

An introduction to Higher Apprenticeships

You've probably heard of apprenticeships and plumbers, joiners and electricians spring to mind. You're not wrong, although there are lots more besides the traditional trades... but what do you know about Higher Apprenticeships?

What was once a bit of hidden gem is now becoming a popular alternative to university. Going to university is not the best route for everyone. Earning while learning is catching on.

Hundreds of school leavers, who could easily go to university, are now kick starting their careers in a variety of skills sectors via Higher Apprenticeships. They are taking their hard earned school qualifications and jumping directly into the work place. Many are put off by the thought of ever increasing student debt and tuition fees while others just feel that a structured academic route into their chosen career is just not for them. What may come as a surprise is that many higher apprenticeship programmes train you to degree level as well as allowing you to gain industry led qualifications.

So what exactly is a Higher Apprenticeship?

Government backed Higher apprenticeships allow you to earn a salary, gain training while at work and at college/university and start moving up the career ladder. They vary depending on what particular skills sector you are applying for. The good news is the government are firmly behind this mode of learning and Higher Apprenticeships can be found in the following skills sectors:

- Business & IT
- Construction,
- Creative, media & the arts,
- Customer service & retail,
- Energy,
- Engineering & electrical,
- Finance,
- Health & care,
- Hospitality & travel,
- Manufacturing, processing & logistics,
- Public services
- Vehicles & transport.

How does one work?

Like any job you have to apply, meet the entry requirements (which will vary depending on the apprenticeship) and pass the interview process. The length of a Higher Apprenticeship will depend on the organisation and what it involves. They generally range from 3-5 years.

Who offers them?

BP, Network Rail, Aldi, Acca, Honda, EDF, the Royal Navy and the Civil Service are just a few of the organisations offering Higher Apprenticeships. Like any job it's up to you to find the one that's right for you and that involves a bit of ground work on your behalf.

Good places to start are:

www.targetcareers.co.uk

www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.studentladder.co.uk/School-Leaver-Programmes/school-leaver-programmes.html

All these websites advertise current vacancies across all sectors. You can register and get job alerts. If you have a particular organisation in mind, then go directly to their website and Facebook page. Follow them on Twitter. Not only will it give the latest company news and vacancies but you will be familiarising yourself with the organisation which will become most helpful when you gain an interview.

Confused between the difference between a Higher Apprenticeship and an Advanced Apprenticeship?

The **Higher** level is the top level and involves apprentices working towards work-based learning qualifications such as Level 4+ NVQs and BTECs and Foundation degrees relevant to the sector worked in. They can also be used as part of the admission process into a full Honours Degree course at university or as part of a professional qualification from certain UK industry governing bodies.

An **advanced level apprenticeship** is the equivalent to 2 A level passes and involves apprentices working towards work-based learning qualifications such as Level 3 NVQs, Functional or Key Skills, and a knowledge-based qualification (such as BTEC Diplomas, Awards and Nationals).

Deciding what's right for you

Making the decision on what to do post school can often be done without knowledge of all the opportunities open to you. Many students drop out of their chosen courses through a lack of understanding of what is being asked of them.

Assess all your options; university, college or Higher Apprenticeships? Decide which fits you best in how you want to learn and if you also want to earn from day one. There are plenty of case studies on the websites mentioned that will help you decide which route is right for you.