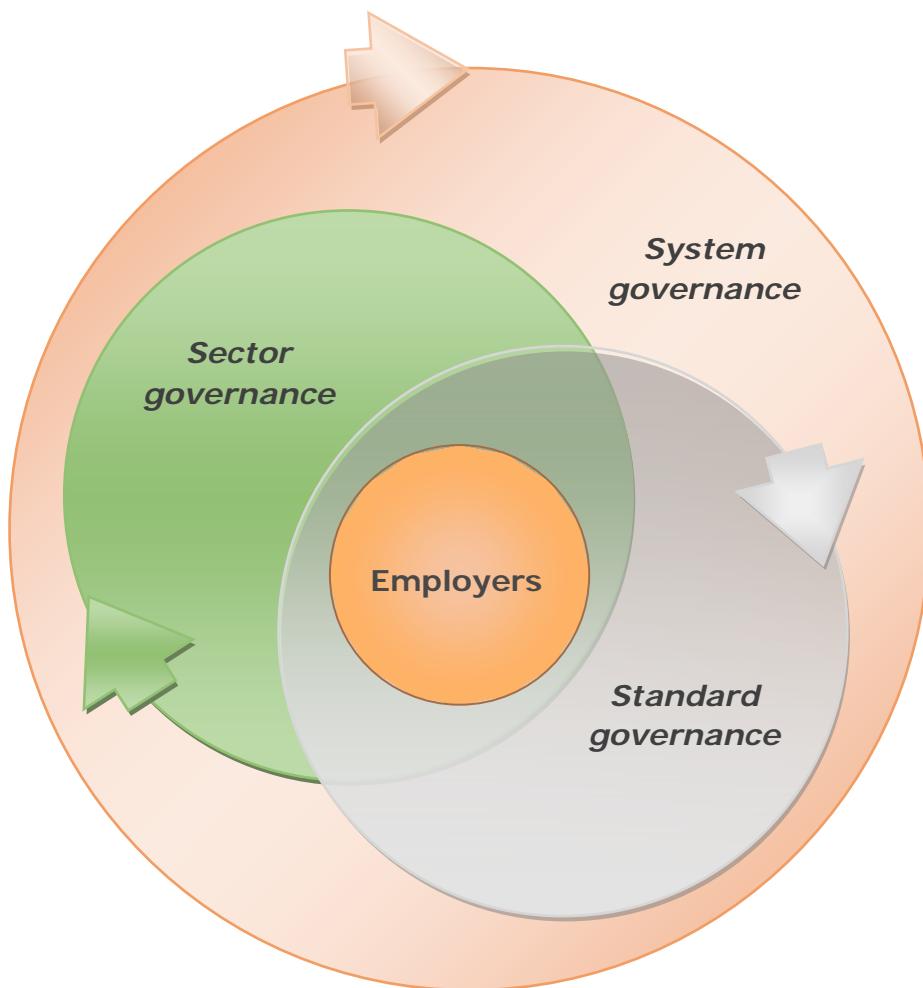




Implementing governance in the reformed Apprenticeship system

A resource for employer groups

May 2015



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Introduction

In *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan*, published in October 2013, BIS launched an Apprenticeship reform programme built on a fundamental desire to put employers in the driving seat of developing new Apprenticeship standards. Employers have a high degree of freedom to develop Apprenticeships that best meet their needs and that are seen to be '*high quality, with sufficient content and transferability to justify public investment*'.

The early phases of Apprenticeship standard development were led by Trailblazer employer groups. Sector skills councils, professional and trade bodies, and representatives from education and training have been working with employer groups and government on the rollout of the Apprenticeship reform.

The purpose of governance

Broadly, governance refers to the top-level of leadership, control, and decision-making. For Apprenticeship standards, this could encompass:

- A strategy for the development and implementation of Apprenticeship standards.
- Oversight of, and accountability for, the effectiveness of Apprenticeship standards in terms of sector workforce development, leading to the review, development, and maintenance of Apprenticeship standards.
- Anticipation and mitigation of risks to the successful implementation of Apprenticeship standards and the escalation and resolution of issues at any stage of a standard's lifecycle.

The policy framework and strategic approach to the governance of Apprenticeships after the Trailblazer pilot programme is currently being considered by BIS and their stakeholders. However, there are governance activities that can be identified now and that can be developed and implemented within the developing policy framework.

This resource will support employer groups and those working with them as they begin to think through their involvement in Apprenticeship governance.

