



SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER:

7/2023

PUBLICATION DATE:

06/02/2023

Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme

Final Report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Title: Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme
Subtitle: Final Report

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Full Research Report: Allies, O; Maughan, C; Turner, D; (2023) Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. Cardiff.: Welsh Government, GSR report number 7/2023.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/evaluation-degree-apprenticeship-programme-final-report>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

Acronym/Initialism/Keyword	Definition
BCS	British Computer Society – The Chartered Institute for IT
CTER	Commission for Tertiary Education and Research
ESW	Essential Skills Wales
FE	Further Education
GLLM	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
HE	Higher Education
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
NTfW	National Training Federation for Wales
PCET	Post-Compulsory Education and Training
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RSP	Regional Skills Partnership
UWTSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WEST	Wales Essential Skills Toolkit

1. Foreword – Summary of Findings and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report is the culmination of extensive research and analysis on the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales. The programme and the policy and socioeconomic context within which it is situated have evolved considerably over the course of the evaluation, with much of this being documented in this report. This has influenced the scope and, therefore, length of this report. As a consequence, a summary of the findings and recommendations of the research has been included herein.
- 1.2 Following its launch in 2018, and despite initial delays with the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, the Degree Apprenticeship Programme has made steady progress, with more than 600 apprentices currently enrolled in a programme delivered by eight of the nine HEFCW-funded HEIs and six FE colleges in Wales.

Programme design and implementation

- 1.3 The programme launched without a national campaign and with limited associated promotional activity due to concerns that this may lead to levels of demand that the available budget would be unable to fulfil. With the programme launched for a three-year period only, some stakeholders (HEIs, FE colleges, and employers) viewed it as a pilot and with an associated degree of caution, thereby restricting their levels of investment (in personnel, partnerships, infrastructure and applicants) in the scheme. Upon the culmination of the initial three-year programme period in 2021, the programme had attracted 55 per cent of the target allocation of degree apprentices.
- 1.4 Annualised funding awards, often late within the academic year, reinforced the sense that the programme was temporary in nature and also had implications for the nature of employers engaged in the programme. This led to a tendency for HEIs and FE colleges to pursue larger employers who may offer a greater number of apprentice enrolments. Furthermore, it encouraged these institutions to target employers with whom they had a pre-existing relationship (as securing engagement with a programme with no guarantee of funding proved to be more challenging with those where there was no prior relationship).

- 1.5 The programme design also influenced the nature of employees engaged as apprentices in the programme. Tight timeframes following funding announcements limited the extent to which a degree apprenticeship opportunity could be linked to an employer recruitment exercise. This has led to existing employees representing 86 per cent of those who have enrolled in the programme, with less than one fifth (19 per cent) of degree apprentices below the age of 21 (compared to 44 per cent of those enrolled in degree apprenticeships at Level 6 in England being below the age of 21).
- 1.6 Staff from management and delivery teams and wider stakeholders also reported that more work was needed to promote the availability of degree apprenticeships to a wider pool of employers, including small employers. However, amongst SMEs, awareness of degree apprenticeships was reported as being particularly poor. HEIs' promotional opportunities were predominantly driven by one-to-one engagements with employers and liaising with employers through industrial events. These methods were, however, time-intensive and, therefore, limited in reach.
- 1.7 Broadening the reach of the programme through a more expansive marketing campaign may also bring about benefits in terms of the programme's ambitions in relation to widening participation. At present, this is an area in which the programme is struggling to deliver against its ambitions. Feedback from management and delivery staff suggests that this has in part been driven by the overreliance of the programme on employment as a pathway into the programme, as the profile of entrants is therefore determined by the profile of employees within the employer settings. As such, broadening the reach of the programme to individuals who are not currently engaged in employment may facilitate access to the programme for a broader profile of individuals.

Recommendations

1. The Welsh Government has set out plans to continue with degree apprenticeships within the Programme for Government. The programme's ongoing implementation needs to be strategically aligned with a sustained, long-term commitment to programme investment.
2. Whilst it may be necessary for funding allocations to remain annualised, allocations should be committed earlier in the year. This should include outlining the potential funding available in the following years.
3. The Welsh Government should support promotion of the programme through the provision of a wraparound campaign to raise awareness of degree apprenticeships among employers and potential apprentices and within schools and FE colleges.
4. HEIs should continue to support promotion through direct engagement with employers via one-to-one interactions and engagement through employer liaison forums alongside school and FE college engagement.
5. If a strategic programme of investment is announced, progress and performance indicators associated with employer type and apprentice type should be considered in order to help increase levels and diversity in the types of employers and apprentices engaged.

Programme delivery

- 1.8 The Degree Apprenticeship Programme has been positively received by degree apprentices, their employers, higher education providers, and wider stakeholders. The vast majority of degree apprentices (96 per cent; 187/195) would recommend a degree apprenticeship to someone else, and most employers (80 per cent; 61/76) anticipate that they will enrol additional staff in the programme.
- 1.9 The programme was credited with bringing about a range of positive benefits, including contributing to the skillsets of employees/degree apprentices, and, in turn, bringing benefits to their employers such as a more skilled workforce and improvements in staff retention.
- 1.10 The programme was frequently championed by employers as a "win-win" for employees/degree apprentices, employers, and Wales.

Areas for improvement

- 1.11 Whilst the programme has received a positive reception from employers, wider stakeholders, and degree apprentices, there are several areas in which the programme would benefit from further refinement.

Improvements to workload

- 1.12 A substantial proportion of degree apprentices (67 per cent; 131/199) reported that they had experienced challenges in managing workload between their degree apprenticeship and pre-existing in-work demands. This was also one of the main challenges reported by employers.
- 1.13 Whilst many degree apprentices remained positive about the programme, even withstanding these challenges, there was evidence that difficulties in balancing workload were resulting in stress among some degree apprentices. Moreover, there were a small number of reports from degree apprentices, their employers and teaching staff of cases in which difficulties in balancing work and study had resulted in impacts on the well-being of degree apprentices.
- 1.14 Available data do not make it possible to systematically analyse employees' experiences to understand where these issues may be related to particular delivery structures or release processes agreed with employers; however, there was evidence of variability in the time that degree apprentices had made available to themselves to dedicate to study. Indeed, within some employment settings, degree apprentices were receiving regular paid study days to support their study, whilst some degree apprentices were expected to work back their hours. Going forward, this is an area that may require further exploration. At present the programme places an expectation on employers to release staff for 20 per cent of their working week. However, feedback from both degree apprentices and management and delivery staff suggests that the extent to which employers adhere to this varies.

Recommendations

6. Gaining clarity on the expectations of employers as part of the degree apprenticeship "deal" would be beneficial to apprentices and may help to ensure greater consistency with regard to day release for degree apprenticeship participation.

7. There ought to be strengthened monitoring of completion and retention rates across delivery profiles and employer settings to identify best practice in supporting apprentices.

- 1.15 Related to challenges surrounding balancing workload, 23 per cent (11/47) of apprentices who participated in telephone interviews reported that they wanted the delivery period of the course to be extended or additional time with which to submit assignments. It is difficult at this stage to identify whether particular delivery models are having impacts on completion and retention rates (with the proportion of early leavers varying from c.10 per cent to c.23 per cent of those enrolled). Furthermore, it is difficult to disentangle challenges associated with course delivery from additional restrictions from employers.
- 1.16 As the programme moves forward, however, this may be an area that could be explored further to identify whether best practice can be developed in terms of delivery models that both meet employer needs and support a good work–life balance among degree apprentices.
- 1.17 It is also possible that workload issues have in some cases been exacerbated by the overreliance of employers on putting current employees forward for the programme. Most apprentices (88 per cent) were employed before enrolling in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, and many of these employees appeared to be at relatively senior levels within their organisation (reflecting the level of skill provision being delivered through the apprenticeships). For example, 40 per cent (70/177) of employees reported that they were in an “associate professional or technical occupational role”, 29 per cent (52/177) reported that they were in a “professional occupational role”, and six per cent (10/177) were “managers, directors or senior officials”. As a result, some of these roles may have been more challenging for employers to back-fill, which would likely be less of an issue where new roles have been created for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

Opportunities to improve the alignment between the course and work-based learning

- 1.18 A substantial number of degree apprentices (36 per cent; 14/47) reported that they would like to see the course deliver content that is more relevant to their job or industry. Currently there is a high degree of variation in how degree apprenticeships approach the work-based learning element of provision and how they engage with

employers. Improved coordination will likely aid the review of this issue, with quality assurance of how this element of degree apprenticeships is delivered already being identified through the first round of scrutiny of the CTER Bill as a key area of focus and through the QAA review.¹

- 1.19 There was clear evidence that HEIs were — in the main — working closely with employers to understand their requirements and align the course in order to meet these. At many HEIs, updates with employers and Industrial Liaison Panels were used as an opportunity to understand employer requirements. However, practice varied across HEIs, and employers did not always feel as though they had been able to influence the course content. Indeed, 39 per cent (29/74) of employers reported that they had not been able to influence the course content.
- 1.20 HEIs, however, reported that this was an area of challenge or tension in delivering degree apprenticeships. HEIs were presented with the difficulty of offering a course that met the differing (and sometimes contradictory) requirements of different employers, as well as the apprenticeship frameworks and the PSRB requirements. However, there may be areas in which courses lend themselves more to alignment between the course and the employment setting. For example, one wider stakeholder reported that more could be made of opportunities to involve employers in assessment. This may also help to improve the relevance of assessments to degree apprentices.

Broadening the reach of degree apprenticeships

- 1.21 Evidence shows that those in degree apprenticeships are much more likely to be the first generation of their family to participate in higher education than are those in first degrees. Beyond this, there is little indication, at a programme-wide level, of success in widening participation (partly linked to some of the challenges surrounding programme design outlined above). However, some HEIs and FE colleges have enjoyed much greater success in widening participation than have others, suggesting that there is scope for sharing performance and good practice amongst HEIs to aid progress against this agenda.

¹ QAA (2021) Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales – Overview Report, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.

Recommendation

8. The sharing of progress and performance by HEIs with regard to widening participation indicators through a community of practice should be considered.

Outcomes and impacts

- 1.22 The majority of apprentices engaged through the evaluation remain in the midst of their degree apprenticeship; therefore, it is perhaps too soon for tangible outcomes identified in the outcome pathway (Figure 6.2) to be realised, which stated:
- 45 per cent feel more confident about and better at performing their role
 - 28 per cent have been promoted, and 29 per cent have gained additional responsibilities
- 1.23 Furthermore, two thirds of employers reported that participation in the programme was increasing the rates of productivity amongst degree apprentices, whilst in the absence of the degree apprenticeship, 36 per cent of apprentices would not have participated in an alternative course (increasing to 41 per cent amongst those in the digital framework).
- 1.24 Collectively, these initial indicators suggest a strong net additional impact emerging for the programme and illustrate the importance of a more robust impact framework being established for the programme.

Recommendation

9. The impact framework ought to be taken forward at the earliest possibility to enable a robust assessment of the net additional impact of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, relative to other provision being undertaken.

2. Introduction/Background

- 2.1 In February 2020 the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill and the Learning and Work Institute to undertake a formative evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and impact. This report presents the culmination of research findings from the evaluation.
- 2.2 Following its identification as a key aim in the Welsh Government's Apprenticeship and Skills policy plan (2017) and as an explicit recommendation in the Diamond Review of Higher Education Funding (2017), the Degree Apprenticeship Programme launched in Wales in January 2018.
- 2.3 The Welsh Government initially grant-funded the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) approximately £20m for the first three years of the programme, with the first apprentices expected to enrol in the programme in September 2018.
- 2.4 The Degree Apprenticeship Programme delivers against a wide range of policy objectives; however, the initial focus has been placed upon supporting:
- The realignment of the apprenticeship system to deliver higher-level skills driven by the needs of employers and the Welsh economy, as articulated through ministerial priorities.
 - Progressions from the existing apprenticeship programme into higher education, and, in turn, greatly improving the credibility and accessibility of the Welsh Government's apprenticeship offer for those with higher aspirations, particularly those who have not followed the sixth form/college route.
- 2.5 In 2016, in anticipation of a Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales, the HEFCW invited higher education institutions (HEIs) to submit plans to develop qualifications that could become part of an apprenticeship framework in Wales within the subjects of IT/computing, engineering, and advanced manufacturing. These areas had been identified by Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) as sectors in which there were skill shortages in technical and highly skilled occupations that drive productivity.²
- 2.6 In response, degree apprenticeship frameworks in digital and engineering & advanced manufacturing were commissioned by the Welsh Government. Following

² [Aligning Apprenticeships to the Needs of the Welsh Economy](#) (2017):

engagement with sector groups and employers, the following occupational pathways within those frameworks were identified as fitting with Welsh Government priorities:

- Control and instrumentation
- Data science
- Civil engineering
- Digital media
- Software engineering
- Mechanical engineering
- Manufacturing engineering
- Cybersecurity.

2.7 Whilst publication of the digital framework was achieved on 29th April 2018, there were delays in the completion of the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework. Consequently, proposals for degree apprenticeships in the first year of the programme were associated with the digital framework only. The HEFCW has overseen annual competitive bidding rounds to fund individual programmes of delivery by HEFCW-funded HEIs since 2018. Proposals submitted through each competitive bidding round are considered by a panel chaired by an HEFCW member, with the panel including HEFCW officers and a representative from the Welsh Government. The proposals are expected to deliver against set criteria, with the expected inclusion of the following:

- Measures in place to ensure that there is a diverse mix of individuals recruited to degree apprenticeships.
- Arrangements in place for delivery through the medium of Welsh.
- Confirmation that provision will be delivered over no more than five years.
- Information on how the apprenticeship bids align with the mission and expertise of the institution applying for funding.
- Information on how SMEs will be supported in delivering degree apprenticeships.
- Confirmation of how the delivery of the provision will provide additionality to the apprenticeship offer in Wales.

