

Post-16 Option

Apprenticeships

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is an **employer-led** training programme which combines employment with training. Unlike work experience for school students, an apprenticeship can only be undertaken by a student after they have officially completed their statutory education (the last Friday in June of the academic year they turn 16 – usually the end of Year 11). The employer ‘employs’ the apprentice on a temporary contract as a member of staff, and pays them an agreed salary. Alongside working for the employer (doing a real job), the apprentice does part-time training to get qualifications which are related to the type of work they are doing.

How much does an apprentice get paid?

There is a national minimum wage (NMW) for apprentices, which is currently £4.15 per hour for school leavers. Many employers pay more than the minimum wage for apprentices, but this is for them to decide.

How many hours a week does an apprentice work?

The minimum number of hours a week an apprentice can work is 30, and the maximum number of hours is 40. The training is included within this, and the salary includes the training hours. Hence an apprentice on a 35 hour per week contract might be training for 7 hours and working for 28 hours, being paid 35 hours x £4.15 = £145.25 per week. Within the weekly guidelines above, employers can ask apprentices to work whatever shift patterns they require – this can involve evening and weekend working in some apprenticeship areas, particularly in hospitals, care work, retail, hairdressing, and hospitality.

What qualifications does an apprentice do?

An apprentice would usually undertake a vocational qualification often called an NVQ or a BTEC whilst they are working. For eg, an Administration apprentice might do an NVQ in Business Administration, an Engineering apprentice might do a BTEC in Engineering, a Retail apprentice might do an NVQ in Retail. Some apprentices have a day-release to local colleges or training providers, other apprentices complete their qualification through on-the-job training and online portfolios. Degree apprentices attend a University part-time whilst they are working. Alongside the main qualification, Functional Skills in Maths and English will also be studied unless the student has already achieved GCSE Maths/English at grade 4 or higher. The work undertaken by the apprentice is an integral part of the training package, and the work plus the qualification is known as the ‘apprenticeship standard’. There are apprenticeship standards available in hundreds of vocational qualifications, but remember that the apprentice must also be in at least temporary employment in a related area of work and apprenticeship qualifications start at level 2.

How long does an apprenticeship last?

Until the apprentice completes the qualification(s) they are undertaking. This is usually between 12 to 18 months, but can be up to 4 or 5 years for apprentices undertaking higher/degree level apprenticeships. Many apprentices move on to the next level of training after they have completed their first qualification.

What levels of qualifications are there?

Most young apprentices on the Isle of Wight start their training at level 2 = GCSE standard. Some apprentices start at, or progress onto, level 3 = A-level standard. There are apprenticeship standards available up to level 5 = degree level, and, increasingly, forward-thinking employers are using these to provide training packages for their staff. A **level 2** apprenticeship is known as an **Intermediate** Apprenticeship, a **level 3** apprenticeship is an **Advanced** apprenticeship, a **level 4** apprenticeship is a **Higher** Apprenticeship, and a degree level apprenticeship is a **Degree** Apprenticeship.

Does an apprentice have to pay for anything?

One of the advantages of an apprenticeship is that all the training is paid for by the government or the employer, and the apprentice also receives a salary paid by the employer. This also applies to degree level apprenticeships – there are no University tuition fees. The apprentice would need to get to work and back at the times the employer requires them to be in work, and child benefit stops because the apprentice is receiving a salary whilst in work-based employment and training and not in full-time education.

How old do I need to be to do an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship can be undertaken at any time after the statutory school leaving date (last Friday in June of the academic year a student turns age 16). There are financial incentives for employers to take on apprentices before the age of 19. Higher and degree level apprenticeships require a level 3 qualification to have already been completed, such as A-levels or a BTEC Level 3 or a level 3 Apprenticeship, so are usually open only to over-18 year old's.

How do I get an apprenticeship?

The employer selects their apprentice, so the process is virtually the same as getting a job. The employer can set their own entry requirements. The candidate needs to apply, usually with a CV and/or application form, and go for a selection interview. For some companies, the process might involve a test of some kind. You will probably be in competition with other people for the same vacancy. You may well not get the first apprenticeship you apply for, so stick with it, keep applying for vacancies, and learn as you go along. Training Providers – see below – refer potential apprentices to employers seeking apprentices and should be a first point of contact if you are looking for an apprenticeship.

Where are vacancies advertised?

As with jobs, they are advertised in a number of places, and they change daily so if you are actively looking for an apprenticeship you need to check all these places really regularly for the latest vacancies:

- www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship is the national government website for vacancies throughout England – for IW vacancies put the location as Newport, IW, and search within 10 miles. Alternatively, search by a bigger distance and sort by nearest distance first
- www.isleofwightjobs.com is a local recruitment website which includes local apprenticeship vacancies
- www.iwcp.co.uk IW County Press newspaper carrying local job vacancies and sometimes apprenticeships
- www.iwight.com/islandfutures link to a weekly online bulletin which includes most of the local vacancies advertised on the three websites above
- The local Training Provider websites for HTP, SMART, Isle of Wight College Apprenticeships, and CLC. See Handout - Key Websites – for addresses

What qualifications will I need before I can do an apprenticeship?

This depends on the employer, the type of position applied for, and the level of the apprenticeship – the entry requirements will be described within the vacancy description. Maths and English at least at GCSE grade 4 are highly valued by employers and give you a big advantage as these are the basic skills needed for most jobs, and they also exempt you from taking the Functional Skills in Literacy and Numeracy.