

Number: **WG37780**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation Document

Structure for Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks

Date of issue: 14 October 2019
Action required: Responses by 9 December 2019

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview The consultation seeks views on the structure of Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks and supporting pathways

How to respond Please respond to the consultation using the questionnaire at the back of the document and emailing the document to Dfes-ApprenticeshipUnit@gov.wales.

Further information and related documents **Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.**

Contact details For further information:

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General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to this consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process personal data this will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions.

Any response you send us will be considered in full by Welsh Government staff dealing within this consultation and will feature in planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such, work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out appropriately Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses and even publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response will be published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

Before responding you should make yourself aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation

If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

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For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

e-mail:

Data.ProtectionOfficer@gov.wales

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
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SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or
0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

The Foreword

As a part of our National Strategy, we have identified developing skills as one of our key priorities. We are re-shaping the skills landscape to help younger and older learners alike to find opportunities to meet the challenges of our changing economy.

Apprenticeships are fundamental to the success of this. Our headline commitment is 100,000 apprenticeships in this Assembly term – our *Prosperity for All* target. A target we are fully on course to meet. But this isn't just about quantity - it's about building our apprenticeship offer to grow our economy.

Apprenticeships raise skills levels to meet the demands of existing and future markets. This is how we will drive productivity, prosperity and build communities that are more resilient. By building a more responsive skills system we can better respond to industry changes.

Aligning apprenticeships with the needs of the Welsh economy is at the centre of our skills policy, and we are building our skills system to respond more effectively to industry changes.

Our priorities for apprenticeships are:

- Investing in higher level skills, particularly in STEM and technical areas;
- Driving inclusivity, equality and equity of opportunity;
- Responding to current and projected skills gaps; and
- Delivering apprenticeships through the medium of Welsh and/or bilingually.

We want to improve the quality of apprenticeships by implementing new arrangements to develop, issue and raise awareness of apprenticeship frameworks to meet individual and employer needs.

We also want to focus more on the well-being goals within the *Future Generations Act*, ensuring the next generation of apprentices has access to high quality professional training that enables them to compete against the best apprentices other nations have to offer.

In recent years, the UK wide system on apprenticeships has changed drastically and a number of UK wide functions disappeared with the closure of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, including the development of apprenticeship frameworks.

We are building our system to better respond to industry changes and place Wales in a stronger position to deal with the impact of globalisation, technological changes and to respond to the decision to leave the European Union. We recently consulted on the future role of the Issuing Authority for issuing Apprenticeship Frameworks in Wales and whether the Welsh Ministers should adopt this role and, if so, what the criteria for issuing apprenticeship frameworks should be to meet the needs of the economy, employers and apprentices. Thank you for all those who responded. We are currently considering the responses and a Report will be published over the coming weeks.

This consultation supports our broader system changes by proposing a new, simplified structure for apprenticeship frameworks based on clear occupational sectors and pathways to strengthen the quality of apprenticeship frameworks in Wales, held on a visible apprenticeship framework library for Wales.

The apprenticeship programme was never intended to be a programme to be used to fill every possible skill gap in the marketplace. We need to look forward whilst reflecting on best practice in apprenticeship programmes and delivery. We need to refocus our efforts on skilled technical trades and sustained and substantial training closely integrated with individual occupations. This will support our aims to secure parity of esteem for vocational education and training, enhance quality and improve the outcomes for the economy and people of Wales.

This eight-week consultation seeks views on the future architecture of apprenticeship frameworks linked to occupational sectors and pathways. I look forward to receiving your responses to help shape the future structure of apprenticeship frameworks to ensure we continue to make excellent progress collectively in developing and delivering good quality apprenticeships in Wales.

Ken Skates
Minister for Economy and Transport

Purpose of the Consultation

This consultation seeks views on the future architecture of apprenticeship frameworks in Wales, linked to occupational sectors and pathways to ensure the quality, processes, governance and criteria of apprenticeship framework development is transparent, consistent and fit for purpose.

Policy Context

In 2017 we published our policy on apprenticeships “Aligning Apprenticeships to the needs of the Welsh Economy.” We are developing new ways of working to help improve the quality of apprenticeship frameworks in Wales by implementing new arrangements to develop and issue frameworks to meet individual and employer needs.

Our policy clearly states that we want the programme to ensure that apprenticeships support young people and that our focus will be to improve our offer across a range of technical and professional areas, particularly STEM and that higher level training will feature more within the programme. Many employers have told us that we need to ensure that all apprenticeships provide a curriculum of learning and skills that leads to occupational competence, whilst using them as a tool to support new professions resulting from radical changes associated with the digital age. Almost certainly there will be a need to ensure apprenticeships provide sustained and substantial training, fully and closely integrated with the experience of learning within a job and occupational related context.

What are the main issues?

