



Aligning the apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy

ICAEW welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation *Aligning the apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy* published by Welsh Government on 22 January 2015, a copy of which is available from this [link](#).

This response of 20 April 2015 has been prepared on behalf of ICAEW by the Learning & Professional Development department.

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ICAEW members operate across a wide range of areas in business, practice and the public sector. They provide financial expertise and guidance based on the highest professional, technical and ethical standards. They are trained to provide clarity and apply rigour, and so help create long-term sustainable economic value.

The ICAEW Learning and Professional Development department has worked in partnership with employers and tutors to support the development of apprenticeships in England. Currently, we are part of a consortium of organisations who have developed a Level 4 "Trailblazer" Apprenticeship standard in accountancy.

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MAJOR POINTS

1. ICAEW has been closely involved in the development of Higher Apprenticeships in England with the current Trailblazer initiative and this is the particular lens of focus we bring to this consultation.
2. ICAEW believes that the addition of funding for Higher Apprenticeships would greatly assist in ensuring that the apprenticeship offering within Wales is strengthened.
3. The addition and alignment of apprenticeship funding for existing job positions as well as for new positions would provide a greater degree of commitment and allow more development scope and manoeuvrability for employees within their chosen profession.
4. We believe greater engagement with employers would assist to enhance the apprenticeship system in Wales, in particular ensuring that relevant professional qualifications leading to professional registration are embedded for each occupation or major job role.
5. We would be happy to offer further advice and be consulted with should this be required.

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 – How can apprenticeship progression be strengthened to provide clear routes into higher apprenticeships?

Firstly, the addition and alignment of apprenticeship funding where a position already exists as well as for new job roles would further support the apprenticeship system. This wider funding would allow more individuals to gain higher skills and experience, thus developing their careers and enhancing their potential.

Secondly, more and better cross-collaboration with Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland on linking the branding and systems associated with apprenticeships to allow more mobility within areas of employment.

Question 2 – What delivery models would support expansion of higher apprenticeships, particularly in technical occupations?

In addition to more funding, better employer engagement is crucial. Also, a robust mixture of challenging on-the-job experience blended with classroom-based training and professional examinations.

Question 3 – Is the proposal to commence the completion of apprenticeship programmes at Level 3 the best way to achieve the objectives of: raising skill levels of the workforce; providing viable alternative education routes to university; and improving the economic benefit of investing government money in apprenticeships?

Yes.

We agree that starting things at Level 3 constitutes a sensible system rationalisation which promotes higher standards and is aspirational for individuals while still being achievable.

Question 4 – How could Level 2 provision be delivered outside of the apprenticeship model?

Level two provision could be delivered within the school curriculum and possibly by a concerted drive to encourage employers to offer this training even though no public subsidy will be available.

Question 5 – To help inform our assessment of the possible impact of these proposals can you foresee any particular impact on those with protected characteristics (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) and how they might be particularly affected by these proposals?

No, but must be carefully monitored to ensure there is no worrying trend of developing under-representation in apprenticeships regarding those with protected characteristics.

Question 6 – What would be the impact of limiting government-funded apprenticeship places to employees in new job roles?

We think this will restrict the number of apprenticeships that are offered and the number of employers and individual apprentices who engage with and support the new system. Overall, this will in turn limit the positive effect that apprenticeships can have. We therefore think it would be better (albeit also more expensive) not to have this restriction on new roles only.

Question 7 – What would be the impact on employers and apprentices of moving the apprenticeship programme offer towards occupationally specific apprenticeships?

We think the impact would be positive for employers and for apprentices. For employers it would mean that apprenticeships contained the development of skills and knowledge relevant to the world of work – and hence a sustainable return on investment. For apprentices it would mean relevant training that leads to professional registration and enhanced prospects for a secure job and an on-going career.

Question 8 – What issues have you encountered in relation to the delivery of Essential Skills Wales qualifications when apprentices already have comparable or higher-level qualifications in similar subjects?

Unable to comment.

Question 9 – Do you think that proxies for Essential Skills Wales qualifications should be accepted within apprenticeship frameworks?

Unable to comment fully.

However, this seems sensible – credit for prior learning (CPL) is normal practice within education provided it is appropriately awarded and monitored. We will be interested in seeing how the revision of ‘The Essential Skills Wales’ and ‘Wider Key Skills’ become a part of one suite of ‘Essential Skills’ in September.

Question 10 – Which qualifications do you believe that it would be reasonable to accept as proxies for particular Essential Skills Wales qualifications?

Unable to comment.

Question 11 – How can Welsh Government encourage an increase in demand for Welsh-medium apprenticeship provision?

Unable to comment.

Question 12 – What does the Welsh Government need to consider regarding the compatibility and portability of apprenticeships between the English and Welsh systems?

Ensuring that assessment standards and the composition and delivery of apprenticeships (including funding models) are transferable and transparent so there is confidence in harmonised, portable alignment of apprenticeships.

Question 13 – Are there aspects of the English reformed system which would further enhance the apprenticeship system in Wales?

Yes, building on the recent '*Richards Review*' (in England) which recommended that, working with employers, there should be just one apprenticeship standard and qualification for each occupation or major job role and that where possible it should lead to professional registration. Therefore, the need to embed professional qualifications in apprenticeships to ensure that relevant knowledge and skills are developed and assessed and that individuals completing an apprenticeship have career options.

Question 14 – What would be the benefit of establishing employer panels to have a role in advising on the design and content of apprenticeships and informing demand annually at a sectoral level?

We believe that employer buy-in for the development and delivery of apprenticeships is vital. Without this, apprenticeships will never achieve what they otherwise could. Employer panels may be an important way to help deliver this employer engagement provided that they are valued by employers as effective in ensuring employers get what they really want from the system and not as bureaucratic or cost-adding for little benefit. So the manner in which such panels are convened is itself very important.

Question 15 – How could Qualifications Wales support the Welsh Government's aim to be more responsive to employer need and ensure that the content of apprenticeships has a high degree of labour market relevance?

There is an important role to play ensuring that there is effective and ongoing consultation and outreach to employers and professional bodies to make sure that both the general system and the nature of individual apprenticeships are relevant to the job market and that the schemes offered in particular sectors are consistent with one another.

Question 16 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

n/a

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: