



**An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta**
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025

FAQs

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1. GENERAL

1.1. What informed the actions in the Plan?

Apprenticeship in Ireland is currently managed in two different ways (Craft and Consortia-led apprenticeships). The Plan is based on learnings from operation of the two models of apprenticeship, best international practice and feedback from stakeholders, employers and apprentices.

60 stakeholders responded to a written consultation process; 3750 apprentices responded to a web-based survey and 350 SME employers provided feedback through the Regional Skills Fora network.

Details of the consultation process can be found [here](#).

1.2. This is a five year plan...what are the main deliverables?

The Government has set a target of 10,000 new people registering as apprentices every year by 2025.

- In 2021 we will work in the background, setting out the structures for the national apprenticeship system of the future. This includes the establishment of the National Apprenticeship Office, the National Apprenticeship Alliance and starting the process for migrating all existing apprenticeships to the single model set out in the Plan. We will form a baseline for apprentice outcomes to demonstrate the value of apprenticeship to learners.
- In 2022 we will launch financial supports for employers and a bursary for apprentices in target groups. The Public Sector will set out a roadmap for recruitment of apprentices and the existing consortia-led programmes will migrate to the new apprenticeship system. The National Apprenticeship Alliance, through its Equity of Access committee will determine targets for inclusion of underrepresented groups in apprenticeship.
- The NAO will facilitate increased visibility of apprenticeship to employers and prospective apprentices. Over the period of the Plan registered apprentices will also be supported with greater visibility on their progress through their apprenticeship programme. Employer grants will be managed through the Office, with peer learning supports for apprenticeship consortia integrated into the system.
- Between 2022 and 2025 the existing centralised craft apprenticeship system will move to the single apprenticeship model. This will move the decision

making for delivery of craft apprenticeship closer to the employers, employee representatives and the education and training providers. It will also fully integrate the provision of apprenticeship within the quality structures of the respective higher education providers.

- During this time the number of apprenticeship places across the public sector will also grow to reach 750 new apprentices every year by 2025. The content, level and duration of public sector apprenticeships will be determined by identified skills needs.
- Towards the end of every year a report will be brought to Government which sets out progress on the plan to date and defines clear actions for the coming year. In this way, Government will have clear site of the impacts of the plan in delivering on its objectives.

Ireland's craft apprenticeships have a strong tradition and reputation of excellence. The migration of these 25 apprenticeships to a distributed model will maintain and enhance this reputation, providing flexibility in programme delivery at a national level while safeguarding quality, and the collaborative spirit of apprenticeship stakeholders (employers, unions and education and training providers).

By 2025 apprenticeship will be a clear choice for people looking for a new career, qualification or return to work option across all sectors of the economy. Apprenticeship will be available, accessible and seen as a real and substantive option for those who learn best by doing and/or who may wish to earn while they learn.

1.3. How will apprenticeship be promoted through the second level system?

The lack of information on apprenticeship opportunities received from guidance counsellors was highlighted in the apprentice survey with only 10% of respondents receiving details through this route. Apprenticeship will be positioned within career guidance websites and clear ladders of progression into and beyond an apprenticeship will be published in the respective apprenticeship brochures. Information packs will be delivered to all guidance counsellors and Intreo staff and the potential for CPD courses for guidance counsellors will be assessed. The development of apprenticeship taster courses will be explored as part of Transition Year and Senior Cycle reform with the NCCA.

The availability of apprenticeship opportunities will be promoted alongside other further education and training and higher education offerings and all apprenticeship opportunities will be advertised on or linked from www.apprenticeshipjobs.ie with clear guidance on scheduled/expected recruitment dates for programmes with group intake. The potential for linking to apprenticeship.ie/promoting apprenticeship through the CAO is also being assessed.

1.4. What will the plan do to increase diversity in the apprentice population?

The Plan promotes access, diversity and inclusion in apprenticeship by offering targeted supports to encourage participation from under-represented groups such as women, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Actions within the plan to increase participation by under-represented groups are based on stakeholder feedback and also the current position of the 2018 *Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship Review*.

The National Apprenticeship Alliance will be supported by an equity of access subcommittee to ensure that the voice of under-represented groups is integral to the development of the apprenticeship system. The subcommittee will include representation which ensures that links with second level, community education, youth justice programmes, broader FET provision and higher education are represented. Targets will be set in conjunction with the Equity of Access Subcommittee and will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that interventions are effective in supporting increased diversity of the apprentice population.