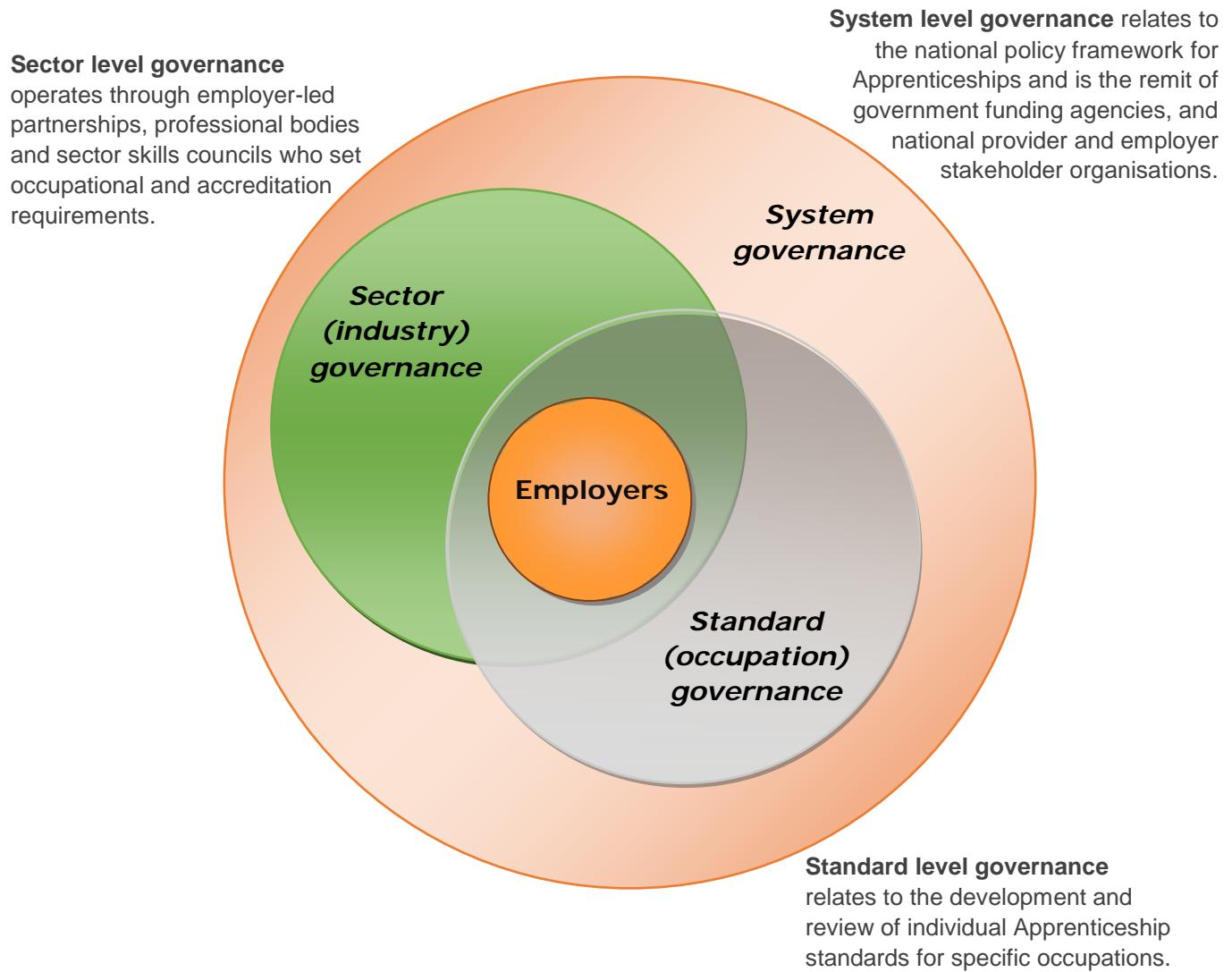
It will assist sector skills councils, industrial partnerships, other sector bodies, and employer groups as they begin to contribute to the development of governance arrangements.

Important: This FISSS resource should be used in conjunction with the latest guidance issued by [BIS and the Skills Funding Agency](#).

Levels of Apprenticeship governance

Apprenticeship governance can be considered to operate at three interlocking levels:

- **System:** the national policy framework
- **Sector:** the implementation and co-ordination within and across the sector
- **Standard:** the development and review of individual occupational standards.



