

Frequently asked employer questions about apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an innovative and modern way of ushering in beneficial skills to your business. Apprenticeships are appropriate for learners at any level, so are an effective tool for upskilling existing staff or new hires. Understandably, employers can have a collection of unanswered questions about the rules for businesses, leading to many deciding against apprenticeships as a route for their staff.

As such, we at CCCU seek to answer several of the questions employers may have below. How does the apprenticeship programme work? What is the cost of an apprenticeship programme? What rights do the apprentices have? What happens once the course is finished? Please continue reading to get an answer to these crucial questions.

1. How do apprenticeships work?

To be eligible for an apprenticeship, you must be 16 years old to be eligible for an Apprenticeship however, at CCCU we offer degree apprenticeships which are available to those aged 18 and above. Learners must be already employed and paid at least the national minimum wage. The programme will combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in their job. The apprentice will therefore be working with experienced staff to enable them to learn skills that are specific to the job. There must also be time for studying and training during their working week. All of this will be done in collaboration with the University. Dependent upon the apprenticeship programme, they usually last from one to four years with the apprentice gaining their qualification upon completion of the course

2. What costs will there be for my business?

There are many factors which influence the cost of an apprenticeship. Recruitment costs, wages, and the cost of the programme, influence the total amount of investment. However, there is support available via the Government's apprenticeship levy. According to the government, if you do not pay the levy "you pay 5% towards the cost of training and assessing you apprentice". To find out more, please click on the following link - <https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice/get-funding>

3. Is an apprenticeship only for school leavers?

The short answer is no. Apprenticeships are available to 18 year olds and many older workers complete them to either change careers or to increase their skillsets in the workplace.

4. Can apprenticeships be offered to existing staff?

Absolutely yes! There are programmes available for experience staff members of all levels, including the director level. Apprenticeships of this kind are very popular and as well as the upskilling there can also be benefits for your staff retention. Christ Church offers many programmes that enable you to do just that, please check out our website for the courses on offer - www.canterbury.ac.uk/study-here/apprenticeships/current-apprenticeships

5. What makes an apprentice more attractive than a regular new hire?

There are many reasons why an apprentice is more attractive than a regular hire, not only will you gain support in developing their skills and attributes. Furthermore, apprentices can be moulded to fit your business needs and requirements from commencement of employment. As such, there is no former bad practices that are present from previous roles. In addition, government research indicates that employers of apprentices can count at least 8 benefits to their business. As well as 67% of businesses surveyed gaining an improved image in their sector, with many more benefits identified - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800060/Achieving_the_benefits_of_apprenticeships.pdf

6. Can I offer a part-time apprenticeship?

Part-time apprenticeships are a common option available, if all parties are in agreement. Although, these apprenticeships typically last longer to ensure the apprentice has the required time to absorb the skills of the job and the off-the-job training required to successfully complete the programme.

7. How much of a work week will an apprentice need to complete their off-the-job training?

To be able to complete their studies, apprentices need at least 20% of their working hours completing off-the-job training. For a full-time staff member, that typically means one day a week away from work.

8. What are my responsibilities as an apprentice employer?

By and large, your responsibilities are to provide real, work-life experience for the apprentice. In addition to allowing them time to complete their off-the-job training. As part of this training, they will typically have to evidence knowledge and will require regular reviews to document their progress. The programme will also involve liaising with the training provider (CCCU) to ensure the smooth running of the programme.

9. Can I let an apprentice go if needed?

Most apprenticeships in England and Wales fall under an apprenticeship agreement however apprenticeship contract permits dismissal in only the most serious of circumstances. Therefore, it depends upon the type of apprenticeship on offer. Apprenticeship agreements on the other hand enables dismissal in the same way as any other employee. To find out more - Terminating an apprenticeship early? Employer & employee rights - Real Business

10. Can I make an apprentice redundant if need be?

Again, this is dependent upon the type of apprenticeship offered. Similarly to dismissal, apprenticeship agreements enable an employer to treat an apprentice similarly to any other employee. However, the government funds training for at least 12 weeks afterward, giving the individual time to find an alternative placement. With apprenticeship contracts, redundancy can only occur in circumstances in which the placement is no longer viable such as, the business shutting down.

11. If I hire someone as an apprentice, would I be required to offer them a permanent role?

If they are existing member of staff their current contract will remain valid. There is no requirement to take on an apprentice permanently after the completion of their programme. However, in the majority of cases, businesses do choose to offer the apprentice a permanent role if there is one available. Ultimately, the decision lays in the hands of the business and can be based on capacity but also on performance. Apprenticeships work as an investment, training a worker to your required standards. As such, taking on an apprentice after their studies can save you time and money replacing them.

12. Can we develop our own apprenticeship, for a specific skills gap within the business, with Canterbury Christ Church University?

CCCU can absolutely develop an apprenticeship programme based on any of your skills gaps. Provided we have the expertise and a minimum level of workers agreed to sign up to the programme. The first step would be to arrange a meeting to discuss the possibility and how we can make the programme match your requirements.

13. Is employee shadowing an existing staff member a requirement?

On-the-job training provided by the employer for apprentice is encouraged, however how that is carried out is down to each individual organisation. This could include, mentoring, one-to-one guidance, networking and performance reviews.

14. What's the next steps?

If after the reading the above, you think an apprentice might be a good option for your organisation, the first step is to speak to our team to discuss your requirements. Please contact Canterbury Christ Church University on b2b@canterbury.ac.uk