

Improving Apprenticeship standards through consultation

A guide and toolkit for employers

November 2014



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Introduction

Consultation is a formal, structured process by which wider sector employers and other stakeholders can comment on, and contribute to, the implementation proposals of the employer steering group who represent them.

Consultation is a vital part of establishing the demand for, and the quality and relevance of, an Apprenticeship standard.

Good consultation makes a difference. There have been several instances where aspects of a standard or assessment approach have changed significantly as a result of consultation.

"Initially, we had believed that the existing Apprenticeship frameworks met employer needs and so would need little amendment to create the new standards. Engaging with large numbers of employers through consultation opened our eyes to the difficulties faced by smaller employers and those with only a small cohort of apprentices."

Digital Industries Trailblazer

Using this guide

This guide has been provided by the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards (FISSS) to support lead employer groups as they plan a consultation strategy to support the development and implementation work for their Apprenticeship standard.

It aims to complement, rather than replicate, the extensive guidance already available on stakeholder consultation by offering an overview of the important aspects of consultation that a lead employer group should understand.

The guide has been designed as a resource for employer groups with different levels of experience of consultation. Some groups will benefit from reading the guide in full whilst others may prefer to dip in and out as needed.

Use the hyperlinks in this map of the consultation process to navigate directly to the required section of the guide.

If you have any questions about the content of this guide or need further support, contact info@fiss.org.



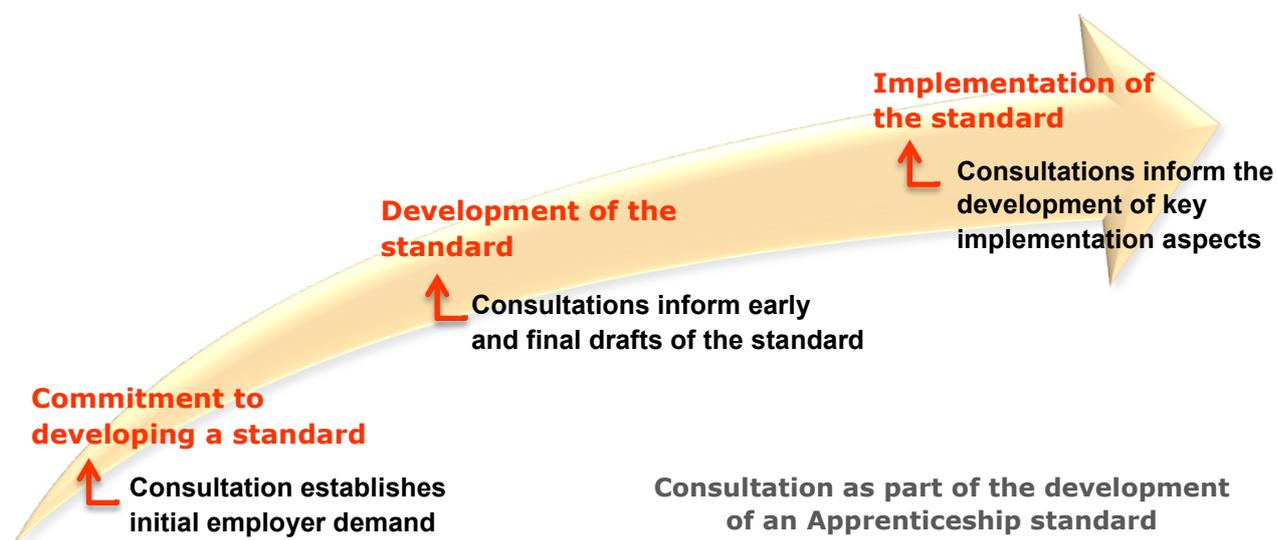
Why consult?

Consultation should inform all of the development and implementation stages of an Apprenticeship standard (see diagram below)

Effective consultation is essential to the eventual acceptance and success of an Apprenticeship standard within the sector.

Note

Trailblazers must provide evidence of their consultation processes to BIS.



The benefits of consultation

Consultation that is carefully planned, effectively carried out and thoughtfully used, will realise a range of benefits, such as:

- An Apprenticeship standard and associated implementation services (assessment, training, etc.) that align closely with what employers want, and avoid what they don't want.
- Services (e.g. assessment), especially new ones, that are more likely to be planned effectively, with potential problems identified quickly, and less likely to need early modification.
- High uptake of the resulting Apprenticeships as all employers will have a sense of ownership.
- A strengthening of the steering employer group's leadership role within the employer community.
- Improved understanding of the stakeholder population, priorities for the sector and the necessary direction of future policies and strategies.

The cost of consultation

Consultation undoubtedly has a cost. It is reasonable for good quality decision-making to have a cost.

However, lead employer groups will have to make a cost-versus-reward judgement about how extensive consultation should be and what form it will take.

Planning your consultation strategy

Timely and appropriate consultation activities are needed to inform every development phase of an Apprenticeship standard, for example:

- prior to forming of an initial expression of interest for the standard
- during the drafting process for the standard and high-level assessment approach
- during the detailing all the implementation requirements for the Apprenticeship (such as training, assessment and governance).

As each phase is tightly time bound, this requires careful planning and on-going commitment from all those charged with drafting and implementing the Apprenticeship standard.

You will need a consultation strategy that operates over an extended period of time, with multiple consultation points that allow sector stakeholders to contribute to the different stages of the development of the standard.

Good planning is essential. The key challenges are to:

- carry out all consultation work to consistently high standards;
- identify the priorities for consultation from the start;
- ensure that no part of the stakeholder community is excluded from consultation;
- utilise new technology and methods alongside the best of traditional consultation techniques;
- provide feedback to participants on how their views were taken into account;
- and, importantly, demonstrate that the consultation is authentic (see below).

Principles of authentic consultation

1. **Inclusiveness:** the participation of all stakeholders who have an interest in, or who would be affected by, a specific decision, including hard-to-reach or commonly under-represented groups, such as SMEs.
2. **Transparency, openness and clarity:** ensuring that all stakeholders have all the information they need, that they are told where information is lacking or things are uncertain, what they can or cannot influence by responding to engagement, and what the next steps will be.
3. **Commitment:** respecting stakeholders by giving consultation the appropriate priority and resources and demonstrating a genuine attempt to understand and incorporate all viewpoints.
4. **Accessibility:** providing different ways and opportunities for stakeholders to engage, minimising exclusion.
5. **Accountability** promptly informing stakeholders after each consultation exercise on how their contributions have influenced resulting decisions and/or plans.
6. **Responsiveness:** those doing the consulting must be prepared to amend their original ideas in response to consultation feedback. Those being consulted must perceive that their voice will be taken seriously, and that things can be changed.

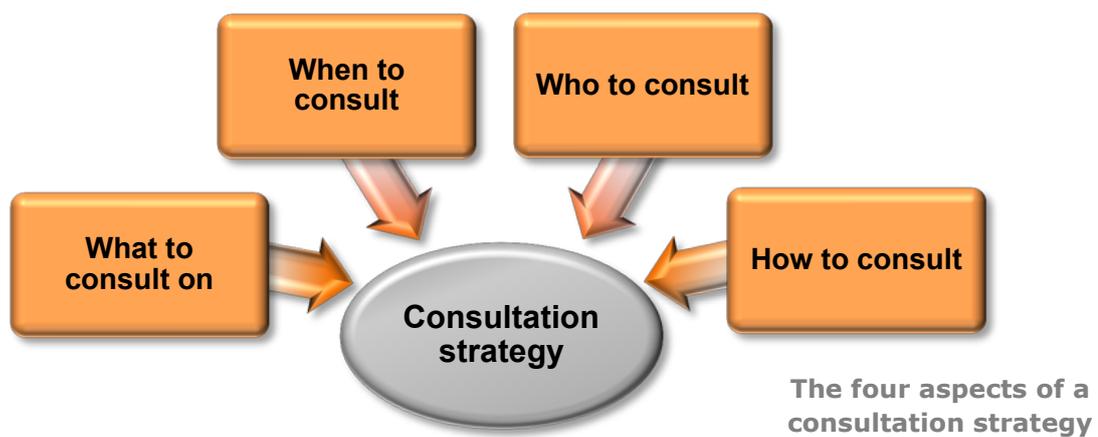
Adapted from: Dialogue by Design (May 2012)

Effective consultation is not always easy to achieve. Typical difficulties include:

- engaging the right cross-section of stakeholders, rather than a narrow or self-selecting group;
- interpreting the results, particularly where responses appear to conflict;
- balancing consultation feedback against other factors that affect decisions, such as practicalities (costs and resources) and statutory requirements.

