



Developing a Trailblazer Apprenticeship Guidance

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Trailblazer Apprenticeships – England Only

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This guide is for Build UK Trade Association members looking for further information on the Trailblazer process. It provides Trade Associations with the information they need to advise and support their membership.

Introduction

What is the change?

Apprenticeships in England are changing. Following a review, the Government has chosen to create an employer-led model for developing and funding apprenticeship standards. This will replace the current system and focus on employers driving the development and delivery of apprenticeships. The Government's aim is to replace all current Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE apprenticeships) with new apprenticeships, known as Trailblazer Standards, by the end of 2020.

The Government has introduced Trailblazers to:

- ❖ **ensure that employers are in the driving seat:** employers will be designing the apprenticeship standards, making them more relevant.
- ❖ **increase the quality of apprenticeships:** the new apprenticeships will require apprentices to complete a rigorous assessment throughout their programme. This will give employers confidence in the competence of the apprentice and provide apprentices with transferable skills.
- ❖ **simplify the system:** employer-designed standards will be concise and easy to understand, and will describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) expected of a fully competent operative.
- ❖ **give employers purchasing power:** empowering businesses to act as customers; putting control of funding in the hands of employers is expected to drive up quality and relevance.

How will this affect my sector?

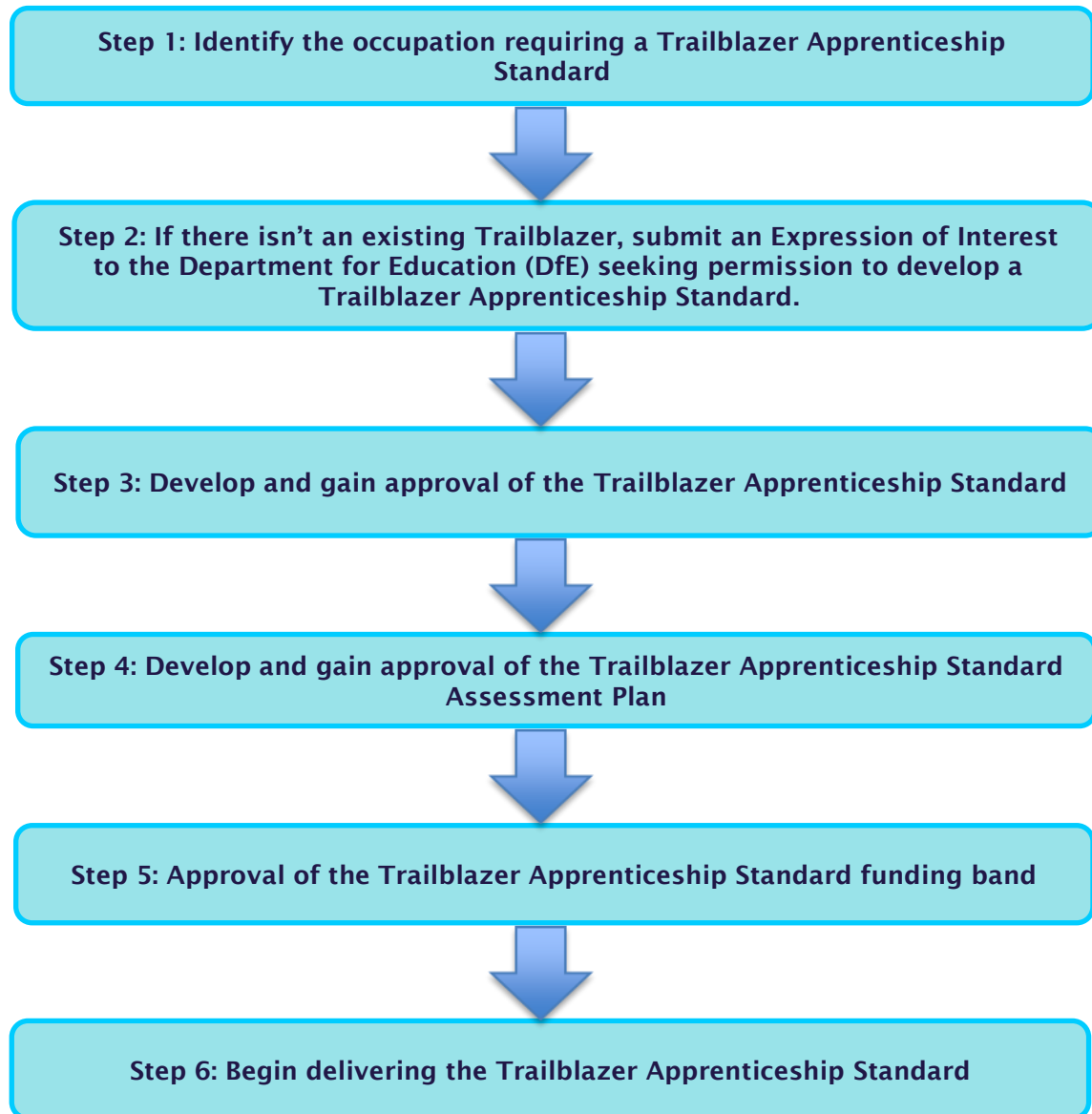
- ❖ **From 2020, only Trailblazers will be eligible for apprenticeship funding**
From May 2017, providers will no longer receive direct funding from Government to fund apprenticeship programmes. Instead, employers will decide which provider they want to deliver their apprenticeship and confirm when payments should be made through the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).
- ❖ **From 2020 the SASE Framework will be switched off**
The changes mean that employers will need to identify existing or new occupations requiring apprenticeships and design and implement a programme, which meets the new Trailblazer Apprenticeship criteria. Where there are existing SASE apprenticeships, new Trailblazers should be completed by 2020 to ensure there is no gap in funding provision. Where existing SASE apprenticeships already meet the needs of the sector, there will be limited development activity required to move from the SASE framework to a Trailblazer Apprenticeship.

