Scottish Apprenticeship Development

Frequently Asked Questions

To support AAG members, the SDS Standards and Frameworks team have developed a set of responses to frequently asked questions aligned to the key thematic areas of apprenticeship development.

Key thematic areas of apprenticeship development:

1. Development of Work Situations
2. Meta-skills
3. Technical Expert Groups
4. Qualifications
5. Assessment
6. Consultation
7. Apprenticeship Approval

Q: What are work situations?

A: Work situations are the foundations of Scottish Apprenticeships and are used for the purpose of informing an apprenticeship, and for developing an occupation profile and a competence-based qualification for a given apprenticeship. Individually, a work situation is a key responsibility of an occupation and comprises of the knowledge, skills and behaviours to demonstrate competence. Used within Scottish Apprenticeships, work situations are identified and clustered to develop an occupation profile which details all the knowledge, skills and behaviours an apprentice needs to demonstrate to competently perform their entire job.

Q: How are work situations developed and who is involved?

A: Work situations are developed from **the bottom up** using an internationally recognised 'Situation-based approach' model of good practice to define *'what actually happens'* currently in the job. Driven by the voice of experienced employees (ideally 3 years post qualified apprentices or similar who can display "conscious competence" in their role) who are currently doing the job. These individuals are initially asked to capture the key activities of their role individually and then agree collectively the key work situations for the role their work is then validated by a Technical Expert Group (TEG) representing the occupation and made up of employers and industry specialists primarily operating in Scotland. A Technical Writer experienced both in the occupation and in developing standards is commissioned by SDS to write the work situations to the Apprenticeship development quality standard based on the information provided from employees and TEG.

Q: Why are Work Situations used in apprenticeship development?

A: Work situations are used because they reflect the reality of work as described by current employees. They provide a direct connection between the apprenticeship and the authenticity of work within a specific occupation. This ensures that they are very closely linked to the actual job, fit for purpose, reflect industry needs, and can be used to develop and measure the skills employers need. They will therefore better prepare apprentices for the job they are required to do. This was reflected

in the recent independent review by BSI who stated this approach provides "A better fit between work-based learning, the jobs that employees do and the skills that employers need in the workplace"[1]

Q: Do work situations consider any other sources of insight/intelligence relating to work in the area of development?
A:Yes - A range of data sources are considered, as appropriate, insights to the apprenticeship development process such as: Labour market insights e.g. Burning Glass labour insights tool; NOS, insights from data-science; other industry and professional standards; Subject Benchmark Statements; and exsisting qualification structures and take up of units within apprenticeships. This approach removes dependency on any single source of evidence. It complements the richness of the qualitatively derived work situations with additional quantitative intelligence to provide a robust evidence base to the Technical Expert Groups.

Q: Why not just use National Occupational Standards (NOS)?
A: NOS are, and remain, a key part of Scottish Apprenticeships. Moving to an approach where multiple sources (including NOS) of occupational and labour market intelligence such as Burning Glass Job advert information, are used in the development of apprenticeships strengthens Scottish Apprenticeships. It creates a common approach that can be applied across all apprenticeships (inc. Graduate Apprenticeships) regardless of whether or not NOS are available.

Q: How were current NOS and other industry standards considered in developing Work Situations?
A: A mapping exercise is carried out between NOS, labour market intelligence and other industry and professional standards and the work situations to provide insight for the TEG into where there are synergies and where there are gap areas for consideration.

Q: Is there an expectation that generic work situations could be used by other TEGS or may they develop other similar ones - and therefore cause unnecessary proliferation of standards.
A: Yes, existing work situations will be used in any occupations where TEGs agree they meet the requirements of the role to prevent such proliferation.

 Q: How will you avoid duplication of work situations?
A: A repository of the work situations will be maintained and will be reviewed/referenced within each development to understand relevance and potential alignment to that occupation. The work situations will be made available to the technical writers while the occupational Profiles, which are the collection of the work situations will be made public.

Meta-skills

Q: What are Meta-skills?
A: Meta-skills, as Skills Development Scotland defines them (here), are those skills required to increase resilience, performance and productivity in our workforce. They are unique, human capabilities, that support problem solving, social interaction, innovation and adjustment to change -

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[1] BSI's Consulting: Helping Skills Development Scotland meet the challenges of Industry 4.0. https://www.bsigroup.com/globalassets/localfiles/en-gb/our-services/standards-services/consulting/bsi_consulting_skills_development_scotland.pdf

all of which are essential requirements for our modern world. They include **self-management** skills such as focussing, initiative, adapting and integrity; **social intelligence** skills like communicating, feeling, collaborating and leading; and **innovation** skills such as creativity, curiosity, sense-making and critical thinking.