Consultation planning is an on-going process, responding to changes in priorities or to failure to achieve the right participation level or response profile. It should be objective-driven, not technique-driven, i.e. you must decide what you want from your consultation before choosing consultation approaches and tools.

Consultation planning focuses on four, key aspects that are equally important to your final consultation strategy (see diagram below).



The *Consultation planning checklist* (see overleaf) will guide you through some important considerations for each of these four aspects of consultation.

Can you do it alone?

You may not have the required expertise or resources available to design and manage an effective consultation strategy.

It may be more cost-effective and efficient to contract with an external supplier to design and carry out the consultation work across the breadth of development for **all** the sector's Apprenticeship standards.

Using specialists will have a cost, but offers significant advantages, such as:

- confidence that consultation exercises will be properly designed and carried out;
- access to trained interviewers where needed;
- expert analysis and presentation of results.

If you decide to use an external agency to plan and implement your consultation strategy, allow time to:

- prepare a brief;
- tender; and
- select your working partner.

Quick Tip



Consultation planning checklist

Double click the pin to use the MS Word version of this checklist. 

Use this checklist to guide you through some important considerations for the four aspects of consultation (what, when, who, how). These will inform your consultation strategy, which you can record on the consultation plan template (see page 16).

What to consult on	
<p>While it is not realistic to consult on every aspect of the standard and its implementation, there are key areas where you need to ensure that your proposals are properly informed and acceptable to all stakeholders.</p>	
<p>What are your primary objectives for consultation? Explore whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• there is sufficient employer support for developing a standard for this occupation to submit an Expression of Interest to BIS.• employers agree with proposed content for the standard and any high level assessment approach that you have developed.• employers support key implementation aspects for the standard such as detailed assessment processes, training requirements or governance. <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how you can confirm that the standard is not so specific that it limits its relevance to all employer contexts, yet not so generic that it is too open to interpretation.• whether any aspects of the standard or its implementation are likely to be complex, potentially controversial, or account for a significant proportion of overall spending in the future.• whether you will be looking for new ideas or approaches from stakeholders.• whether you need to discover what employers do not want as well as what they do want.• how you will raise awareness of wider issues, such as the potential cost of training and assessment for otherwise desirable elements of a standard.	<p>Your notes:</p>

<p>What secondary objectives (or added benefits) are you anticipating from your consultation exercises?</p> <p><i>For example, do you need to better understand the sector, is relationship-building with stakeholders (e.g. SMEs) important, or are you hoping to encourage employers into deeper engagement through long-term working groups?</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>What outcomes and outputs are you expecting from the consultation exercises?</p> <p><i>An outcome is the level of influence the exercise will have on decision making and an output is an activity or product.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>How much information relevant to the occupation and the standard is already available elsewhere?</p> <p><i>Check in the media and in journals for reports/research carried out by professional, sector or industry bodies, or by education providers.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Would there be value in pre-consultation meetings with select groups of employers, to help shape the purpose and agenda of the consultations?</p> <p><i>This may lead to greater participation further down the line as employers will not just be involved in responding to the consultation but will be involved in thinking about what was consulted on and who was asked.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>

When will you consult?

Develop a timeline to cover sufficient consultation points throughout the development of a standard and its implementation requirements. Beware that too much engagement can cause 'stakeholder fatigue' and make them less willing to participate when it is really needed.

When are the important points in the development process at which you will need to consult?

As a minimum, you will probably need consultation points:

- prior to submitting your Expression of Interest to BIS;
- during development of the standard and any high-level assessment approach (at least once, if only to finalise);
- as you develop the implementation details such as training, assessment and governance strategies.

Make sure that each consultation exercise happens early enough to allow the findings to influence the relevant development work.

Your notes:

Is there a case for consulting different stakeholder groups at different stages with a consultation window?

This might involve doing targeted work with a small group of stakeholders at the start of the consultation window, followed by an open consultation with a more general audience later on.

Your notes:

What are your time constraints?

Are there any external or internal deadlines?

Your notes:

<p>Are there other events or processes could impact on the timing of each consultation point (e.g. traditional holiday periods)?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>How can you ensure that you will be providing sufficient time for potential participants to respond?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Who will you consult? For your consultation to be effective, you must reach and engage a sufficient number of the right stakeholders. Who these stakeholders are will change for different consultation points.</p>	
<p>How accurate is your understanding of the makeup of your sector? Where can you find information on the size and type of different employer groups or segments (such as SMEs) that make up your target consultation sector(s)?</p> <p><i>The Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and professional bodies should be able to help you build this picture.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Do you need to target employers individually? If so, where will you obtain a list of relevant employers?</p> <p><i>Organisations such as your SSC, local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) may be able to help you build up this information.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>To be sure that you are getting the views from a representative cross-section of the stakeholder population, have you determined a target response profile (see page 17) for each of the consultation points you have identified?</p> <p>What will you do if you don't achieve your target at each point?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>

<p>Will you need to make particular efforts to consult important sections of the employer community that are hard-to-reach or commonly under-represented and that may have particular needs or views?</p> <p>If so, what form will these additional efforts take?</p> <p><i>For example, you may wish to target SMEs or those that don't currently take on apprentices.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Besides employers, are there other stakeholders that you want to reach?</p> <p><i>For example, to ensure that the training and assessment plans for the standard are practicable, you may need to consult with a range of training providers and assessment organisations when you are developing a standard and/or its implementation details.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Are there any potential participants or groups that you would like to exclude?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>What drivers/messages will you use to motivate your target stakeholders to respond?</p> <p>How will you ensure stakeholders recognise the benefit of spending time and effort responding to your consultation?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>What may prevent members of your target audience from participating and how will you address these barriers?</p> <p><i>Recognise the diversity across employers in your sector. There will be different abilities and levels of willingness to respond to a consultation. SMEs, in particular, may need extra support before they can respond effectively.</i></p>	<p>Your notes:</p>

How will you consult?

The method(s) that you use at each consultation point must suit your target audience and provide the appropriate quality of responses within your time and resource constraints.

Who will manage and facilitate the consultation process at each consultation point?

Your notes:

What are the cost implications or constraints on your consultation planning?

Your notes:

What staff expertise and resources do you have for designing effective consultation questions (see page 19)?

Your notes:

What consultation methods will you use at each consultation point? Consider:

- the reasons and priorities for consultation and to the availability and preferences of different stakeholder groups
- the consultation methods you have previously used and the advantages and disadvantages of sticking with these;
- utilising new or a combination of methods;
- cost-versus-reward judgements on the breadth of consultation that is practicable.

Your notes:

See page 32 for a compendium of possible consultation methods.

<p>What communication channels will you use to publicise the consultation points?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>What background information will you need to provide at each consultation point so that employers can make properly informed responses?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>How will you monitor participation and respond to low or unrepresentative response rates?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>Do you have the staff expertise and resources to properly analyse the results of each consultation exercise?</p> <p>Consider the demands of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualitative versus quantitative analysis; • the anticipated volume of response; • managing contradictions in responses; • balancing the views of different stakeholder groups; • reporting requirements. 	<p>Your notes:</p>

<p>How much time will you need at the end of each consultation exercise to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the results to the lead employer group? • report outcomes to participants? • evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise and, if necessary, revise your consultation strategy? 	<p>Your notes:</p>
<p>How will the consultation findings be used at each consultation point and what weight they will be given alongside other sources of evidence?</p>	<p>Your notes:</p>

Reality check

Nobody gets consultation design right the first time. Throughout your planning, take time to check the decisions you have made and to confirm that your consultation strategy will:

- meet your objectives;
- engage the right stakeholders;
- ask the right questions;
- produce a response that you have sufficient resources to analyse and respond to; and
- be achievable within the time, resources and budget you have available.

