Annex T: Quality Assurance Framework for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

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# Purpose

* 1. This Annex to the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance establishes the internal quality assurance arrangements for [Higher and Degree Apprenticeships](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships) and the principles behind these.

The procedures are underpinned by the University of Kent’s commitment for continuous improvement in the quality of all aspects of its work in relation to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in order to help apprentices achieve the highest possible standards.

* 1. This Annex sets out additional requirements specifically for the quality assurance of courses of study leading to apprenticeship awards, as per the national regulatory framework governing such courses. It should be read alongside the rest of this [Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Taught Courses of Study](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses) and the [Credit Framework for Taught Courses](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework) which remain relevant except as specifically amended by this annex.

# Quality Assurance References

* 1. The courses of study that underpin the apprenticeships must meet the requirements of the full Code of Practice, [Academic Regulations](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/academic-regulations-for-taught-courses) and Credit Framework. By doing so, these courses satisfy the expectations and core practices of the UK Quality Code and the ‘B’ (Quality) Conditions of Registration set by the Office for Students (OfS).
  2. Courses must also meet the requirements of the relevant [Apprenticeship Standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/?), with a mapping between course content and the apprenticeship Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) carried out.
  3. In accordance with the [Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency) and the [Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted), the University undertakes to deliver the provision to an acceptable standard of quality, complying with the funding rules published by ESFA and the Education Inspection Framework, as amended from time to time. As a result, the University should use all reasonable endeavours to ensure the achievement of the following objectives:
     1. To minimise drop-out rates, deliver high completion, achievement and success rates and appropriate progression;
     2. To meet the requirements for quality and standards, as published by ESFA and OFSTED, that apply to the apprenticeship courses delivered;
     3. To ensure competent and appropriately qualified staff deliver and assess learning. The University shall be responsible for the continuing professional development (CPD) and relevant training of its staff and for meeting any minimum requirements which may be required by the ESFA-and Ofsted designated regulatory process for higher and degree apprenticeships;
     4. To provide a mechanism for Divisions to carry out the observation of teaching, learning and assessment related to apprenticeships provision;
     5. To offer equality of access to learning opportunities and close equality gaps in learning and outcomes;
     6. To help provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment, which meets the needs of apprentices
     7. To embed understanding of areas such as Safeguarding, PREVENT, British Values, Equality Diversity & Inclusivity, English /math skills development and Online Safety within the curriculum delivered by a Division, and provided through reviews provided by the Apprenticeship Advisors;
     8. To provide good management and leadership of the learning process;
     9. To deliver value for money and financial regularity and probity; and
     10. To ensure any subcontractors delivering the provision have been approved in-line with the requirements of Annex O: Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships – Part 1 (as varied at section 18 below) and comply with the requirements above and with the University’s Quality Assurance of Subcontracting Procedure (see Appendix B).[[1]](#footnote-2)

# Quality Improvement

* 1. The University continuously seeks to improve provision and raise standards to benefit the apprentice and their employer. The University has the primary responsibility for improving standards and demonstrates this through a process of self-evaluation and action planning. The University’s procedure for such Self-Assessment can be found in Appendix E
  2. The University of Kent’s commitment for continuous improvement in the quality of all aspects of its work in relation to all Apprenticeships requires regular review of standards and monitoring of learner progression, achievements, retention, attrition and destinations.

This is achieved through:

* The consideration of key data such as that provided as part of the University’s Annual Monitoring procedure (please see Annex E of the Code of Practice for Taught programmes) and considered at apprenticeship Boards of Studies (see section 10 of this Annex);
* Progress Reviews with apprentices;
* Progress Boards;
* Boards of Examiners;
* Assessment Review Boards;
* Learner and Employer feedback at module and course level;
* The consideration of data, policy, and risk related to Apprenticeships at the Apprenticeships Governance Committee (AGC) (see Appendix A)