Apprenticeships were traditionally focussed on occupations that required individuals to acquire technical skills and knowledge to become professionally competent and qualified to practice. In recent years some apprenticeships have lost this focus in favour of more generic occupational definitions. For example, frameworks now exist in business administration, customer service and team leading. A lack of occupational focus can dilute the value of an apprenticeship.

A system that focuses apprenticeships on occupational roles would lead to individuals reaching a level of expertise that is respected by others and would provide employers with assurance that individuals are occupationally competent when they complete their apprenticeship. This would also increase the esteem and value of an apprenticeship as an alternative education route.

Professor Ellen Hazelkorn’s report: “Towards 2030 – a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales”¹ noted that “*Wales lacks coherent learning Frameworks and educational opportunities for learners, of all ages, gender and talent, from school, into/through further and higher education*”.

¹ <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/towards-2030-a-framework-for-building-a-world-class-post-compulsory-education-system-for-wales.pdf>

There are currently over 200 apprenticeship frameworks in Wales, (some at multiple levels), linked to one of 28 occupational sectors set out in the Apprenticeship Sectors (Specification) Order 2011², made under section 38(1) of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009. These frameworks can be accessed on Apprenticeships Frameworks Online³. Each framework represents distinct packages of learning.

Demand for apprenticeships is changing as employers seek skills at higher levels and young people are looking towards apprenticeships as a credible and recognised alternative to traditional full-time undergraduate provision. Apprenticeships are now reaching into the professions, which offer an opportunity to enhance the esteem of the programme for a new generation. At the same time, there has been a trend towards classifying employer funded training programmes as apprenticeships driven by demand from, in the main, levy paying employers. Apprenticeships are, by default, increasingly being aligned to broader workforce skills rather than focusing on providing strong occupationally relevant skills. Against this backdrop we need to create a responsive, streamlined and consistent system that can adapt to differing economic and social stimulus and be calibrated to meet skills challenges, such as the decision to leave the European Union and ensure the integrity of the programme for future generations.

Where are we now?

We are continuing to review the arrangements for commissioning, developing and issuing apprenticeship frameworks in Wales to support the Welsh economy. We recently consulted on the future role of the Issuing Authority in Wales, whether the Welsh Ministers should adopt this role and, if so, what the criteria for issuing apprenticeship frameworks should be to meet the needs of the economy, employers and apprentices⁴. We are currently considering the responses and will publish the report and next steps over the coming months.

Demand from employers and the economy; and improving access, equality and equity of opportunity that will strengthen portability of skills and competencies throughout Wales will underpin decisions on which frameworks are developed.

All frameworks commissioned must meet the needs of the Welsh economy, evidenced by strong labour market intelligence and employer support; meet quality assurance requirements including progression routes, equity and equality of access and parity/portability with apprenticeships in other home nations; and support the overarching apprenticeship policy direction⁵.

² http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/220/pdfs/ukxi_20110220_en.pdf

³ <http://www.afo.sscalliance.org/frameworkslibrary/index.cfm#current>

⁴ <https://beta.gov.wales/role-issuing-authority-apprenticeship-frameworks>

⁵ <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/aligning-the-apprenticeship-model-to-the-needs-of-the-welsh-economy.pdf>

The Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB) has been established to provide advice and recommendations on apprenticeship frameworks to be developed, including simplifying the architecture for occupational sectors and pathways for apprenticeships in Wales.

We are introducing new arrangements to improve the development process for framework developers, consisting of four stages:

- producing a project plan;
- consulting with stakeholders (including employers, sector bodies, training providers and awarding bodies) to produce a stakeholder evidence report;
- producing a draft framework which will be quality assured by an independent technical expert;
- producing a final framework to be submitted to the Issuing Authority.

These robust and transparent arrangements will ensure all new frameworks will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, and meet economic need before they are issued.

We will also improve the visibility of the infrastructure supporting the apprenticeship programme through a new ICT platform to host services including:

- a central vacancy service for apprenticeships in Wales, allowing employers to advertise their apprenticeship opportunities;
- employer profiles that will showcase what is currently delivered in Wales and what opportunities are available in addition to those available through the vacancy service at any one point in time;
- a framework library, allowing users to search a database of apprenticeship frameworks available and identify a training provider;
- an area where key strategic information is published.

Evidence for change

As stated in this consultation document, there is a need to ensure that the apprenticeship frameworks, which are developed and issued, meet the needs of the economy, employers and individuals by delivering clearly to occupational needs.

There are currently over 200 frameworks, the majority of which were developed by Sector Skills Councils and sector bodies under a UK-wide mandate to focus on skills development. These were not developed within a broad strategic structure, and more than a third of current frameworks have not had any new apprenticeship starts in the last 3 years.

Changes to the Welsh economy have resulted in a number of frameworks being out of date and not fit for purpose. We have concerns that as the number of qualifications contained within frameworks have expanded, apprentices may be undertaking less demanding qualifications in some sectors. Qualifications Wales is undertaking a series

of sector reviews, and this will help to inform our plans for reviewing the content of apprenticeship frameworks.

