace and encourages high level skills through pace, delivering excellence and confidence, making the learning more enjoyable.”

Joanne Timms, Head of Skills Competition Development, East Kent College/Kent Further Education

Why apprentices should get involved

Apprentices who take part in competitions develop improved employability skills, alongside higher levels of technical skills, often demonstrating the following:

- improved time management
- self-reliance
- planning and preparation skills
- increased motivation, engagement and ambition

Motivation and engagement is seen to increase, with apprentices:

- rising to challenge
- improving levels of skill
- improving confidence
- better problem solving
- individual learning plans
- exposed to new experiences
- learning from peers

- being more productive
- being retained in the workforce

Apprentices' perspectives:

“WorldSkills UK literally changed my life. I got my job at Codemasters as a result of my competition success. The gaming industry is incredibly hard to get into and now I’ve got the career that I have always wanted.”

Daniel McCabe, Team UK (3D Digital Game Art), WorldSkills Abu Dhabi 2017 and designer at Codemasters

“WorldSkills UK looks fantastic on your CV. It is also a great boost for employers as they can show they have the ‘best of the best’ working for them.”

Rachael Carr, Team UK (Manufacturing Team Challenge), WorldSkills London 2011, a former apprentice and now Systems Engineer at BAE Systems at BAE Systems

“As a former competitor of a WorldSkills competition with childcare, I can only express my experience as empowering. I was initially nervous about taking part however I really enjoyed it. Although I was not a winner of the competition, I feel I was a winner within myself”

Tayla Glover, Room Leader, Hunny Nurseries

Employers' perspectives:

“The competition touches the lives of hundreds of apprentices at the start of their careers, encourages them to strive for excellence in their craft and reach the very highest professional standards.”

Debbie Orr, Crown Paints Marketing Manager, sponsor of the CITB Competitions

“Not only has competing been great for Ethan on a personal level, but it has been invaluable for us as a business. When training for the 2015 competition, Ethan and our other apprentice, Leigh Clarke, went on several training courses. They came back to the workshop and implemented their new skills which resulted in us being able to do our job three times faster.”

Matthew Booth, Electroimpact

“Global innovation is at the heart of our business which is why we are passionate about developing the young talent in our industry and supporting the work of WorldSkills UK. The competitions are proven to fast track an apprentice’s career and the training they receive as part of their preparation for the competition will see them develop the world-class skills which will drive the engineering industry forward.”

Chris Cooper, DMG MORI UK