Q: Why are Meta-skills important and why should they be included with Apprenticeships?
A: Meta-skills are an essential component of new apprenticeships. They augment and enhance the technical competence of an individual with the skills necessary to adapt and transfer skills and knowledge to new situations. In an economy where the nature of jobs is subject to change, the capability to transfer skills from one context to another, or to unlearn existing knowledge and replace it with new is becoming increasingly important to ensure apprentices are equipped to thrive now and in the future.

Q: How are Meta-skills identified within Apprenticeship development?
A: Meta-skills are initially identified by employees performing roles relating to the apprenticeship being developed. As part of the "Situation-based Approach" (SBA) session, employees are asked to provide language/descriptors for each of the skills, as well as examples of where they might occur or support work tasks. This ensures they are captured and communicated in a way that integrates them directly within the occupation. This data is then validated by a group of technical experts as part of the wider apprenticeship development process.

Q: How are Meta-skills assessed within an Apprenticeship?
A: A process-based approach is used to assess meta-skills. Apprentices are required to conduct a number of reflective exercises in which they self-assess, set learning goals and regularly reflect on progress and performance, all the while, making direct connections between their meta-skills use or development and their on the job experiences. Assessment focusses on the quality of this process, rather than meeting (or not) a fixed definition of what good looks like.
As with all aspects of apprenticeship development SDS will continue to review and continuously improve the approach to the integration and assessment of meta-skills, learning through feedback from employers and individuals to ensure attainment of and effective use of meta-skills is central within Scottish Apprenticeships.

Q: Are Meta-skills separately certificated within Apprenticeships?
A: No. Meta-skills are an integral component of the apprenticeship and exist within the primary qualification. They are not separately certificated.

Q: Do Meta-skills replace Core or Career skills within Apprenticeships?
A: No, there are distinctions between core, career and meta-skills that make it unhelpful to draw direct comparisons between them. Meta-skills are being included in all new apprenticeship developments. The approach to core or career skills inclusion in apprenticeships and how these are reflected within the apprenticeship are to be decided by the employer led Technical Expert Group based upon their view of best approach/need within the apprenticeship

Technical Expert Groups

Q: What is the make-up of a Technical Expert Group (TEG)?

A: TEGs are primarily made up of employers, but also include other stakeholders such as trade unions, innovation/future skills experts, sector skills councils, professional bodies and others deemed to have useful occupational insight.

Q: How are individuals identified to become TEG members?
A: A cross functional team within SDS works to engage employers and other stakeholders to identify TEG members. From the spring of 2021, employers will be able to complete an expression of interest form in the process, via the apprenticeships.scot website.

Q:What are the typical employer roles that would be TEG members?
A: Whilst these will vary according to the size and nature of the organisation, we would look for individuals that are ideally line managers of roles being developed or the functional managers of area in which the roles being developed sit; the key factor is that employers can articulate the knowledge and skills required to achieve the competence within the occupation.

Q: How is breadth of representation considered?
A: We aim to include employers from a wide range of public and private sector organisations across Scotland, from micro businesses to large corporates.
SDS have developed a modified lottery style approach to ensure where oversubscription occurs equity in the approach to TEG members selection. This approach ensures that where possible, depending upon employer representation a good spread of geographically, business size and sector (public/private).
The Federation of Small Business and the Scottish Chamber of Commerce have been engaged and are working with SDS to ensure that small and micro business are engaged in a way which most suits their business needs.

Q: How does the TEG develop the apprenticeship?
A: The TEG will typically meet 3 or 4 times during the development process. The first two meetings focus on the apprenticeship standard (the what of the apprenticeship), and the TEG will refine the work situations which have been identified, to develop this. Latterly, contextualised aspects of the apprenticeship framework (the how of the apprenticeship) are developed, including equalities and fair work considerations, approaches to development and assessment and qualifications requirements.

Q: How does the TEG ensure that the developed apprenticeship is fit for purpose for all potential users within the sector/occupation?
A: Following the third TEG meeting, the draft apprenticeship will be circulated to networks within the industry for wider consultation.
This approach reflects the current maturity of the development approach and is inline with the approach taken historically. Going forward there is the ambition to move to an open consultation process which will ensure there are no restrictions to access.