"In an ideal world, you would run two phases of consultation: initial research related to what people think that profession looks like, and a follow-up phase which would be about what is in the standard. Given the BIS timeframes, we could only consult on what we proposed for the standard, but we were in a good position because there had been some recent research by De Montfort University on the future of the housing sector which had attracted over 1000 responses. This proved to be great precursor to our Trailblazer work."

Tim Edwards, Chair of Housing Management Trailblazer

"Sponsored by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and together with the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE) and other industry stakeholders, we conducted research to look at industry perceptions of professional recognition and at employer perceptions of the existing Apprenticeships in Plumbing and Domestic Heating. Whilst this research was not specific to the proposed Apprenticeship standards, we will draw on relevant key findings from the research to help inform the development of Apprenticeship standards related to our industry."

SummitSkills

"The Life Sciences & Industrial Science Trailblazer used an online survey to reach out to over 4000 employers in the science industry. Employers were asked to view drafts of the new standard and assessment approach and to consider the following questions:

- 1. Does the standard describe this job role in your company?***
- 2. Would you employ someone for this job role who had been awarded an Apprenticeship that had been assessed by the method described?***
- 3. Would you use an Apprenticeship to train someone for this job role?***

The responses helped to inform the final version of the standards. The consultation also raised awareness of the Trailblazer work."

Christine Sakhardande, Science Apprenticeships Trailblazer Programme Manager

**Support
tool**

Consultation plan template

Double click the pin to use the MS Word version of this template.

Use this template as the basis for recording your consultation strategy, or adapt it to suit your particular requirements.

Consultation title:	Responsibility: <i>[name of overarching managing agent/person]</i>	
Consultation objectives: <i>[brief description of overarching goals and priorities]</i>	Planned consultation point	Timeframe

[repeat the following block for each identified consultation point]

Consultation point:				
Prior knowledge: <i>[identify known research, consultation or other relevant knowledge sources]</i>				
Objective(s)		Stakeholder response rate target		Method(s)
Schedule	Timeframe	Who by	Resource requirements	Notes
Consultation design				
Participation period				
Response analysis				
Evaluation				

Setting a target response profile

Poorly designed or executed consultation exercises can be harmful as decisions regarding the Apprenticeship standard may be made on the basis of misleading results.

A common, and significant, problem with consultation is failing to achieve a sufficiently representative range and volume of participation that accurately reflects the makeup of the stakeholder population.

Setting an appropriate target response profile for each consultation exercise will provide confidence in the validity of the consultation results and demonstrate to BIS and all stakeholders that there is genuine support and agreement from the wider sector.

A target response profile defines the volume of consultation responses required from the stakeholder population broken down by subgroup.

There are several important things to consider as you determine your target response profile for a particular consultation exercise:

- 1.** You must have an accurate picture of the proportional makeup of the important subgroups within the whole of your target stakeholder population.
- 2.** As a general rule, the response profile should aim for at least 50 - 100 responses for each target subgroup.
- 3.** To be unbiased, your response profile should proportionally reflect the characteristics of the stakeholder population. However, you may decide to bias your target profile towards some parts of the population (e.g. SMEs) if their responses are particularly important.
Also note that a total 1,500 responses is a realistic upper limit for a response profile as, beyond this, the value of return diminishes greatly against the additional collecting and processing costs.
- 4.** Your target response profile is as dependent on the resources you have available to run the consultation as well as the size needed to represent the stakeholder population and there may need to be a compromise between these two constraints.
- 5.** Your target response profile will influence your choice of consultation methods and your communication strategy as you will know who you need to reach and to what extent.

Use the annual [Business population estimates for the UK](#) to help you understand the makeup of your sector.



Meeting your target response profile

During each consultation exercise, you will need to monitor the range and volume of responses against your target response profile.

If there is a danger of the target not being achieved (responses are insufficient or inappropriately biased), then you may need to consider compensatory strategies such as:

- Further consultation work with the under-represented groups – in any case, you may need to make special efforts to gather responses from important, hard-to-reach or commonly under-represented employer groups (e.g. time-poor SMEs).
- Convening a small group that is definitely representative of the total population and using it as a control group to compare with other results.
- Weighting the responses.

**Support
tool**

Consultation calculator

BIS will want assurances that the responses you have received from the wider consultation(s) that you have undertaken are representative of the employers in your sector. This tool will help you identify the validity of the response profile and provide a statistical demonstration to BIS that there is sufficient buy-in from your industry. Note that the tool provides a guide and not a definitive answer.

To use the tool, enter the actual number of responses you have received for each consultation question. The tool will calculate how accurate the response is to $\pm x\%$.

For example, if you get a response where agreement with a statement is 74% and there are 300 responses. The tool will tell you that this result is accurate to $\pm 5\%$. So you can be assured that between 69% and 79% of your population (industry) agree.

The tool can be accessed at www.fisss.org/apprenticeship-standard-resources.

Designing consultation questions

No matter which consultation method(s) you use, take time to carefully design appropriate consultation questions so that you:

- receive the right type and quality of response;
- are working with manageable amounts of data;
- don't miss out on something critical to your analysis.

Do

- ✓ Consider how consultation responses will be analysed when developing your questions.
- ✓ Ask questions that will elicit both quantitative and qualitative data.
- ✓ Recognise the limitations of quantitative information and, where possible allow respondents to express an opinion.
- ✓ Only ask questions that contribute to your goal.
- ✓ Ensure all questions are clearly worded.
- ✓ For questions eliciting quantitative responses:
 - offer discrete response options (for a written/online method, these will be linked to radio boxes or checkboxes);
 - vary the question format and provide sufficient response options so that participants must think about each response rather than just responding the same way throughout.
- ✓ For questions eliciting qualitative responses, use the right start word for the type of information you need:
 - 'why?' questions for explanations and reasons;
 - 'what?' questions to get information;
 - 'how?' for more demanding versions of 'what?'.
- ✓ Where applicable, design screening criteria to keep out unwanted participants.
- ✓ Ask general, straightforward questions first followed by more specific or complex questions.
- ✓ Group questions on the same theme together.
- ✓ Test your questions before they are used live.
- ✓ Collect demographic information to help you profile participants.
- ✓ Ask participants for contact details in case you want to follow up on their responses.

Don't

- ✗ Ask lots of questions as this increases the potential for response fatigue and subsequent loss of engagement.
- ✗ Ask completely closed questions – it is rare that yes/no answers provide value.
- ✗ Lead respondents in particular directions either through the wording of the question or through any examples you use.
- ✗ Ask composite questions such as "What are the pros and cons of ...?" Separate them.
- ✗ Use words that have no clear meaning, such as 'regularly'.
- ✗ Ask questions that are likely to have predictable answers. For example, "Is a well-trained apprentice important to you?"
- ✗ Ask online survey questions that only offer a text box for responses as many participants will ignore the question. Offer response options so that you always get some data; text boxes can be offered for additional comments for those participants that have specific feedback to give.

Support tool

Consultation question bank

This question bank sits at the heart of the *Consultation Survey Web Tool* (see page 38) which will help you build an online consultation survey. However, the questions are relevant to all consultation approaches whether online or face-to-face.

Use the questions within the sections of the question bank to kick-start each of your consultation exercises.

General questions for all consultations

These questions primarily identify the profile of the respondents. Combined with responses from other questions, these will allow for breakdown of opinion by stakeholder type.