- The current female craft apprenticeship bursary will be expanded to all programmes with greater than 80% representation of a single gender – this means, for instance, that employers of male hairdressing apprentices will be eligible for the scheme.
- An apprentice bursary/support scheme will be established to fund up to 100 apprentices per year who are experiencing severe socioeconomic disadvantage and who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.
- An employer survey will determine baseline employer attitude and extent of knowledge of supports available to employers for supporting employees with a disability. This will be used to target information supports for employers, provided through the new National Apprenticeship Office and consortia.
- Clear information on existing supports for persons with a disability will be made visible to employers and prospective apprentices through www.apprenticeship.ie, both through a direct resource page, through consortia information to employers and by reflecting positive experiences in promoting apprenticeship. Employers who demonstrate examples of good practice will be acknowledged through initiatives such as a diversity badge.
- Access to apprenticeship programmes and pre-apprenticeship courses will be clearly labelled as such, with progression routes into apprenticeship clearly identified, and will be published on apprenticeship.ie.

The 2018 Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship has already resulted in a significant widening of measures to support increased visibility of apprenticeships. Actions outlined within this Plan are designed to support and enhance progress towards the goals of the Pathways review. A full review will be conducted during the lifetime of this plan, informed by the Equity of Access subcommittee and employer and apprentice experience as determined within the annual survey.

1.5. How does this fit into work on single portal for all options for people accessing tertiary education (further education and training and higher education)?

Linkages to and from major career guidance and further and higher application resources will drive initial recognition of the range of offerings available to learners across the system, including an assessment of the ability to facilitate expressions of interest in apprenticeship through the CAO.

Apprenticeship is a contract of employment and needs to be reflected as such. We will enhance engagement with DSP and Enterprise agencies to highlight the need to balance access to apprenticeship opportunities for school leavers and career changers/unemployed/long term unemployed.

1.6. Why are you establishing a new National Apprenticeship Office?

Apprenticeship programmes are delivered across the further and higher education sectors. SOLAS are responsible for apprenticeship under legislation dating back to 1967 and for education and training across the further education sector (ETBs). The Higher Education Authority is responsible for the governance and delivery of apprenticeship in higher education institutions (IoTs, TUs and University of Limerick).

Currently and historically the two organisations have a strong working relationship in the delivery of apprenticeship, with off-the-job training for craft apprenticeships in particular taking place across the ETBs and IoTs/TUs. The National Apprenticeship Office will provide the opportunity for SOLAS and the HEA to further enhance the existing close cooperation between the two organisations to manage apprenticeship delivery across the further and higher education sector. The office will be accountable to the Boards of both SOLAS and the HEA for the management of apprenticeship.

2. LEARNERS

2.1. What does the plan mean for me?

It will be easier for you to find out information about apprenticeship opportunities and you will receive more support and clearer communication throughout your learning journey.

By the end of 2021, all apprenticeship opportunities will be advertised on or linked from www.apprenticeship.ie with clear guidance on expected recruitment dates for programmes with group intake.

2.2. How can I apply for an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is a contract of employment. You can find details of available apprenticeship roles on www.apprenticeship.ie or through the consortia responsible for running the programme you are interested in. You can also contact your local Education and Training Board who may hold information on local apprenticeship vacancies. A list of ETBs can be found [HERE](#)

2.3. Where can I find details on available apprenticeships?

Details on the range of apprenticeship programmes and how to apply are available on www.apprenticeship.ie. You can also find information on available apprenticeships in your area from your local Education and Training Board (ETB). A list of ETBs can be found [HERE](#)

2.4. Where and when can I access bursaries?

During 2022, an apprentice bursary/support scheme will be established to fund up to 100 apprentices per year who are experiencing severe socioeconomic disadvantage and/or who are from target groups, including lone parents, people with disabilities, Travellers and Roma.

The mechanisms of the scheme are being developed and details of how to apply for a bursary will be available on www.apprenticeship.ie during 2022.

2.5. I am a craft apprentice – what does this mean for me?

There will be no immediate changes for craft apprentices. Feedback from apprentices indicates that the existing method of payment of off-the-job training allowances can cause difficulty for some apprentices. The method of payment of allowances apprentices will be examined before the end of 2022.