- A summary of the collaboration with FE colleges and work-based learning (WBL) providers and employers to support the delivery of higher-level apprenticeships at Levels 4 and 5 and strengthen progression pathways into the degree apprenticeships.³

- 2.8 Furthermore, collaboration in delivering the degree apprenticeships between HEIs, further education (FE) colleges, and other WBL providers to best meet the needs of employers and avoid nugatory competition is prioritised by HEFCW within the guidance.⁴
- 2.9 All bar one of the HEFCW-funded HEIs submitted a proposal to the programme for the £3m of funding (based on an allocation of £27,000 per degree apprentice for their entire degree apprenticeship) made available for the first year.
- 2.10 In March 2019, HEFCW-funded institutions were invited to submit proposals for £5m of funding for 2019/20 against the three priority areas of digital (in the Digital Degree Apprenticeship (Wales) Framework) and engineering and advanced manufacturing (in the Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (Wales) Framework). In 2020 the programme secured £12m of funding for 2020/21.⁵ The initial phase of funding for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme came to an end in 2021.
- 2.11 In June 2021 the Welsh Government made a further commitment to supporting the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales for an additional year, i.e. 2021/22, to the value of £9.5m for existing and new apprenticeships in the existing priority areas.

The evaluation

- 2.12 The specification for the evaluation has the following specific objectives, which were jointly developed with the HEFCW⁶, namely to:
- Develop a theory of change for the programme.

³ HEFCW (2020) [Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and Proposal for Funding 2020/21](#)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Welsh Government (2019) Specification for: Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, Cardiff, Welsh Government.

- Assess the current evidence base underpinning the development and delivery models of degree apprenticeships internationally.
- Assess the performance of the programme against Welsh Government and HEFCW aims and objectives, making recommendations for improvements.
- Review whether and how well the programme has met the objectives of including the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Equalities, and the Welsh Language Strategy.
- Assess the extent to which professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, as a feature of degree apprenticeships, influence employer and/or apprentice engagement with a programme, and whether this aspect is appropriately considered in framework and curriculum development.
- Investigate and assess (with regard to the higher education (HE) sector, employers, and apprentices):
 - Demand, progression and recruitment
 - Benefits, motivation and engagement
 - Partnership and collaboration.
- Assess the value of Essential Skills Wales (ESW) as an element of degree apprenticeships, and the appropriateness of current ESW assessment practice and/or assessment of individual learning needs.
- Review the processes used to identify future programme priorities and make recommendations as to how these can be improved.
- Consider and provide a range of options for sustainable ways of funding the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.
- Develop a framework for evaluating the longer-term impact of degree apprenticeships, including a value-for-money aspect with regard to funding spent on programme delivery versus the return in terms of outcomes achieved.

2.13 The evaluation has been delivered over two phases:

- A scoping phase drawing on evidence gathered through the literature review and via initial engagement with strategic stakeholders involved in the planning, implementation, management and delivery of degree apprenticeships.
- A final phase (this phase) that has prioritised fieldwork with employers, apprentices, HE providers, FE colleges, and WBL providers to capture feedback on the experiences of delivering/participating in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

Context

2.14 The [scoping report](#) provides details on the policy context that led to the introduction of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme; however, there have been several key developments of contextual importance that have emerged and/or evolved since the evaluation commenced.

Policy context

2.15 In 2015 the Welsh Government commissioned Professor Ellen Hazelkorn to undertake a [review](#)⁷ of the governance, regulation and oversight of post-compulsory education in Wales. The report contained two primary recommendations:

- Develop an overarching vision for the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector.
- Establish a new arm's-length body responsible for the oversight, strategic direction, and leadership of the sector.

2.16 Following a [white paper](#)⁸ in 2017 and a [technical consultation](#)⁹ in 2018, the Welsh Government in July 2020 published the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill in draft form for consultation. The Tertiary Education and Research Bill was then introduced into the Senedd on 1st November 2021.

2.17 The Bill proposes the establishment of a Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). The Commission, subject to legislation, will be established as an

⁷ Welsh Government.(2016). [Oversight of post-compulsory education and the HEFCW \(Hazelkorn Review\)](#)

⁸ Welsh Government. (2017). [White Paper: Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a reformed PCET system](#)

⁹ Welsh Government. (2018). [Consultation Outcome: Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales](#)

independent Welsh Government–sponsored body by 2023. It will be responsible for overseeing the post-16 sector in Wales, which includes FE, HE, apprenticeships, sixth form, and Welsh Government–funded research and innovation in the PCET sector.

2.18 It is intended for the CTER to have the following responsibilities:

- Protecting the interests of learners and ensuring that vocational and academic learning are equally valued.
- Aligning education and training more closely with the needs of employers.
- Monitoring performance and governance whilst protecting the academic freedom of institutions.
- Monitoring and promoting improvement in education and training providers.
- Taking a whole-system approach to research and innovation funding with the ability to provide funding to a wide range of HE and FE institutions.
- Increasing the availability of Welsh-medium tertiary education and encouraging individuals to learn through the medium of Welsh.

2.19 The Bill also seeks to establish a new Wales-specific apprenticeship system that is flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and employers and supports the development of a robust and innovative Welsh economy. Ministers will have strategic stewardship of the Welsh apprenticeship system, but operation of the system and the delivery of apprenticeships will be undertaken by the Commission. Apprenticeship frameworks will set out the requirements for completing a Welsh apprenticeship in a specific occupation. The Commission will be responsible for preparing and publishing apprenticeship frameworks or securing others to prepare them on its behalf. It will be required to maintain and publish a register of these frameworks.

2.20 Taking the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill through the Senedd is also set out as a commitment in the new [Programme for Government 2021-2026](#)¹⁰ (published following the Welsh Government elections in May 2021). The Programme for Government also includes the Welsh Government’s commitment to providing decent jobs, relevant skills, and new training opportunities. It sets out the

¹⁰ [Programme for Government | GOV.WALES](#)

commitment to building an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability, and the industries and services of the future. The Programme for Government states that 125,000 all-age apprenticeships and that the number of apprenticeships within the care sector will be increased (although it is unclear at what level). Furthermore, it sets out a commitment to delivering on a range of activity within individual portfolios. Within the economy portfolio the government commits to expanding the use of shared and degree apprenticeships, thereby providing a commitment to the Degree Apprenticeship Programme through to at least 2026.

- 2.21 In March 2022 the Welsh Government published its [new employability plan](#) which sets out five key areas of action, including ‘raising skill levels and adaptability of the workforce: by expanding flexible and personal learning opportunities for people in and out of work so they have the chance to improve their skills, find work or retrain throughout their lives’, and reiterates the aspiration to deliver 125,000 new apprenticeships. The plan also makes reference to the launch of the apprenticeship vacancy service in late 2020.¹¹ However, whilst the service offers the mechanism with which to search for degree apprenticeship vacancies, at the time of writing, none were available.¹²

Influences on the Degree Apprenticeship Programme and evaluation

- 2.22 In addition to the evolving policy context, there have been several developments that have influenced the Degree Apprenticeship Programme and the evaluation.

COVID-19 and the associated impact

- 2.23 The progress of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which, in response to UK Government guidance, necessitated a rapid transition in the provision of learning to a remote, digital offer. Moreover, it led to continued restrictions on in-person learning within HEIs through to the 2021/22 academic year. The impact of and response to the pandemic have therefore been included as a further objective for the evaluation and are explored in section 5 below.

¹¹ [Welsh Government. \(2022\). Apprenticeships a Genius Decision.](#)

¹² Based on a search conducted on 16th May 2022.

Senedd Cymru Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee inquiry into degree apprenticeships

- 2.24 In November 2019 the Senedd Cymru launched an inquiry that examined the operation of the initial phase of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme and the future direction and potential of degree apprenticeships. The launch of the inquiry coincided with the commencement of the commissioning process for this evaluation. What is more, it led to a pause in fieldwork as part of the scoping phase for this evaluation until several months after the completion of the inquiry to minimise the risk of consultation fatigue.
- 2.25 The inquiry culminated in a [report](#) (Senedd Cymru, 2020) published in November 2020 with 12 recommendations for the programme.¹³ These are reviewed in section 1 of the [scoping report](#). The Welsh Government issued its response to these recommendations, accepting or partially accepting all of them.¹⁴

¹³ [Senedd Cymru - Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee \(2020\) Degree Apprenticeships, Senedd Cymru.](#)

¹⁴ The Welsh Government's response to the EIS Committee's report on degree apprenticeships can be found here: [Welsh Government response to degree apprenticeships](#)

QAA review of degree apprenticeships in Wales

2.26 In August 2020 the QAA were commissioned by the HEFCW to undertake a [review of HEFCW-funded degree apprenticeships](#) in Wales for the 2020–21 academic year. Conducted in spring 2021, the review was undertaken with each lead degree apprenticeship provider in Wales in receipt of funding from the HEFCW, and included partnership arrangements with further education providers in its scope, with the aim to:

- inform the development of degree apprenticeship provision through a review of the provider's provision.
- share practice with partners and employers and inform future apprenticeship provision.
- promote the sharing of sector good practice, learning, and areas for development through an overview report.
- enhance the value of the apprentice learning experience and the value of apprenticeships for employers.
- inform the future development of degree apprenticeship provision in Wales.

2.27 Once again, to avoid an overlap in fieldwork activity between the QAA review and this evaluation, a postponement of fieldwork for the final phase of the evaluation was agreed until several months after the completion of the QAA review.

2.28 The QAA review identified many instances of good practice in support of the characteristics of degree apprenticeships, including the following:

- The level of engagement with employers in the design, operation and flexibility of work-based learning opportunities is commented upon widely across providers as being a positive feature of degree apprenticeships, in addition to providers' use of Industry Liaison Panels in the design and development of degree apprenticeships.
- The responsiveness and flexibility of providers who acted quickly to ensure the continuation of the apprenticeship programme as it moved online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The appointment by providers of key link tutors with employers, apprentices, and partner colleges was valued by all and further evidenced by all providers

having in place a tripartite agreement between employers, the university and apprentices.

2.29 Several areas for development recurred across a number of the reviews; the QAA summarised these in four overarching recommendations:

- Full recognition should be given to the distinctive nature of degree apprenticeships by ensuring that they are mapped to the [Characteristics Statement](#)^{15,16} during the design and development of programmes.
- Apprentices should be provided with support and guidance materials that are tailored to the distinct nature of the provision and its delivery.
- Providers should ensure the implementation of formal progress reviews at least every two months (as required by the Characteristics Statement).
- To enhance provision, providers should give greater opportunities for employer involvement in the design and delivery of programmes and for employer-led assessment.

Report structure

2.30 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Section 3** sets out the methodological approach used in the evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.
- **Section 4** provides an analysis of management information to offer insight into the progress and performance of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme from 2018–2021.
- **Section 5** reflects on fieldwork in relation to the promotion, engagement and enrolment of individuals in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.
- **Section 6** explores the various models adopted by institutions for delivering degree apprenticeships, and reflects on the perceived benefits and impacts arising for those engaged in the programme.
- **Section 7** considers the future of degree apprenticeships and the opportunities and constraints associated with the programme's continuation.

¹⁵ The Characteristics Statements complement the information provided within the degree apprenticeship frameworks, providing more details on the distinctive features of these qualifications.

¹⁶ QAA (2019) Characteristics Statement – Higher Education in Apprenticeships, Quality Assurance Agency, Gloucester.

3. Methodology

Methodological approach

- 3.1 Immediately following the inception meeting to commence the evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, the first national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was announced by the UK Government. The challenges that this presented to HEIs, employers and policymakers led to an initial postponement of the evaluation until July 2020.

Scoping phase

- 3.2 Following the recommencement of the evaluation, the following methods were undertaken as part of the scoping phase (further details are available in section 2 of the [scoping report](#)):

- Preliminary scoping interviews with six key representatives of the Welsh Government and the HEFCW.
- Subsequent scoping interviews to gather perspectives on the design and scope of the programme with 16 lead representatives from each of the HEFCW-funded HEIs in Wales in addition to a representative from Universities Wales.
- A review of key documentation associated with the programme design, alongside evidence gathered as part of the inquiry.
- A review of literature on degree apprenticeships and apprenticeships at higher levels globally and within other home nations of the UK.
- A workshop with representatives from the Welsh Government, the HEFCW, and Universities Wales to explore and assist in the development of the theory of change for the programme.

Final phase

- 3.3 The final phase of the evaluation, which commenced in spring 2021, has involved:
- Interviews (virtually or via telephone) with 40 stakeholders (in late summer/early autumn 2021) involved in the management and delivery of degree apprenticeships across Wales. These included representatives from the HEFCW-funded HEIs involved in delivering degree apprenticeships, as

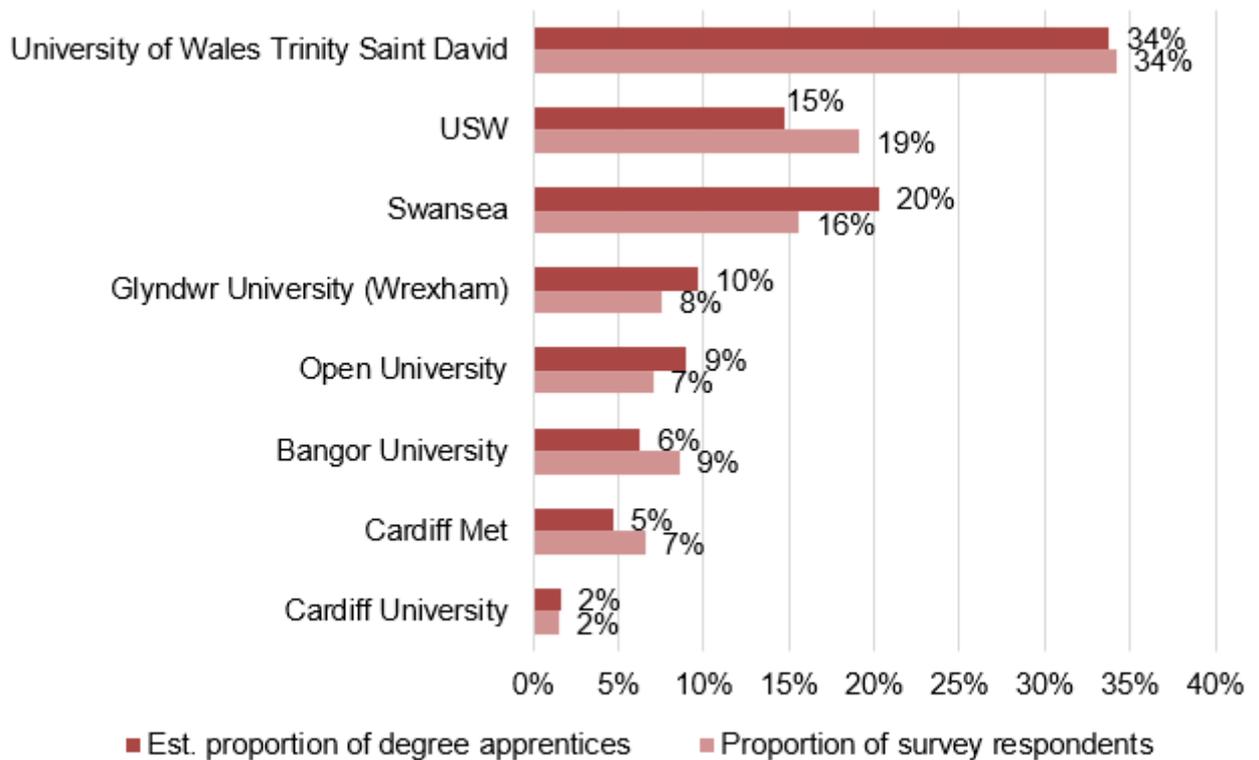
well as representatives from those FE colleges that partner HEIs in the delivery of degree apprenticeships.