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
X		<p>What type of organisation do you represent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employer - Professional body - Training provider - Awarding organisation - Other (please specify) 	<p>To confirm that responses are from the stakeholders that you intended to reach,</p> <p>To allow you to check the proportion of responses across stakeholder types and help ensure that responses from representative bodies are properly weighted.</p>		Count per category
X		<p>If you are an employer, how many employees to do you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <10 - 10-49 - 50-249 - 250-499 - >500 	<p>To confirm that responses are from a sufficiently broad base of employer sizes and are proportionally representative of employer sizes within the sector.</p> <p>This can also help highlight concerns being raised by particular sizes of employer.</p>		Count per category
	X	<p>Do you currently employ apprentices in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>If not, please say why. [Comment]</p>	<p>To ascertain whether you are reaching employers who are currently disengaged from Apprenticeship delivery and why these are disengaged.</p>	Reasons for not employing apprentices based on the existing framework.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	<p>Would you consider employing (more) apprentices in this occupation based on the new standard?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>If not, please say why. [Comment]</p>	To help ascertain whether the new standard will meet the needs of employers.	Reasons for not employing apprentices based on the new standard	Count per category
X		<p>Which of these best describes your role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owner/Director - Manager - Supervisor - Operative - Apprentice - Other (please specify) 	To ascertain whether responses are from appropriate positions within employer organisations.		Count per category
X		<p>Which region is your organisation based in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North West - North East - East Midlands - West Midlands - South East - South West 	To check that the spread of your consultation responses meets the geographical profile of your industry.		Count per category
	X	<p>Which of the following sub-sectors does your organisation operate in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>[insert sector specific options]</i> 	To allow for analysis of variances in responses that may be relevant to particular sub-sectors within the wider industry.		Count per category
	X	<p>Please provide your contact details so that we can follow up on your responses if necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name - Role - Organisation - Email address - Telephone number 	Allows you to carry out follow-up and/or targeted consultations, if appropriate.	Contact database	

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	Do you have any feedback on the consultation exercise itself or suggestions for improving future consultations? [Comment]	To ensure the consultation approach is meeting the needs/expectations of stakeholders. To build ownership of the consultation process across wider stakeholders..	Comments on the consultation process.	
	X	How did you find out about this consultation? - Sector Skills Council - Professional Body - Trade press - Social media - Your employer - Other (please specify)	To identify the most successful routes for communication with stakeholders so that you can improve future consultation and communication activity.		Count per category

Questions for consultations prior to submitting an Expression of Interest to BIS

The purpose of consultations at this stage are primarily to establish and explore demand for the proposed standard.

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
The existing framework (if one exists)					
X		Do you agree that the existing Apprenticeship framework for <i>[insert occupation]</i> provides a good level of training and development for apprentices? - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree	To provide an overview of the level of satisfaction with the current framework which will indicate the potential amount of development required for the new standard.		Count per category
X		What are the strengths of the current framework? [Comment]	To identify what aspects need to be retained in the new standard.	List of strengths	

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
X		What are the weaknesses of the current framework? [Comment]	To identify what aspects may need to be dropped or refined in the new standard.	List of weaknesses	
The proposal for an Apprenticeship standard					
X		To what extent do you agree that there is a need for an Apprenticeship standard for the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i> ? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree [Comment]	To establish the level of demand for the proposed standard. Comments may influence the parameters of the proposal.	Reasons for and against the need for a standard	Count per category
X		Is the proposed occupation title relevant to the job role within your organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree [Comment]	To establish the extent to which the occupation title is relevant to different types/sizes of employers across the sector.	Suggestions for changes to the occupation title.	Count per category
X		<i>[provide the occupation profile]</i> Does the occupation profile provide an accurate description of what you would expect an <i>[insert occupation]</i> apprentice to be able to do on completion of their apprenticeship programme? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree [Comment]	To establish the extent to which the occupation profile is relevant to different types/sizes of employers across the sector.	Suggestions for changes to the occupation profile.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
X		What are the core knowledge requirements for <i>[insert occupation]</i> that you believe should be included in the standard? [Comment]	To kick start the design of the knowledge elements of the standard, once development is approved by BIS.	Suggestions for the knowledge elements of the standard.	
X		What are the core skill requirements for <i>[insert occupation]</i> that you believe should be included in the standard? [Comment]	To kick start the design of the skills elements of the standard, once development is approved by BIS.	Suggestions for the skills elements of the standard.	
X		Are there any core behaviour requirements for <i>[insert occupation]</i> that you believe should be included in the standard? [Comment]	To kick start the design of the behaviour elements of the standard, once development is approved by BIS.	Suggestions for the behaviour elements of the standard.	
X		Are there are specific qualifications that are essential to the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i> ? - Yes - No If yes, please identify them. [Comment]	To kick start discussions on qualification requirements as part of the design of the standard, once development is approved by BIS.	List of potential qualifications to be included as part of the standard.	Count per category
General, exploratory					
X		Do you have any other comments on the proposal to submit an Expression of Interest to BIS to develop an Apprenticeship standard for <i>[insert occupation]</i> ? [Comment]	A catch-all for aspects related to the proposed standard that may not have been considered.	List of comments.	
	X	Are there any other occupations or job roles for which you would like to see an Apprenticeship standard developed? [Comment]	To inform the direction and priority of future Apprenticeship standards.	List of occupations that might require an Apprenticeship standard.	

Questions for consultations on a draft standard and any associated high-level assessment approach

Consultations may be held at different stages of the drafting process and question wording will reflect this. Questions are likely to be more exploratory in earlier consultations with those in later consultation exercises more focused on concluding and confirming employer support for the final draft.

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
The standard					
X		<p>Is the occupation title relevant to the job role within your organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	To establish the extent to which the occupation title is relevant to different types/sizes of employers across the sector.	Suggestions for changes to the occupation title.	Count per category
X		<p><i>[provide the proposed occupation profile]</i></p> <p>Does the occupation profile accurately describe what you would expect an <i>[insert occupation]</i> apprentice to be able to do on completion of their Apprenticeship?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	To establish the extent to which the occupation profile is relevant to different types/sizes of employers across the sector.	Suggestions for changes to the occupation profile.	Count per category
X		<p>How important is each of the knowledge elements to the standard?</p> <p><i>[list each of the knowledge statements against the following review criteria]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vital - Important - Not important - Unknown 	To confirm the extent of stakeholder support for each knowledge element.		Matrix of counts per category for each knowledge element.

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
X		Are there any knowledge elements missing that you feel are essential to the standard? [Comment]	To ensure the completeness of the knowledge elements for the standard.	List of possible further knowledge elements.	
X		How important is each of the skill elements to the standard? <i>[list each of the skill statements against the following review criteria]</i> - Vital - Important - Not important - Unknown	To confirm the extent of stakeholder support for each skill element.		Matrix of counts per category for each skill element.
X		Are there any skill elements missing that you feel are essential to the standard? [Comment]	To ensure the completeness of the skill elements for the standard.	List of possible further skill elements.	
X		How important is each of the behaviour elements to the standard? <i>[list each of the behaviour statements against the following review criteria]</i> - Vital - Important - Not important - Unknown	To confirm the extent of stakeholder support for each behaviour element.		Matrix of counts per category for each behaviour element.
X		Are there any behaviour elements missing that you feel are essential to the standard? [Comment]	To ensure the completeness of the behaviour elements for the standard.	List of possible further behaviour elements.	
	X	The level of the Apprenticeship is proposed as <i>[insert level]</i> . Is this the right level? - Yes - No If not, please say why. [Comment]	To confirm that the level of the Apprenticeship is correct.	Reasons why the level might need to be changed.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	<p><i>[provide the proposed statement of entry requirements]</i></p> <p>Are the entry requirements complete and appropriate for this Apprenticeship at this level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>If not, please say why. [Comment]</p>	To confirm that nothing has been missed in the entry requirements.	Reasons why the entry requirements might need to be amended.	Count per category
	X	<p>How long do you think it should normally take for an apprentice to become fully competent in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12-24 months - 24-36 months - 36-48 months 	To inform the recommended length of the Apprenticeship.		Count per category
High-level assessment approach (if applicable)					
X		<p><i>[provide the proposed high-level assessment approach]</i></p> <p>Do you think the proposed outline assessment approach is appropriate and feasible for an apprentice in the <i>[insert occupation]</i> role in your organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>[Comment]</p>	To confirm employer support for the initial proposals for the assessment approach.	Set of feedback on the high-level assessment approach.	Count per category
X		<p><i>[provide the proposed grading approach]</i></p> <p>Do you think that the proposed approach to grading is appropriate for our industry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>If not, please say why. [Comment]</p>	To confirm that the grading approach is suitable for all types/sizes of employers.	List of reasons why the grading approach is not suitable.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	Are the qualifications listed as part of the assessment approach: <i>[insert qualification list]</i> appropriate to the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i> in your organisation? - Yes - No [Comment]	To confirm that any proposed qualification requirements are appropriate to all employer contexts.	List of comments regarding suitability of proposed qualifications.	Count per category
	X	Are there any suggestions that you would like to put forward to inform the development of the assessment implementation? [Comment]	Exploratory question to gain early feedback that will inform later assessment implementation work. Responses may be followed up on with the relevant participants outside the consultation and/or responsive participants invited to join implementation working groups.	List of early ideas for developing the assessment approach.	
	X	When and what are the naturally occurring opportunities for assessment during the course of day job for an apprentice in this role? [Comment]	Exploratory question to gain some early feedback to inform later assessment implementation work.	List of potential opportunities for assessment.	
Overarching, general					
X		Overall, is the language of the standard clear, and easy to understand for both employers and apprentices? - Yes - No If not, please say why. [Comment]	To confirm that the standard has been worded appropriately and, if not, indicate how it could be improved.	Feedback on how the language of the standard might be improved.	
X		Overall, is this standard appropriate for apprentices for the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i> in your organisation? - Yes - No If not, please say why. [Comment]	To confirm that the standard meets the needs of all employers and, if not, indicate how it could be improved.	List of reasons why the standard might not be appropriate for the occupation.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	<p>Have you been directly involved in the development of this standard?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, member of steering group - Yes, member of a working group - Yes, in another capacity (please specify) - No, not involved 	To check the extent to which responses are coming from employers who have already contributed to the development of the standard and confirm the consultation is achieving a wider reach.		Count per category