# Scope of QA Framework and Implementation

* 1. The Quality Assurance framework involves employers, apprentices and subcontractors, as appropriate. The management of the quality processes are carried out through existing University structures for management, review and audit of courses, together with additional specific Apprenticeship Governance provided by the AGC. In addition the Quality Assurance of Subcontracting procedure provides a framework for assuring the quality of subcontracted provision
  2. Quality assurance procedures are founded in a process of regular self-evaluation by staff and internal and external audits and observations. The University ensures that it seeks the views and thoughts of learners who are enrolled on an apprenticeship with the University and their employers (see section 13 of this Annex).
  3. Wherever possible, the procedures promote the identification of quality standards and performance indicators against which performance can be measured, evaluated and improved, for example, via ESFA Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs), data considered at Boards of Studies and indicators considered at the AGC (see clauses 10.3 and 12.1 of this Annex).

# Responsibility for Procedures

* 1. Responsibility for the implementation of this Annex lies with staff at all levels, including:
* Senior Leaders at the University who are responsible for the operation of apprenticeship strategy and provision.
* All staff involved in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes, and support of apprentices including staff in:
* Divisions
* Professional Service Departments (PSDs)
* Support Services
  1. Specific responsibilities have, where applicable, been detailed within this Annex. Where clarification of a responsibility is required this should be sought from the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office (QACO) and Global and Lifelong Learning (GLL) which acts as the University’s designated apprenticeship unit.
  2. It is the responsibility of Senior Management within GLL to work with QACO and under the purview of the AGC, to ensure there is an annual review of this Annex.

It is the responsibility of all to engage positively in that review.

# Quality Assurance of Awards

* 1. The University’s Code of Practice and Credit Framework set out the quality assurance procedures and academic/credit conventions through which the University assures the quality and standards of its awards, unless varied by this Annex.
  2. Apprenticeships are also subject to external quality frameworks and requirements such as:
* [Ofsted Education Inspection Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)
* [Education and Skills Funding Agency Apprenticeship Funding Rules](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules)
* [The approved Apprenticeship Standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/)
* [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education External Quality Assurance Framework for End Point Assessment Organisations](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/4424/eqa-framework-august-2020.pdf)
* [Register of Approved Apprenticeship Training Providers](https://apply.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/)
  1. The University only offers HE-prescribed qualifications for the higher and degree apprenticeships that it delivers. When required, the University shall confirm in writing to ESFA that it has formal course approval from the professional or educational awarding body or other organisations as relevant to the qualification. This will ensure that the course of study has approval from ESFA and is listed on the ESFA Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS) database.

# Quality Assurance of Staff

* 1. The [University’s Staff Development Policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-learninganddevelopment/documents/staffdevepolicy/index.html) outlines the University of Kent’s commitment to ensuring that staff can undertake development opportunities throughout their careers. The policy supports the process of regularly reviewing apprenticeship delivery staff performance, training and developmental needs through regular performance reviews and the annual Reflect, Plan, Develop (RPD) reviews.
  2. In addition to the University’s Staff Development Policy, quarterly observations between Apprenticeship Advisors are used to monitor and evaluate performance and highlight developmental needs. Observations are recorded on a standard pro-forma.
  3. In addition to the University’s Staff Development Policy, at least one teaching observation per academic staff member needs to be conducted each academic year. Observations are recorded on the approved form.
  4. All new Apprenticeship Advisors are required to be observed conducting their first progress review. They should then be subject to periodic review (to be agreed with their line manager) following this to ensure that they are adhering to all relevant procedures.

# Management of Learners

8.1 The University, through the Apprenticeship Advisors team based in GLL and staff involved in the management and delivery of apprenticeships in Divisions must provide high quality and easily accessible information and advice in helping apprentices to understand the opportunities and support available to them about education, training and connected matters (including employment).

8.2 All parties should be made aware of the expectations of the University with regards to quality and standards at the beginning and throughout the apprenticeship. This includes providing learners and employers with information related to the requirements of University’s Credit Framework, Code of Practice for Taught Courses, and Academic Regulations as applicable. As detailed within the apprentices training plan.