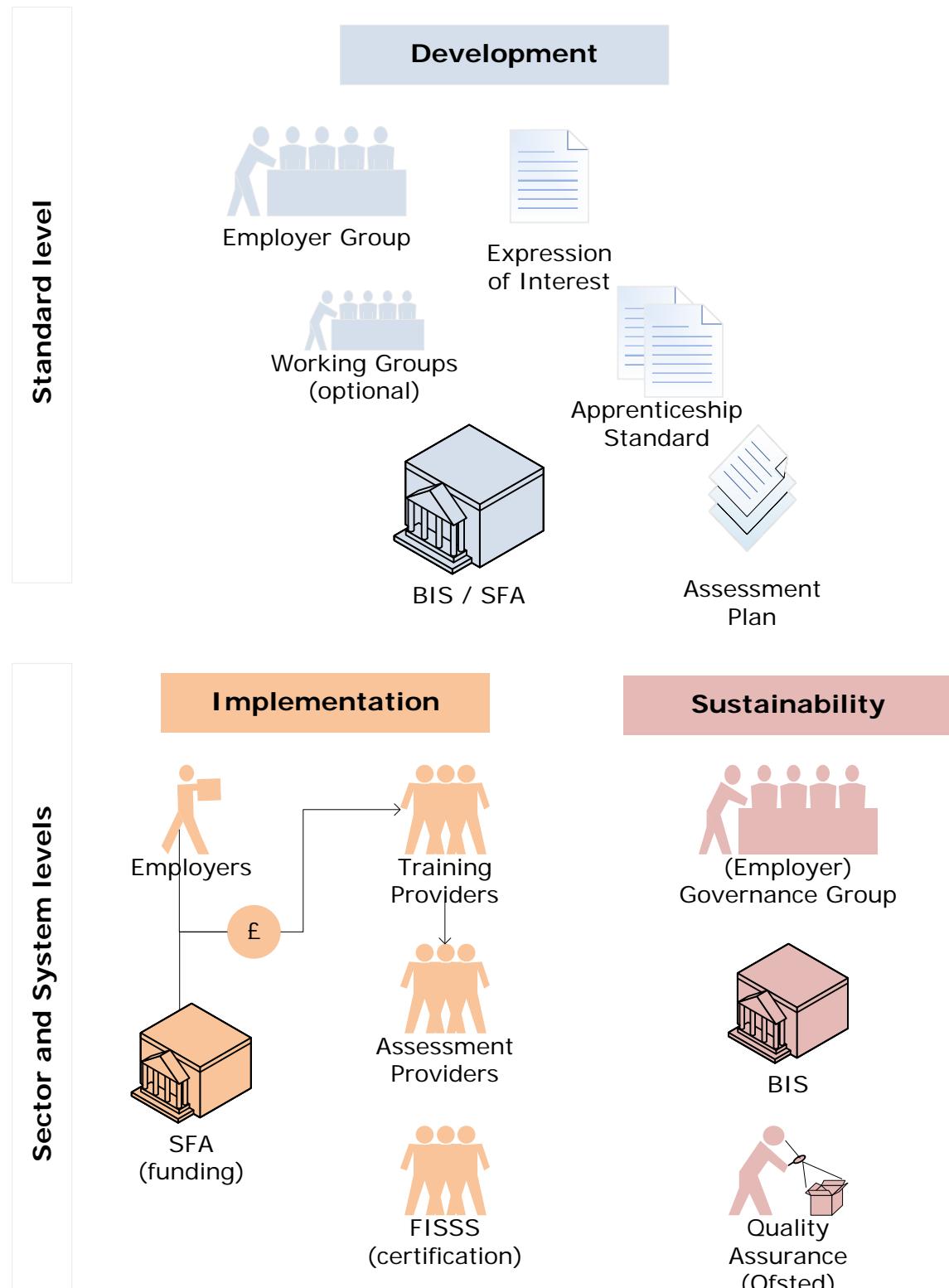
The [Richard Review of Apprenticeships \(Nov 2012\)](#) emphasised the need for employers to be at the heart of Apprenticeships. This means that employers should have a role at each governance level, moving from control (at standard level governance) to influence (at system level governance).

Tip

The 2013 FISS report [21st Century Apprenticeships](#) offers a comparative review of Apprenticeships in Australia, Canada, Ireland, and the US, with reference to the Richard Review of Apprenticeships and implementation in England.

Development, implementation and sustainability of Apprenticeship standards

Employers working together to **develop** a new Apprenticeship standard form a steering group, which in itself is the first stage of governance. Once the Apprenticeship standard and its associated assessment plan have been approved by BIS, employers and BIS will need to establish **sustainable** governance arrangements to implement and oversee a strategy for successful **implementation** delivery, long-term maintenance and quality assurance of the standard.



The **roles** of employers, the government and other stakeholders and their inputs to standard, sector and system level governance are fluid as the stages and levels overlap and interact over time.

Stage for Apprenticeship standard	Development	Implementation	System
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new Apprenticeship standards & assessment plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop links between standards & with other sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve standards • Support employer groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver training & assessment • Monitor & review delivery and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor delivery in terms of sector workforce development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage & fund the system • Evaluate & refine delivery at a system level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand sector workforce needs • Propose & plan new standards for the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand economic, social & skills drivers • Develop a policy framework
	Standard	Sector	System
	Level of governance		

Roles during the stages of Apprenticeship standards at the three levels of governance

In any scenario, the starting point is system level governance, which is under the control of central government and provides the underpinning national policy framework. Beyond this, the governance starting point for employer groups has been at either sector or standard level.

For many employer groups, the initial focus is likely to be on developing an individual Apprenticeship standard. Only later will they consider how the standard will be monitored and maintained, particularly with regard to the context of other standards in the sector.

In some cases, an established body such as an industrial or sector employer-led partnership will develop sector level governance encompassing a range of occupational routes before developing individual standards.

This guide initially considers governance at system level, then standard level governance and, finally, sector level governance.

System level governance

Apprenticeship governance in the UK is devolved and separately controlled by the four UK administrations with variations in structure and funding.