Questions for consultations on the assessment implementation details

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
[provide the content of the assessment approach – or a hyperlink to it]					
On-going assessment					
	X	<p>To what extent do you agree that the proposed on-going assessment activities would be practical and affordable for my organisation to implement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm employer support for the on-going assessment approach.</p> <p>To confirm feasibility of the on-going assessment approach for all types and sizes of employers.</p>	Comments on the on-going assessment approach.	Count per category
	X	<p>Do you agree that the proposed on-going assessment activities will give an accurate indication of the development of the apprentice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm employer support for the on-going assessment approach.</p> <p>To confirm appropriateness of the on-going assessment approach.</p>	Comments on the on-going assessment approach.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
	X	<p>Are the qualification(s) that the apprentice must undertake during their programme relevant and appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm that any proposed qualification requirements are appropriate to all employer contexts.</p> <p>To confirm employer support for the mandatory achievement of specified qualifications.</p>	List of comments regarding suitability of proposed qualifications.	Count per category
End-point assessment					
	X	<p>To what extent do you agree that the proposed end-point assessment will accurately assess whether or not the apprentice is competent in the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm employer support for the end-point assessment approach.</p> <p>To confirm appropriateness of the end-point assessment approach.</p>	Comments on the end-point assessment approach.	Count per category
	X	<p>To what extent do you agree that the proposed end-point assessment is both practical and affordable for my organisation to implement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strongly agree - Agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm employer support for the end-point assessment approach.</p> <p>To confirm feasibility of the end-point assessment approach for all types and sizes of employers.</p>	Comments on the end-point assessment approach.	Count per category
Grading					
	X	<p>Is the proposed approach to grading apprentices relevant and appropriate both to the role and to the industry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes - No <p>[Comment]</p>	<p>To confirm that the grading approach is suitable for all types/sizes of employers.</p> <p>To confirm employer support for the grading approach for the standard.</p>	Comments on the grading approach.	Count per category

Question rating		Question	Rationale for the question	Response data	
Essential	Useful			Qualitative	Quantitative
Overarching					
X		Overall, does the proposed assessment approach give you the confidence that a successful apprentice would be competent in the role of <i>[insert occupation]</i> ? - Yes - No [Comment]	To confirm appropriateness of the overall assessment approach for the Apprenticeship To confirm employer support for the overall assessment approach for the standard.	Comments on the assessment approach.	Count per category
	X	Are there any other comments that you wish to make with regard to the proposed implementation of assessment for the standard? [Comment]	A catch-all to capture further comments.	Comments on the assessment approach.	
Exploratory – to elicit new ideas					
	X	Are there any suggestions that you would like to put forward to inform the development of the assessment implementation? [Comment]	Useful for focused consultations on assessment early in the development process to inform assessment implementation work. Responses may be followed up on with the relevant participants outside the consultation and/or responsive participants invited to join implementation working groups.	List of ideas for developing the assessment approach.	
	X	When and what are the naturally occurring opportunities for assessment during the course of day job for an apprentice in this role? [Comment]	Useful for focused consultations on assessment early in the development process to inform assessment implementation work.	List of potential opportunities for assessment.	
	X	What would highlight an 'outstanding' apprentice that might be able to do that could be graded	Useful for focused consultations on assessment early in the development process to inform assessment implementation work.	List of opportunities for grading the standard.	

Choosing your consultation method(s)

Once there is clarity on the purpose of the consultation, when it will take place and the target participants identified, it is time to select the consultation method. There are numerous tools and techniques available for consultations – some of these are explored in the *compendium of consultation methods* provided overleaf. No single method is appropriate for all situations; each has inherent strengths and weaknesses. Some will work better than others with particular stakeholders.

It is important to tailor the consultation method(s) to:

- the objectives of the particular consultation exercise;
- the type/depth of response needed;
- the stakeholder participation required, as defined in your target response profile.

To date, an online survey has been the most common consultation method, probably due to the undoubted ease, speed and cost-effectiveness of initial set-up and final results analysis, particularly with regard to the tight time constraints they are working to. For potential participants, online consultations can be convenient because they are easy to access irrespective of the time and location.

However, it is important to be aware of the downsides and risks of web-based consultation tools:

- They exclude anyone who is not able to use or does not have access to the internet.
- They offer little opportunity for relationship-building.
- They tend to attract the 'vocal minority' rather than a representative sample of the wider stakeholder group.
- Response rates can be relatively low compared to the size of the target population and biased towards particular stakeholders or subgroups.

It is recommended that you use a multi-channel approach to consultation – combining web-based tools with face-to-face and/or written approaches – as this will give potential participants the opportunity to choose the way they would prefer to participate and provide you with a more diverse range of responses.

Be wary of relying on a narrow range of methods or of sticking to habitual approaches.



Minimise the risk that articulate employers and stakeholders who are more able or willing to participate than others will dominate the consultation responses.



Don't rely on consultation methods where participants select themselves, and carefully facilitate all group consultation events.

Compendium of consultation methods

Connected mass deliberation

A recent consultation approach that links large numbers of participants simultaneously for a one-off event using a combination of face-to-face methods and technologies such as wireless voting, television and networked computer systems to help them deliberate and respond effectively.

Pros

- Has the potential to engage on a very large scale, region or nation wide
- Can ensure a representational cross section of the community take part
- Can be broadcast live on the web

Cons

- Expensive to set up
- Involves a great deal of organisation and planning
- Need to ensure that the event itself is followed up effectively

Consultation document

Documents are released to provide information and invite formal written responses.

Pros

- Good starting point for consultation
- Tends to work well when targeted at specific 'informed' stakeholders
- Provides detailed information on an issue
- Elicits a considered view

Cons

- Can be resource intensive and costly to administer
- Writing and editing skills needed to produce a readable document
- Likely to be attractive only to small numbers of potential participants
- Needs significant time to allow for adequate participation
- May have poor response rate due to nature of response required
- May not reveal issues that the document does not address
- Labour-intensive to read and collate responses

Deliberative polling and dialogue

A randomly selected and demographically representative group completes a questionnaire at the beginning of the process.

Participants are provided with documents on various proposals, including arguments for and against each. Participants debate the pros and cons. Then participants complete a second questionnaire to assess changes from initial perceptions and why those changes occurred.

Pros

- Allows for formal and informal exploration of issues
- Can be managed face-to-face or electronically
- Can include experts who serve as a resource
- Provides an opportunity for participants to become informed on issues
- Requires participants to say "why" they support a particular viewpoint
- Can track changes in participants' views, if any

Cons

- Is a relatively new technique
- Can be expensive and time-consuming to plan, implement and produce final reports
- Requires experienced facilitators
- Relies on representative samples of the population, which can complicate planning

Employer panels

A consultative body of demographically-representative participants who respond to proposals on a long-term basis.