Build UK has produced this guide to help employers and their trade associations understand how apprenticeships are evolving.

The Government is making regular changes to its apprenticeship policy. This Guidance Note will be kept up to date and further information is available on the [Government Trailblazer Apprenticeships website](#).

The Development Process

An overview of how Trailblazer Apprenticeships are developed:



Step 1: Identify the occupation requiring a Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard

The sector needs to identify the role that requires a Trailblazer Apprenticeship. The occupation needs to be unique and should not have any significant overlap with any other. If there is significant overlap with another occupation then it will be necessary to consider designing them as a single apprenticeship with pathways to reflect the differences in job roles.

Once the occupation has been identified, a check of the [Government Trailblazer Apprenticeship website](#) should take place to ensure there is not an existing Trailblazer Apprenticeship or one in development. [The Construction Trailblazer Steering Group](#) also has a list of construction specific courses in development. If there is another Trailblazer underway, you should contact the Chair of the Trailblazer group to allow you to be involved in its development.

Existing SASE apprenticeship frameworks will provide a good indicator as to where new Trailblazer Apprenticeships are required. Data relating to the occupations currently served by an apprenticeship, their content and usage is available via the [Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards \(FISS\)](#).

Step 2: Submit an Expression of Interest to the Department for Education (DfE)

If the sector has identified that it needs to develop a Trailblazer, the following should be satisfied before submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI):

- ❖ A minimum of 10 employers from a wide range of companies commit to being actively involved in the development of the apprenticeship standard
- ❖ The participating employers are reflective of those who employ people in the occupation. The group should normally include at least two employers with fewer than 50 employees
- ❖ Sector or trade bodies, professional bodies, training providers or industry training boards can be invited to support the process by employer leads, but cannot lead the process themselves
- ❖ One employer member acts as the Chair. They cannot be a representative from a trade body or other such organisation
- ❖ The group must be willing to work inclusively and collaboratively with other employers or groups who express an interest in the same or similar occupations
- ❖ Employers involved in the Trailblazer should intend to use the standard once it is ready for delivery and commit individually to a specific number of starts
- ❖ Employers must work with other organisations to promote and market the Trailblazer, particularly where an occupation is prevalent across sectors.

The group of employers must submit an EOI to the Department for Education seeking permission to develop an apprenticeship standard in the chosen occupation. The [EOI template](#) should be completed including details of the employers involved with the development and a brief description of the occupation.

Once submitted the EOI will be put on the [DfE website](#) for two weeks to allow other interested employers or organisations the chance to comment.

The Minister for Skills will make a final decision on the application within six weeks of submission. Once the EOI is approved, detailed development work can begin.

Step 3: Develop and gain approval of the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard

Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards should meet the needs of employers, their sector(s) and the economy. These standards are short, easy to understand documents that describe the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) required to undertake a specific occupation and to operate confidently within a sector. Standards focus on how an apprentice should demonstrate competence in an occupation and meet professional registration requirements where these exist; for example the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS).

To ensure quality, all Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards must meet seven criteria:

1. Be short, concise and clear
2. Set out the full competence needed in an occupation so that on completion, the apprentice is able to carry out the role for any employer, across any relevant sector
3. Have the support of employers including smaller businesses
4. Be sufficiently stretching that it will require at least a year of training before the end-point assessment, with off-the-job training accounting for at least 20% of the apprenticeship
5. Align with professional registration where it exists
6. Meet minimum English, Maths and digital requirements, as follows:
 - i. For Level 2 apprenticeships, achieve Level 1 English and Maths and take the test for Level 2 prior to taking their end point assessment (EPA)
 - ii. For Level 3 to 4 apprenticeships achieve Level 2 English and Maths prior to taking their EPA.
7. Include mandatory qualifications under certain circumstances. CITB has agreed with the DfE that NVQs can be included for construction occupations. Further information is available in the **Best Practice** section of this Guidance Note.

