



Your rights as an

apprentice



**UNISON**
the public service union

What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships provide the chance to ‘earn and learn’ in a wide range of jobs and sectors and give you the chance to develop skills, experience and qualifications. Apprenticeships can take between one and four years to complete depending on the level of apprenticeship and the industry sector.

Apprenticeships are more than just a qualification. They are an excellent way of gaining workplace experience, understanding how a business works, improving personal and social skills and starting out on your career.

Apprenticeships are open to all age groups above 16 years old – whether you are just leaving school, have been working for years or are seeking to start a new career. You just need to be living in England and not taking part in full-time education.

There are more than 200 different types of apprenticeships suitable for over 1,200 job roles from engineering to financial advice, veterinary nursing to accountancy. There are currently three different levels of apprenticeship:

- Intermediate Level Apprenticeships (NVQ Level 2)
- Advanced Level Apprenticeships (NVQ Level 3)
- Higher Apprenticeships (NVQ Level 4 and above).

What do Apprenticeships offer?

Apprenticeships are made up of four compulsory elements:

- A competency-based qualification, such as an NVQ, which proves that you are able to demonstrate the skill, trade or occupation to which the apprenticeship relates – this must be achieved in order to qualify for an apprenticeship certificate.
- A technical certificate, such as a BTEC, to show you understand the underpinning theory or knowledge related to the apprenticeship; sometimes an apprenticeship framework may have an integrated qualification that combines competence and technical knowledge elements, in which each element is separately assessed.
- Either key skills (e.g. working in teams, problem-solving, communication and using new technology) or functional skills (e.g. Maths and English) qualifications or as GCSE with enhanced content.
- Employment Rights and Responsibilities (ERR) in the workplace – every apprentice is required to demonstrate that they know and understand the range of employer and employee statutory rights and responsibilities under employment law. These include health and safety and equality and diversity procedures and an understanding of representative bodies such as trade unions.

What are apprentices entitled to?

- a written contract of employment
- a full induction in the workplace
- a negotiated training plan or contract between yourself, the employer and the training provider
- a fair wage (see page ‘ How much do you get paid?)
- a safe working environment and protection from discrimination or bullying
- release from work to attend formal training
- provision of an appropriate range of work experiences to enable you to complete your qualifications
- access to support, guidance and mentoring
- quality training
- regular assessments and review of progress.
- sufficient time away from work station or desk to study in work time

“The thing I like about my apprenticeship is that what I learn at college I take to work the next day and I apply it and it just clicks.”

IT apprentice





“It’s a great opportunity to build up skills you didn’t think you had.”

Business Administration
apprentice

- a chance to learn while you earn – to get real work experience
- an opportunity to get nationally recognised qualifications
- access to progression routes to higher education the possibility of long-term employment with promotion prospects
- a chance to learn from experienced workers in the sector.

Your terms and conditions of employment

All apprentices have employed status and are covered by the terms and conditions contained in their contract of employment and any relevant employment legislation.

Your employment contract should cover areas such as:

- working time
- pay
- health and safety
- holidays
- protection from discrimination
- the right to join a trade union.



How much do you get paid?

The amount paid to employed apprentices, as for all employees, is negotiated with the employer. Pay rates vary between sectors, regions and between different employers. UNISON can help in negotiating pay rates.

There is an apprenticeship national minimum wage (NMW) in the UK which applies to all 16-18 year olds and to those aged 19 and over in the first year of their apprenticeship. The current rate can be found at www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates. This is subject to an annual review.

However, UNISON is involved in negotiating pay rates well above that.

“I joined UNISON a couple of years ago. I became a union learning rep and now help recruit apprentices to the union.”

Human resources admin
apprentice



Join UNISON for just £10 a year

UNISON strongly supports apprenticeships that offer genuine high-quality training, pay the rate for the job, and that do not use apprentices as cheap labour. We are leaders in challenging discrimination based on age, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.

UNISON also negotiates to get you time off to study or train. We have also negotiated provision of impartial information, advice and guidance, and proper support by a mentor.

As an apprentice you can join UNISON for just £10 a year – and get the chance to get your voice heard. If you decide to become an active member, you can get support and training that will provide you with a wide range of activist skills that can also be a real asset in your chosen career.

For more information about UNISON, go to:
unison.org.uk

For more information about apprenticeships go to:
apprenticeships.org.uk

Three simple ways to join UNISON today and get essential cover wherever you work



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for an application form