Pros

- Can vary in size
- Participants can be selected randomly or based on knowledge and interest
- Can ensure representation of all sub groups within the target population
- Offers regular access to opinion; no need to recruit for each consultation exercise
- Can generate quantitative and qualitative information
- Can provide high response rates
- Can use other consultation methods with the panel
- Do not have to meet face-to-face

Cons

- Can be expensive to set-up if not used regularly
- Requires long-term commitment from participants and facilitators
- Can be difficult to recruit to.
- Can be dominated by participants with own agenda or those who are particularly articulate
- May need to regularly replace panel members as participants become more knowledgeable as responses may no longer accurately reflect that of the wider population
- Rarely remain representative due to commitment required and respondent fatigue; not appropriate as the only consultation method

Online discussion groups

E-mail list: a group of participants (subscribers) communicate on a particular topic through a single e-mail address.

Web-forum: web-based application that combines the basics of web-based asynchronous discussions threads on particular topics with aspects of live chat and basic document sharing. More often used for online collaboration than consultation.

Pros

- Allows specific questions and issues to be discussed
- Can be invitation only or open to all
- Brings together geographically dispersed participants or those short on time
- A source of qualitative data
- Can encourage those less publicly vocal to provide input
- Can offer easy access to background information and documents
- Allow opinions to be expressed without issues of location
- Can use avatars to make more personal
- Cheap and easy to set up

Cons

- Depends on internet access and computer literacy confidence
- Some platforms are not very user friendly
- Difficult to control the response rate and profile
- Interest level can quickly fall off
- Can be dominated by a few participants
- Needs ground rules for participation and interaction
- May be difficult to keep on focus
- May not be effective in producing the quantity or quality of response data required for the time invested
- Software constraints such as the need to register or login to participate or receive updates are perceived as complexity and a barrier to participation
- Requires skilled moderators to develop and manage
- Difficult to collate and analyse unstructured responses

Forums/strategy groups

Structured and regular meetings with interest groups. Used to provide information, seek views and develop/endorse plans and strategies.

Pros

- Regular process of engagement
- Can be used to seek committed involvement
- Primarily a source of qualitative data

Cons

- Attendees are unlikely to represent all views
- Can be dominated by the most vocal
- Needs effective management
- Needs a method for capturing the data (note-taking, recording)
- Transcription of recorded data is time consuming

Opinion polls, questionnaires, surveys

A process for collecting information and opinions through a pre-set list of questions. Can be administered via mail (paper-based), online, or a combination of these.

Pros

- Useful for consulting a large number of people across a range of subgroups
- Useful when it is difficult to bring participants together physically because they are either very dispersed or short on time
- A source of qualitative and quantitative data
- Easy and quick for participants to respond to (if well designed)
- Inclusive for participants who wish to remain anonymous
- Easily tailored to different target audiences and issues
- Provides hard statistical evidence
- Can be repeated over time to provide comparisons

Paper-based (mail)

- Permits specific targeting of participants to obtain responses from demographically representative sample or to reach particular subgroups

Online

- Relatively cheap to administer (no materials or distribution costs)
- Easy to publicise – survey address can be sent out via email or text message or featured as a website link
- Convenient for participants
- Responses are automatically captured (no transcription needed)
- Most online tools provide automatic (though simplistic) response analysis and reporting
- Can use avatars to make more engaging

Cons

- Results influenced by precise wording of questions and can be misleading – requires expertise to develop valid questions and avoid flawed results
- No control over response rates so can be difficult to meet targets- results can be unrepresentative
- Can have a low response rate without adequate and regular promotion;
- Can be difficult to analyse statistically
- Need statistical advice to ensure validity of the survey tool
- Needs sufficient time to allow for breadth and volume of participation
- Need appropriate software for analysis and reporting of large data sets

Paper-based (mail)

- Relatively expensive to administer (materials, distribution and transcription of responses)

Online

- Difficult to limit to specific subgroups or participants
- Access to and/or the skills/willingness to use computers may be problematical for some stakeholders – provide alternative methods of participation such as a means to request a paper-based version and/or making the survey downloadable/printable for completion offline together with an email/mail address to send completed surveys to.
- Software constraints such as the need to register or login are perceived as complexity and are a barrier to participation

Seminars, conferences, focus groups

A formally organised, one-off meeting to exchange and gather information on key issues.

Usually follow a format of presentations followed by small group discussions, ending in a large group discussion of key issues.

May be hosted face to face or electronically using web-based webinar/conference software (which may include video).

Pros

- Participation may be open to all or may be via pre-selected invitation
- Can be designed for large numbers and a wide range of participants or for smaller numbers (focus groups) to consult separately with hard-to-reach groups or with pre-selected control groups of the stakeholder population
- Can be useful for consulting separately with hard-to-reach groups or with pre-selected control groups of the stakeholder population
- Opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders
- Helps to build consensus
- Participants can ask questions and explore issues
- Primarily a source of qualitative data
- Can make use of voting technology
- Useful for building relationships with stakeholders where this is important
- Can be useful for conducting background research prior to consultation and/or for testing clarity of options at the end of the consultation

Face-to-face

- Can be more personal and engaging than electronic equivalent
- More time to explore (a range of) issues

Electronic

- Allows greater focus on issues rather than participants (when no video)
- Reduces work, time and location constraints
- Easier to capture responses as input can be recorded
- Running costs are significantly less than for face-to-face equivalent

Cons

- Needs careful preparation
- Can be a challenge to achieve promised participation
- Participants and responses may not represent wider stakeholder population
- Participation of individual attendees (particularly in large groups) may not be equal (or existent), giving misleading results
- May need several events to gain different perspectives
- Can be dominated by a vocal minority
- Can go off focus
- Lack of confidentiality for participants
- Needs ground rules for participation and interaction
- Requires skilled facilitators

Face-to-face

- Work, time and location constraints may limit or bias participation
- Needs a method for capturing the data (note-taking, recording)
- Transcription of recorded data is time consuming
- Costs are variable depending on size and organisational requirements

Electronic

- Usually tightly time constrained (approx. 1 hour)
- Interaction constraints of the interface may limit number of participants
- Facilitators and participants need to be familiar with the software
- Could intimidate potential participants unfamiliar with the technology
- Need facility to record session to capture responses

Social networking

Platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are used to pose questions and promote online discussions.

Pros

- Can have closed or open networks
- Privacy settings can be release or restrict information depending on need
- Good way of organising groups with minimum effort and correspondence
- Familiar technology for many users

Cons

- Different platforms offer different functions and services and will appeal to different groups – need to think carefully about which platform to use
- Not used by everyone – may not be appropriate for target participants
- Not likely to be sufficient as the only mean of consultation

Telephone interviews

Pre-selected individuals are asked a series of questions to gather information on a specific topic by a trained interviewer.

Pros

- Permits specific targeting of participants to obtain responses from demographically representative sample or to reach particular subgroups
- Can produce very accurate results if a good target response profile is used
- Done on a one-to-one basis
- Can be used to collect a brief snapshot of opinion or an in-depth detail
- Can gather both quantitative and qualitative data
- Useful for participants who are geographically dispersed or short on time
- Can help build understanding of complex or sensitive issues
- Allows for flexible questioning – can be useful in the preparation phase for consultation
- Can provide a good response rate

Cons

- Time-and resource intensive so may be best limited to relatively small sample sizes or for key stakeholders
- Can be difficult to arrange and coordinate interviews
- Needs a skilled interviewer
- Risk of the interviewer introducing bias
- Need to record responses to capture data
- Time consuming to collate and transcribe data

Telephone polling/voting lines

Automated phone number(s) normally used to collect votes although can also collect comments, or opinions. Platform can be voice or SMS.

Pros

- Familiar technology and impersonal, so people respond without fear
- Are useful for long-term data collection
- Frees participants from geographic and time constraints
- Can quickly change focus as issues develop

Cons

- Only useful for simple issues and few vote points
- Cannot control response profile
- Qualitative responses may vary in quality and focus
- Need to record responses to capture data
- Time consuming to transcribe qualitative responses

Support tool

Online group consultation

FISSS is offering the use of an online conferencing platform supported by expert facilitation to help lead employer groups prepare and run group consultation events as one strand of their consultation strategy.

The platform allows you to display presentation slides, share documents and to utilise video, audio and online chat to maximise the interaction and output from the group session.



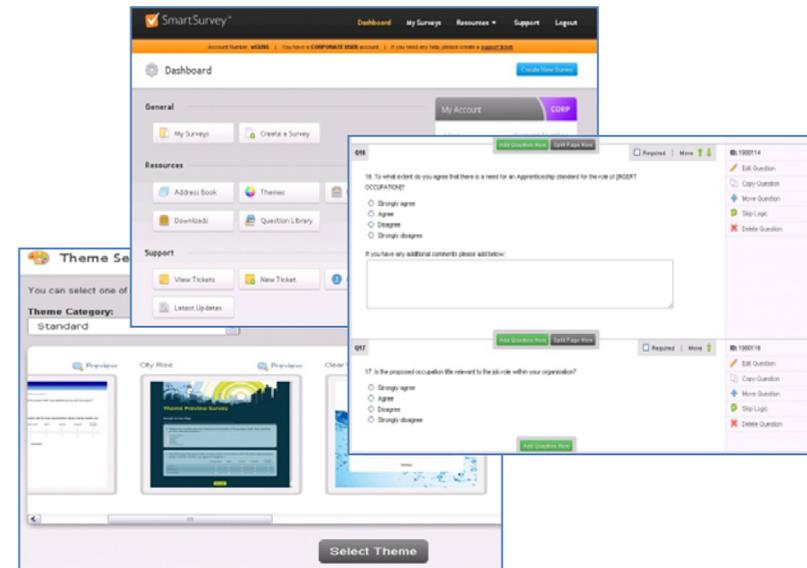
To discuss this free service in more detail, please contact info@fiss.org.

Support tool

Consultation Survey Web Tool

Working together, FISSS and the Gatsby Foundation have provided an online survey platform for employer led groups who are developing a new Apprenticeship standard.

The tool is based on the experience of early Trailblazers about what needs to be asked in a consultation. It holds a core bank of questions which can be changed, added to or removed and it provides a set of bespoke analytics to help identify the issues being raised.



Use this simple, easy to use, free tool when you need to consult with a broader group of employers than those on the steering and working groups. It can be accessed at www.fiss.org/apprenticeship-standard-resources.

Running the consultation

Open, clear and continual communications are vital to the success of a consultation exercise.

This means that you need to:

1. Keep websites and other information sources up to date.

Keep employers updated on what's happening and how they can be part of it. Do this from the start (i.e. even before an expression of interest is submitted to BIS) and on a regular basis. Let them know in advance when consultation exercises will be happening.

2. Provide sufficient information to engage and inform potential participants and enable them to respond to the consultation appropriately.

At each consultation point, use the information checklist provided overleaf to help you provide comprehensive and complete support information.

3. Publicise the consultation to the right audience, and continually encourage participation throughout the consultation period.

There are many organisations that can help you reach employers. As well as working with organisations that have a high sector focus (see right-hand side of the matrix below), take advantage of the opportunities to reach employers that the low sector focus – but high-membership – organisations could offer.



Organisations that may help you reach employers

Use the short action checklist on page 42 to maximise the reach and effectiveness of every consultation exercise.

**Support
tool**

Checklist of information needed to support a consultation exercise

Double click the pin to use the
MS Word version of this checklist.



For each consultation exercise, use this information checklist to ensure that you provide comprehensive and complete support information that will engage and inform potential participants and enable them to respond appropriately.

Information to include	Your notes
A description of the purpose of the consultation.	
A brief overview of underpinning government policy, such as how/why Apprenticeships are changing.	
Relevant sector information such as who the lead employers are and what they want to achieve, why a standard for this occupation is important, who is being consulted, the training and/or assessment culture etc.	
An explanation of any essential considerations that you want employers to understand that might influence how the consultation is approached, such as envisaged implementation costs or constraints.	
Highlighted key messages so that those who don't want to read more detail can pick these out at a glance.	

Information to include	Your notes
<p>Images (e.g. charts, maps or an infographic) and other media such as video to increase impact and improve the clarity of text-based information.</p>	
<p>Driver(s) to encourage participation – tell employers why you are asking for their help and how it will be used.</p>	
<p>Timeline dates - for the close of consultation and, wherever possible an outline of the proposed timetable for the rest of the decision-making and implementation processes.</p>	
<p>A statement of how/when feedback will be given.</p>	
<p>A statement that responses may be made available in the public domain unless the respondent has requested that they remain confidential.</p>	
<p>Contact details for potential participants to use if they have queries about the consultation or want to find out more.</p>	

**Support
tool**

Checklist of actions for publicising the consultation and encouraging participation

Use this short action checklist during each consultation exercise to maximise its reach and effectiveness.

Action	Your notes
<p>Allow a sufficient consultation period for adequate reach and response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For online consultations, 10-14 days is usually sufficient.• For paper-based consultations, provide a self-addressed stamped envelope and allow for transit time.• For face-to-face consultations, allow time for potential participants to forward diary plan, reply to invitations as well as for the attendance itself. <p>Build in time to consult specifically with subgroups that are considered hard-to-reach or that are commonly under-represented.</p>	
<p>Use a range of communication channels to advertise the consultation to potential participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local and national newspapers and trade press• Newsletters and websites of interest groups, and of professional, sector and trade bodies• Social media – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn• (E)mail shots• Announcements in employer meetings and events.	

Action	Your notes
<p>Work with a range of stakeholder engagement partners (e.g. sector and professional organisations, regional and local networks, high-membership employer organisations) to increase consultation reach.</p> <p>Provide partners with a short briefing sheet (see overleaf for an example) to help coordinate and standardise their engagement activities.</p>	
<p>Issue regular participation reminders using all communication channels – keep this up until the end of the consultation period.</p> <p>Always reiterate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the deadline for responses; • the driver(s) and incentives for participation – these may differ between stakeholder subgroups; • the hyperlink for accessing the consultation – perhaps an online survey or a booking form for a face-to-face event. 	
<p>Monitor reach and response.</p> <p>If you are not hitting your target response profile, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing your communication methods and/or your message; • supplementary consultation exercises. 	

Support tool

Briefing sheet template for publicising the consultation

Adapt this 2-page template to create a briefing guide that will help your partner organisations run consistent activities to engage employers and other stakeholders in your consultation exercise.

How you can support the stakeholder consultation for the [insert name of sector] Apprenticeship standard

Introduction

[Provide a short introduction to the purpose of the consultation].

The consultation is open *[insert start and end dates]*.

Consultation objectives

[examples shown below – adapt and add to as required]

- To achieve feedback from stakeholders from across the *[insert name of sector]* sector including existing Apprenticeship users; non-Apprenticeship users and small businesses *[insert other stakeholders as appropriate]*.
- To demonstrate an employer consensus for the Apprenticeship standards that embody good practice by government and employers.

Target audiences

[insert target response profile]

What you can do

- Engage with your marketing/communications teams to promote the consultations.
- Publish information about the consultation on your website and provide a link to the consultation page.
- Include a paragraph about the consultation in any newsletters or emails that may be going out to relevant stakeholders in the lead up to and during the consultation period.
- Publish information and link to the consultation through your Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.

See overleaf for sample text that you can use with your promotion activities.

Feedback

At the end of the consultation period, we will send you a very short questionnaire to capture the extent to which this consultation was publicised, so please keep a record of your activities.

Thank you for your help

Sample text for websites, newsletters etc.

Our industry is currently engaged in developing new employer-defined Apprenticeship standards. Lead employers including *[insert names of employers]* are working with partners *[insert names of partners such as professional and sector bodies]* to develop these Apprenticeship standards are now looking for feedback from the sector on *[insert focus of the survey]*. Have your say at *[insert link to consultation details]*.

Sample social media postings

(examples given here are for consulting on a draft standard)

Please post messages on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn about the consultation on a regular basis. Adapt, brand and/or personalise the examples below as needed.

