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# Initial Assessment for Apprenticeships Process

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## 1. Scope

- 1.1 This procedure applies to all potential and confirmed apprentices wishing to enrol on a UCQ learning programme. It is the responsibility of the designated tutor to:
  - 1.1.1 Clearly explain the purpose and importance of initial assessment to proposed apprentices and their supervisors and check their understanding of this
  - 1.1.2 Ensure that initial assessment is carried out effectively
  - 1.1.3 Ensure that the process and outcomes of initial assessment (including of prior learning) are recorded in full, and are submitted in a timely manner to the responsible business development staff member in order to ensure that:
    - 1.1.3.1 Outcomes inform programme content, structure and cost
    - 1.1.3.2 Process and outcomes are discussed in full with the employer apprenticeship manager
    - 1.1.3.3 Process and outcomes are accurately reflected in the commitment statement

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 Before an apprenticeship begins, UCQ undertake a thorough initial assessment. Initial assessment is designed to:
  - 2.1.1 Establish a sound understanding of the prior attainment, experience, and existing skills, knowledge and behaviours of the apprentice
  - 2.1.2 Understand any difficulties or barriers that may challenge full engagement in learning and timely achievement of the target standard, so that relevant support plans can be put in place.
  - 2.1.3 Establish whether the apprenticeship is an appropriate programme for the individual; and to ensure that the target programme will provide for the development of substantial skills, knowledge and behaviours (i.e. there will be 'distance travelled' in learning)\*
  - 2.1.4 Inform the creation of the Individual Learning Plan which ensures that training already undertaken is not repeated
  - 2.1.5 Inform the related fee for the programme
  - 2.1.6 Inform the information, advice and guidance provided to individuals (and their employer) where it is found that the target apprenticeship is not appropriate for them.

\*The initial assessment process is critical in enabling UCQ to fulfil our obligations under funded apprenticeship provision, including the requirement that only those who are assessed to require a programme of at least 12 months in duration, with 20% off-the-job training, are eligible for funded support.

- 2.2 Each initial assessment will be delivered by designated and trained sector specialist staff prior to enrolment and induction. The process is fully documented, undertaken on a one to one basis and evidence of the process and outcomes is retained for audit and ongoing reference purposes. Outcomes of the assessment will be discussed in full with the individual and, as described below, directly inform the joint creation of an Individual Learning Plan.
- 2.3 The initial assessment involves the collection of various information to form a detailed and coherent assessment of an individual's experience and abilities.

### 3. What will be assessed and how

#### **3.1. Career Aspirations and Suitability**

- 3.1.1 Professional discussion will be used to explore the career aspirations of those who are already employed and seeking to undertake an apprenticeship programme, in order to ensure that this information informs the focus, content and context of their programme.
- 3.1.2 For those seeking new apprenticeship opportunities, part of the assessment of candidates will include an exploration of the career aspirations of each individual in order to establish whether the target opportunity is well-aligned to their plans and also, where it is not well-aligned, to provide effective CEIAG in order to support the individual in appropriate next steps.

#### **3.2 Functional Skills**

- 3.2.1 All potential apprentices will undertake an assessment of their English and maths in order to identify their current abilities. These diagnostic assessments will establish levels of ability from Entry Level to Level 2, across a range of skills in each subject area, providing a detailed profile which will be used to determine the level of support/learning (where required) that the apprentice requires in order to ensure that their skills are developed effectively, they gain qualifications where required, and any lack of skill identified does not act as a barrier to learning on their main programme.
- 3.2.2 Where there is an entry level requirement for English and/or maths for a Standard, this information will be made clear to the individual and the employer and UCQ will provide full information and support joint planning where an apprentice does not meet the requirement (e.g. to put in place learning and support in maths and/or English in order to develop skills prior to commencing an apprenticeship). Where prior qualification of the individual exempts them from a maths/English requirement, evidence of this must be clear and in line with ESFA guidance on acceptable prior equivalent qualifications, stored within the evidence pack and clearly declared on the Individual Learning Plan.

