

Hospitality & Catering Apprenticeships in Higher Education

A resource & checklist for hospitality and catering line managers' conversations with staff about doing an apprenticeship



This resource is designed to help hospitality and catering managers working in a Higher Education context discuss apprenticeship training with their staff. Apprenticeships can offer a great opportunity for staff to learn new skills and gain a qualification that is recognised in the wider hospitality sector. The document highlights the benefits and challenges of apprenticeship training so staff can make an informed choice about whether it is the appropriate training route for them.

The advice and information was compiled following a research project led by Dr Gail Hebson from the Alliance Manchester Business School in 2018-20. The research was carried out in a Higher Education setting in the UK and followed a cohort of hospitality and catering staff from the start to the completion of their apprenticeship training.

Background to the Apprenticeships



Why apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are a structured form of workplace-learning over a minimum period of 12 months. The idea of an apprenticeship dates back to the Middle Ages as a way of training up new highly skilled craftspeople and professionals. While they were once only associated with young people entering the workplace and learning a new trade, now the UK government is also encouraging adults who are already in work to study for an apprenticeship to recognise the level of skills associated with doing the job. High quality adult apprenticeship offer opportunities to

- Enhance existing skills
- Learn new skills with off-the-job training
- Update English and maths knowledge
- Gain a qualification in a recognised occupation in your industry

Why now?

Since 2017 large employers in the UK are required to make a payment to the government called an Apprenticeship Levy. Employers can recoup this money if they provide apprenticeship training. The hospitality sector has been hit particularly hard by the global coronavirus pandemic with many in the sector facing job losses and job insecurity. Hospitality in the Higher Education sector is also being impacted as universities and students adjust to a new on-line university environment. In this context more training and qualifications may be one way to increase employees' skills and employability in a fast-changing sector.



What apprenticeships are available?

Examples of apprenticeships relevant to hospitality and events are

Level 2 apprenticeships

- Hospitality team member
- Commis chef

Level 3 apprenticeships

- Senior production chef
- Hospitality supervisor
- Head barista
- Event assistant

Level 4 apprenticeships

- Senior culinary chef
- Hospitality manager

Apprenticeship equivalent qualifications

- Level 2
equivalent to GCSE
- Level 3
equivalent to A-level
- Level 4
equivalent to Diploma



Who delivers the apprenticeship training?

Universities will choose approved training providers for particular apprenticeships. In agreement with the University, the training provider provides an overall structure for the apprenticeship training and will roll out a programme of activities that staff need to complete in order to gain the qualification.

One of the important aspects of apprenticeship training is that it is workplace-learning. This means line managers will need to be aware of the programme content and specific training activities since you will also play an important role in its delivery by supporting your staff.

New technology can make learning easier and more flexible, but it is important in advance to agree and mark out when and where learning is going to take place, any IT access needed, and how time will be paid for

When will the training take place?

Apprenticeship learning is meant to take place in work time, over a minimum period of 12 months. According to the government criteria for apprenticeships, staff are entitled to have 20% of their work time dedicated to off-the-job training. As a line manager, one of your key roles is to make sure that your staff find the paid time required and to consider how any time off the job will be covered. New technology, e.g. tablets and smartphones, can make learning easier and more flexible. It is important in advance of starting the apprenticeship to agree and mark out when and where learning is going to take place, any IT access needed, and how time will be paid for.

What do staff actually do on the apprenticeship?

In off-the-job training, staff will be involved in a mix of learning activities, such as self-guided on-line learning, reading, researching and completing written assignments, attending meetings with their trainer to discuss progress, as well as possibly group activities (e.g. classes) and/or other activities that you put in place as part of their learning (e.g. job shadowing).



What support will staff be able to access to help them complete the apprenticeship?

Government legislation states that the learning aims of the apprenticeship and the resources and support for staff should be described in a 'commitment statement' that the employer, the training provider and the individual apprentice agree before the apprenticeship begins.

All apprentices will have a named individual from the training provider who will help deliver and support the training.

All apprentices should also be given a workplace mentor. Ideally this is someone outside of the apprentice's line management chain who can give practical guidance and support to them. Mentors themselves need to be given appropriate time and training by the University so they can support apprentices properly.

Expectations about the mentor's role (e.g. how frequent meetings might be, what type of support might be necessary) need to be discussed and agreed between line managers, apprentices, trainers and mentors themselves at the start of the apprenticeship. It is important to give staff clear expectations about their mentor's role, how and when the mentor is likely to check on staff progress, and how and when staff can contact them for support.

A free smartphone app for mentors to use is being trialled to make this contact easier (see www.wei.manchester.ac.uk/research/projects/creating-good-jobs-in-the-catering-sector). It is important also for the line manager to keep in touch with the mentor to make sure the apprentice remains well supported over time.

How is the apprenticeship assessed?

There are a variety of ways that apprenticeships can be assessed. Apprentices are required to pass module tasks related to different aspects of the hospitality and catering role. When all the tasks are complete the training provider will then arrange an 'end-point assessment'. This needs to be passed before the qualification is awarded, as a Pass or Distinction grade. The assessment will be carried out by an assessor from an agreed independent organisation who will come in and make sure staff have reached the required level of skills and knowledge. They will do this, for instance, through observing them at work and through a conversation with them. The training provider and line managers should discuss the plans for assessment and when it will take place.



Understanding the benefits & challenges of apprenticeship learning

Research carried out with hospitality and catering apprentices in a UK University revealed both positive and negative experiences of apprenticeship learning. These are discussed below and will be useful to consider when you talk to individual staff about whether they would like to do the apprenticeship, what the benefits might be for them, as well as the challenges they may face.