Overall Apprenticeship policy and governance in England is the joint responsibility of the Department of Education (DfE), for apprentices under 19, and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for apprentices aged 19 and over.

System level governance originated with the [Richard Review of Apprenticeships \(Nov 2012\)](#) at national policy level and resulted in a request for employers to come forward to develop new Apprenticeship standards.

Examples of governance issues that may be tackled at the system level might include overseeing and ensuring consistency in the overall systems and processes, such as:

- Ongoing maintenance and development of Apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
- Apprentice registration
- Apprentice assessment
- Apprenticeship certification.

It is important that employer groups maintain awareness of national developments so that governance at both the sector and the standard level can be adapted appropriately.

There are a number of key government policies and processes related to the development and implementation of Apprenticeship standards and the funding mechanism for the reformed Apprenticeship system. During the reform period, these are constantly evolving so it is essential to check that you are referring to the most recent guidance. The primary source of information is the gov.uk website, particularly [Apprenticeship changes](#) and [Apprenticeship standards](#).

BIS have confirmed that (as with existing SASE/SASW and Scottish Modern Apprenticeships) FISSS will continue to manage the certification systems for the achievement of Apprenticeship standards. See their page on [Apprenticeship certification](#).

FISSS have produced [resources to support the development of Apprenticeship standards](#) for sector skills councils and employers.

Standard level governance

Standard level governance falls into three phases:

- Design and development of an Apprenticeship standard
- Developing an assessment approach
- Preparing for implementation.

Phase 1: Design and development of an Apprenticeship standard

Subject to government approval, an employer group is established to design an Apprenticeship standard for one or more specified occupations.

The make-up of the employer group will include representative employers from across the sector and will often include other sector stakeholders such as sector skills councils, professional and/or trade bodies.

An effective and active employer group – often supported by employer working groups – is the key to governing, mobilising, and maintaining the momentum of the development process for the standard.

The right membership, and an early definition of what the group is accountable for will result in a quality output with minimum conflict and maximum collaboration.

Detailed guidance on the requirements of this phase can be found at [Future of apprenticeships in England: guidance for trailblazers](#).

Phase 2: Developing an assessment approach

Once an Apprenticeship standard has been approved, the focus of the employer group will move to the development of an assessment approach, although the group may have already put thought and time into this as part of earlier development work.

Early governance tasks during this stage of development may include:

- Redefining the membership of the employer group for this next phase of work
- Resetting key objectives and proposed outputs
- Establishing working groups to support the work
- Considering training and assessment delivery systems; these may include training providers, awarding bodies and professional bodies
- Determining the best way to implement end-point assessment governance once the Apprenticeship standard is implemented
- Identifying systems for monitoring performance and quality
- Setting medium-term objectives for the Apprenticeship standard and forecasting how the occupation might change
- Providing a focal point on behalf of all employers to negotiate and hold discussions with other stakeholders.

Sector level governance might also be applicable to assessment planning, which could require cross-standard collaboration, particularly in relation to affordability.

"Reviewing the Terms of Reference and redefining membership of the steering group was critical for us. It was important that the employers retained the decision-making power but equally, we recognised the need to draw on advisory support from specialists in assessment and training to inform our activity."

Tim Edwards, Chair of Housing Employer Steering Group

FISSS have developed an [Assessment and Apprenticeship standards](#) resource to help sector skills councils support employer groups with assessment planning.

Tip

Use [Tool 1: Checklist for employer group membership and leadership](#) to ensure that the group represents the sector and has a workable constitution.

Phase 3: Preparing for implementation

When the assessment plan has been approved, the employer group may start to consider implementation, although they do not have a formal remit from government to do so.

At this stage, governance may move more clearly into sector level. Where several Apprenticeship standards are developed by the same employer group or by groups with shared/similar interests or industry links, there would be value in having shared governance arrangements in place.

Unless the employer group is aligned to an industrial partnership, a sector skills council, or a professional or trade body, it is likely that they will need to form strategic relationships to ensure the sustainability of governance arrangements and, potentially, they may need to establish a longer-term legal entity.

The governance strategy at the standard level will focus the employer group on the following questions:

- What is the desired governance structure? For example, will the employer group tasked with designing the Apprenticeship standard pass its functions on to one or more governance groups?
- Where sector-level governance arrangements exist; are they fit for purpose? If nothing suitable exists, what is the best approach to governance design and development?
- Will the revised or new governance group(s) have a practical role in designing and implementing the systems of governance? Will the group commission, approve and monitor a quality assurance system or evaluative framework.
- How will the governance group(s) manage internal and external communication, especially for consultation activities and for the decisions that impact on the design of the standard and the evaluations at the end of each period of review?
- How will governance be paid for?

Tip

Use [Tool 2: Checklist for reviewing employer group membership in readiness for assessment planning](#) to identify the changes that may need to be made when re-grouping.

Sector level governance

A newly developed Apprenticeship standard will normally be part of a suite of standards applicable to the sector. It will become important to establish sector level governance to monitor Apprenticeship delivery and its impact on sector workforce development. There will also need to be structures in place to monitor and review all standards within their first three years of implementation (and subsequently) as revisions are agreed.