8.3 During the apprenticeship Divisions should ensure that learners are made aware of any specific requirements that will enable the learner to progress through to completion (for example this could include, but is not limited to, assessment requirements, course submission deadlines, learning resources, mitigation of extenuating circumstances applications).

* 1. All learners must receive from the University of Kent:
* An Initial Assessmentto determine a learner’s starting position in preparation for their apprenticeship.
* An Initial Assessment of the learner’s maths and English level where prior attainment could not be evidenced.
* A detailed Training Plan for the specific programme.
* An Apprenticeship Agreement for the duration of the apprenticeship including End Point Assessment.

8.5 Where additional support is required the University, provides appropriate resources to the apprentice, and signposts them to the University’s S[tudent Learning Advisory Service (SLAS)](https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-learning-advisory-service) and [Student Support and Wellbein](https://www.kent.ac.uk/student-support)g.

8.6 Support to develop maths and English skills should be provided throughout the apprenticeship, regardless of whether the individual apprentice has level 2 English and maths qualifications.

8.7 Learners with level 2 maths and English are required to provide evidence of this at the outset of their apprenticeship. Where learners do not have the required level of maths and English certification, GLL will support development of these skills and the first attempt for the exam of English and/or maths is funded by the apprenticeship levy via the University of Kent with an approved provider of their choice.

8.8 The University should work in partnership with apprentices and employers to ensure that satisfactory performance and progress of the apprentice is maintained throughout the apprenticeship, including progress through the KSBs for the relevant apprenticeship standard. Progress should be monitored at the relevant subject Progress Board. All Progress Boards are operated by GLL (see Appendix C) for Progress Board terms of reference).

8.9 All apprentices’ performance and progress must be monitored and evaluated every 8-12 weeks via the University’s Apprenticeship Advisors.[[2]](#footnote-3)

8.10 All apprentices’ evidence packs and files, including feedback, progress review meetings and exit questionnaires are analysed and acted upon where required. All learners’ evidence packs/files are continuously and rigorously audited by the relevant GLL staff to ensure they are complete and up-to-date.

# On-going Monitoring of Quality of Apprenticeships Provision

* 1. The bodies with responsibility for on-going monitoring of the quality of apprenticeship provision within the University are those detailed in the Code of Practice:
* Board of Studies at subject level
* Divisional Education and Student Experience Committee and Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee (or equivalent) at Divisional level).

And

* The Apprenticeship Governance Committee (on behalf of the Education and Academic Standards Committee),
* Progress Boards (operated by GLL for all apprenticeships)

* 1. Monitoring is conducted against the requirements of the University’s Code of Practice for Quality Assurance, the apprenticeship standard, external frameworks and other student success indicators.
  2. Departmental termly audits on apprentice eligibility via apprentices evidence files and the ILR PDSAT report.

# Divisional Boards of Studies/Committees

* 1. Divisions may operate the requirements of the above bodies within their responsibility (Boards of Studies and Divisional Quality Committees) in-line within the practice of the Division provided that the full requirements of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses in relation to such groups are met. This could be the operation of a specific Apprenticeships Board of Studies/committee or Board of Studies/committee which considers apprenticeships provision alongside other cognate courses.
  2. Divisions should however ensure that evidence of the on-going monitoring of the quality of apprenticeships provision (i.e. via a Board of Studies or Divisional Quality Committee) can be made available should it be requested as part of an Ofsted inspection.
  3. This should include minutes or extracts of minutes related to apprenticeships provision for at least the preceding six months and consideration of the following apprenticeships specific data, considered at subject level (i.e. Board of Studies) , on a termly basis:
* Number of Apprentices for the previous term
* Module assessment results including percentage who have passed/failed a module during the previous term;
* Student progression and achievement for the previous term
* Withdrawals for the previous term;
* Applications and admissions for the previous term;
* Employment of former students for the previous term;
  1. At the subject (i.e. Board of Studies) level consideration should also take place on a termly basis of the ways in which the following have been embedded into the curriculum for apprenticeships delivered by the Division:
  + KSBs contained in the Apprenticeship Standard
  + British Values information
  + Safeguarding
  + Equality Diversity and Inclusivity
  + Prevent
  + Careers guidance
  + English and Maths
  1. Divisions should report on their consideration of the data and actions taken under 10.3 and 10.4 to the AGC on a termly basis. Reports should be sent to the Quality, Improvement and Compliance Officer in GLL.
  2. Divisional Ofsted/ESFA Mapping document
     1. Divisions should also ensure that they regularly receive at subject/Divisional level as applicable for that Division, the Divisional Ofsted Mapping Document provided by GLL. This document maps requirements of Ofsted to practice within the Division.
     2. This document is used to inform the annual Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan and Divisions should confirm the contents of this mapping prior to it coming forward to GLL by the deadline set and circulated by GLL.