- An online survey of apprentices who had enrolled in the programme to capture feedback on their motivations to enrol in a degree apprenticeship and their experience and perceived value of the degree apprenticeship following enrolment. In most instances, HEIs provided contact details to Wavehill for the distribution of the survey; in one instance, however, the survey was distributed by an HEI on Wavehill's behalf. The online survey was distributed in September 2021 to an estimated 593 apprentices (representing 89 per cent of all apprentices in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme at the time).¹⁷ Responses were received from 199 apprentices, constituting a response rate of 34 per cent (which generates a confidence interval of 5.7¹⁸ at a confidence level of 95 per cent).
- Upon the culmination of the online survey, participants were asked if they would be willing to engage in a follow-up telephone interview (which took place from September–October 2021) to explore their experience of and journey through the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in greater depth. Seventy-five participants (38 per cent) expressed a willingness to do so, and 47 (63 per cent of those who expressed a willingness to do so) were successfully engaged in a telephone interview.
- Figure 3.1 below presents the distribution of survey responses by HEI. It should be noted that five per cent of respondents referred to the FE college delivery partner in their response. These have been reallocated to the respective lead HEI. The figure shows that the survey is broadly representative of the actual population of degree apprentices by HEI.

¹⁷ HEFCW monitoring data reported 670 apprentices (rounded to the nearest 5) enrolled in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales in the 2020/21 academic year.

¹⁸ This means that we can be 95 per cent confident about an answer within the maximum confidence interval of plus or minus 5.7 per cent if the answer reported is 50 per cent (where answers are more extreme (e.g. 90 per cent or 10 per cent) the population-wide confidence interval will be much smaller).

Figure 3.1: Proportion of total enrolled degree apprentices (estimated)¹⁹ and survey respondents by HEI



Note: n=199 (survey sample) and n=593 (estimated total enrolled degree apprentices)

- Whilst there is a broadly even split in the number of degree apprentices on the digital pathway and those on the engineering and advanced manufacturing pathway, 63 per cent of those who responded to the survey were from the digital framework. This should be borne in mind when considering the evidence captured in the survey, which is explored in sections 5 and 6 of the report.
- Telephone interviews were also undertaken in August and September 2021 with employers to capture perspectives on their experience of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. A total of 202 employer contacts were provided to Wavehill by HEIs, who collectively represented 160 different employers. A total of 76 employers responded to the survey, representing 38 per cent of the

¹⁹ The estimated degree apprentices are taken from monitoring reports from either the 2020/21 or the 2019/20 academic years.

total population (and generating a confidence interval of 8.7²⁰ at a confidence level of 95 per cent).

- A series of stakeholders were identified by the HEFCW and the Welsh Government as being likely to have an informed, external/strategic perspective on the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. Virtual interviews were conducted (in February and March 2022) with 11 strategic stakeholders to capture their perspectives on the design, implementation and progress of the programme whilst also gathering their perspectives on the future direction of degree apprenticeships in Wales.
- There was an analysis undertaken on monitoring returns submitted by each HEI to the HEFCW to explore the profile, patterns and trends of employers engaged with and individuals enrolled in, by framework and by HEI, the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

3.4 The methodological approach described above has also informed the development of an outline impact framework and a cost–benefit analysis model for future usage in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. The approach has been designed in consultation with representatives from the Welsh Government.

Methodological limitations

3.5 The evaluation was beset by delays which led to fieldwork taking place over a much longer period than anticipated. The primary cause of delays to the evaluation related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which commenced shortly after the commencement of the evaluation. Further delays arose due to the need to avoid fieldwork for the evaluation clashing with (initially) the Senedd inquiry and (subsequently) the QAA review. To minimise the risk of consultation fatigue, fieldwork was postponed for several months.

²⁰ This means that we can be 95 per cent confident about an answer within the maximum confidence interval of plus or minus 8.7 per cent if the answer reported is 50 per cent (where answers are more extreme (e.g. 90 per cent or 10 per cent) the population-wide confidence interval will be much smaller).

- 3.6 The inability to access participant and employer data from each of the HEIs caused further delays. Whilst there was reported to have initially been a consistent approach to obtaining consent from participants and employers enrolled in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, the delays in commencing fieldwork and staff changes during that time led to different interpretations of the nature of consent obtained. This necessitated a variety of approaches for obtaining the necessary contact data. Collectively, this led to fieldwork taking place over a long period of time amidst the COVID pandemic (when perspectives may have evolved considerably during that timeframe). Furthermore, there were challenges in gathering the HEFCW monitoring information from some HEIs. Once again, these related to queries regarding consent to share information with evaluators. This illustrates the need to revisit data-sharing agreements, forms of consent, and associated privacy notices in relation to those enrolling in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, particularly in terms of consistency and how they align with an HEI's own data-sharing agreement.
- 3.7 Wavehill were therefore reliant on HEIs providing contact details for all apprentices and employers. Furthermore, in one instance the HEI distributed the online survey to apprentices on Wavehill's behalf. It was also not possible to secure consent to share contact information from those apprentices who had left their apprenticeship. There is therefore the risk of bias in the survey sample (the rates of early exit (where HEIs reported that learners had left during the course) were estimated to be between 10 and 23 per cent (for each HEI) of enrolled apprentices, including apprentices leaving with an exit award).

4. Progress and Performance to Date

Section Summary

- In 2020/21, just over three quarters (76 per cent) of the degree apprenticeship places in the engineering framework and 46 per cent of the allocated degree apprenticeship places in the digital framework had been filled.
- The lower uptake in degree apprenticeships has meant that programme costs are considerably lower than originally estimated.
- Certain HEIs dominate degree apprenticeship provision, with 43 per cent of degree apprentices enrolled in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework being enrolled at UWTSD, and a further 28 per cent at the University of South Wales. Thirty-two per cent of those enrolled in the digital framework are enrolled at UWTSD, and 24 per cent at Swansea University.
- Whilst the programme has been successful in engaging first-generation university students, there is limited further evidence at a programme-wide level of the programme widening participation to enrol those with protected characteristics.
- There is emerging evidence at individual HEIs of success in widening participation, however, with females representing 46 per cent of enrolments at Cardiff Met and 39 per cent of enrolments at the University of South Wales in the digital framework.

4.1 This section reviews various data to summarise the progress of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme from 2018–2021. The evidence used in this section is drawn from a number of sources, including the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) and HEI monitoring returns (primarily relating to the 2020/21 academic year) that have been analysed on a programme-wide basis by the HEFCW. In addition, Wavehill have undertaken an analysis of monitoring returns by individual HEIs²¹ to provide a more granular analysis of progress and performance.

²¹ Data associated with Swansea University and Bangor University are drawn from their 2019/20 returns.

Programme overview

- 4.2 Table 4.1 below shows the number of degree apprentices enrolled in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales in 2020/21. It breaks down the enrolled apprentices by framework and by whether they had newly enrolled during the 2020/21 academic year or were continuing in their degree apprenticeship learning after having enrolled in one of the frameworks in a previous academic year.
- 4.3 The table also includes the volume of apprenticeship allocations for the 2020/21 academic year and illustrates that whilst the number of apprentices in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework constitute just over three quarters (76 per cent) of the allocation, there are less than half (46 per cent) of the allocated number of digital apprenticeships enrolled in the programme.
- 4.4 With each degree apprenticeship being funded up to a maximum of £27,000, the lower-than-anticipated enrolments have led to programme costs being considerably lower (c.£4.4m lower for the 2020/21 academic year) than originally estimated. The lower costs are also influenced by the point at which an apprentice enrolls in the programme. The prior learning of an apprentice may lead to their enrolling in the programme at Level 5 or Level 6 (which would mean that their degree apprenticeship would cost less than £27,000), whilst, equally, some apprentices may leave the programme early, having gained a qualification at Level 4 or Level 5.

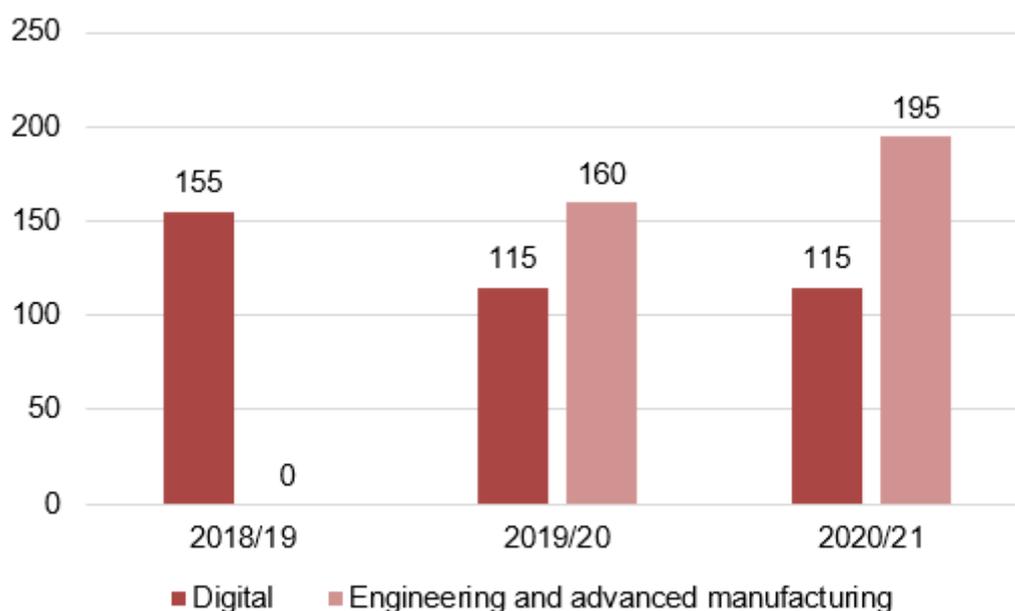
Table 4.1: 2020/21-degree apprentices by framework against allocation

Framework	Allocated		Recruited		Proportion of Allocation
	2020/21	Continuing	New	Total	
Digital	710	215	115	330	46%
Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing	450	140	195	340	76%
Total	1160	355	310	670	58%

Source: HEFCW analysis of HEI returns (2021)

- 4.5 Figure 4.1 below provides an overview of the levels of recruitment, by framework, over time. It shows how the advanced engineering and manufacturing framework commenced a year later than planned but has increased in popularity each year. Conversely, there has been a decline in the number of new enrolments in the digital framework when compared to the inaugural year of the programme, although the last two years have maintained a relatively consistent intake to that framework.

Figure 4.1: Number of new degree apprenticeship enrolments per year by framework



Source: HEFCW analysis of HEI returns (2021)

4.6 Table 4.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of total enrolments to the programme by pathway for the academic years in which that information has been made available. The table shows how degree apprentices on the software engineering pathway constitute almost one third of all degree apprentices, whilst one fifth are enrolled on the mechanical engineering pathway.

Table 4.2: Degree apprentices by pathway (2019–21)

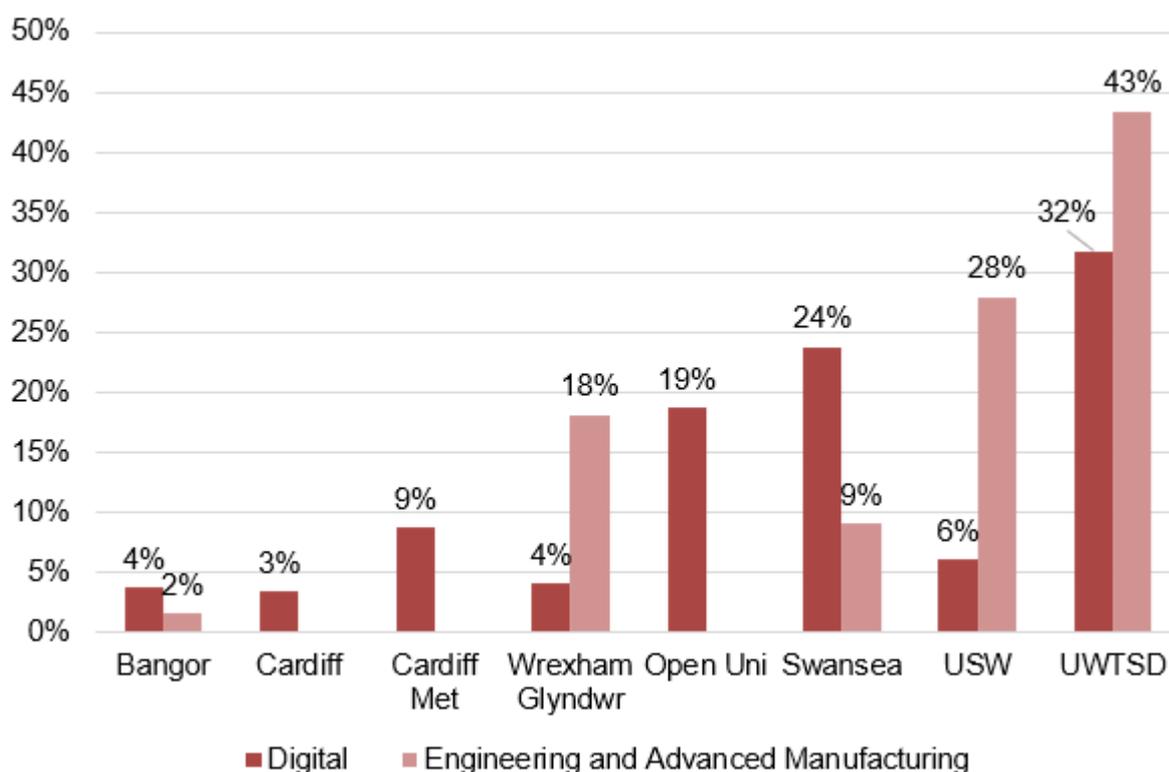
Pathway	2019/20		2020/21	
	Number	%	Number	%
Cybersecurity Management	40	11%	55	8%
Data Science	50	13%	60	9%
Software Engineering	135	36%	215	32%
Advanced Manufacturing	55	14%	120	18%
Chemical Engineering	5	1%	5	1%
Electrical/Electronic Engineering	35	9%	75	11%
Electrical	0	0%	5	1%
Mechanical Engineering	60	16%	130	20%
Total Apprentices	380	100%	665	100%

Source: HEFCW analysis of HEI returns (2020 and 2021)

4.7 Using monitoring reports from HEIs to the HEFCW, it is possible to present an analysis of the estimated volume of degree apprentices by HEI to give a sense of patterns of engagement. Figure 4.2 presents an estimated proportional breakdown of participant numbers in each framework by HEI. It illustrates that the University of

Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) has, by far, the most degree apprentices, with almost one third of all apprentices in the digital framework and over 40 per cent of those in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework. The University of South Wales is particularly prominent as a recruiter of apprentices in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework (building on their history of working with the engineering sector in that area), whilst Swansea University is prominent in the digital framework (which is likely to be partly influenced by the foundation degree that they were delivering in that sector prior to the launch of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme).

Figure 4.2: Proportional breakdown of degree apprentices by HEI

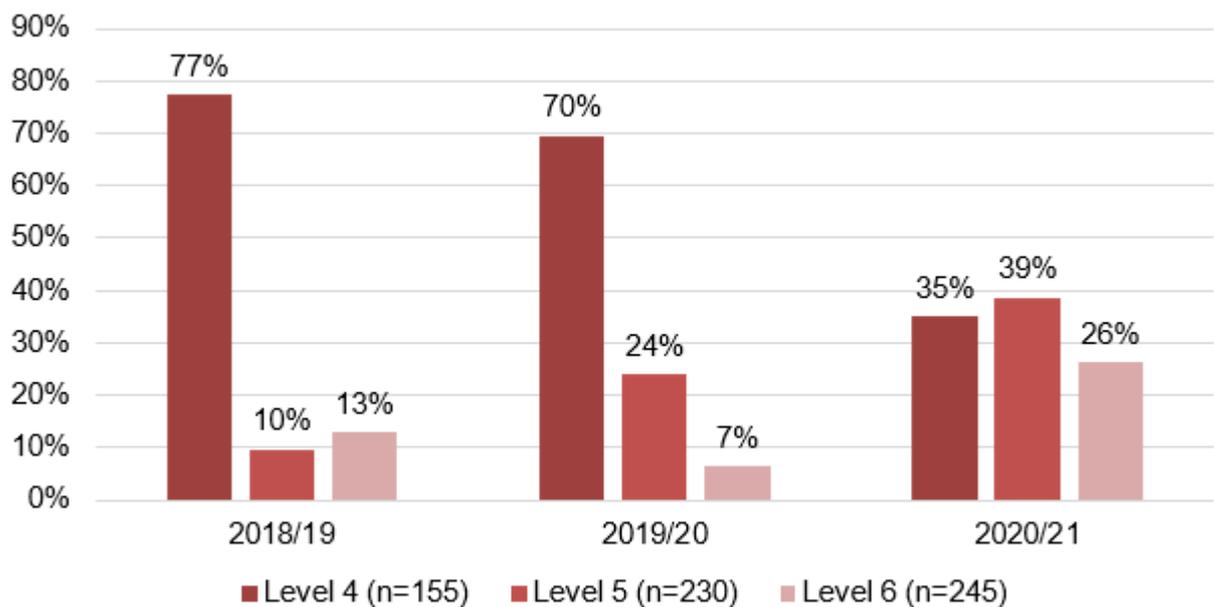


Source: Wavehill analysis of HEI monitoring returns (2020 and 2021)

- 4.8 Degree apprentices enrol in the programme at various levels depending on their prior learning or experience, with some prior learning enabling apprentices to enter with an advanced standing (which determines the amount of credit from prior study or existing skills that may be awarded towards the degree apprenticeship). Some apprentices, for example, who have undertaken an HND on one of the pathways are able to enrol in the degree apprenticeship at Level 6, illustrating established progression pathways with delivery partners.

4.9 Figure 4.3 shows the level at which participants have enrolled in the programme over time. It highlights how there has been a steady transition in terms of enrolments (from the vast majority of degree apprentices enrolling in a degree apprenticeship at Level 4 in 2018/19 to a more balanced portfolio of enrolments across Levels 4, 5 and 6 in 2020/21). This transition over time may reflect an initial focus on Level 4 upon commencement of the programme, with subsequent planning on progression routes and the latter stages of the degree apprenticeships as the programme matured. Whilst the breakdown in the level of enrolments by framework was not made available to the evaluators, it is likely (based on anecdotal evidence) that there are more established progression pathways (or more recognised qualifications, particularly at Levels 4 and 5) within the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, with a proportion of students enrolling in the programme from Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs).

Figure 4.3: Level of entry to the degree apprenticeship by academic year



Source: HEFCW analysis of HEI returns

Degree apprentice demographics

Age

4.10 Less than one fifth (19 per cent) of degree apprentices (across enrolments from 2018–2021) are below the age of 21. By way of comparison, research conducted in England identified that amongst those enrolled in Level 6 degree apprenticeships (albeit across a much wider set of standards/occupational rates than are currently

available in Wales), 44 per cent were below the age of 21.²² There is variation, however, in the age of enrolments by HEI in Wales. Within the latest academic year, it is estimated that over one third (36 per cent; 103/289) of those enrolled in courses delivered by UWTSD are below the age of 21.²³

Gender

- 4.11 Across the HEIs, 14 per cent of current degree apprentices are female. The sectors associated with the degree apprenticeship frameworks are traditionally male-dominated; however, the gender bias towards males appears to have increased each year. In the 2020/21 academic year, for example, an estimated 10 per cent (30/290) of degree apprentices newly enrolled in a degree apprenticeship identified as female. Whilst males represent the majority of apprentices across each of the HEIs, there is considerable variation in terms of the gender profile. Across the digital framework, approximately 19 per cent of degree apprentices currently enrolled in the programme are female; however, this proportion rises to 46 per cent at Cardiff Met²⁴ and 39 per cent at the University of South Wales.²⁵
- 4.12 In the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, only 10 per cent of all apprentices are female; however, at Swansea University, over one fifth (21 per cent) of those enrolled in the framework are female.²⁶ Furthermore, 71 per cent of those enrolled at Swansea University in that framework are below the age of 21 (compared to 18 per cent of degree apprentices across the entire engineering and advanced manufacturing framework) and all are recorded as being newly recruited employees to the degree apprenticeship (compared to 11 per cent of all enrolments across the framework). The profile of degree apprentices at Swansea University in this framework is notable, given that the degree apprenticeship team work closely with [Technocamps](#) (itself founded at Swansea University), which works with secondary schools to increase young people's engagement with STEM subjects (with a particular focus on boosting female engagement).
- 4.13 When considering the gender balance in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, it is important to reflect on the inherent gender bias within the industrial sectors

²² [Wavehill. \(2019\). Degree Apprenticeships Motivations Research, Office for Students.](#)

²³ Analysis of HEI monitoring returns to HEFCW.

²⁴ Wavehill analysis of HEI monitoring returns to HEFCW.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

associated with the two degree apprenticeship frameworks. To therefore place the gender profile in context, a comparative assessment of the gender profile in first degrees in these sector subject areas is presented in Table 4.3 below. It shows that females are marginally more prevalent amongst those enrolled in a first degree in engineering & technology or computing than they are in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales. That difference is greater when specifically focused on those enrolled in a first degree on a part-time basis (which is arguably a closer comparator to the part-time nature of a degree apprenticeship).

Table 4.3: Gender breakdown by degree type in engineering & technology or computing

Degree Type	Proportion of Enrolments Identifying as Female	
	2019/20	2020/21
HEFCW-Funded Degree Apprenticeships	16.4	14.4
First Degrees – Engineering & Technology or Computing	16.64	16.62
First Degrees – Engineering & Technology or Computing Part-Time	16.49	21.08
First Degrees – Engineering & Technology or Computing Full-Time	15.94	16.51

Source: Gender breakdown for degree apprenticeships, HEFCW. Gender breakdown for first degrees, HESA data (Wales)

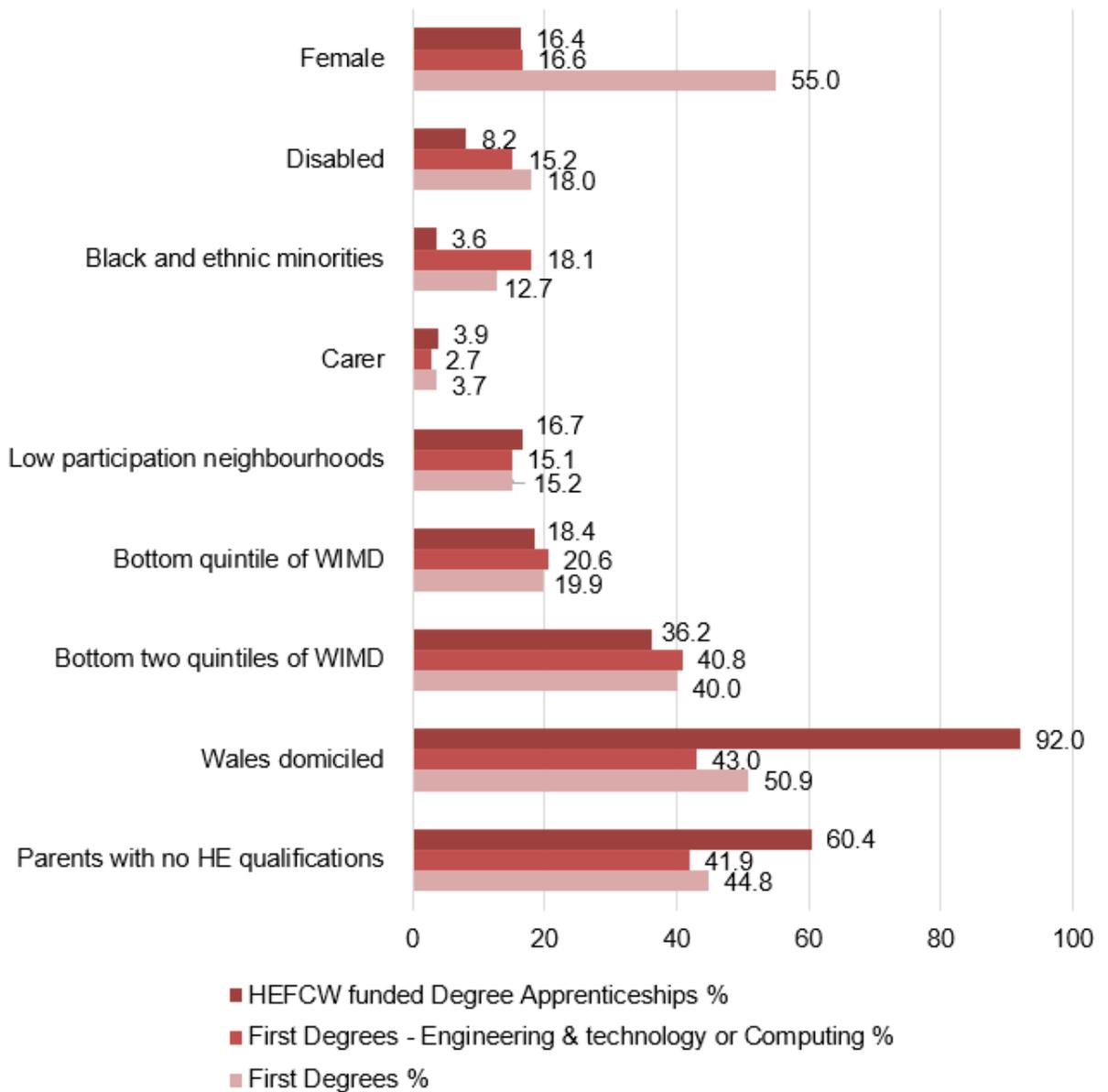
Ethnicity

4.14 A range of other comparative performance indicators in relation to widening participation are presented in Figure 4.4 below. The analysis relates to the 2019/20 academic year (the latest year of HESA data) and provides an indication of the relative success of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in relation to widening participation when compared to first degrees in similar sector subject areas and to first degrees generally. The figure illustrates that degree apprentices in the Welsh Government’s Degree Apprenticeship Programme are much more likely to live in Wales and are much more likely to have parents with no HE qualifications when compared to those embarking on traditional first degrees. What is more, participants are marginally more likely to reside in neighbourhoods in which participation in higher education is lower than the UK average.²⁷

²⁷ Based on POLAR (Participation of Local Areas) 4 data.

4.15 Figure 4.4 also shows, however, that participants in degree apprenticeships are less likely to be disabled or of Black, Asian or minority ethnic origin. For the latter indicator, this is (at least) partially explained by a higher proportion of degree apprentices being Wales-domiciled (where the latest data estimate that around four per cent of residents are of Black, Asian or minority ethnic origin).