Sector level governance is important for future skills planning and for maintaining an appropriate spread of Apprenticeship standards across the areas of growth, need, and demand – occupational mapping and consistency will be just one aspect of this.

Where an occupation relates to more than one industry or sector, there will need to be oversight and collaboration from more than one employer group to agree a common core of skills, knowledge and behaviours, and a common assessment approach that will ensure equivalence and recognition across sector boundaries.

Setting up sector level governance

At the current time (April 2015), there is no government advice on how this might be done. If sector-wide governance is not already in place, an employer group progressing towards implementation of a standard could consider models of governance that will provide continuity and maintenance for the standard, taking into account the relationship with other existing or planned Apprenticeship standards.

Considerations might include:

- Any sector level governance that already exists
- The structures and groups within the remit of governance
- Members of the governance group (recruitment and refinement)
- Quality assurance processes for assessment
- An evaluation plan for the Apprenticeship standard and its implementation
- Management of change in the Apprenticeship standard and its assessment
- Year-one priorities and actions – governing underpinning systems of assessment, delivery, training and review – and year-two and year-three priorities
- The means by which governance might be funded.

It is important to communicate and work with BIS and the Skills Funding Agency to ensure that arrangements are not considered inadequate or inappropriate.

Tip

Use [*Tool 3: Checklist for establishing and sustaining governance*](#) to help you review your proposed or existing governance arrangements:

- when planning implementation to help you set the governance remit and structures and to inform priority setting and action planning;
- to review existing arrangements and identify whether these have met the needs of the employer group.

The role and position of sector assessment bodies

Impartiality of assessment is a feature of the new Apprenticeship system. Initially, government anticipated that assessment would be delivered by an independent third party. The Trailblazers have shown that independence can be secured in different ways to meet the needs of different sectors and different occupations.

At the time of writing (April 2015), BIS have asked the Skills Funding Agency to develop and trial a *Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations* – a list of organisations who have met the requirements for the delivery of independent end-point assessment and can deliver against one or more approved assessment plans for Apprenticeship standards.

For phase 2 Trailblazers onwards, employers must select an organisation from this Register to undertake the independent end-point assessment of their apprentices in line with the published Apprenticeship standard and assessment plan for that occupation.

Although, employers may only select an organisation to deliver independent end-point assessment if it is on the Register; being on the Register is not a guarantee that an organisation will actually deliver end-point assessment, as it is up to each employer to determine which organisation they wish to work with and the process for that selection.

Some employer groups have chosen to set up an industry recommended assessment body. However, whilst industry recognised, this does not prevent individual employers from choosing another assessment provider so long as they have been identified as being capable of delivering against that particular standard and are on the *Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations*.

Examples of sector-level governance for Apprenticeships

Some organisations already have sector-level governance responsibility for occupational pathways (including Apprenticeships). These are described below.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs): These are independent, employer led UK wide organisations. They work with employers to develop high quality skills standards that will support productivity and profitability, growth, and enhance competitiveness in UK and overseas markets by:

- defining occupational standards and job competencies – these are used in many different ways by employers;
- defining the qualifications which recognise career development in the sector;
- having oversight of, and reviewing responsibilities for, all industry relevant Apprenticeship frameworks under the legacy system.

National Skills Academies: These are employer-led organisations with a leading role in developing the infrastructure needed to deliver specialist skills for individual industries and sectors. They bring employers together with specialist training organisations to develop solutions that tackle the skills challenges facing their sector and to increase skills levels. They seek to focus, coordinate, and promote UK-wide training in their sector by helping others develop standardised training materials that can be flexed to deliver exactly what an individual or group of employers want.

Professional/trade bodies: A trade association, also known as an industry trade group, is an organisation founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry. A professional association (also called a professional body, professional organisation, or professional society) is a non-profit organisation seeking to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest.

Industrial Partnerships: Industrial Partnerships are owned and led by employers and were created as part of the Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot (EOP) as a key model for delivery of the government's vision for industry-wide collaboration on skills development. Employers define their industrial partnership's vision and set its priorities and direction of travel. Many include Apprenticeships in their planning and have already engaged in Trailblazer development work.



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MS Word version of this tool.