The plan also sets out actions to provide for craft apprentices to express preferences on the location of their off-the-job training. While the offer of an off-

the-job training place will be dependent on a number of factors such as demand for a specific location and available spaces. This will be delivered by Q1, 2022

Information on actions being taken to address backlogs on off-the-job phases of training for certain craft apprentices is available on www.apprenticeship.ie

Ongoing opportunities for apprentices to input their views on the functioning and development of the apprenticeship system will be enhanced. These will include appropriate representation within stakeholder advisory bodies and an annual survey of apprentices to be carried out by a new National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) as part of the data collection and evaluation framework.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

3.1. What exactly is the new model of apprenticeship?

By 2025 all national apprenticeship programmes will be managed by apprenticeship consortia. Consortia will comprise of employer, employee representatives, education and training providers and other key stakeholders and will be directly responsible for the development and delivery of apprenticeship programmes.

Programme validation, quality assurance and delivery will be managed through a coordinating provider (a further or higher education institution) who is a member of the consortium.

The relevant consortium is responsible for oversight of the coordinating provider in the delivery of their role and the continued relevance of curriculum and programme delivery within the boundaries of the occupational profile.

A new National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) is being established which will facilitate a coming together of the statutory functions of SOLAS and the HEA as they relate to apprenticeship. It will hold responsibility for all aspects of the management, oversight and development of the apprenticeship system and for implementing the Action Plan.

It will act as a single point of contact for employers, apprentices and providers in accessing information and guidance on apprenticeship. It will also manage the provision of supports to apprenticeship consortia in developing and implementing apprenticeships and in providing peer learning opportunities for consortia.

Stakeholder insight is critical to both the existing and continued success of apprenticeship. The National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee have an

established place in craft apprenticeship and the Apprenticeship Council has successfully steered the first phase of the expansion of the Apprenticeship system.

A new National Apprenticeship Alliance (NAA) will provide advice and guidance to the NAO on all aspects of its work and to help it drive the implementation of the Action Plan. The NAA will discharge its role in respect of all apprenticeships and will be representative of apprenticeship stakeholders. It will help steer the next phase of apprentice to create a single coherent system and will review and approve formal occupational profiles in the development of new apprenticeships. This ensures the national character of apprenticeship programmes is maintained with nationally approved standards of knowledge, skill and competence and only a single apprenticeship in place for any one occupation.

3.2. What will happen with the migration of craft apprenticeship to the new model

The migration of craft apprenticeship from SOLAS as a coordinating provider to the distributed system where craft apprenticeships will have a number of different coordinating providers will take place over the full lifetime of the plan.

A migration plan for the 25 craft apprenticeships will be developed by the NAAC and SOLAS in collaboration with the NAO and NAA.

3.3. Will Quality Assurance procedures be affected?

A programme of review of all craft apprenticeships has been delivered, curricula have been revised and modernised and an updated framework for quality assurance has been developed. The terms of reference for review of QA framework and operation of consortia-led model of programme governance will be published and delivered.

The statutory QA guidelines for apprenticeship will be revised and the 2017 Apprenticeship Handbook will also be reviewed and updated. A review of the role of Authorised Officers and how the AO network can further evolve to support the delivery of the action plan will be carried out.

4. EMPLOYERS

Without engagement from employers there can simply be no apprenticeships or places on those programmes. Feedback from employers as part of the action plan focused on three main areas (1) the need for information on apprenticeship (2) practical supports to engage with apprenticeship, particularly for SMEs and (3) financial supports towards the cost of apprenticeship.

4.1. What supports are available to employers?

The cost to employers of craft apprentices is reduced through payment of off-the-job training allowances for Phase 2, 4 and 6 of their courses. The Action Plan sets a target for a new base grant to be introduced for employers of apprentices other than craft apprentices from 2022.

This will be supplemented by practical measures to support the employment of apprentices in SMEs, and additional financial and other measures to support the employment of underrepresented groups in apprenticeship and the delivery of skills essential to the economy.

4.2. How do I access the apprenticeship system/hire an apprentice?

Information on accessing the apprenticeship system and how to hire an apprentice is available on www.apprenticeship.ie which includes access to the apprenticeship jobs portal (which is free to use). You can also find information on apprenticeship from your local Education and Training Board (ETB). A list of ETBs can be found [HERE](#)

A new National Apprenticeship Office will provide technical supports making access to information on, and engagement with, apprenticeship more straightforward. A user-centred Apprenticeship Management System will be delivered during the lifetime of this plan to simplify employer engagement with apprenticeship allowing access to information from recruitment and selection, apprentice application process, programme progress, employer grant payments and apprenticeship consortia-led engagement and development opportunities.

Apprenticeship Consortia will also be supported to implement measures appropriate to the employer cohorts in their industry, from recruitment supports to the potential for shared visiting assessors to support workplace learning and assessment for apprentices.