Figure 4.4: Higher education provider enrolments – Wales (2019/20)



Source: HESA

Disability

- 4.16 With regard to the proportion of degree apprentices declaring a disability, this varies considerably by HEI, and whilst five per cent of all degree apprentices declared a disability, this proportion increased to 11 per cent of those enrolled at the Open University and UWTSD declaring a disability.^{28,29}

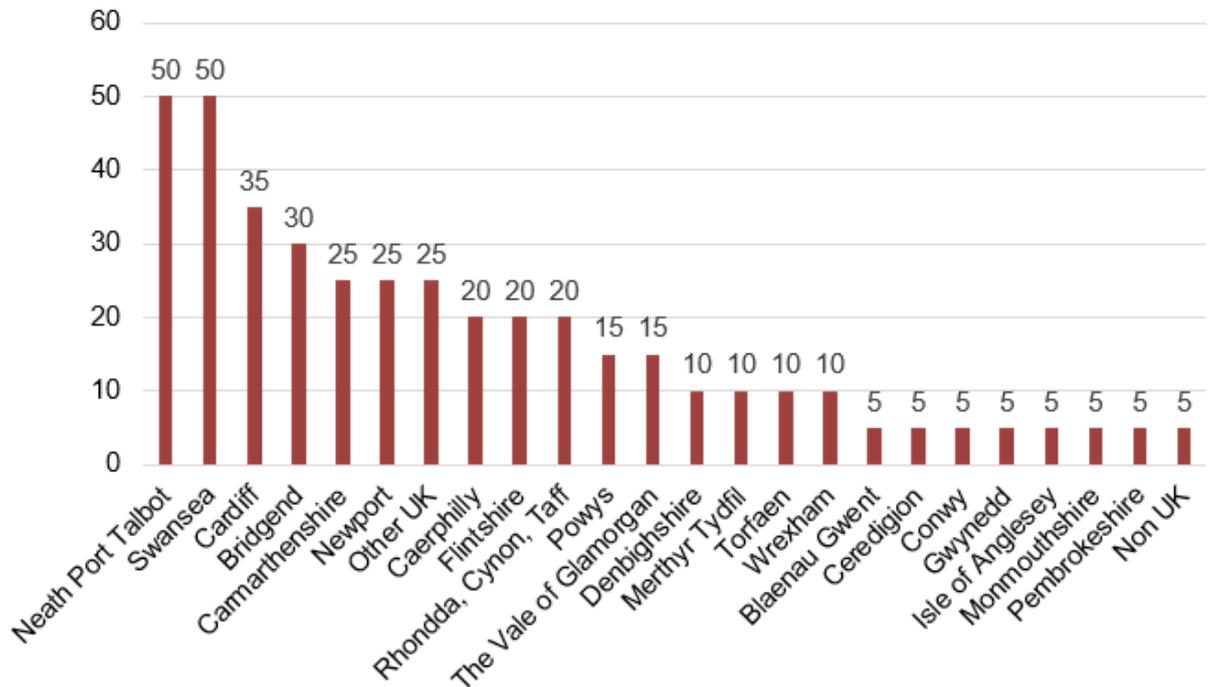
Welsh language

- 4.17 The analysis of monitoring information also shows that the proportion of degree apprentices who are Welsh speakers increased year on year from less than one fifth (19 per cent) in 2018/19 to more than one quarter (27 per cent) in 2020/21.
- 4.18 Figure 4.5 provides further analysis of where degree apprentices were domiciled in 2019/20 (the latest date for which the analysis is available). The chart shows how degree apprentices are most commonly domiciled in the local authority area of Neath Port Talbot. Neath Port Talbot is the ninth most populated local authority with the eleventh highest employee stock in Wales. Residents in the authority are therefore much more likely to have enrolled in a degree apprenticeship than those in other local authority areas. This is likely to be influenced by the considerable involvement of large organisations based in the local authority, such as Tata Steel, in the programme.

²⁸ Wavehill analysis of HEI monitoring returns to HEFCW.

²⁹ There is a higher proportion with a declared disability at another HEI; however, the data have been suppressed because the overall intake of students at that HEI is small and those individuals therefore could be identifiable were the data to be published in this report.

Figure 4.5: Unitary authority of domicile of degree apprentices (2019/20)³⁰



Source: HESA

Prior qualifications

4.19 Amongst the degree apprentices in Wales for whom prior qualifications were known, 14 per cent (55/385) had previously graduated from university. When analysed by framework (drawing on evidence captured via the online survey), there is a marked difference, with 31 per cent (38/125) reporting being at a graduate level or above in the digital framework, whilst only four per cent (3/74) of those in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework reporting already being educated at that level. This might be an indication of less established learner pathways in the digital framework than in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, although it may also reflect a greater need for those in the midst of their career to reskill in fields within the digital framework (to which several stakeholders also referred).

³⁰ Note that enrolment numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.

- 4.20 Of the apprentices in the programme, an estimated 86 per cent of those enrolled across 2018–2021 were existing employees within their organisation upon entry to a degree apprenticeship. Again, however, there is a good degree of variation amongst HEIs, with 34 per cent of those enrolled in degree apprenticeships at Swansea University enrolling as new employees, and 21 per cent of those at the University of South Wales doing the same. In England, degree apprentices enrolled in the programme would appear to be much more likely to engage with the programme as new employees. Research showed that 31 per cent (64/207) of those enrolled in a degree apprenticeship which leads to a Level 6 qualification in England were in full-time education immediately prior to enrolling in a degree apprenticeship, whilst 36 per cent had no prior experience of full-time employment prior to commencing their degree.³¹
- 4.21 Existing employees are more prevalent within the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, wherein 89 per cent of enrolments are existing employees in comparison to 77 per cent of those enrolled in the digital framework.

Employers

- 4.22 Collectively, HEIs are engaged with approximately 330 employers. Fifty-five per cent of these have employees engaged in the digital framework, with the remainder engaged in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework.
- 4.23 Over four fifths (81 per cent) of the degree apprentices enrolled in the programme in Wales are employed by large businesses, which is a considerable overrepresentation of employees of large businesses when considering that across the Welsh economy, 38 per cent (74/207) of the working population are employed in large businesses.³² This trend is reflected in England too, wherein an estimated 80 per cent of degree apprenticeship starts in 2017/18 were from levy-paying employers (with wage bills in excess of £3m).³³
- 4.24 When analysed with respect to the number of businesses (rather than the number of apprentices), the proportion of SMEs increases, with 43 per cent of employers engaged in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework and 37 per

³¹ [Wavehill \(2019\) Degree Apprenticeships Motivations Research, Office for Students.](#)

³² [Business structure in Wales by size-band and measure Inter-Departmental Business Register \(IDBR\), ONS 2019.](#)

³³ Policy Connect (2019) Degree Apprenticeships Up to Standard, Policy Connect, London.

cent of employers in the digital framework reporting to be SMEs.³⁴ The increased prevalence of SMEs reflects the fact that a larger business is more likely to enrol greater numbers of employees in the programme than is an SME.

4.25 Table 4.4 below shows how 46 per cent of apprentices are employed by organisations based within the manufacturing sector (which is unsurprising when considering the sectoral focus of the frameworks). Furthermore, 15 per cent are employed in the public sector, with organisations in the health and information & communication sectors also being prominent. Moreover, the table shows the distribution of employers by sector. When comparing the two datasets it is evident that public sector organisations put forward a higher number of degree apprentices per employer than the average, whilst employers in the information and communication sector put forward a lower number of employees per employer than is typically the case.

Table 4.4: Number of apprentices and employers by industrial sector of employment

Sector	No. of Apprentices	Percentage of All Apprentices	No. of Employers	Percentage of All Employers
Manufacturing	305	46%	85	43%
Public administration and defence	100	15%	16	8%
Human health and social work activities	55	8%	16	8%
Information and communication	50	8%	19	10%
Financial and insurance activities	40	6%	8	4%
Education	30	5%	8	4%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	30	5%	14	7%
Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply	10	2%	6	3%

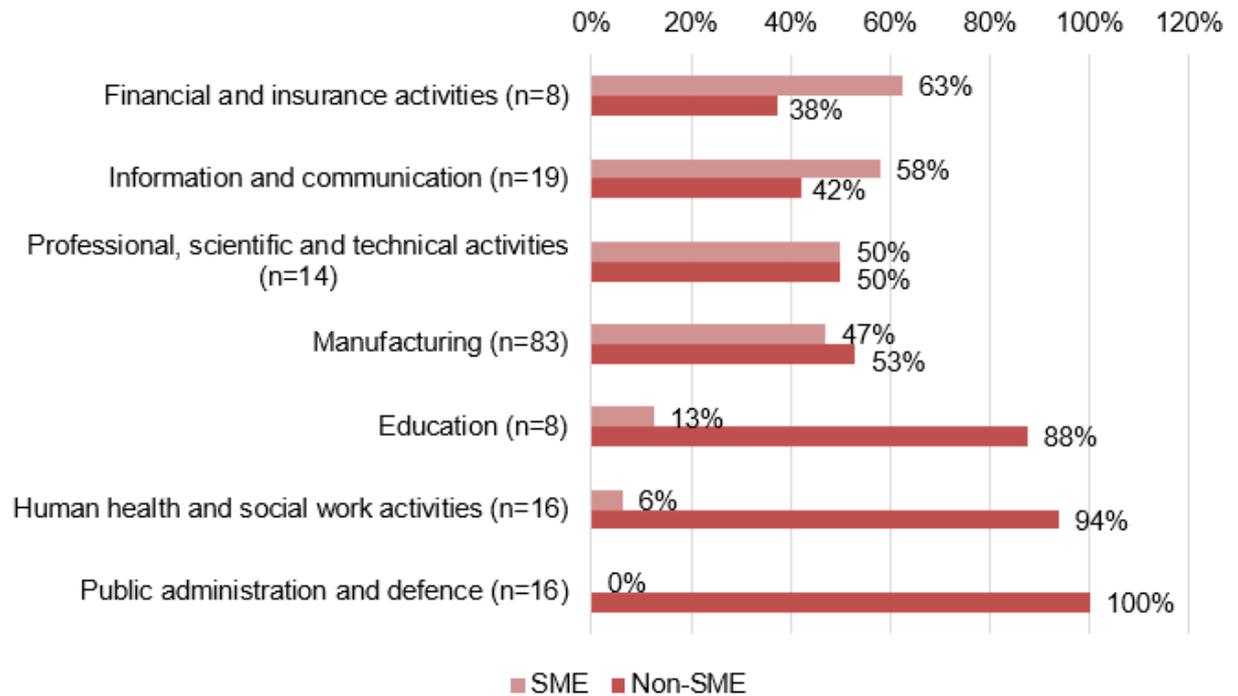
Base: 10 or more apprentices

Source: HEFCW analysis (2021)

4.26 Figure 4.6 shows the size of employers engaged with degree apprenticeships by industrial sector. It illustrates that whilst the majority of those in the finance and information & communication sectors engaged with the programme are SMEs, most education and health sector organisations and all public sector organisations engaged are large businesses.

³⁴ It should be noted that 13 of the entries related to this analysis are for duplicate employers, that is, where employers enrolled apprentices at more than one HEI and/or within more than one framework.

Figure 4.6: Employer size by industrial sector



Source: HEFCW analysis of monitoring returns

Base: 8 employers

Summary

4.27 An analysis of programme data shows that the Degree Apprenticeship Programme attracted fewer apprentices than anticipated at the start of the programme and that when viewed across all HEIs, whilst the programme has been successful in engaging first-generation university students, there is limited further evidence of the programme widening participation. That being said, where evidence is available at an individual HEI level, a degree of variation is evident. There is strong female engagement, for example, at Cardiff Met and the University of South Wales in the digital framework and at Swansea University (which also performed particularly well in attracting those below the age of 21 who had been newly recruited to their employer) within the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework.

5. Key Findings – Promotion, Demand, Engagement and Enrolment

Section Summary

- Various stakeholders and management and delivery staff identified the lack of a centrally led marketing campaign promoting degree apprenticeships as being influential in various aspects of programme delivery, including in the number and profile of employers and apprentices.
- Several members of delivery staff and wider stakeholders reported that awareness of degree apprenticeships was poor among SMEs.
- Apprentices typically hear about the programme through their employer or a work colleague, with limited awareness being gained through other routes — this may influence the dominance of apprentices who are existing employers enrolled in the programme.
- Learning pathways to degree apprenticeships appear to be fairly well established in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework, with over half having undertaken an apprenticeship previously and over half of these with their same employer.
- In the absence of a degree apprenticeship, most employers would not have supported their employees in participating in a traditional degree, with other forms of less formal, bite-sized training being likely.
- Delivery staff reported that more certainty surrounding the funding for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme was needed to support their ambitions to recruit and engage more employers.
- Prior to enrolment, apprentices were most concerned about balancing their work and life — their concern was an accurate one, with the other two thirds describing this as a key challenge of the degree apprenticeship.

Introduction

- 5.1 This section reflects on feedback from staff, apprentices and employers to provide insight into the experience of promoting, engaging and enrolling employers and apprentices in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. Details on the initial implementation of the programme, including the framework design, can be found in the [scoping report](#). This section seeks to build on those findings.

HEI applications and representation in frameworks/pathways

- 5.2 In the academic year of 2021/22, degree apprenticeships were delivered by eight HEIs across Wales in collaboration with partners from six FE colleges. How each HEI is involved in each pathway is presented below, whilst additional information on the types of courses offered by each HEI is presented in Annexe A.

Table 5.1: Degree apprenticeship provision by HEI

HEI	Delivery Partner(s)	Digital Pathway	Engineering Pathway
Bangor University	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Coleg Cambria	Yes	Yes
Cardiff University	Gower College		Yes
Cardiff Metropolitan University		Yes	
The Open University in Wales		Yes	
Swansea University	Gower College Coleg Cambria	Yes	Yes
University of South Wales		Yes	Yes
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	Coleg Sir Gâr	Yes	Yes
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	Grŵp NPTC – Neath Port Talbot College Coleg Powys	Yes	Yes

- 5.3 In addition to the courses currently on offer, Aberystwyth University has signalled an interest in developing degree apprenticeships if new frameworks match the demand amongst employers in Mid Wales.

Marketing and promotional activities

- 5.4 The Degree Apprenticeship Programme received very limited marketing or promotion nationally by either the Welsh Government or the HEFCW. Limited

promotion reflected concerns that this may generate levels of interest and engagement beyond that which could be met through the available budget.

- 5.5 With a lack of national promotion, the marketing campaign was led primarily by HEIs and their partner FE colleges, who delivered a range of marketing and outreach activities to support promotion of the programme to employers. Commonly, these included attending industry events or open days and hosting activities such as Business Breakfasts (which provided opportunities for employers to find out about the programme). These were also used to promote the programme to potential apprentices. For example, UWTSD invited Level 3 apprentices to attend Business Breakfasts with the opportunity to learn about the programme and to network with potential employers with whom they may be able to enrol in the programme.