Supporting tools

Tool 1: Checklist for employer group membership and leadership

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>How will the right employer leaders for the steering group be targeted and recruited? What criteria will be used?</p> <p><i>The employer group should be led by employers who have the confidence of the sector, bring industry expertise to the table, and represent the views of all employers taking account of size, location, and sub-sector.</i></p> <p><i>Trailblazers recognised this as a challenge as many smaller employers struggle to resource the level of commitment required and may lack the confidence to engage.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst good employer representation is of primary importance, high membership numbers may undermine effective operation and decision-making. Overflow could be redirected into employer working groups, but this will need careful handling to retain the engagement of employers not involved in the steering group.</i></p> <p><i>Will the employer group require secretariat support?</i></p>	
<p>How might a wide range of employers, including smaller businesses, be recruited to contribute to the development of the Apprenticeship standard and ensure it is applicable to the wider sector?</p> <p><i>Engagement with the process may be broader than the steering group. For example, you may decide to establish small advisory or working group(s), particularly if you intend to develop more than one Apprenticeship standard.</i></p>	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>Are prospective members of the groups required to declare vested or potentially conflicting interests?</p> <p><i>Are there checks or balances in place to guard against a member potentially gaining a business/financial advantage by working on the development of the standard?</i></p>	
<p>What criteria will inform the election of the Chair and facilitator for the employer group?</p> <p><i>The Chair and facilitator play crucial roles in the effective working of the group. An appropriate, transparent, and fair selection process is important.</i></p>	
<p>Are professional bodies and/or industry regulators engaged as development partners to the employer group?</p> <p><i>This will ensure the alignment of the Apprenticeship standard with any professional requirements for the sector.</i></p>	
<p>When and how will the expertise of other organisations or advisors be invited into collaboration with the employer steering and/or working groups?</p> <p><i>Early consideration is required, particularly for the development of the assessment approach or the overview of training where specialised expertise may be required. However, employers must still lead and control all development decisions.</i></p>	



Tool 2: Checklist for reviewing employer group membership in readiness for assessment planning

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>Have members of the employers group sustained their commitment or is this an opportunity to review whether other employers can provide better support?</p> <p><i>The employer group must be fully engaged. Larger employers may have the scope to change their representative, especially where more understanding of the training and assessment landscape would be useful.</i></p> <p><i>The group must retain a mix of larger and smaller employers so that proposals can be evaluated across a range of employment scenarios. Other stakeholders such as trade unions and professional bodies may be able to make important contributions.</i></p> <p><i>Renewed leadership and revised terms of reference will be needed. The governance group will require secretariat and management arrangements.</i></p>	
<p>Are professional bodies and/or industry regulators engaged to ensure alignment of the assessment mechanisms with any recognition requirements for the sector?</p> <p><i>Are there existing mechanisms/oversight bodies that operate within the sector? Have they been involved in consultation on the development of the Apprenticeship standard?</i></p> <p><i>Be careful that potential partners do not have vested or conflicting interests in participating in the development process.</i></p>	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>How much experience of assessment exists within the employer groups?</p> <p><i>The steering group should include employers who have an understanding of training and assessment.</i></p>	
<p>Should membership of the working group be widened?</p> <p><i>Utilising trade/sector bodies, training providers, awarding bodies, or consultants etc. can bring specific expertise to the process, and the employer group will exercise oversight of the plans. Decide when and how to work with such assessment experts – this may be by invitation to join sub/working groups or by running support or advice consultations.</i></p> <p><i>Be careful that potential partners do not have vested or conflicting interests in participating in the development process.</i></p>	
<p>How will independence of assessment be achieved?</p> <p><i>Some sectors have chosen to set up an industry recommended assessment body. This does not prevent individual employers of apprentices from choosing an alternative assessment provider.</i></p>	
<p>Are prospective members of the groups required to declare vested or potentially conflicting interests?</p> <p><i>Are there checks or balances in place to guard against a member potentially gaining a business/financial advantage by working on the development of the assessment approach?</i></p>	