# Progress Boards

* 1. GLL shall stage Progress Boards for each apprenticeship on a termly basis in co-ordination with the Division responsible for delivery.
  2. The Terms of Reference for Progress Boards are provided in Appendix C.
  3. Progress Boards capture progress and identify learners who are ‘at risk’ of falling behind in their study.
  4. For apprentices who are failing to progress at the expected rate learners will be contacted and interventions will be implemented swiftly. Divisions, learners, Apprenticeship Advisors and employers will all be made aware when a learner is failing to progress at the expected rate. Effectiveness of interventions will be monitored as part of Progress Reviews and at the following Progress Board ensuring that there is a report on interventions provided to GLL on a termly basis.

# Apprenticeships Governance Committee

12.1 The Apprenticeships Governance Committee provides oversight of apprenticeships at Kent. It meets on a termly basis with a remit to ensure the sound academic governance of the University’s arrangements for managing courses of study leading to apprenticeship awards and contains a cross-institutional membership, and a member external to the University with expertise in the management of apprenticeships provision.

12.2 The Committee is serviced by GLL and chaired by the Director and Dean of Global and Lifelong Learning. The full terms of reference and membership for the committee are detailed in Appendix A.

# Apprentice and Employer Evaluation

13.1The views of learners, employers and staff views and perceptions are gathered via questionnaires, surveys and review meetings, such as:

* Employer and apprentice surveys run by ESFA and Ofsted.
* Employer and apprentice surveys run by GLL
* Module evaluations completed at subject level
* Undergraduate and postgraduate surveys at the national level (such as the National Student Survey & Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey)
* Student/Employer Voice Forums
* Apprenticeship and employer drop-in sessions.

# Course and Module Approval

14.1 Apprenticeship Courses and Modules should be proposed, approved and amended in-line with the Code of Practice for Taught Courses, Approval of Taught Courses, Suspensions and Withdrawals (Annex B) and Approval of Modules, Suspensions and Withdrawals (Annex C), with the exception for Courses as noted at 14.2 and 14.3 below.

14.2 New proposals for Courses leading to the completion of an apprenticeship must be made in conjunction with GLL. This is to ensure that there is central oversight of the development of such courses and that all requirements of funding and delivery of apprenticeships are fully met.

14.3 Amended proposals for Courses must, following consideration within the relevant Division, be considered by GLL through its applicable course approval routes, prior to progression of the proposal to the University’s Course Approval Subcommittee. This is to ensure that any amendments made to a course of study leading to an apprenticeship continue to fully meet all of the requirements of funding and delivering that apprenticeship.

14.4 Course specifications, once approved, should be uploaded to the Ofsted Teams Channel to ensure that a central repository of apprenticeships courses is maintained (GLL can advise on this requirement).

**Please note:** This is to create a central repository of apprenticeship course specifications in the event of inspection and is separate to any other publishing requirements for specifications the University, via QACO, may have.

14.5 New/Amended module proposals should, once approved be uploaded to the Ofsted Teams Channel to ensure that a central repository of apprenticeships module is maintained (GLL can advise on this requirement). **All apprenticeship course and module changes are required to be approved by GLL.**

**Please note:** This is to create a central repository of apprenticeship module specifications in the event of inspection and is separate to any other publishing requirements for specifications the University, via QACO, may have.