It is important the apprenticeship does not simply replace existing training. In discussion with your staff, it may turn out that a different internal training course is a better option than an apprenticeship for their development. Line managers should know how to access this alternative training for staff too.

Motivations and benefits of doing an apprenticeship

In the research, staff identified the following benefits of apprenticeship training:

An opportunity to access **wider knowledge** about the hospitality sector and the business that staff work in. This knowledge helped staff put their work in context.

An opportunity to get onto a **defined career path with higher pay prospects**. This was particularly important for some of the younger staff for whom this was their first permanent job.

An opportunity to gain a **formal qualification**. This was particularly useful for staff who missed educational opportunities earlier in their lives.

An opportunity to learn **new hands-on skills** that make their work more interesting.

An opportunity to develop 'functional' skills such as **maths, English and IT skills**. Functional skills are defined as skills that allow individuals to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and work. The apprenticeship was a chance to show that staff had good transferable functional skills.

A way for staff to build **personal confidence** and a sense of achievement through life-long learning. This was an unexpected and welcome benefit particularly to older members of staff who had not been in education for a long time.

Line managers should discuss staff motivations for doing an apprenticeship and take these to the training provider to discuss. For instance, if someone would like to develop their IT skills, can you ensure this is included in their training provision? If staff want career progression, could you find any job shadowing opportunities? Are there any ways they could gain some useful experience? If someone wants new hands-on skills, can you create opportunities for this in the training programme?

Challenges of doing an apprenticeship

The research also uncovered a number of obstacles and frustrations for staff doing the apprenticeship. Many of these can be successfully overcome if they are planned for right at the start of the training.

Staff often found it **difficult to find time** to complete the apprenticeship learning. Some groups of staff found it particularly hard to find time, e.g. those who have care responsibilities at home, or who work non-standard hours such as split shifts.

Different staff can have different challenges relating to time. Those who have responsibilities at home are more likely to need time in work to do the required activities while other staff may like some flexibility to catch up with their learning at home.

Staff found it **difficult to keep motivated** over the course of the apprenticeship, especially during learning tasks that did not seem directly related to their job. Some of the learning in the apprenticeship may not seem relevant and may only become useful long after the apprenticeship has finished.



Staff sometimes **did not see the point** of the apprenticeship: there did not seem to be any end benefit once it was completed. If there is no direct improvement in pay after staff have completed the apprenticeship, could there be other incentives to do the training?

Balancing different types of learning that can be applied to job roles immediately and learning that will make a difference in the future is important to keep motivation high. Mentoring and ongoing encouragement also makes a difference.

Line managers should talk with individual staff to discuss how time might be found. It may be that a certain number of hours can be found every week, once every two weeks, or once a month depending on the demands of the business and what suits the learner. Think also about when there are going to be busy periods at work, where the learning may be more difficult to complete. It may be useful to draw up and plan a calendar of activities to keep the learning on track over the course of the apprenticeship programme.

Linking challenges to equality and diversity

As a line manager, you should also think about specific challenges for particular groups of people and whether there are equality and diversity issues that need to be considered. This means thinking about how characteristics such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion may shape the support that people need. Making a link to your institutions' equality and diversity agenda can help line managers make a strong case for getting extra support and resources where these are needed.

Many staff are **juggling work with family care responsibilities**. Talking through the responsibilities staff have outside of work is important when helping staff decide whether they would like to do an apprenticeship at the moment. As a line manager, it should be the case that family care responsibilities should not be the factor that prevents staff from taking up this opportunity. For instance, extra time or other support for these staff might be given to make it possible.

Staff may have **particular learning needs** including help with English or maths. Extra support for these can be offered as part of the apprenticeship training. Staff who are not used to using IT equipment may need extra support early on to get them started and to overcome any nerves. Others may need support for particular sight or hearing disabilities to be able to access the training resources. Think in detail about how these needs can be accommodated, and consult with the training provider and others to put the necessary support in place.

Older staff who have **not been in education or training for a long time** may feel wary about taking on new learning, and particularly about undertaking the examinations and observations that are part of the assessment for the apprenticeship qualification. Talking to the training provider to be clear about what to expect and putting in place a supportive mentor may be especially important for these staff.



A list of questions to discuss with individual staff

Below is a list of issues for line managers and staff to discuss together before they commit to the apprenticeship training. If the staff member decides they want to pursue apprenticeship learning, the 'actions to be taken' column can help record what will happen next to put the necessary support in place for them to be successful.

Questions	Answer	Action to be taken
What is your staff member's motivation and incentive to do the training? Is it career progression, a qualification, new skills or all or none of the these? How can this help structure the support you provide?		
Do they work split shifts ? How might this impact on their time available for the apprenticeship? How might any challenges be overcome?		
Do they have care responsibilities (e.g. for children or older relatives or friends) outside of work? How might this impact on their apprenticeship activities? How might any challenges be overcome?		
Do they have any specific learning needs , e.g. extra support for reading and writing, access to IT equipment, help with logging on to IT systems?		
How will it be possible for paid time to be given to the staff member so that they can complete their learning activities? When will staff be able to take time off the job to do learning activities during work hours? Could free time outside of work be paid as overtime? How would they go about claiming these payments?		
Who could act as a mentor for the staff member? Does this person have the time and skills to be a mentor for them? When will you follow up with the person you have identified and agree the mentoring role and details?		

FURTHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Institute of Apprenticeships (www.instituteforapprenticeships.org).

TUC Unionlearn website (www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships) is useful both for line managers and staff considering apprenticeship learning.

Some case studies from the research project (available at www.wei.manchester.ac.uk/research/projects/creating-good-jobs-in-the-catering-sector) provide examples of some benefits of and obstacles to apprenticeship learning.