Once the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard is developed, the employer group must facilitate consultation with employers and parties who had not been involved in development and consider any feedback. Once submitted to the DfE it will be posted on their website for final consultation.

If the Standard meets all of the required criteria it will be approved by the Minister for Skills within six weeks of submission.

Step 4: Develop and gain approval of the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard Assessment Plan

All Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards must contain an end-point assessment (EPA) of the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) that have been developed throughout the apprenticeship. This ensures that apprentices meet the standard set by employers, are fully competent in the occupation and are assessed consistently across the standard.

An assessment plan is an electronic document which describes the EPA for a particular Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard. It is the employer's opportunity to explain how to test the full occupational competence of the apprentice. Whilst the nature and methods of assessment will differ between occupations, all assessment plans must clearly focus on the EPA process and:

- ❖ explain what will be assessed (i.e. which KSBs are listed on the standard and providing more detail if necessary)
- ❖ explain how the apprentice will be assessed (i.e. which method or range of methods, will be used at the end of the apprenticeship to judge competency)
- ❖ indicate who will carry out the assessment (i.e. who will be the assessor(s) for each aspect of the EPA) and who will make the final decision on competency and grading
- ❖ propose internal and external quality assurance arrangements to make sure that the assessment is reliable and consistent across different locations, employers and training and assessment organisations. CITB is able to provide support and further information is available in the **Frequently Asked Questions** section of this Guidance Note.

As with the standard, an assessment plan should be a stand-alone document which can be easily understood by other employers, training and assessment organisations, the apprentice and their parents.

If the assessment plan meets all the criteria it will be approved by the Minister for Skills within six weeks of submission.

Step 5: Approval of the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard funding band

The Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) will enable employers to use the funding in their digital accounts to pay for training and assessment of apprentices in England. There will be 15 bands ranging from £1,500 to £27,000, with all Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards allocated into one of these bands.

An indicative funding band for delivery of the Apprenticeship will be allocated during the development process. This will be provided at the time the standard is approved to give clarity about the funding that is likely to be available as the Trailblazer group develops their assessment plan.

Once the assessment plan is approved, the final band allocation will be confirmed. This will be the same as the indicative band unless Trailblazer group request a review with evidence that it should be allocated to a different band.

Following the approval of the assessment plan and the allocation of the final funding band, there will be a short delay to allow training providers to register apprenticeships onto the funding system. Once the Trailblazer goes 'live', employers and providers can begin negotiating and agreeing the price for delivery.

Step 6: Begin delivering the Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard

Once an apprenticeship standard is 'live', members of the Trailblazer group should be delivering the projected annual volumes stated in the initial Expression Of Interest.

At the same time, employers and providers are expected to start delivering apprenticeships under the standard within the wider sector. The Trailblazer group will need to consider:

- ❖ communicating details of the Trailblazer to employers of all sizes that have not been directly involved in its development, to encourage them to offer apprenticeships using the standard
- ❖ continuing to work with the Association of Colleges (AOC), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) to promote the standard to the training provider base
- ❖ negotiating the cost of training with education and training providers, which could be undertaken at employer level or by forming a consortium
- ❖ working with assessment organisations to ensure they meet the group's expectations
- ❖ working with professional bodies to ensure that where standards are aligned with professional registration, the process for apprentices seeking registration is clear and straightforward.

Best Practice

It is essential that there is a co-ordinated approach to the development and implementation of construction Trailblazer Apprenticeships to ensure they:

- ❖ reflect current employer skill needs
- ❖ demonstrate consistency
- ❖ have common rigorous quality assurance arrangements in place
- ❖ allow workers to move freely within the industry.

Adopting the following recommendations will help Trailblazer Development Groups achieve this. These are offered as suggested best practice and there is no Government requirement to comply:

1. Engage with the Construction Trailblazer Steering Group

Employers wishing to develop a Construction Trailblazer Apprenticeship should request help, advice and guidance from the Construction Trailblazer Steering Group. Build UK has representation on this group along with numerous employers and other stakeholders. Engaging with the group will ensure a consistent industry approach to development work, and that good practice is shared across the development and implementation of all Trailblazers.

2. Seek CITB Involvement

If the Trailblazer Apprenticeship is for a construction occupation, CITB offer a wide range of support including a representative to facilitate development of the Trailblazer, meeting facilities, assistance with wider industry consultation and support liaising with the DfE.

3. Assistance with Industry Consultation

Trailblazer groups whose proposed occupation(s) fall within the scope of CITB should consider using their consultation service to ensure proper and wide consultation with all relevant and interested employers, federations/associations and other organisations that may have an interest in the apprenticeship being developed.