‘The breakfast events have been a success. We invited employers and potential apprentices and it worked like a match-making event. After we finished, one potential apprentice stood up and said she was looking for an employer, and we found an employer who was looking for someone like her. She’s in the third year of the course now.’ **(Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 5.6 Frequently, HEIs reported that they had put in place dedicated staff to support efforts to promote the activity to employers, or had built responsibility into an existing job role. At Cardiff Metropolitan University, for example, this included a Degree Apprenticeships Lead based within the university, whilst at the Open University this work was led by the Business Development Unit (who engage directly with employers). At Bangor University, Work Placement Officers based within Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) promoted the Degree Apprenticeship Programme to their existing employer networks.
- 5.7 Two HEIs reported that social media formed a large part of their engagement approach. Cardiff Metropolitan University reported that LinkedIn had been a particularly helpful tool for connecting with potential employers and had allowed them to extend the marketing of their new programmes. However, when it came to engaging potential apprentices, social media did not appear to be generating a large number of entries to the programme. Responding to the online survey of degree apprentices, only five per cent of degree apprentices (9/198) reported that

they first heard about the programme via social media, whilst five per cent of employers (4/76) referred to the Internet as the route through which they became aware of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

‘Website brings in some direct apprentices, but most of our first intake was with companies that we were already talking to.’ **(Stakeholder Interviewee)**

5.8 Across all institutions, existing relationships with employers were a key part of the engagement and recruitment approach. Most institutions reported that they had well-established relationships with some of the employers who had taken up the opportunity, and in some cases the institutions or their delivery partners had a long history of working closely with particular employers. Indeed, 59 per cent of employers (45/76) described first hearing about the degree apprenticeship from either a university or an FE college. Some HEIs also relied on the personal relationships of key programme staff to help raise awareness of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

‘We’ve used a lot of personal contacts from people who worked in the apprenticeship unit and from the academic teams who already had relationships with employers. We work within networks, so we make sure we are involved in networks, from staff who attend CIPD meetings and interest meetings in computing, so staff would promote the provision through these. And we hosted the employer breakfast events and we did some targeted recruitment for these.’ **(Stakeholder Interviewee)**

5.9 Promotion of the programme to employers took the form of both one-to-one interactions between staff at HEIs and employers, as well as one-to-many engagement. The latter included engaging with employers through existing Industrial Liaison Panels and Skills Boards, in addition to hosting events for employers such as open days and Business Breakfasts, as discussed above.

5.10 Employers were asked what worked well in terms of promotion of the programme and commonly they reported that being directly approached and having frequent communication with the HEI setting out how the course would work was helpful. However, as one member of management and delivery staff explained, this

approach could be burdensome, particularly in the absence of a central campaign upon which to build.

‘Everything is very piecemeal and a big drag on our time to get people in, so needs awareness raising centrally. Companies and schools lack even the knowledge of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme and what is entailed [...] really needs to be seen as a pathway [...] Word of mouth is great but can’t get the same reach as a central boost.

Universities can push this, but it can be difficult because we are not measuring recruited students based on academic performance. They need to meet the business needs. It is incumbent of us to really get the smaller companies on board who are going to really benefit from this, so need to get the message down to them.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 5.11 Interviews with several members of management and delivery staff suggested that a wider wraparound promotional campaign that is centrally led would support HEIs’ efforts in promoting the programme. Whilst their direct outreach activity helped in recruiting apprentices, particularly where they had existing relationships with employers, it was also felt as though more could be done to raise greater awareness of the programme among employers, as illustrated in the quote below.

‘This [promotion] has been one of the most challenging areas that we face, raising the work we are doing in the sector. We are relying a lot on our existing university links to push this out. We are pushing other routes and awareness-raising sessions, but I feel that it needs more of a central shove from the likes of HEFCW. Some of my partners are working their way into advocacy bodies and this is great, but it’s taking time.’

(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)

- 5.12 However, there was recognition amongst several providers that most degree apprentices had joined the programme from employers with whom the HEI or their delivery partners had already had existing relationships. Indeed, it was not uncommon for the majority of apprentices to come from merely one or two employers, with the analysis of data showing that, on average, employers enrolled 2.5 apprentices each in the programme, although this ranged from 1.6 apprentices

per employer at Bangor University and Wrexham Glyndŵr University to 10 apprentices per employer at Cardiff University.³⁵

- 5.13 Among SMEs in particular, delivery staff within HEIs frequently reported that there were challenges surrounding the level of awareness of the programme. Several staff reported that some SMEs had a poor understanding of degree apprenticeships and the options that they provide.

‘Many SMEs didn’t know about degree apprenticeships and their opportunity.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 5.14 Similarly, several delivery staff raised concerns regarding low awareness of the programme among school leavers. This was commonly viewed as a potential growth area for the programme.

‘When they become embedded and delivered successfully, I would make sure the secondary school sector and Careers Wales actively promote them, because the teachers and parents might be nervous of their child going to university because of the cost, but if they know there is a degree apprenticeship route, they may encourage that route.’
(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)

Determining employer demand

- 5.15 The funding structure of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme requires HEIs to apply for funding each year with an agreed annual expectation regarding the number of apprentices whom they will recruit. The majority of HEIs determined the likely employer demand for the programme through direct communication with employers. Frequently, however, HEIs reported difficulties in obtaining accurate depictions of demand due to issues surrounding the timescales for funding to be agreed for the programme, as well as the timing with which they were going out to employers. Management and delivery staff reported issues with regard to getting employers to commit numbers in the absence of certainty surrounding funding.

‘One of the challenges of doing that is you can speak to employers and get a theoretical number, but that doesn’t transpire into numbers

³⁵ Wavehill analysis of HEI monitoring returns to HEFCW.

enrolled [...] equally, you can't guarantee the funding when speaking to employers. We got funding awarded this year [on] 28/29 July. When you speak to the employers you need something definite [...] we can't commit to them, because we haven't got the funding. "Do you want to come on apprenticeship?" "Yes." "Great, but I haven't got funding yet." So no one has to commit to anything. In one instance [for example] we were told an employer would provide eight apprentices and then we had three.' **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Routes into the programme

- 5.16 Degree apprentices may enrol in a degree apprenticeship as a newly recruited employee. The degree apprenticeship may have been advertised as part of that post by the employer when recruiting and at times it is understood that HEIs have been involved in the recruitment process alongside the employer to aid the determination of suitability of a candidate for the degree apprenticeship. Degree apprentices can also enrol as an existing employee of an organisation. (There will typically be an agreement with their employer that enrolling in a degree apprenticeship will be beneficial to them (and their career) and to their employer.)
- 5.17 At present, employment is one of the dominant progression routes for degree apprentices to enter the programme. Data from the online survey of apprentices reflect the findings from the programme analysis presented in the previous section which showed the programme to be dominated by existing employees. The online survey shows that the majority of degree apprentices (88 per cent; 175/199) were in full-time employment immediately before they joined the Degree Apprenticeship Programme (compared to 36 per cent in England). Additionally, three per cent (5/199) were employed part-time. Most of these apprentices joined the programme with the same employer (88 per cent; 158/180). It should be noted that some of these apprentices may have progressed from a lower-level apprenticeship from their employer; for example, 20 per cent of apprentices (39/199) reported that they had previously undertaken an apprenticeship with their current employer.
- 5.18 Additionally, degree apprentices are most likely to have heard about the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in the workplace. Indeed, just over half of apprentices who participated in the online survey reported that they had heard about the Degree

Apprenticeship Programme through their employer (52 per cent; 102/198). A further 16 per cent (13/198) of apprentices heard about the programme from a colleague.

- 5.19 In contrast, 11 per cent (21/198) of apprentices reported that they had heard about the programme from a teacher at school or a tutor at college, which suggests that progression from these pathways is limited at present (although almost one fifth (19 per cent; 14/74) of those in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework found out in this way). To date, eight per cent (15/198) of degree apprentices had heard about the programme on a website for students (e.g. a university or college website).
- 5.20 Only seven per cent (13/199) of respondents to the online survey reported that they were in full-time education (at school, college or university) prior to starting the programme, and only two per cent (4/199) of apprentices reported that they were not in employment, education or training prior to commencing their degree apprenticeship. A further 11 per cent (22/199) described changing employer so as to enable themselves to enrol in the programme. Collectively, these groups (which account for almost 20 per cent of those surveyed) will therefore likely have enrolled in a degree apprenticeship as part of a recruitment process with the employer with whom they are undertaking the degree apprenticeship.
- 5.21 Delivery staff expressed an ambition for progression routes to be widened further, with an emphasis on the potential role that could be played by schools and educators in raising awareness and encouraging learners to see degree apprenticeships as a valid alternative to studying for a traditional degree.

'I would love for someone at 16 to see this as a route to going into IT, and they do something vocational instead of A Levels and then move on to degree apprenticeship. We need to be far more flexible about this offer and when people can participate to encourage more pathways into the career and the business. Could also consider "career changers" and those who want to come back into the industry.' **(Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Learner pathways

- 5.22 At many institutions, students with prior learning were able to enter the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Year 2 or 3. Indeed, as outlined within section 3, in 2020/21, 65 per cent of participants joined the degree apprenticeship at Level 5 or 6. Furthermore, around one in three degree apprentices (68/199) reported that they had previously undertaken an apprenticeship, with 55 per cent (41/74) of degree apprentices in the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework having done so, with half (51 per cent; 21/41) of these doing so with their same employer. This suggests that learning pathways are becoming established within this framework in particular.
- 5.23 Most HEIs (5/9) concurred with this, reporting that they had good progression routes from other educational programmes. For example, Wrexham Glyndŵr University reported that there were many students entering the programme from other apprenticeships, including those who had completed HNCs at Level 5. However, several HEIs reported that strengthening the learning pathway to degree apprenticeships was an area in which the programme could be improved. For instance, one HEI reported that they had initially faced challenges in mapping the (digital) degree apprenticeships to the offer of higher and lower apprenticeships in Wales and joining the pathways together.

New and existing employees

- 5.24 Management and delivery staff at HEIs reported how the programme is predominantly being used as a mechanism for upskilling existing employees, with less of a focus amongst employers upon recruiting additional staff through degree apprenticeships. This was also reported by several wider stakeholders, as illustrated in the quotes below.

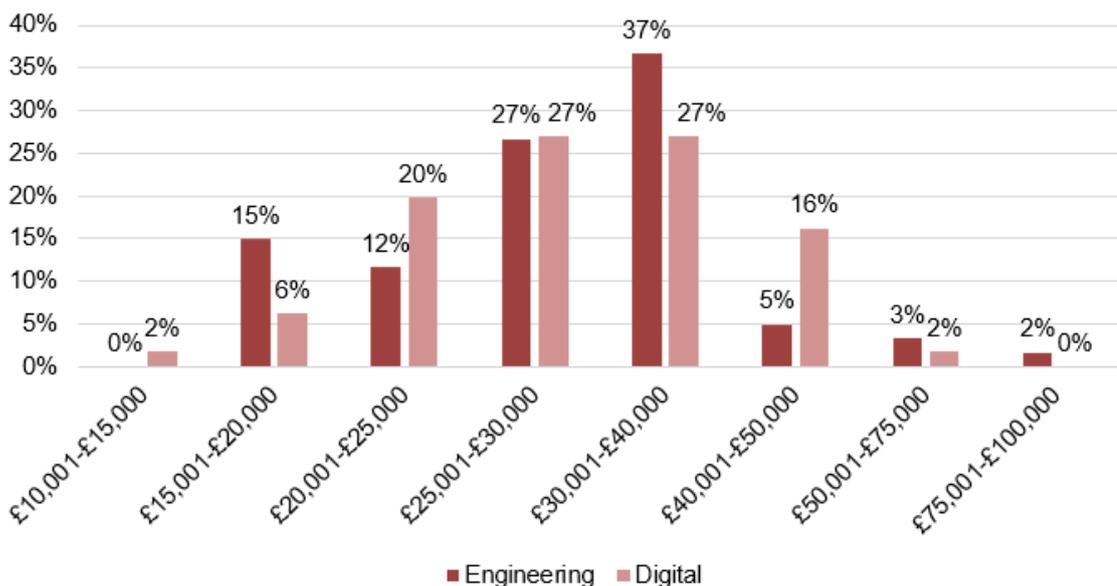
‘Most are existing staff; employers seem to assume it is for upskilling their bottom level, rather than bringing in new degree apprentices. They all seem to focus on the existing bank of people, rather than bringing in new staff.’ **(Stakeholder Interviewee)**

‘The model is much more about the companies having already got people and being ready to go. We need to break the cycle of existing employees, as we need to get a proper talent pool that is recognised as

part of the spectrum of continual career development.’ (**Stakeholder Interviewee**)

5.25 This perspective was reflected in feedback from degree apprentices who, on average (mean), had been with their current employer for over five years at the point of enrolment in a degree apprenticeship (and almost six years on average amongst those within the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework). Over two thirds (69 per cent; 122/177) described their role as professional or associate professional (rising to 85 per cent (95/111) amongst those in the digital framework); meanwhile, the average (median) salaries amongst the survey degree apprentices across both frameworks stood within the £30,001–40,000 salary band (Figure 5.1 below). The salaries of those in the digital framework are typically higher on average than those in the engineering framework.