#### **3.3 Learning Difficulties**

- 3.3.1 Professional discussion and other assessments during initial assessment is also designed to elicit any learning difficulties or disabilities, which may or may not require specialist learning support and/or resources. It is vital that these are identified during initial assessment in order that they can be addressed in the individual's learning plan. Where additional learner support is agreed to be required UCQ undertake further assessment to understand the difficulty/disability; this may include, for example, a short paper-based dyslexia screening checklist to ascertain whether the student has any Dyslexic, dyspraxia or visual stress indicators.
- 3.3.2 As an outcome of assessment, UCQ will put in place the required plan, including providing classroom support, resource adaptation, assistive technology, special examination conditions and additional support via the VLE. Trainers design the Individual Learning Plan with embedded support that is appropriate to learner need and programme requirement, recorded on the ILP and reviewed for effectiveness and impact in one to one review sessions.

3.3.3 Individuals who have significant support needs and have identified themselves on application are referred to the Vice Principal to determine the most appropriate method of initial assessment.

### **3.4 Potential Barriers to Learning**

3.4.1 Some individuals may have personal problems or physical disabilities which need to be addressed in order to ensure good, continued access to and full participation in their learning programme. Some examples of barriers include: social problems such as homelessness, behavioural difficulties, alcohol or drug addiction; medical conditions or mobility issues; carer or child care responsibilities. Professional discussion during initial assessment will seek to elicit any potential barriers so that ways can jointly be found to either overcome the problems or find ways round them, e.g. through programme planning, by offering a supported referral to a specialist agency and so on.

### **3.5 Personal Behaviours and Effectiveness**

3.5.1 Skills in personal effectiveness are important in enhancing the employability of students. The skills include self-confidence, motivation, presentation, taking responsibility, attendance, time-keeping, reliability, respect for others and decision-making. Many students need to develop these as part of their learning programme.

### **3.6 Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning**

3.6.1 The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a term used to describe the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study and through work and other life experiences. Like other initial assessment areas, it is critical in determining eligibility and suitability of the individual for their target programme and also for determining what training should be undertaken.

3.6.2 UCQ recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet programme entry requirements or to achieve credit towards specific awards. In the case of apprenticeship programmes, the assessment and recognition of prior learning will inform how much of the off-the-job training element of the programme is required by the potential apprentice; where the individual is deemed to not require an apprenticeship with a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training, they will not be eligible for an apprenticeship. This will be tested through a professional discussion with the proposed apprentice using a pre-completed Initial Knowledge Skills and Behaviours (KSB) Skill scan document based upon the relevant apprenticeship, to elicit the skills, knowledge and behaviours that may have already been attained and also including an examination of competence at a lower level which will inform preparedness for progression to the standard being considered. Key aspects of this process will include:

3.6.2.1 What the goal is and what the learner is trying to achieve

3.6.2.2 Where the learner is currently at against this goal

3.6.2.3 How much of the content is new to the learner

3.6.2.4 Does the learner require significant and sustained new learning

3.6.3 Recognition of prior learning in all cases will only be given where learning, appropriate to the outcomes of the relevant entry requirements, module(s) or award level, can be assured to be

academically valid and that the student is competent and ready to sit the end-point assessment.

- 3.6.4 RPL has two widely recognised forms: prior experiential (or informal) learning and prior certificated learning:

**3.6.4.1 Prior Experiential Learning (PEL)**

Prior Experiential Learning denotes learning derived from experience, including work experience, which is uncertificated and not previously assessed. For example, learning from unpaid work or paid work, non-accredited training undertaken, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.

**3.6.4.2 Prior Certificated Learning (PCL)**

Prior Certificated Learning is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered, and if appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

- 3.6.5 All instances of RPL will be reviewed in accordance with our general Recognition of Prior and Experiential Learning (RPEL) Policy (AD-006).