Tool 3: Checklist for establishing and sustaining governance

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>Who will form a long-term employer governance group?</p> <p><i>Does a potentially suitable governance group already exist?</i></p> <p><i>Taking forward governance may involve representation from different employers and sector/professional bodies.</i></p> <p><i>Revised terms of reference will be needed.</i></p> <p><i>The governance group will require secretariat and management arrangements.</i></p>	
<p>Structures and groups involved with governance</p> <p><i>Will the employer steering group evolve into a sector level governance group?</i></p> <p><i>How will this interact with any existing bodies? Where are the possible overlaps? Are there any areas of potential conflict?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a need to map across other governance bodies and into other sectors where there might be overlap?</i></p> <p><i>What will be the legal framework for the group?</i></p> <p><i>How will the governance activities be funded?</i></p>	
<p>Membership of the governance groups (recruitment and refinement)</p> <p><i>How will members of the group be chosen?</i></p> <p><i>What areas of expertise (such as assessment, delivery, or evaluation) might be required?</i></p>	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>Are professional/sector bodies and/or industry regulators fully engaged as partners?</p> <p><i>How will alignment of the Apprenticeship standard with professional requirements for the sector be sustained?</i></p> <p><i>Is there coherence with the arrangements for other Apprenticeship standards in the sector?</i></p>	
<p>Governance strategy for the standard(s)</p> <p><i>What needs to be governed? Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future development of the standards • Training • Assessment • Evaluation • Compliance • Complaints. 	
<p>Year-one priorities</p> <p><i>How and when will we:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish the governance structures? • agree costs and budgets for governance inception? • prepare a governance strategy? • contribute to implementation strategies for new standards? • identify quality assurance priorities • identify/manage risks (whose? when? what?) • evaluate success (targets for recruitment, equality etc.)? • review standards and recommendations for improvement? • fund the governance process? 	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>Quality assurance</p> <p><i>What will the governance body's role be in quality assuring Apprenticeship delivery and assessment? How will this be undertaken? What systems and processes will be needed, and at what cost?</i></p> <p><i>Determine a quality strategy to monitor consistency of performance of training and assessment functions, building on what may have been considered by the original employer group.</i></p> <p><i>Establish mechanisms for evaluating success, for updating the content of the standard and assessment strategy, and for reviewing the success of new structures and engagement with organisations such as assessment bodies and training providers.</i></p>	
<p>How could a wider group of employers, including smaller businesses, be encouraged to implement an Apprenticeship standard in a way that will ensure that it is utilised as widely as possible within the sector?</p> <p><i>Engagement with the marketing and information to employer colleagues may require more than the service provided through the National Apprenticeship Service. Develop a communication process to include written materials, guidance, support and any assessment materials and plans</i></p> <p><i>Consider Apprenticeship recruitment targets and key performance indicators. How will such data be collated?</i></p> <p><i>What are the likely completions and certifications in year one (two, three etc.)</i></p>	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>How will independence of assessment be managed?</p> <p><i>How will independence be established and maintained?</i></p> <p><i>What role will the governance group play alongside the Skills Funding Agency?</i></p> <p><i>Some sectors have chosen to set up an industry recommended assessment body. This does not prevent individual employers of apprentices from choosing an alternative assessment provider. How will these work together in governance terms?</i></p>	
<p>Managing change in the standards and their assessment</p> <p><i>How will changes to Apprenticeship standards and assessment arrangements be proposed, consulted on, and actioned?</i></p>	
<p>What arrangements will need to be put in place to deal with issues and queries from apprentices, employers, delivery partners, and other stakeholders?</p> <p><i>Consider how to provide the resource and continuity to deal with queries that will arise over a sustained period before and beyond the approval of the standard for delivery.</i></p>	

Area for consideration	Notes
<p>What mechanisms are needed for capturing and reporting apprentice, employer, and stakeholder feedback?</p> <p><i>Who needs the feedback? BIS, Ofsted, Ofqual, SFA, training and/or assessment organisations, or the governance group itself?</i></p> <p><i>How will feedback be incorporated into the reviews of Apprenticeship standards and assessment plans?</i></p>	
<p>How can the effectiveness of the governance arrangements themselves be reviewed?</p> <p><i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-review of performance</i> • <i>Quality of information gathering</i> • <i>Impact of actions taken</i> • <i>Implementation issues</i> • <i>Managing issues and solutions</i> • <i>Establishing a code of practice.</i> 	

Governance case studies

The following examples outline governance approaches being proposed by different sectors.

Hospitality

Hospitality employers who have developed the Apprenticeship standards for *Senior Chef* and similar occupations have committed to maintaining them to ensure they remain fit for purpose. To facilitate this process, they have elected the sector skills council, People 1st, to act as a governing body, directed by an Apprenticeship council comprised of employers. This governance body will provide a central point of coordination for the effective output of hospitality Apprenticeships and will work with industry partners and Apprenticeship stakeholders to increase growth in Apprenticeship take up. Specifically, the governance body will support the system through:

a. Maintaining the industry's standards and assessment

The governing body will continue to maintain the standards and assessment plan and will undertake any new development as identified by the industry.

b. Licensing independent end-assessors

The independent assessor will be licensed by the governing body based on the individual meeting the criteria for occupational qualifications, experience, and continuous professional development. It is expected that the majority of independent assessors will be licensed via training providers, employers and some direct licenses.

c. Register of apprentices that start independent end-assessment.

The register will be maintained by People 1st to determine at any one point the number of apprentices that have started their independent end-assessment and therefore the date that they should complete it. The registration fee for an apprentice will incorporate the cost of maintaining the standard, new development and the quality assurance of assessment

d. Quality assurance of end-assessment

The governing body will work with multiple, Ofqual-recognised, awarding organisations to quality assure the assessment performance of independent assessors and the results of independent end-assessment to ensure a standardised, and consistent Apprenticeship outcome is achieved. The industry governance body will use a range of employer-defined requirements and criteria to invite and approve awarding organisations to develop the assessments and supporting materials.

Source: [Annex A: Hospitality Apprenticeship Assessment: Amplification and guidance for senior chefs: Draft for consultation \(People 1st, February 2015\)](#)

Science Industry Partnership (SIP)

The SIP has created a new employer-led group, the *SIP Apprenticeships Standards and Assessment Group*. This group will work to ensure that Apprenticeship standards and assessments continue to meet the needs of the science industry. The SIP is a non-legal entity, partnership organisation. The governance structure of SIP is an employer-led arrangement for engaging in skills development and delivery. The SIP board, nominated by the sector, is the driving force. It provides strategic context for decisions about skills needs. As part of the commitment to a sustainable industrial partnership demonstrated through employer investment, SIP employers have established an employer led independent assessment body, SIAS - the science industry assessment service.