Figure 5.1: Average FTE salaries amongst employed degree apprentices at enrolment



Note: n=60 (engineering) and n=111 (digital)

Source: Degree apprentice online survey

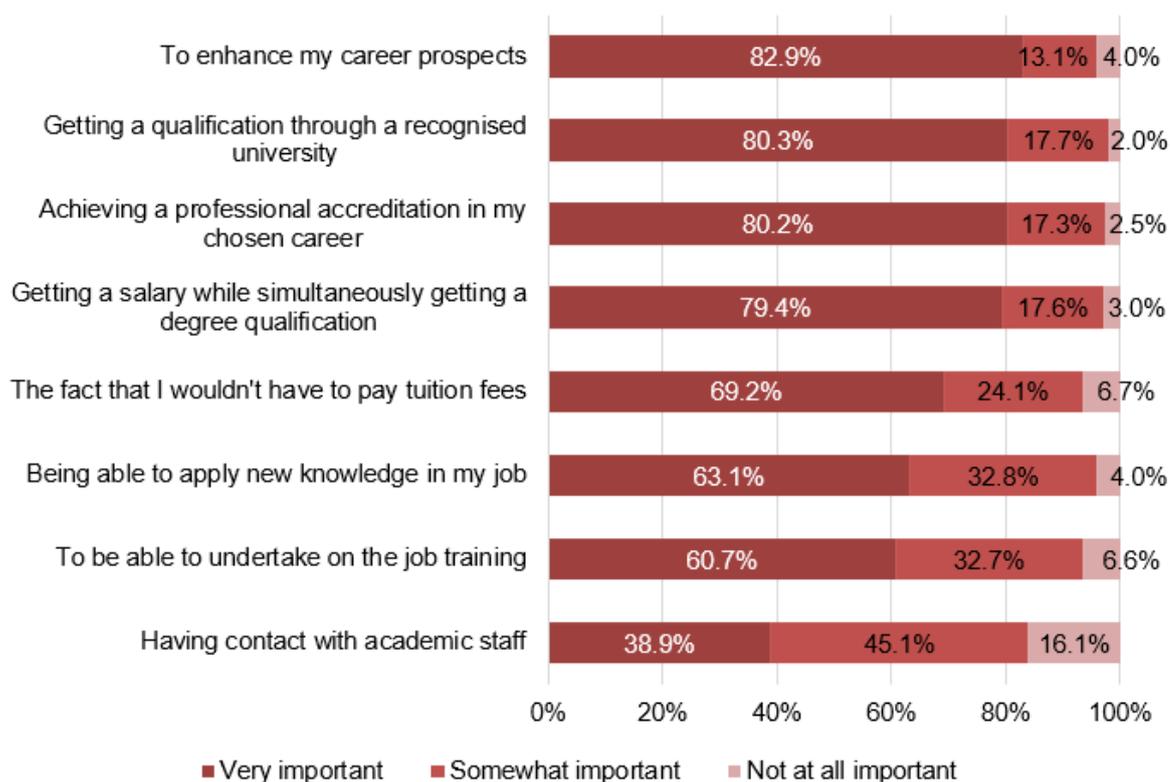
Motivations for joining the Degree Apprenticeship Programme

Motivations amongst degree apprentices

5.26 The survey of degree apprentices sought to understand common motivations for undertaking a degree apprenticeship. When asked the degree of importance that each survey respondent attributed to a series of statements, survey respondents most commonly (83 per cent; 165/199) reported that the opportunity to enhance

their career prospects was a very important factor in shaping their decision to join the course. Degree apprentices were also commonly motivated by the opportunity to gain a qualification through a recognised university (80 per cent (159/198) stated that this was very important). The level of importance assigned to each of these was largely consistent across degree apprentices in both frameworks.

Figure 5.2: How important was each of the following in shaping your decision to do a degree apprenticeship?



Note: n=199

Source: Degree apprentice online survey

5.27 Not having to pay tuition fees was also viewed as being important in influencing decisions to participate in the course. This was reported as being very important by 69 per cent (135/195) of degree apprentices. Only seven per cent (13/195) of degree apprentices reported that this was not an important factor in shaping their decision to participate in the programme.

‘I would not have had the opportunity to return to higher education, due to work and family commitments. I would not have been able to afford to stop working to return, so this was an opportunity I could not pass on. I thoroughly enjoyed it, even the areas that aren’t relevant to my career path, such as project management, as it has given me a pathway I may

never have thought about. I couldn't recommend this course enough.'

(Current Degree Apprentices, Online Survey of Degree Apprentices)

- 5.28 Employers also appear to have played some role in influencing degree apprentices to join the course. For example, as outlined previously within this section, over half (52 per cent; 102/198) first heard about a degree apprenticeship from their employer, whilst 16 per cent (32/199) of degree apprentices reported that their employer convinced them that the programme would be a good fit for them when they were deciding whether to pursue the course.

Employer motivations

- 5.29 To gain further insight into the key influencer in embarking on a degree apprenticeship, employers were asked whether the choice to participate in a degree apprenticeship was the employer's decision, the employee's decision or a joint decision. Most commonly (45 per cent; 33/73), they described it as a joint decision. A further 40 per cent described it as the employee's decision, whilst 15 per cent reported that they, as the employer, had made the decision on their employee's behalf.
- 5.30 Employers were most often motivated to put their staff through degree apprenticeships to fill specific skill needs (44 per cent; 32/73), provide opportunities for staff progression and development (32 per cent; 23/73), and support succession planning by promoting talent growth within the workplace (21 per cent; 15/73).³⁶

'I am always looking to have a workforce that is as highly skilled as possible. I believe in a culture of work-based learning. Most of our employees join us at 18 [years] of age and we feel that apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships are the best way of getting staff with the right skills.' **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

- 5.31 Developing digital skills was often identified as a key motivator for participating in the digital pathway, as rapid growth in technology meant that some workforces were seeing skills gaps in this area. Once again, the funding was an attractive part of the offer, and 16 per cent (12/73) reported that funding was one of the things that prompted them to consider a degree apprenticeship. A small number of employers

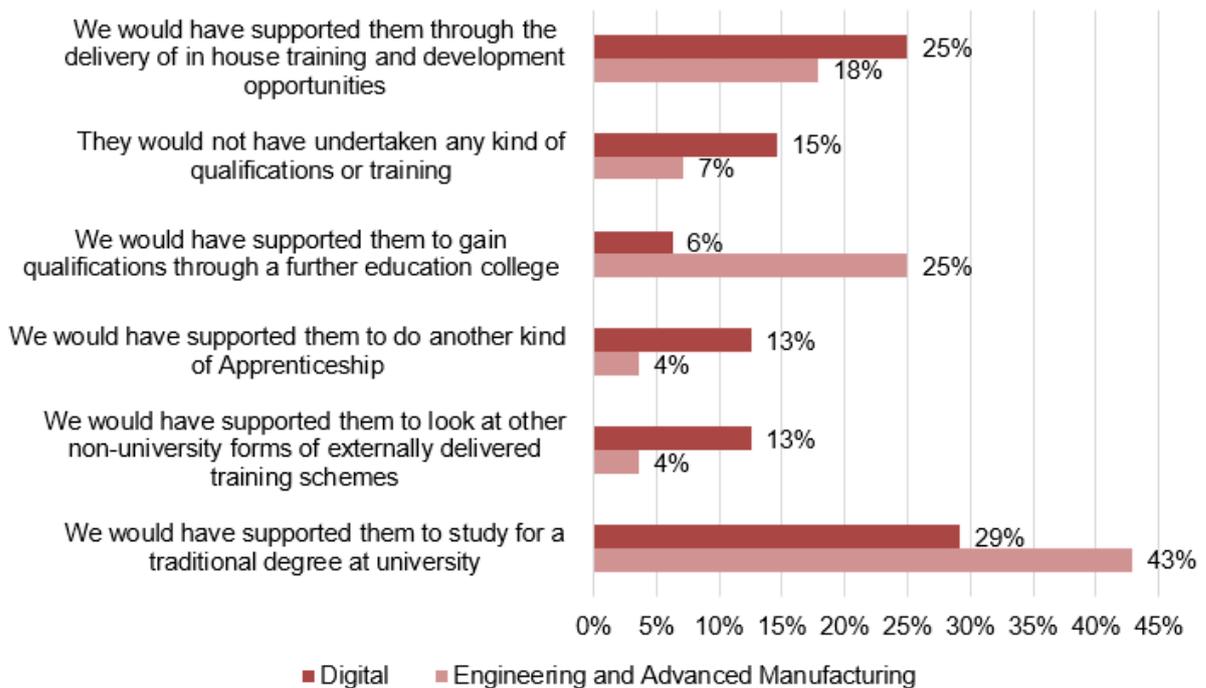
³⁶ It should be noted that these motivations were detailed as responses to an open-ended question; therefore, these figures represent common themes in responses.

reported that they would have been unable to support individuals in undertaking a degree apprenticeship without the funding offer.

‘Honestly, it was fully funded and I couldn’t have given the degree course to my employee without it. Secondly, we run an e-commerce website and working with external companies has been very difficult, so my employee saw the software development degree and is in his second year. Then he will be able to write and run our site, which makes everything much easier when it’s internal.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

5.32 Whilst around one third of employers (33 per cent; 26/79) reported that they would have supported their employee in studying for a traditional degree at university in the absence of degree apprenticeships, the majority of employers would not have done so. In the absence of degree apprenticeships, 24 per cent of employers (19/79) reported that they would have instead supported their employees in accessing in-house training and development, and a further 11 per cent (9/79) reported that they would not have undertaken any qualifications or training.

Figure 5.3: Which of the following statements would best capture your situation if your employee(s) had not had the opportunity to study for a degree apprenticeship?



Note: n=48 (digital) and n=28 (engineering and advanced manufacturing)
 Source: Wavehill employer telephone survey

Barriers that are restricting engagement

5.33 Delivery staff reported that more certainty surrounding the funding for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme was needed to support their ambitions to recruit and engage more employers. Management and delivery staff from three HEIs reported issues relating to the programme being a “pilot”. At one institution a staff member reported that this was resulting in less of a strategic push behind the programme.

‘One of the issues we have got is around the longevity of the programme. We understood it was a pilot and still it is in the fourth year, but the talk of it being a pilot is not helpful, especially now because it’s even more uncertain about the long term. Employers are planning for the next 12 months and thinking about 2022 and we need that certainty now as to what is happening with the programme. It’s more of a barrier now than it was three years ago.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

5.34 Whilst the programme is perceived to be a pilot, staff reported that this had the risk of deterring employers from engaging because they might be concerned about the long-term sustainability of the programme.

5.35 Additionally, several stakeholders reported that the current planning cycle could be a barrier to employer engagement because employers tend to plan over longer periods that are not necessarily aligned with the Degree Apprenticeship Programme timeline. Related to this were concerns that the planning cycle is built around the academic calendar, which may not be how employers are used to planning.

‘What happens is that the education calendar year is set for when you launch an apprenticeship [...] But employers don’t appreciate the education calendar. For them there are 12 months in the year. The recruitment timeline of advertising in March and starting in September is not really known to employers [...]. The marketing and comms. campaigns reflect the education calendar year. The employer communications should be all year round, because they might be doing this for the first time and won’t realise this.’ **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

5.36 For SMEs a further barrier to participation relates to the time away from the workplace that is required to enable employees to take up apprenticeships. This challenge was reported by both wider stakeholders and management and delivery staff.

‘Of the ones that have been launched to date, they have been very successful. The only challenge we have come across is that when degree apprenticeships are in SMEs, and [with] the amount of time needed away from the workplace, it is quite impactful. In a large organisation it’s more structured and they plan for it. It’s the environment the learner is in.’ **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Barriers amongst degree apprentices

5.37 Degree apprentices identified a series of concerns that they had prior to enrolling in the programme. Two thirds (67 per cent; 133/199) of degree apprentices reported concerns with regard to balancing working, home life, and studying for a degree at the same time (with the proportion citing these concerns rising to 72 per cent (90/125) of those in the digital framework).

‘[There were concerns that] my employer would not understand how much extra work this entails, [with a] fear of burning out.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Online Survey of Degree Apprentices)**

‘The home–work–study balance was a big concern. How would I be able to work and do the apprenticeship and have a life with my kids at home?’ **(Current Apprentice, Telephone Interview)**

5.38 This concern had materialised in many students’ experiences of studying for a degree apprenticeship. Responding to the online survey, 67 per cent (131/199) of degree apprentices reported that they had experienced challenges in managing workload between the degree apprenticeship and their pre-existing in-work demands. Amongst those in the engineering and manufacturing framework, the proportion facing experiencing this challenge increased to 74 per cent (54/73).

5.39 Around one in three (34 per cent; 67/199) degree apprentices reported that prior to commencing the course they had concerns regarding the programme being new and not knowing what to expect.

'I didn't know what to expect and felt this is quite new to Wales and maybe it would be that we were being experimented on and maybe I wouldn't get the full benefits. I worried about the split between work and university and how it would work. I thought it might not be recognised as a proper degree. I barely go to university and my mum still doesn't understand that it is a degree.' **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interview)**

- 5.40 Additionally, 13 per cent of degree apprentices (26/199) reported that they had concerns that other people might not view a degree apprenticeship as a "real" degree. This may suggest that more support is needed to help create parity of esteem between vocational degree apprenticeships and traditional degree programmes. A small number of delivery and management staff and wider stakeholders also raised concerns regarding how parity of esteem can be created.

'I think there's still a perception issue around the term "apprenticeship". There are some students who go down the degree route because of pressure. Apprenticeships are seen as something different and they still see the two as separate.' **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 5.41 Another concern reported by around 15 per cent (14/68) of degree apprentices who participated in telephone interviews was whether they would have the academic capability to succeed as a degree apprentice. Some degree apprentices were returning to education after many years, and learners who had no prior experience of higher education often expressed doubts as to whether the course would be too challenging.

'I was worried about the standard — I had been out of education for 15 years and maths was a concern. I was previously doing an HNC, which does have quite a high level, but with a degree it would go further again. Also, the work–life–home balance [was a concern]. I have a one-year-old daughter.' **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

'Would I be able to do it? Was I clever enough? And would I have the time? I had no experience of higher education and genuinely didn't know how a degree was broken down over the years and over the

levels. I thought it would be like school.’ (**Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews**)

Enrolment processes

- 5.42 Enrolment processes were distinct within each HEI, with differing approaches taken to application, employer engagement, and responsibilities for admitting degree apprentices.
- 5.43 One HEI reported that their processes had been more informal or ad hoc, with employers being invited to have informal conversations with the HEI. However, this is an area in which the HEI had been prompted to introduce formal processes following the QAA review and has subsequently done so.
- 5.44 At other institutions there was evidence of a more joined-up approach involving the apprentice, the employer and the HEI. For example, within the digital pathway at Swansea University, wherein enrolment is aligned with a new role, employers carry out an initial sift of applicants and the university then interviews candidates and carries out aptitude tests and provides feedback to the employer as to who they think has the potential to succeed in the course.
- 5.45 At UWTSD, apprentices register their interest through the university website, and staff then meet with the employer and the apprentice to explain the programme and support their enrolment.
- 5.46 Enrolment processes were one of the areas of the programme in which there appeared to be variation across the programme. This variation may in part be influenced by differences in the cohorts of degree apprentices recruited. At some HEIs, for instance, the cohort was predominantly composed of employees from one employer, which may lend itself to more informal recruitment mechanisms. Similarly at the University of South Wales, staff reported that many learners entered the programme after Year 1 (at Level 5 or 6) with certificates of prior learning, which may require a different enrolment pathway from where learners are joining the programme in Year 1 (at Level 4).
- 5.47 Most employers (79 per cent; 62/78) reported that the process for enrolment was “very straightforward”, with a further 14 per cent (11/78) reporting that the process was “relatively straightforward”. Only one per cent (1/78) reported that the process was “somewhat complicated”.