Apprenticeship frameworks should only be developed where critical demand exists and where the occupation/job role for the apprenticeship meets current or emerging skills needs. This ensures that the apprenticeship has credibility and is well regarded across the industry or sector, as well as giving it longer-term value. Section 31 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 defines relevant occupational competencies as “the competencies required to perform the skill, trade or occupation to which the framework relates at the level required in the framework”.

The Proposals

Recognising the issues highlighted throughout the consultation, it is proposed that we implement a revised, simplified structure of 23 high level apprenticeship frameworks, supported by 72 occupational pathways.

Each broad occupational sector and supporting pathway is linked to a specific occupation, craft or trade, which we believe, will strengthen the relevance, quality and rigour of frameworks. We believe these frameworks better reflect the structure of the Welsh economy, and provide a clear range of occupational pathways within the sectors.

In recent years some apprenticeship frameworks have lost their specific occupational focus in favour of more generic occupational definitions. We propose that generic frameworks are removed, which we believe will increase the esteem and value of an apprenticeship as an alternative education route. We are interested in understanding the impact of targeting government funding towards occupationally specific apprenticeships, and would welcome views of stakeholders.

The outcome of this consultation will help shape new arrangements to ensure the underpinning architecture for apprenticeship frameworks and pathways are clear, streamlined and aligned with the current and anticipated future needs of the Welsh economy. We would also aim to review all frameworks on a more regular basis, prioritised by factors including demand from the Welsh economy and employers, changes to qualifications and/or sector reviews by Qualifications Wales; Labour Market Intelligence, policy emerging from other Welsh Government Departments and more essentially advice from the Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board. In terms of timeframes we intend to revise all Welsh Government funded frameworks over a three year cycle.

To provide a mechanism to respond more quickly to demand for skills in the Welsh economy, we also propose to introduce a system for stakeholders/employers to request new or revised frameworks and pathways outside of the planned review cycle.

Our proposals are:

- To strengthen the quality of apprenticeship frameworks in Wales by implementing a new, simplified structure for apprenticeship frameworks;

- To focus future apprenticeship framework development on occupational pathways, linked to occupational sectors; and
- To review and remove existing frameworks that have not been utilised in recent years, or which do not align with occupational sectors or the needs of the Welsh economy.

Annex 1 sets out the proposed framework architecture of 23 occupational sectors; and the 72 occupational pathways supporting the sectors.

Annex 2 provides a comparison of the proposed occupational sectors and occupational pathways with the T Level routes and pathways adopted in England and a list of the current frameworks with the number of starts for the 3 academic years between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

The outcome of the consultation will inform the future architecture of apprenticeships in Wales to ensure the quality, processes, governance and criteria of apprenticeship framework development is transparent, consistent and fit for purpose.

Annex 1 - Proposed Occupational Sectors and Pathways

Occupational Sector	Pathway(s)
1. Culture, Design and Media	Craft & Design
	Cultural Heritage
	Media
2. Automotive, Transport and Logistics	Vehicle Maintenance & Repair
	Vehicle Driving
	Logistics
3. Business & Management	Business Start Up, Marketing and Growth
	Business Management
	Customer Service
4. Agriculture & Environment	Agriculture,
	Land based Engineering, Management and Production
	Animal Care & Management
5. Construction & Building Services	Design, Surveying, Planning and Management
	Onsite Construction
	Engineering Construction
	Electrical and Electronic Services
	Plumbing and Heating
6. Property services	Property and Housing
	Facilities Management and Cleaning
7. Life Sciences	Laboratory Services
	Other Life Sciences

Occupational Sector	Pathways
8. Engineering	Mechanical
	Chemical
	Maintenance
	Electrical
	Aerospace
	Rail
	Civil
	Petroleum
9. Advanced Manufacturing and Materials	Manufacturing
	Process
	Materials
	Management
10. Energy	Gas
	Water
	Electric
	Sustainable and Renewable Energy
	Energy Management
11. Legal & Financial Services	Financial Services
	Legal Services
	Insurance Services
12. Food and Drink	Food & Drink Production
13. Catering & Hospitality	Catering
	Hospitality

14. Digital Technology	Cyber
	Software
	Analytics
15. Retail	Retail
	Retail Management
16. Travel, Tourism and Leisure	Sports
	Leisure
	Travel
	Tourism
17. Hair and Beauty	Hairdressing and Barbering
	Beauty Services
18. Healthcare Services	Healthcare Support
	Healthcare Science
	Clinical
	Dental
	Ambulance
	Therapies
	Pharmacy
19. Social Care Services	Social Care
20. Childcare Services	Childcare
	Childcare Management
	Playwork
21. Education and Information Services	Education
	Information Management

22. Public Services	Fire and Rescue
	Police
	Other Public Services
23. Protective Services	Security

