



FAQs

The Apprenticeship Levy and the Acoustics Technician Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are first and foremost a job, but a job that combines practical training and study, either on a day or block release basis.

The new Apprenticeship Levy, introduced in England, Wales and Scotland in April 2017 incentivises companies to recruit more employees who will study towards occupational competence, which is often underpinned by a qualification whilst working. The Acoustics Technician Level 4 Apprenticeship programme was launched in January 2020.

The apprenticeship has been developed as an employer-led, industry initiative, with support from the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) and the Institute of Acoustics (IOA).

Richard Grove, Acoustics Director at BDP, is Chairman of the working group which has developed the apprenticeship.

He said: "The new apprenticeship will help deliver the acousticians of the future, which are needed across a range of industries to meet demand."

"It will also bring benefits to the higher education sector, by acting as a feeder for degree courses, either under the apprenticeship route, or as a sponsored degree by a company."

The Trailblazer Group behind the programme was recently presented with the Armstrong Next Generation Award at the John Connell Awards – organised by the Noise Abatement Society – for promoting and facilitating entry to the acoustics profession.

Richard added: "Apprentices will have a clear, defined career path and the programme will offer opportunities for diversity and inclusion within the acoustics industry."

The following is a list of **Frequently Asked Questions**. Links to find out more about the apprenticeship are provided at the end of the document.





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What is the Apprenticeship Levy?

Introduced in April 2017, the apprenticeship levy is a fund to assist the government in meeting its target to create 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. The levy only applies to businesses with an annual salary bill of more than £3 million.

How is the apprentice levy calculated?

For businesses with an annual salary bill of more than £3 million the apprentice levy is calculated at 0.5% of a company's salary bill, less an allowance of £15,000.

How is the apprentice levy paid?

The apprentice levy will be collected on a monthly basis through an employer's Pay as You Earn (PAYE) and will be payable alongside income tax and national insurance.

What can the apprentice levy be used for?

The money raised will be held by the government in a "levy pot" to spend only on the training and assessment of Apprentices. It can only be spent through Government registered training providers or end point assessment organisations.

If I don't pay the levy can I still access funding for Apprenticeships?

You will still be able to access funding to support Apprenticeship training and assessment through the registered providers and end point assessment organization.

You will need to ensure you 'reserve' your funding through the Government portal (which your training provider can help you with) to access funds of up to 95% of the total costs of the apprenticeship. You will, however, be expected to pay a cash contribution to the costs of the training and assessment.

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Who are the Government registered Education Providers?

Currently London South Bank University and Southampton Solent University are interested in providing this apprenticeship. It is hoped that as more employers show support for the scheme, other education providers will be able to offer the training for this apprenticeship in the future.

Who are the Government registered End Point Assessment (EPA) Organisations?

Currently the Institute of Acoustics (IoA) are interested in providing end point assessment for this apprenticeship. It is envisaged that apprentices will also be eligible to proceed to professional review as an Engineering Technician (EngTech) through the EPA, but this remains a personal choice as it is subject to signing the IoA's Code of Conduct and payment of membership and registration fees.

Can the apprenticeship levy be used to pay for salaries of those on levy funded apprenticeships?

No. The levy can only be used to pay for training and assessment with registered providers.



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How long does an Apprenticeship Last?

An apprenticeship must last for 12 months or more, during which a minimum of 20% off the job training must be achieved prior to end point assessment. Anything less is not considered an apprenticeship, and as such cannot attract apprenticeship funding.

How do I recruit an Apprentice?

- Advertise the role via your usual website and recruitment providers. They will work with you to agree a job description
- Engage directly with the Acoustic Technician Apprenticeship education provider to advertise the role
- Online media e.g. Notgoingtouni, Indeed, TargetCareers
- National Apprentice website
- Colleges and schools
- Youth Support Service and The Skills Company
- Social media e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook

What age can an Apprentice be?