Qualifications

Q: Who decides what the qualification type should be?
A: The Qualification Design Group (QDG) will review the information from the first two TEGs and identify the most appropriate qualification type based upon the TEG requirements. In most apprenticeships this is likely to be a competence-based qualification and in many, but not all,

apprenticeships, a professional qualification or another qualification which provides the required underpinning knowledge.

Q: Who is involved in the development of apprenticeship qualifications?
A: In most apprenticeship developments, the Qualification Design Group will include awarding bodies, Sector Skills Councils, the Scottish Qualification regulator (SQA Accreditation) and relevant professional organisations. In Graduate Apprenticeships, the Qualifications Design Group will include universities and QAA (Scotland), Sector Skills Councils, relevant professional organisations.

Q: Can awarding bodies develop apprenticeship qualifications if they weren't involved in apprenticeship development?
A: Yes, a range of supporting materials is provided to assist all awarding bodies, primarily the Qualification Design Specification. This document will contain the qualification structure, assessment approaches and all other details that would enable an awarding body to develop an acceptable qualification to support the apprenticeship. Awarding bodies will need to meet the requirements of SQA Accreditation where they have accredited the qualification. Only universities can award qualifications in Graduate Apprenticeships.

Q: Who is responsible for the SCQF credit rating **of the qualification?**
A: The process for allocating an SCQF level and credit points can is carried out by an SCQF Credit Rating Body (CRB), the Qualification Design Group and TEG carry out an exercise to propose an SCQF level and credit points but the final credit rating must be carried out and confirmed by the responsible CRB.   In Graduate Apprenticeships this will be done by the universities.

Q. How is the apprenticeship qualification developed – where does the development process sit within the overall apprenticeship development?
A. A Qualification Design Group, represented by Awarding Bodies, SQA Accreditation, Sector Skills Organisations and SDS, is established after TEG 2, and runs in parallel with the apprenticeship development process. The remit of the QDG is to develop the apprenticeship qualification design specification in line with the TEG requirements. The qualification design specification provides consistent and contextualised guidance for any awarding body who decides to develop the apprenticeship qualification. This aims to create a more iterative and collaborative approach to apprenticeship qualification development, enabling effective working between relevant stakeholders and quick development times.

Q: How does the learning content of an apprenticeship link to the qualification?
 A: The Occupation Profile defines all the learning content within the qualification.

Q: Will other awarding bodies be able to carry out the credit rating?
A: Where the awarding body is a recognised credit rating body they can carry out the credit rating of all competence-based qualifications other than SVQs. If not a credit rating body, then SQA Accreditation may facilitate the credit rating process with the awarding body.

Q: How is the assessment within apprenticeship qualifications decided?
A: All qualifications which support apprenticeships are assessed. Technical Expert Groups develop the approaches to assessment including identifying which aspects of the qualification need to be assessed in the workplace or a realistic working environment. An Assessment Strategy based on these approaches to assessment will be further developed by the Qualifications Design Group before

subsequently being approved by the Technical Expert Group. Apprenticeship qualification products including assessment strategy for MAs will be approved by SQA Accreditation.
Apprenticeship qualification products for GAs will be developed and approved by the HEIs.

Q: Which assessment approaches can be used?
A: A range of assessment approaches may be used depending on the nature of the apprenticeship. However, it is important that any assessment approaches are valid, reliable, practical and equitable and approved by the relevant accreditation body.

Q: Is there guidance/good practice available for approaches to assessment within apprenticeships?
A: Awarding bodies will provide appropriate guidance and assessment support materials to support assessment. SDS will provide a range of supporting resources for development, application, evaluation and assessment of meta-skills.

Q: Where will I find the assessment methodologies?

 A: Approaches to assessment (aka assessment strategy) are specified in the apprenticeship and qualification specification. Further details are exemplified in the qualification specification.

Q: If a qualification is not yet available how can the SCQF level be known?
A: It cannot definitively but the work situations have been aligned to the level of the qualification agreed by the TEG and qualifications will be prepared in line with the qualification design specification and relevant SCQF descriptors, providing an indicative level whilst in draft.

Q: Duration - how can this be known?
A: Duration is based on the expert views from the TEG, and feedback from wider consultation.

Consultation

Q: Why is consultation used within the apprenticeship development process?
A: Consultation on the apprenticeship framework is to ensure that representatives of the wider sector/occupation are able to provide feedback on the draft apprenticeship to ensure that it meets the needs of a wide range of organisations.