Clear and transparent information on supports for employers and new programme development will be published and easily accessible on the apprenticeship.ie website, adding to existing sector and programme specific information.

4.3. Where can I find details on available apprenticeships?

Information on available apprenticeships is available on apprenticeship.ie and from your local Education and Training Board (ETB). A list of ETBs can be found [HERE](#)

During the lifetime of the action plan we will move to increase linkages with national employer agencies.

4.4. Where and when can I access bursaries/financial supports?

- The Apprenticeship Incentivisation Scheme is a temporary Covid-19 related payment to employers of apprentices registered for the first time between 1 March 2020 and 30 Jun 2021. The payment of €3,000 is spread over two years, with the final instalment of €1,000 payable where the apprentice is retained for at least one year. Details of the scheme are available from SOLAS.
- An employer bursary of €2,667 is currently available to eligible employers who register female apprentices in a craft apprenticeship. The bursary is applied by the relevant Education and Training Board at a rate of €95.23 per week for 28 weeks as a contribution towards the apprentice's salary and other costs. It is paid in two instalments, the first on completion of phase 1 of an apprenticeship and the second during phase 3 when the apprentice completes the balance of the 28 applicable weeks with their employer. More information can be found on www.apprenticeship.ie.
- Under the Action Plan for apprenticeship the female craft apprentice bursary will be extended to all apprenticeship programmes with greater than 80% representation of a single gender during 2022.
- Additional targeted funding will become available during the lifetime of the plan in response to National Skills needs.

5. APPRENTICESHIPS AVAILABLE April 30

Apprenticeship	NFQ Level	Duration (years)
AGRICULTURE		
Arboriculture	Level 6	2
BIOPHARMA		
Laboratory Analyst	Level 7	3
Laboratory Technician	Level 6	2
CONSTRUCTION		
Brick and Stonelaying (c)	Level 6	4
Carpentry and Joinery (c)	Level 6	4
Geo-Driller	Level 6	2
Painting and Decorating (c)	Level 6	4
Plastering (c)	Level 6	4
Plumbing (c)	Level 6	4
Stonecutting and Stonemasonry (c)	Level 6	4
Wood Manufacturing and Finishing (c)	Level 6	4
ELECTRICAL		
Aircraft Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Electrical (c)	Level 6	4
Electrical Instrumentation (c)	Level 6	4
Electronic Security Systems (c)	Level 6	4
Industrial Electrical Engineer	Level 7	2
Instrumentation (c)	Level 6	4
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (c)	Level 6	4
ENGINEERING		
Engineering Services Management	Level 7	2
Farriery (c)	Level 6	4
Industrial Insulation (c)	Level 6	4
Manufacturing Engineer	Level 7	3
Manufacturing Technology	Level 6	2
Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting (c)	Level 6	4
Metal Fabrication (c)	Level 6	4
OEM Engineer	Level 6	3
Pipefitting (c)	Level 6	4
Polymer Processing Technology	Level 7	3
Principal Engineer – Professional Doctorate	Level 10	4
Sheet Metalworking (c)	Level 6	4
Toolmaking (c)	Level 6	4
FINANCE		

Accounting Technician	Level 6	2
Insurance Practitioner	Level 8	3
International Financial Services Associate	Level 6	2
International Financial Services Specialist	Level 8	2
HAIR		
Hairdressing	Level 6	3
HEALTHCARE		
Healthcare Assistant	Level 6	2
HOSPITALITY & FOOD		
Commis Chef	Level 6	2
Chef de Partie	Level 7	4
Sous Chef	Level 8	2
Butcher	Level 5	2
ICT		
Network Engineer Associate	Level 6	2
Software Developer Associate	Level 6	2
CGI Technical Artist (Animation, Games, VFX)	Level 8	2
Cybersecurity	Level 6	2
Telecommunications and Data Network Engineering Technician	Level 6	2
LOGISTICS		
Lean Sigma Manager	Level 9	2
Logistics Associate	Level 6	2
Supply Chain Associate	Level 7	3
Supply Chain Manager	Level 9	2
Supply Chain Specialist	Level 8	2
MOTOR		
Agricultural Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Construction Plant Fitting (c)	Level 6	4
Heavy Vehicle Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Motor Mechanics (c)	Level 6	4
Vehicle Body Repairs (c)	Level 6	4
PROPERTY SERVICES		
Auctioneering and Property Services	Level 6	2
RECRUITMENT		
Recruitment Executive	Level 8	3
SALES		
Retail Supervision	Level 6	2
Sales	Level 6	2

(c) denotes a craft apprenticeship