There are no age restrictions on apprenticeships. The aim of the levy is to encourage work-based training at all levels, for employees of any age. This makes it an ideal way in which potential employees looking to change or upskill their career can combine a new role with training towards occupational competence, often underpinned by a formal qualification.

Are Apprenticeships only applicable for new recruits?

Apprenticeship training can be accessed both by new recruits and existing staff to improve their skills and performance.

Is there a limit to the number of apprentices an employer can have?

No – employers can take on as many apprentices as they can support.

What qualifications are required to be an Apprentice?

There are minimum educational requirements for apprenticeships, and these vary depending on the occupation and level of the apprenticeship. For all apprenticeships, English and Mathematics at level 2 are required before an apprentice can be put forward for End Point Assessment.

The apprenticeship standard will offer typical entry requirements in advance of starting the apprenticeship; For example, this apprenticeship (Level 4), applicants will typically require 5 GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and Maths GCSE at grade C or above to access the programme.

However, some apprentices will also be eligible to carry out this mandatory English and Mathematics training as part of the apprenticeship.

What are the benefits of employing an apprentice?

Cost base - Apprentices can be cheaper to employ compared to graduates or experienced hires.

Investment - Long term investment in our workforce. Employing an apprentice and investing in their education and training is a golden opportunity to “grow our own” and create long term loyalty in our early and professional careers workforce.

Work winning - Increasingly, when developing bids, we are asked to provide evidence of commitment to the development of early careers talent, or engaging with young people from disadvantaged areas and under-represented groups. By recruiting apprentices, you are able to demonstrate more fully this aspect of your business.



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How do Apprentices combine their studies with work?

Over the course of the apprenticeship, apprentices are required to spend 20% of their time undertaking off-the-job training.

What is End Point Assessment?

End-point assessment (EPA) tests the knowledge, skills and behaviours that an apprentice has gained during their training. Unique to each standard, EPA demonstrates the competence of an apprentice in their role. This competence is valued by current and future employers.

Only approved EPAOs can carry out assessments as set out in the assessment plan. EPA is a vital part of an apprenticeship and should be planned for at the start of an apprenticeship programme. Employers are responsible for deciding when their apprentices are ready to pass through gateway and take EPA.

What is Gateway?

Gateway takes place before an EPA can start. The employer and training provider will review their apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviours to see if they have met the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship set out in the apprenticeship standard and are ready to take the assessment. There are minimum requirements for Gateway and EPA: the apprentice needs to:

- display occupational competency (meet all the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour statements readily)
- have evidence of or pass functional skill levels in English and Mathematics
- complete mandatory training (20% off the job across the length of the apprenticeship)
- take any mandatory qualifications set out in the standard
- meet the minimum duration for their apprenticeship training (12 months or more)

Only apprentices who complete Gateway successfully can start the EPA.

What happens after EPA?

The apprentice, if successful in completing the EPA, will be awarded an 'Apprenticeship Completion Certificate'. At this stage, the apprentice is independently deemed to be occupationally competent, and have met all the requirements as an Acoustics Technician.

At this point, apprentices can either become full employees of their company, move into a new role, or could progress to another (higher) apprenticeship through a new apprenticeship contract.

What support do I need to provide to an Apprentice?

As a member of your workforce, the Apprentice will follow your normal HR policies and procedures and require access to the normal company induction and line management structures.

However, all apprentices will need to sign a contract with their employer and training provider to secure and commit to the training required to complete the apprenticeship, until end point assessment is complete; only through this will apprenticeship funding be granted to the employer to train and assess the apprentice.

On average an Apprentice will need to spend approximately one day per week training, this being a combination of study with work on projects in the workplace that support the development of their competence, and is recognized in their individual training plan.

The training provider will assign an Assessor, who will usually meet with them once a month during working hours, to review progress, coach and support the Apprentice and set new tasks for the month ahead, ensuring that they are making good progress against the required standards.