Date	Message
	Consultation on new Apprenticeship standards in <i>[insert the name of the sector/occupation]</i> has started – have your say! <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Do you know what it takes to be a <i>[insert the name of the occupation]</i> in <i>[insert the name of the sector]</i> ? Check out the new Apprenticeship standards we are developing. <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Think you know what it takes to become a <i>[insert the name of the occupation]</i> ? Take part in the Apprenticeship consultation now! <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Are you a manager in <i>[insert the name of the sector]</i> ? Tell us what you think of the new Apprenticeship standards. <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Are you a <i>[insert the name of occupation]</i> ? Tell us what you think of the new Apprenticeship standards. <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Help us build the Apprenticeships of the future – tell us what you think of the new Apprenticeship standards. <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Just <i>[insert number]</i> days left to take part in the consultation on <i>[insert the name of the sector/occupation]</i> Apprenticeship standards! <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>
	Calling all SMEs! There's still time to have your say on Apprenticeship standards in <i>[insert the name of the sector/occupation]</i> ! <i>[insert link to consultation]</i>

Page 2 of 2

Adapted from a guide created by People 1st to support the Trailblazer Hospitality and Travel Apprenticeship standards

Processing consultation results

Effective analysis, reporting and actioning of consultation results is a time consuming process (depending on the volume and nature of the data) and requires significant skills.

Analysing responses

When analysing responses to a consultation exercise, it is important to adopt a systematic and consistent approach that allows the responses to be analysed in various ways, such as by theme, question and respondent group.

1. Collate results into an accessible form such as a spreadsheet or database.
2. Review the respondent profile to provide a breakdown of respondents according to significant features such as geography, type/size of organisation and sectoral interest.

This will identify 'missing voices' – stakeholder groups or sectors that are under-represented amongst respondents. It will also allow for other responses to be analysed on a segmented basis according to the characteristics of individual respondents.

3. Measure or count quantitative data responses to quantify the extent of consensus or disagreement to different questions.

Identify relationships between responses to different questions, such as how many small employers agree that the occupational profile is representative of the role within their context.

4. Identify key themes and points of consensus or disagreement in qualitative data responses as well as noting useful quotations which reflect the purposes of your consultation.

Again, identify relationships and trends between responses, such as which employers appear to be dissatisfied with the proposed skills and knowledge elements.

5. Recognise and balance for any sample bias in relation to any particular stakeholder groups to minimise the chance of misleading results or unfair influence.

Be prepared to explain the significance of any bias and any mitigating action to non-specialists.

Reporting outcomes

The process of reporting consultation outcomes will help you consider how the consultation has, or has not, changed your original proposal or decision, and how best to tell your stakeholders and participants what part they have played.

1. Report consultation results to the employer steering group. There are no hard and fast rules for what this report should look like and reports can vary in length, style and substance although most will be text based.

The report must be sufficiently comprehensive to allow the employer steering group to make informed decisions with regards to the purpose of the consultation.

- Include all the summarised response data (perhaps as an annex to the main report) – make this more accessible by presenting in the form of charts or tables.
- Highlight any anomalous, significant or unexpected results.
- Identify any bias or gaps in the respondent profile.

2. Let the participants know how the findings were used. Providing feedback to the participants on the key findings and final outcomes of the consultation will both strengthen the credibility of the consultation and increase the likelihood that participants will respond to future exercises.

- A useful approach is a 'We Asked, You Said, We Did' format as this will remind participants what the consultation was about, summarise the general opinions of respondents, and explain what has been done as a result of the consultation. A suggested template is provided on page 49.
- Make the feedback accessible. Use the same communication channels as you used for the consultation itself. Encourage the organisations that helped promote the consultation to forward the feedback to their members and contacts.
- Provide a contact point so that participants can ask questions.

Tuning words into action – using the consultation results to inform decisions

The employer steering group have a duty to make their decision on the basis of all the information and feedback. Normally their priority should be to provide what sector employers say they want.

- 1.** Link consultation to the decision-making process at the planning stage otherwise the results may not be used effectively, particularly where there is an open agenda, such as seeking views on what changes employers would like to see.
- 2.** Confirm and/or amend your decisions or proposals – while consultation outcomes should have a strong influence on decisions, they may not necessarily dictate them. The lead employer group must decide what weight to give to employer feedback, particularly when there are conflicting views, and balanced against other factors, such as practicality, statutory requirements and the views of other stakeholder organisations.

For some decisions, employer demands may imply unacceptably high costs or administratively difficult processes (e.g. proposed assessment services). The lead employer group may need to go back to the wider stakeholder population to explain the problem and look for the best available compromise. Just because a service looks difficult or impractical to the employer steering group should not, in itself, be used as a reason not to act on the results.

"We consulted employers on the content of our first standards in two ways:

- 1. Half-day consultation workshops with SMEs. These identified a number of areas where SMEs encounter challenges that are not prevalent amongst the steering group. For example, difficulties in procuring good quality provision when you are not an expert in either procurement or Apprenticeships, and inconsistencies in the quality of provision.***
- 2. An online survey to engage with the wider employer population. Feedback from this required us to reconsider the breadth of the occupational role in the context of a smaller business, and the flexibility of entry requirements to avoid restricting the number of potential apprentices into the sector."***

Digital Industries Trailblazer

**Support
tool**

'We Asked, You Said, We Did' consultation feedback template

Double click the pin to use the
MS Word version of this template.



Use this template to inform participants of the key findings and outcomes of the consultation exercise.

Name of consultation <i>[Insert details]</i>		Date of consultation <i>[Insert date]</i>
We asked:	You said:	We did:
<i>[Insert details]</i>	<i>[Insert details]</i>	<i>[Insert details]</i>
What happens next? <i>[Insert details]</i>		
Want to find out more? <i>[Insert contact details]</i>		

Evaluating the effectiveness of your consultation exercise

Evaluating each consultation exercise is an important element of effective consultation and should be built into your consultation planning. It will help you to:

- determine whether your objectives were realistic and whether they were met;
- find out what is and isn't working;
- rate the quality of each consultation exercise, including the extent of reach and engagement;
- assess whether an exercise was cost effective in terms of time and resources;
- know whether consultation is genuinely helping you to listen and respond to employers.

Use the questions in the evaluation checklist overleaf to appraise the effectiveness of each of your consultation exercises, identify lessons learned and to decide whether you need to revise your consultation strategy.

Checklist of key questions for evaluating consultation

Use these questions to evaluate each consultation exercise, identify lessons learned and to decide whether you need to revise your consultation strategy.

Purpose of the consultation	
Did everyone, including participants, understand the objectives of the consultation exercise?	Your notes
Did the consultation achieve its objectives? If not, why was this?	Your notes
Consultation process	
Did you provide the right type of support information (e.g. accessible, relevant, easy to understand)?	Your notes
How well did your approach to encouraging participation work?	Your notes
How effective were your consultation method(s) – both overall and with particular subgroups?	Your notes

<p>Did participants perceive the exercise as accessible, fair and useful? How do you know?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>
<p>Was the consultation timescale and process kept to? If not, why?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>
<p>Participation levels</p>	
<p>How well did the publicity and communication channels work – did you reach all stakeholders?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>
<p>How good was participation? To what extent did you achieve your target response profile?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>
<p>What did you learn from the response rates to the consultation might inform future exercises?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>
<p>To what extent were you successful in reaching hard-to-reach or under-represented groups?</p>	<p>Your notes</p>

Data collected	
Was the response rate high enough to give reliable results?	Your notes
Was the right balance of qualitative and quantitative data collected?	Your notes
Did you get the information you wanted in sufficient time, depth and quality?	Your notes
What difficulties were there in analysing and interpreting the results?	Your notes
Were results disseminated in a timely, accessible manner to the employer steering group and to participants?	Your notes
Consultation outcome	
How did the results of the consultation inform and improve the decision, product, or service?	Your notes

Resourcing	
Were the level of resources and support right?	Your notes
What was the cost (including staff time)? Did you budget adequately (any overspend or savings)?	Your notes
Future planning	
What would you do differently next time?	Your notes
To what extent do you need to revise your overall consultation strategy?	Your notes

If you have any questions about the content of this guide or need further support, contact info@fiss.org.

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