Initial Assessment for Apprenticeships and HE

Version: 5
Revision date: 25/07/2025
Document reviewer: Head of Policy and Governance
Due for review: 25/07/2027

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1. Scope

1.1 This procedure applies to all apprenticeship and higher education work-based learning applicants 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 applicants 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 of the employer apprenticeship manager (apprenticeships only)
1.1.3.3 Process and outcomes are accurately reflected in the Individual Training Plan.

2. Purpose

2.1 Before an apprenticeship or HE work-based learning programme 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 applicant
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 programme 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 Training 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 applicable) where it is found that the target programme 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 8 months in duration, with the required off-the-job training hours, 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 Training Plan (Curriculum 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 the programme, 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 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in order to support the individual in appropriate next steps.

3.2 Functional Skills

3.2.1 All applicants will undertake an initial assessment of their English and maths skills to determine their current level of ability. These assessments, which include both a diagnostic and a skill scan, will evaluate competence from Entry Level to Level 2 across key areas of each subject. The resulting skills profile will inform an individualised learning plan, identifying any required support to ensure the apprentice is able to develop the necessary skills, achieve qualifications where required, and engage effectively with their main apprenticeship programme without barriers.

3.2.2 Apprentices who began their apprenticeship training when aged 16-18 will be subject to the mandatory requirement to study towards and achieve English and maths. Apprentices who began their apprenticeship training when aged 19+ will no longer be subject to the mandatory requirement to study towards and achieve English and maths.

3.2.3 For apprentices aged 19+, the apprentice or their employer can still choose for the apprentice to study towards an approved level 2 qualification in English and maths where they do not already hold a suitable equivalent qualification and they and their employer choose to complete it as part of the training plan.

3.2.4 Where an apprentice is not required to undertake English and/or maths qualifications, and they score Level 1 or below in their English assessment, they must engage with UCQ to receive appropriate support where identified through initial assessment.

3.2.5 Apprentices who undertake English and maths functional skills during their programme will be given one year to achieve the qualification/s.

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 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 applicant 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 Training 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 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 childcare 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, timekeeping, 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 the required off-the-job training hours, they will not be eligible for an apprenticeship. This will be tested through a professional discussion with the applicant using a pre-completed Initial Knowledge Skills and Behaviours (KSB) Confidence Skill Scan and vocational diagnostic questionnaire documents 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:

- What the goal is and what the applicant is trying to achieve
- Where the applicant is currently at against this goal
- How much of the content is new to the applicant
- Does the applicant require significant and sustained new learning – this will be demonstrated by scores below 80 in the KSB Confidence Skill Scan document.

Where an applicant has scored themselves above 80 within the KSB Confidence Skill Scan document, this will be tested further through the professional discussion. Where it is agreed that the score accurately reflects the current knowledge, skills and behaviours, this will be reviewed in accordance with our general Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy (AD-006).

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 and can be assured to be academically valid.

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 Learning (RPL) Policy (AD-006). An appropriate funding adjustment will be made in line with the current funding rules.

3.6.6 If an apprentice satisfies the requirements under our general policy, however, makes the decision by choice that they don't want to apply for RPL in this instance, the learning will not be fundable, and an appropriate funding adjustment will be made in line with the current funding rules.

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 applicant and whether the level of the planned programme and qualifications are appropriate.

3.7.2 For apprenticeships, 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 programme. If there are any gaps, the tutor/assessor should consider how the applicant will be given the opportunity to develop competence in these areas when developing their individual curriculum 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 Confidence Skill Scan document (and accompanying vocational diagnostic questionnaire and professional discussion) will be used to map sources of prior qualifications, learning and experience against the requirements of the target programme, in order to determine where competence is already in place and where training must be undertaken.

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 applicants and their employer and will confirm whether the target programme is appropriate and related next steps – this is agreed in the Individual Training Plan. As noted above, where the target programme is not deemed appropriate, we will provide this feedback to the applicant, 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 Curriculum Plan will be developed with the applicant, with input from their supervisor (where applicable) on the learning activity to be provided and the methodology to be utilised. The ITP will be designed separately for each applicant. The employer, the applicant and UCQ 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 applicant, 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 ITP – Curriculum Plan will link into the Ecordia e-portfolio system, where it continues as a working document to which the student, the workplace supervisor (for apprenticeships) and the assessor regularly refer. It is reviewed and revised to reflect the student's growing capability and changing learning needs, as assessed against the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship Standard (where applicable) and in the light of changes to the student's job role, emerging barriers etc.

4.4 For apprenticeships, 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 applicants, 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 applicants 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 applicant. Some applicants 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.

6. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
5	25/07/2025	All	Tara Henderson	Periodic review conducted in preparation for the 2025/26 academic year; Reference to ESFA updated throughout; S3.2: English and maths qualification requirements updated to reflect sector policy change; S6 document history added; Section numbers updated accordingly

7. Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

Department: All	**Completed by:** Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance	**Date of initial assessment:** 27/01/22
Area to be assessed:	TLA-015 Initial Assessment for HE Work-based Learning	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	Existing	
What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)		
External guidance and requirements: ➢ Equality Act 2010 ➢ ESFA Apprenticeship funding rules ➢ Consultation with relevant awarding organisations **Internal guidance and requirements:** ➢ Consultation with Policy Approval Working Group		

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure		This procedure applies to all higher education work-based learning applicants wishing to enrol on a UCQ learning programme. It sets out UCQ's approach to initial assessment for applicants.		
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?		All HE work-based learning programme applicants		
The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups		**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics?:-** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected characteristics	**Age**	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Disability	No negative effect	This policy aims to ensure that disabled applicants have equal opportunities to progress through the initial assessment process	Not applicable
	Gender	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

	Pregnancy and Maternity	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Race	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Religion or Belief	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Sexual Orientation	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?		Not applicable as no negative impact identified
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?		Not applicable as no negative impact identified
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 2)		No
Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 27/01/22