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It's also important that your Apprentice receives regular feedback from their line manager and/or their work-based mentor, in order for them to improve and implement their skills effectively in the workplace.

We advise that the line manager or workplace mentor also meets with the apprentice and provider assigned assessor regularly to ensure progress is being made and that each party can agree next steps.

At the end of the formal training, the apprentice, assessor and line manager or work-based mentor should review the apprentices' competence against the statements in the Apprenticeship Standard, go through what to expect during End Point Assessment, and only when the employer is comfortable that the apprentice is ready, the employer put the apprentice forward for End Point Assessment.

The apprentice and employer will need to keep track of timelines, deadlines and progress during the end point assessment period, as this is also a contracted element of the apprenticeship that must be completed. Failure to do so risks failure of the apprenticeship, and can result in the apprentice needing to re-sit or re-take the EPA often at the cost of the employer.

What other levels of Apprenticeship are available and what is the Equivalent Education Level?

Apprenticeships are about occupational competence, that is a range of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required to operate successfully in that occupational role.

Some apprenticeships may be underpinned by a formal academic qualification, which takes them some way to being occupationally competent. These equivalent education levels are presented here for ease.

Name	Level	EQUIVALENT EDUCATION LEVEL
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4	First year of a degree programme
Higher	5	Foundation degree and above
Higher/Degree	6	Bachelors degree level
Higher/Degree	7	Masters degree and PhD level

What Level is the Acoustics Technician Apprenticeship?

Level 4

What are the Entry Requirements?

Whilst any entry requirements will be a matter for individual employers, typically an apprentice might be expected to have already achieved qualifications at Level 3, preferably in the fields of mathematics, science, technology, engineering or design (collectively known as STEM). This will allow them to progress well and tackle the technical and mathematical aspects of training for Acoustics Technicians, and even allow them to progress to higher levels of education and/or training.

Apprentices without Level 2 English and Maths will need to achieve this level prior to taking the end point assessment. For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement, the apprenticeship English and Maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3 and British Sign Language qualifications are an alternative to an English qualification for those for whom this is their primary language.

I have never been strong in STEM subjects, can I still apply?

Level 3 qualification in STEM subjects would be required to embark on the apprenticeship, however an employer may choose to assist you in getting to this level in order to start your journey into acoustics.



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How Long does the Apprenticeship Last?

The typical duration for this apprenticeship is 24 months.

What Professional Recognition can an Acoustics Technician Apprentice apply for?

The Acoustics Technician maps to the Engineering Council's Engineering Technician (EngTech) professional standard, and apprentices who successfully complete the apprenticeship will be eligible to apply for this professional title. This however is subject to committing to the apprentice complying with the professional Code of Conduct, being a member of a relevant professional engineering institution, and being sponsored for professional review.

Persons employed on the apprenticeship can receive student membership of the Institute of Acoustics when they enroll. On successful completion of the apprenticeship (that is the end point assessment) apprentices can:

- apply to upgrade their membership to Associate Membership level (AMIOA).
- apply to the Institute of Acoustics for professional recognition as an Engineering Technician (EngTech)*

**The IoA is currently in process of registration with the Engineering Council to award this professional title.*

I am about to complete my degree, or already have a degree, is the apprenticeship right for me?

Depending on your degree the Institute of Acoustics Diploma or Masters degree may be more a more suitable route into the industry. This may be done in conjunction with employment via a different route and so you should still enquire with companies who provide acoustic services.

Are there other levels of Apprenticeship in Acoustics?

Not currently, however there are plans for a Level 6 apprenticeship.

Where can I find further information?

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/employers/>

<https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice>

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-end-point-assessments-a-guide-for-employers>

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/acoustics-technician/>

https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/3194/st0613_acoustics_technician_14_apforpublication_110619.pdf

<https://www.solent.ac.uk/courses/apprenticeship/acoustics-hnc-apprenticeship>

<https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/study/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-standards>

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