**3.7 Qualifications and achievements**

- 3.7.1 Information about an individual's qualifications and achievements can provide an indication of their general level of ability. The qualifications and achievements can indicate strengths in certain subject areas which may then inform their choice of career. It can help in deciding which programme is most appropriate for the student and whether the level of the planned programme and qualifications are appropriate.
- 3.7.2 An apprentice may have a prior qualification at the same or lower level as the apprenticeship they are wishing to undertake; they may also have undertaken an apprenticeship previously. If they have prior qualification(s) at the same level, they can only undertake the apprenticeship where they start a new role or occupation which requires substantive new skills and the learning is materially different to their prior qualifications.
- 3.7.3 A review of prior qualifications will be undertaken by UCQ staff. This will be based on the self-declared prior qualifications listed in the programme application form as well as an administrative audit of the Learner Record System (LRS), to confirm qualifications.

**3.8 Job role and experience**

- 3.8.1 For existing employees undertaking work-based learning such as apprenticeships, it is important to consider whether their job allows them to develop the necessary competence to achieve the apprenticeship. If there are any gaps, the tutor/assessor should consider how the student will be given the opportunity to develop competence in these areas when developing their individual learning plan. It is also imperative to understand the competences already gained through work experience, in order to avoid the repetition of training which is unnecessary.
- 3.8.2 The Initial KSB Skill scan document (and accompanying professional discussion) will be used to map sources of prior qualifications, learning and experience against the requirements of the

target apprenticeship, in order to determine where competence is already in place and where training must be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the Standard.

## 4. Outcomes

- 4.1 Initial assessment will be delivered by designated and trained staff prior to full enrolment and induction. Staff undertaking initial assessment will discuss outcomes with apprentices and their supervisor and will confirm whether the target programme is appropriate and related next steps. As noted above, where the target programme is not deemed appropriate (e.g. where less than a 12 month programme, including 20% off-the-job training is required to develop the individual to the standard), we will provide this feedback to the apprentice, and employer (where applicable) and offer CEIAG to determine a more appropriate strategy for development.
- 4.2 Where it is deemed that the target programme is appropriate, the Individual Learning Plan will be developed with the apprentice, with input from their supervisor on the learning activity to be provided and the methodology to be utilised. The ILP will be designed separately for each student. The employer, the student and the tutor are all involved in producing the plan; it is the key document in which clear milestones for learning are defined and where progress against these will be recorded.
- 4.3 It includes information on the student, their learning programme, their learning goals, the results of initial assessment, induction training, on and off-the-job training, programme reviews, assessment and additional support arrangements. The ILP then links into the Ecordia e-portfolio system, where the ILP continues as a working document to which the student, the workplace supervisor (for apprenticeships) and the tutor regularly refer. It is reviewed and revised to reflect the apprentice's growing capability and changing learning needs, as assessed against the requirements of the relevant Standard and in the light of changes to the apprentice job role, emerging barriers etc.
- 4.4 Detailed information on the planned learning programme will be provided to the business development team in order to inform the fee set for the programme (Total Negotiated Price); this will then be discussed with the employer apprenticeship manager and confirmed within Schedule 8 of the Employer Apprenticeship Training Agreement.
- 4.5 All initial assessment outcomes and reports will be stored within the evidence pack and made available for audit by our funders, awarding organisations and inspectors.

## 5. Equality of opportunity

- 5.1 In choosing which methods to use in the initial assessment of individuals, UCQ must ensure equality of opportunity, as well as robustness in the process; an approach that may be appropriate in one occupational area, or with one prospective apprentice, may not be in another circumstance. This should not result in some individuals receiving a more thorough initial assessment than others.
- 5.2 When using written tests, tutors have to consider whether they are utilising the most appropriate way of assessing the needs of each individual. Some individuals may be unaccustomed to taking tests or lack confidence in undertaking them, which then effects their

performance. Poor performance in these tests may also be due to poor literacy skills, or the fact that English is a second language, rather than the subject which is actually being assessed.

5.3 All assessment tests used will be valid, reliable and free from bias.