Q: How is consultation used throughout the apprenticeship development process?
- Employers, stakeholders, etc – general consultation
- Training Providers – PAG

A: A survey is circulated to networks within the industry once the apprenticeship is in draft form. Respondees are able to comment on the draft standard – i.e. the work situations and learning outcomes, and on the draft framework, e.g. approaches to delivery and assessment. The Provider Advisory Group is a subgroup of the TEG which allows learning providers to provide insight into the draft apprenticeship as part of the process.

Q: How are parties identified for engagement as part of the consultation process?
A: Via TEG members, SDS and occupational networks, sector skills councils, professional bodies and trade unions.

Q: What methods are used for consultation?
A: Consultation is via an online survey, which is circulated widely to networks within industry. Survey links will be included on pertinent industry websites and highlighted within social media channels. An open consultation approach will be utilised in future instances of development.

Q: How are the consultation outputs and comments considered and reflected into apprenticeship development?
A: The Technical Writer supporting the development synthesises and themes all consultation comments and creates the Stakeholder Engagement Report for the development. This is reviewed by the TEG and any relevant changes are made to the apprenticeship.

Q. What types of feedback results from the wider stakeholder consultation and how is this addressed?
A. Typical feedback includes technical changes to work situations, changes to mandatory and optional components of the qualification structure, suggestions for inclusion of professional qualifications, amendments to the approaches to delivery and assessment. All feedback is collated and synthesised by the Technical Writer who highlights feedback that requires additional discussion to be actioned by the TEG.

Q: Who decides whether consultation comments should be reflected within the apprenticeship?
A: Minor amends may be made at the discretion of the project team, but any comments requiring TEG agreement will be included in discussion at the final TEG meeting.

Apprenticeship Approval

Q. How is the demand for new or revised apprenticeships prioritised?
A. A due diligence process is carried out for any new or revised apprenticeships, this includes number of starts on any existing framework and/or potential uptake of a new or revised framework. Consideration is given to how specific requests support government policy and key sectors within the Scottish economy. The preparedness of the sector to utilise and support a new development process is also reviewed and finally the availability of budget to support the development process ensuring there is best value in developments.

Q: How are newly developed apprenticeships reviewed/approved?
A: All apprenticeships are reviewed internally by SDS Equality specialists to ensure that language is unbiased. Apprenticeship documentation is reviewed by the Apprenticeship Approvals Group (AAG) subgroup for technical checks before finally going forward to be approved by the Apprenticeship Approvals Group to ensure apprenticeships meet the Principles of Apprenticeships as agreed by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board Standards & Frameworks Group (SAAB SFG).

Q. How can AAG be assured that the technical aspects of the apprenticeship are fit for purpose (eg NOS/SCQF level/Meta-skills)
A: The apprenticeship development process confirms technical assurance of the apprenticeship, through a combination of employee engagement and the TEG review and validation process which includes engagement of wider industry and other stakeholders. In addition, the AAG subgroup will carry out a technical review of the occupation profile, qualification design specification and the

apprenticeship standard and framework. For MAs, apprenticeship qualification products including credit rating will be approved by SQA Accreditation.

Q: What is the role of the AAG Subgroup?

A: The AAG Subgroup carries out a technical assurance check to scrutinise the final drafts of all apprenticeships and, where required, feedback will be provided on any changes to developers or Technical Expert Groups (TEGs) prior to AAG submission for approval.

The AAG subgroup is formed of representatives from Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) Accreditation and Skills Development Scotland.

This process provides the AAG with the technical assurance that the apprenticeships are ready to be evaluated by AAG with a view to approval if they meet the approval criteria.

Q: What is the role of AAG

A: The role of AAG is to ensure that apprenticeships meet the needs of employers and provide high quality learning opportunities to individuals that align to the Principles of Apprenticeships

Q. How are AAG members identified?

A. Members are drawn from employers, the education and training sector, regulatory bodies and social partners

The chair of AAG will be an employer.

The Scottish Apprenticeships Advisory Board (SAAB) Standards and Frameworks Group (SFG) chair will propose the chair of the AAG, and the SAAB SFG approves the appointment.

The AAG chair proposes new or replacement members to AAG and appointments are confirmed by SAAB SFG

Q. What are the criteria for Approval of Apprenticeships?

A. All apprenticeships must meet the Principle of Apprenticeship as agreed by the Minister and SAAB SFG. AAG will ensure that apprenticeships meet these principles before approving.