4. Quality Assurance of Assessment

Trailblazer groups should consider CITB taking responsibility for ensuring the external quality control of the apprenticeship assessment.

5. Standardised Duration and Content

Construction Trailblazers should be a minimum of two years in duration, and recognise and allow the transferability of the common skills and knowledge required by industry.

6. Mandating NVQs

Trailblazer Apprenticeships should include NVQs where available as they are required to obtain a CSCS card (or a card which carries the CSCS logo) and apprentices will be at a disadvantage without one. If Trailblazer groups decide not to include an NVQ then they should hold early discussions with CSCS over their recognition of the apprenticeship once developed.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there any funding available to support the development work?

There is a [Government Trailblazer Small Business Travel Fund](#) to support small businesses with reasonable travel costs to subsidise attendance at meetings. Support may also be available from [Gatsby](#), an independent charitable foundation if the Trailblazer aligns with the Gatsby priorities in science and engineering education.

Which nations will introduce Trailblazers?

Trailblazers are for England only, however the devolved nations may choose to adopt the model.

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy will be UK-wide.

What will happen to the current SASE Apprenticeships that are being used?

The existing SASE Apprenticeships will be withdrawn during 2019/20. Some SASE Apprenticeships may be withdrawn prior to this date due to low or no take up, or as Trailblazers are introduced.

What is the funding model for current Trailblazer Apprenticeships?

Trailblazer banding is agreed via consultation between the DfE and Trailblazer group. If an employer group believes the funding band is incorrect, they can challenge the decision and would be required to provide supporting information. However, the DfE make the final decision on the funding band awarded.

The 2016/17 academic year is a transitional year. It is the last year in which government funding for apprenticeships is solely grant based and not levy based.

What are the long-term funding plans for Trailblazer Apprenticeships?

The new Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) will enable employers to use the funding in their digital accounts to pay for training and assessment of apprentices in England.

All existing and new apprenticeships will be allocated one of 15 bands ranging from £1,500 to £27,000.

How will the Apprenticeship Levy work?

The levy will be charged at a rate of 0.5% of the annual pay bill. There will be a levy allowance of £15,000 per year to offset against the levy that has to be paid. This means the levy will only be paid if the employers wage bill exceeds £3 million a year.

For the purposes of the levy, an 'employer' is someone who is a secondary contributor, with liability to pay Class 1 National Insurance Contributions for their employees.

The levy payment to HMRC will be made through the Pay as You Earn (PAYE) process, with employers able to access funding for apprenticeships through the new digital apprenticeship system.

Employers that do not pay the levy will be able to look for training and assessment using the DAS, but will not need to use it to pay for apprenticeship training until at least 2018.

In the meantime employers will negotiate and agree a price with training providers and pay for it with vouchers provided through the co-investment system of 90% government and 10% employer contribution.

How do Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards fit with CSCS and other industry card schemes?

The Construction Leadership Council has agreed that any card scheme used on Government funded and major contractor sites must feature the CSCS logo. This means that those card schemes who feature the CSCS logo demand a minimum standard which includes using S/NVQs as a means of demonstrating competence.

CSCS policy now demands that to receive recognition, any Trailblazer apprenticeship standard must either lead to achievement of an S/NVQ or have been mapped against the National Occupational Standard (NOS) for the relevant occupation, and have a letter from a recognised standard setting body validating this. For mainstream construction, the standard setting body will be CITB.

How is a Specialist Apprenticeship Programme converted into a Trailblazer Apprenticeship?

Sectors wishing to convert a Specialist Apprenticeship Programme into a Trailblazer Apprenticeship will follow the process for development of Trailblazers outlined in this explanatory note.

What about employers with operations across the UK?

Many employers have cross-border operations and training activity. The Government is working with the devolved administrations to allow this to continue and to allow digital funds or Government support to pay for it.

Further Information

Further information on Trailblazer apprenticeship and the Apprenticeship Levy are available from:

CITB:

- ❖ **Apprenticeship Levy**
<http://www.citb.co.uk/levy-grant/apprenticeships-levy/>
- ❖ **Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards and Trailblazers**
<http://www.citb.co.uk/qualifications-standards/the-future-of-apprenticeships/>
<http://www.citb.co.uk/qualifications-standards/trailblazers/>

Government:

- ❖ **Apprenticeship Levy**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>
- ❖ **Digital Apprenticeship Service**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDYEtj16E38>
- ❖ **Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards**
www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards
- ❖ **Post 16 Skills Plan**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education

Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards (FISS):

- ❖ **Apprenticeship Standards**
<http://fiss.org/apprenticeship-standard-resources/>

Useful Contacts

[National Apprenticeship Service - Employer Helpline](#)
[CITB Apprenticeship Team](#)
[SummitSkills](#)
[Federation for Industry Sector Skills & Standards](#)
[National Careers Service](#)

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