# Conventions for Managing Progression, Resits and the Award of Credit

* 1. The conventions for managing progression, resits and the award of credit, as outlined in the [Credit Framework, Section 13](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#cf-t), should be followed with regard to courses and modules leading and contributing to the completion of an apprenticeship at Kent with the exception noted below (15.2)
  2. In order to ensure that decisions on progression, the award of credit and the award of qualifications can be made in a timely manner so as to enable learners to continue to End Point Assessment, Progression and Award Board of Examiners should be staged at least twice a term; such Boards will comprise the standard membership for Boards of Examiners;

# Audit Activity

16.1 As part of supporting the quality of apprenticeships GLL will carry out sample audits of related activity to evaluate compliance with internal and external requirements. Audits will be reported on within GLL, added to the University’s Self-Assessment Report, and any actions required reflected in the University’s ESFA or Ofsted Quality Improvement Plan as applicable. Indicative types of audits would be on areas of activity such as Employer Contracts, Apprentice Evidence Packs Progress Reviews and compliance with external funding requirements.

# Risk Management

17.1 The University takes a Risk Management Approach when working with new providers, employers, procedures and systems related to apprenticeship provision. These risks are reviewed on a regular basis and feed into GLL and the University’s Risk Register where appropriate

# Approval and Monitoring of Subcontractors

* 1. In-line with the [University’s Subcontracting statement](https://www.kent.ac.uk/global-lifelong-learning/about) in limited instances the University will subcontract with another provider in order to ensure the delivery of an apprenticeship.
  2. Any Division that wishes to subcontract any part of an apprenticeship must first liaise with GLL, this is to ensure that the ESFA requirements for any subcontracting arrangement can be met.
  3. In order to be approved as a subcontractor a provider will need to satisfy the requirements for approval of a new Collaborative Partner as detailed in Annex O of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses - Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships – Part 1.
  4. In addition to the standard Due Diligence requirements for a new partner required under Annex O, the following additional steps must also be followed to meet the requirements of the ESFA:
* Confirmation that a proposed subcontractor is on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (the ‘[RoATP](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-apprenticeship-training-providers)’).
* Requesting of a copy of the proposed subcontractor’s Safeguarding Policy
* Review of 3 years’ worth of financial statements by the Finance team at the University Kent, rather than the standard one year required for other partnerships
* Consideration of the most recent report of Ofsted and/or relevant accrediting bodies
* Ensuring that extremist organisations are not funded via any proposed provider

It will be the responsibility of GLL to advise of any other ESFA requirements of subcontractors at the time of approval of a new partner.

* 1. In addition to the standard Due Diligence checks required for the approval/renewal of a subcontractor:
     1. GLL, through its Finance Manager, will also be required to complete and submit an ESFA Subcontracting Due Diligence form as applicable.
     2. Subcontractor Due Diligence checks must be renewed on an annual basis.
  2. On successful completion of Due Diligence an appropriate legal agreement will be signed between the provider and the University. This agreement must reflect any specific requirements of subcontractor agreements as specified by the ESFA in its funding guidance.
  3. Following approval of a subcontractor the on-going monitoring of subcontracting arrangements is managed by GLL via the Quality Assurance of Subcontracting Procedure (Appendix B of this Annex) whilst renewal of subcontracting arrangements is managed by QACO under the requirements of Annex P of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses, Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships – Part 2.

1. [The ESFA defines a subcontrator as](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/subcontracting-using-funding-to-offer-education-and-training#:~:text=A%20subcontractor%20is%20therefore%20a,provision%20that%20the%20ESFA%20funds): ‘… a third party that is engaged in a contractual and legally binding arrangement with one or more lead providers, to deliver education and training provision that the ESFA funds.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Unless more regular reviews are required, for example due to specific contractual or professional body requirements. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)