SIAS has been created as a wholly owned subsidiary of Cogent Skills (the sector skills body). SIAS assessment services will create assessment processes and decisions with the intention that they ensure comparability across employers and providers, and consistency of decisions taken over time. SIP employers through the SIP Quality Group will agree the assessment specifications that describe the tests that must be passed to meet the industry standard.

Source: [Life Sciences and Industrial Science Trailblazer Apprenticeships Assessment Plan](#)

Hair and Beauty

The Trailblazer group for Hair and Beauty are supported by collaboration between one of the main trade associations in the sector, the National Hairdressers Federation, and their Sector Skills Council, Habia (the Hair and Beauty Industry Authority).

Although governance arrangements for the recently developed Hair and Beauty standards have not yet been finalised it is likely these will involve these two bodies working with employers from across the industries.

In the previous Apprenticeship system, governance of an Apprenticeship framework would lie with one sector body, either the Sector Skills Council or a similar body. The new collaborative model reflects wider industry interests and concerns.

Financial Services

After developing two Apprenticeship standards as one of the first group of Trailblazers, Financial Services now have apprentices working towards the new standards. They also have further standards under development and are building assessment approaches for a substantial number of others.

An employer steering group leads on each standard (or group of standards where they are closely related). Steering groups consists only of employers although some have professional body representation. Membership of each group changes as further standards are developed, new employers join, and others retire.

As part of the development work, the employer groups draw on expert input from providers and assessment organisations; usually these have an existing track record of working with employers on Apprenticeship delivery.

There is a strong regulatory framework within the industry and this feeds through into job roles and behaviours. These are built into the standards and the respective assessment approach. In moving to the delivery of Apprenticeship standards, Financial Services employers have recognised that they have an ongoing role in the assessment of their standards and have been exploring options on the best way to do this. One possibility is a triumvirate approach where the employer, the professional body, and the delivery provider must agree that the standard is being met. It is the employers' view that the professional body is well placed to ensure that training and assessment are judged independently. It is acknowledged that this form of ongoing assessment model may be resource intensive, that it may encounter problems with high volumes of apprentices, and that a more scalable solution may be needed.

In the absence of a strong Sector Skills Council or an Industrial Partnership, a number of models for the governance of the standards are being discussed, particularly around an ongoing review process. A likely option is that this role will be taken by the lead professional body for each standard as these bodies already have processes in place to do this for their qualifications.

There are expectations that, as the numbers of new standards increase, the government (BIS) will need to address system-wide governance issues of ongoing gate keeping and progress through the development process, as well as an overall quality-assurance process that will assure effectiveness and value for money.

Energy and Utilities

The group that developed the first Apprenticeship standard for Energy and Utilities (Power Network Craftsperson Apprenticeship standard) have set up the Energy & Efficiency Independent Assessment Service (EEIAS). They believe this will assure the reliability, rigour, and robustness of employer assessment and quality assurance practices and ensure comparability and consistency across employers in their judgements of competence in the context of Trailblazer Apprenticeships.

The EEIAS will be employer owned and governed. It includes professional body as well as broader industry representation. In addition, there will be a Quality and Assessment Panel (chaired by the National Grid), overseeing the implementation and running of the standard

The EEIAS has the specific role of assuring the integrity of each employer's systems and the comparability of assessment across employers, seeking consistency of outcomes in competence and skills across individual occupational standards.

There is an agreement that peer review of assessment decisions and judgements on competence must be an important element of the independent assessment service. There will be a final moderation panel involving employers that will examine and ensure consistency in both pass and distinction awards.

Source: [Power Networks Trailblazer Assessment Plan](#)

Conclusion

Employer leadership and the future of Apprenticeships

Great effort has been placed on engaging employers in the process of defining new Apprenticeship standards and their associated assessment plans. Employers have responded well to the opportunity to lead this development through the early phases.

The spotlight is now moving towards the critical phases of implementation and volume delivery.

The [Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan \(BIS, Oct 2013\)](#) sets out the new direction where:

- the government's role is "*to set the principles and criteria for Apprenticeships to ensure they are rigorous and responsive*";
- a learner's role is "*to work hard in their pursuit of the Apprenticeship standard*";
- the employer's role is "*to drive the system, ensuring that Apprenticeships deliver the skills required to meet their needs and the needs of the future economy*".

Employers are faced with thinking through how they can effectively "*drive the system*", a system that they have played a developmental role in creating.

The system needs employer input that both involves, and meets the needs of, many types of employer of varying size. Employers will need to collaborate to make sure that delivery arrangements are affordable, cost-effective, and create a sufficient and effective pipeline of apprentices with the skills, knowledge and behaviours defined that meet sector needs.

Employer input at the scale and intensity seen in the Trailblazer development phases cannot be sustained. Innovative thinking is needed to identify practicable governance approaches (including the funding models to sustain these new forms of governance) that will ensure employers have a continuing leadership role as delivery scales up 2017 and beyond.

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