- 5.48 In a small number of interviews, delivery staff reported that there could be some disconnection in processes between HEIs and their FE partners. For example, delivery staff from one HEI and their associated partners reported that there could be an element of duplication in which learners were having to engage with the FE and then enrol with the HEI. Initial challenges regarding a lack of shared systems and difficulties surrounding data sharing had prevented this from being a smooth process and left gaps in the knowledge of the FE colleges with regard to who had enrolled. However, the process had been improved following the QAA review, and staff reported that they were in the process of creating a merged process.
- 5.49 Degree apprentices were less likely than employers to report that enrolment was “very straightforward”. Whilst 51 per cent (101/199) of degree apprentices who participated in the online support reported that the enrolment processes were “very straightforward”, 42 per cent (84/199) stated that they were “relatively straightforward” and seven per cent (14/199) reported that they were “somewhat complicated”. Where degree apprentices reported that the processes were “somewhat complicated”, they typically raised concerns regarding communication issues, such as being asked for the same information by multiple people, a lack of communication, or being supplied with contradictory information from different sources.

Essential skill needs and their assessment

- 5.50 Management and delivery staff were asked what approaches are taken in order to assess apprentices’ essential skills. Where FE colleges led on the recruitment of degree apprentices to the programme, they typically led on the essential skill needs assessment. Three HEI-led degree apprenticeship courses reported that they were using WEST (Wales Essential Skills Toolkit) to assess key skills, particularly so with those degree apprentices recruited at Level 4. Among these, one FE college (in collaboration with the HEI) reported that they use WEST assessments throughout the year to continually assess skills. Alongside this, one HEI reported that they were able to take into account prior learning, therefore forgoing the need for apprentices with certificated learning to participate in WEST.
- 5.51 One HEI appeared to have a slightly less formal approach in which the practice tutor role is used as a mechanism for regularly assessing core skills, and where skill needs are identified, provision is put in place to support the learner. The HEI

reported that they complement this with introductory units which help degree apprentices to reach a foundational skill level in relation to core competencies such as writing in academic English and numeracy. An FE college provided a similar approach offering two free preparation modules, either at or just prior to the commencement of the degree apprenticeship, on confidence in numeracy and on confident in learning. The courses were designed to support them with essential skill needs, as well as preparing them for the virtual learning environment. Another HEI spoke about how they tend to focus the essential skill assessment upon those individuals enrolling in the degree apprenticeship at Level 4.

- 5.52 Where the HEI is involved with the employer in recruiting new employees to a degree apprenticeship, any essential skill needs are assessed as part of that recruitment process through an aptitude test.
- 5.53 In situations in which skill needs are subsequently identified (that were not otherwise identified upon enrolment), one HEI described how they contract with one of their FE partners to deliver the essential skill support necessary in recognition of their skills and experience in delivering this element.

6. Key Findings – Delivery Models and Benefits of Degree Apprenticeships

Section Summary

- The taught component of the degree apprenticeship is typically delivered one day per week. Some courses are being lengthened or adjusted in order to respond to learner needs, with the majority of learners describing the challenges of balancing various commitments.
- There are a variety of approaches to how an employer manages the time necessary for the learning element of degree apprenticeships — some apprentices report having to perform a full-time working week compressed into four days, whilst others secure day release.
- The Degree Apprenticeship Programme has strengthened the partnership between FE and HE, albeit with limited examples of new partnerships being forged in response to the programme.
- The COVID-19 pandemic generated new delivery methods and processes, whereby generating both benefits (increased flexibility, increased efficiency) and challenges (increased isolation and in separating work and home life).
- The dominance of existing employees in the programme (providing no possibility to influence those who enrol in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme) and that male dominance in STEM subjects is typically already entrenched from an earlier age are considered to be key constraints on widening participation in degree apprenticeships.
- There may be scope for greater alignment of degree apprenticeships with jobs, with 67 per cent of apprentices describing some or no alignment with their job; however, the extent of this issue is unclear, as 78 per cent of employers reported a great extent of alignment with the services/activities that they undertook. Greater effort is also needed to ensure that all employers feel as though they have adequate opportunities to feed into the programme.
- A large proportion of degree apprentices (46 per cent; 89/195) reported that they have clearer aspirations for their career, and 37 per cent (73/195) reported that they feel more secure in their job.

- In terms of outcomes, 45 per cent (88/195) of degree apprentices reported that they feel more confident about and better at performing their role. Twenty-eight per cent of degree apprentices reported that they had been promoted (55/195) and 29 per cent (56/195) reported that their responsibilities had increased.
- Degree apprenticeships play a considerable role in encouraging people to upskill, with 36 per cent of apprentices stating that in the absence of degree apprenticeships they would not have opted for another course. This figure rises to 41 per cent amongst degree apprenticeships in the digital framework.
- A high proportion of employers (66 per cent; 50/76) reported that participation in the programme was increasing the rates of productivity amongst degree apprentices.

Introduction

- 6.1 This section explores the various models adopted by institutions for delivering degree apprenticeships, and reflects on the perceived benefits and impacts arising for those engaged in the programme.

Staffing

- 6.2 HEIs have mostly delivered degree apprenticeships through existing staff provision. In at least two cases, this is because provision is reportedly aligned with the existing skills of staff.

‘No, [we] did not need to extend capacity. The part we were going to deliver was going to run alongside an existing programme, [with the] opportunity to grow the number of students.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder**

Interviewee)

- 6.3 However, three HEIs had taken on additional teaching staff to support the delivery, which included lecturers and tutors, whilst those utilising existing staff spoke about the potential need to recruit additional personnel should apprentice numbers increase.

- 6.4 A further three HEIs reported that they had embedded additional roles to meet the needs of the programme. This included staff with responsibilities for employer liaison, administration of the programme, or support for degree apprentices.

‘Mainly existing staff, but we do need to build capacity when we have clarification of the plans. We also want to get a dedicated role on this, a

liaison point between the organisations.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

‘If the Degree [Apprenticeship] Programme gets expanded, the university will need some central facility to oversee this, as my team do it as a side project, not [as a] main focus, and employer engagement should be considered formally.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

6.5 Where HEIs had embedded additional staff, they were viewed as an integral part of the infrastructure.

‘It is fundamental to have that team fully dedicated to the degree apprenticeship students. Without this the lecturers wouldn’t be able to cope with the demands of the [six-week] feedback loop. This is working really well with that dedicated team.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Delivery model

6.6 Most degree apprenticeship courses commence in September or October, in alignment with the traditional academic year. In a small (albeit increasing) number of cases, however, HEIs also offer a second intake midway through the academic year. For example, Bangor University offers a January intake, and students at the Open University in Wales are able to opt for an October or February start date.

6.7 The duration of courses differs somewhat between providers. Guidance from HEFCW provides that courses can be no less than three years and no more than five years. Some HEIs have adopted a three-year delivery period, whilst others have adopted elongated completion periods with the course taking four or four-and-a-half years to complete. In several instances, courses have been lengthened (through either lengthening terms or lengthening the course) in recognition of the challenge of balancing workload associated with the course.

Course structure

6.8 Across providers, most HEIs adopt a “day release” model to deliver the academic element of the course. This typically involves apprentices attending the HEI or FE college to receive the taught component of their course over one day or afternoon per week, whilst the remaining days are spent within the employer. In some approaches, this model had emerged out of traditional working practice within

employers. For example, one course had been delivered on a Friday afternoon to align with the employer's work approach, where Friday afternoons were typically kept clear. Where afternoon day release is utilised, this often includes later evenings for teaching, with sessions scheduled to run until seven or eight o'clock in the evening.

- 6.9 Management and delivery staff have also reported instances in which adaptations to day release have ensured that not all apprentices are being released on the same day. This approach has been adopted in recognition that when several cohorts of apprentices are all away from the workplace on the same day, this can cause challenges with regard to staffing levels within the workplace. As more cohorts are being enrolled in the programme, this is an area in which HEIs have needed to be responsive.

'We had a conversation about this in July with the industrial panel, and [employers] are really keen on the Friday afternoon delivery, but they're saying they could send more staff to the courses if the different levels (4, 5 and 6) were taught on different days.' **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 6.10 Within the University of South Wales, three of its engineering courses are taught utilising day release, whilst two courses include two days at the university and three days at the employer per week. Furthermore, some HEIs have courses with a "block release" (provision delivered over multiple, consecutive days) model. For example, this is used to deliver some of the engineering pathways at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and is used at Cardiff University.
- 6.11 Within telephone interviews, 15 per cent (7/47) of degree apprentices reported that they would like to see units or the academic year elongated so as to give them more time with which to complete assignments. This included references to lengthening the course over the summer, extending units so that apprentices had longer to submit assessments, or elongating the overall course timescales. Degree apprentices frequently reported that this would "take the pressure off", and it was felt that the summer break was not necessarily of benefit, given that work-based learners are still working throughout the summer months and, therefore, do not see the benefit of the break in the academic calendar.

‘It is definitely better doing the modules over the summer, like we do now. (In the first year we didn’t have any, last year we had one, and this year we’ve had two.) If we have at least one module over summer, it is less crammed and a lightened workload.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Survey of Degree Apprentices)**

- 6.12 Additionally, one degree apprentice reported that the course was inflexible, which resulted in difficulties in balancing work alongside changing employment demands.

‘There’s no flexibility offered by the course. It has such a strict scheduling of four exams, four [pieces of] coursework, and two portfolio projects per term [...] should any major project work arise in employment, there is little room to wiggle regarding the course — many university colleagues’ mental health has deteriorated because of this, with one of them leaving halfway through the second year.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Online Survey of Degree Apprentices)**

- 6.13 At one HEI a course had previously been run on a smaller timetable, with courses running from September to May. However, this had been updated based on apprentice feedback, which found that this condensed timetable was “too intense”, resulting in a 42-week teaching year.

- 6.14 At this stage in the programme, it is too early to unpick whether different delivery modes have an impact on learner retention and completion. However, as set out in the quote below, as the programme moves forward, this may be an area in need of further interrogation in order to ensure that different modes of delivery are not resulting in differences in outcomes for learners.

‘I think the model of delivery (as in block release and time spent in the employer) is variable depending on each HEI, and I think that has quite a big impact. It would be interesting to see the progression data here. Some are very generous and work four days with the employer, and presumably the nature of the employer allows one-day block release, and then there are others trying to do a full week’s work and a day of study all in five days and self-study as well. That potentially has an impact in terms of the success of the individual programmes [...] There’s a need for flexibility, but there’s also a need for best practice to

support retention, and employers need to understand the impact of that.’ **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 6.15 There is evidence from degree apprentices that fears that they recalled having prior to enrolling in a degree apprenticeship with regard to balancing work, study, and home life (as discussed in section 4.37) have come to fruition. When asked which of a list of suggested challenges (which intentionally excluded COVID-19, as this was identified separately within the survey) they had faced through their participation in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, two thirds (67 per cent; 131/195) identified “managing the balance of workload between the degree apprenticeship and your pre-existing in-work demands”. A further 22 per cent (43/195) referred to “utilising the learning you have gained in your current role”. Feedback from the telephone interviews suggests that these challenges were sometimes compounded by structures within the course. For example, some degree apprentices reported challenges surrounding the timing of the assessments, which they felt had not accounted for their work commitments.

‘During the term times it can be difficult because I’m doing at least a 40-hour week with work and when I’m working on a product that’s going through qualification, I can’t pause all the trials for two weeks for me to attend a lecture or do an assignment. It usually means that I’m doing the full day in university and 6–7 hours in evening catching up with emails and writing reports. The assignments are usually set towards the end of the module. Again, it’s 40 hours of my normal job and I’ve got to find another 40–80 hours to write an assignment.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

‘You would have a 12-week term and you would be in lectures every day and the assignment was due on week 13. Not having the space to do the assignment was difficult, and then having a block of free time over the summer was frustrating. Sometimes there was a general feeling that we were doing a traditional degree alongside work — I don’t feel the university appreciated the nuances of us being work-based learners.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

- 6.16 Within telephone interviews, many degree apprentices (32/48) reported that their employer offered them time off in order to assist with their studies and assignments.

Some degree apprentices reported that they were given an additional day away from work in addition to agreed paid day release to enable them to complete assignments. Other employers offered study leave (in addition to an employee's annual leave entitlement). At the more generous end of the spectrum, one degree apprentice reported that they are given an additional study day per week, in addition to the day that they spend at university.

- 6.17 However, the extent of this provision varied. In a small number of cases (6/48), degree apprentices appeared to have little provision for time away from the workplace or seemed to be using flexitime or annual leave to support assignments and university work. Whilst this did allow the degree apprentices some flexibility, compared to some of the more generous release offers in other workplaces, there is the risk that the use of annual leave or flexitime (which employees are required to work back) could compound the pre-existing challenges regarding work–life balance faced by degree apprentices. This may reduce course accessibility to degree apprentices who face additional barriers within their home lives, e.g. as parents or carers. As illustrated in the quote below, this could impact on the well-being of apprentices.

'My employer did not agree to me taking the day for lectures. [Therefore], for the duration of the apprenticeship, I had to work back the eight hours during the week and over the weekend. This put tremendous strain on my family and work life, as well as my own health.' **(Degree Apprentice, Online Survey of Degree Apprentices)**

- 6.18 Two HEIs also reported issues surrounding employers occasionally not showing that they respected the time that the employee needed to take to enable them to undertake their coursework.

'Sometimes I've had a few instances where students couldn't get work in, as the employers haven't allowed them the day off. [Our staff are] on this straight away. If an employer says [that] they are committed to the degree app structure, then they are committed to a day a year for the student — it is a protected day.' **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 6.19 Employers were asked how they managed to offset the loss of staff resources whilst employees were undertaking their studies as part of the degree apprenticeship. This

did not appear to be a major concern for many employers. Indeed, 49 per cent of employers (37/75) reported that there was no need to manage this or that there had been no loss of employee resources. In most cases these employers reported that staff worked a four-day week, with study leave being in place to cover the study time, and occasionally employers reported that staff worked back the hours or would attend study outside of core hours.

6.20 Other employers reported that they absorbed any loss into the wider workforce, with other staff members supporting business operations when colleagues are away for study.

6.21 A small number of degree apprentices (2/48) reported issues where they felt that academic processes had not taken into account their differing status as work-based learners. These included challenges surrounding the amount of independent study material that was being set, assessment deadlines, and a lack of advanced notice regarding deadlines. Both degree apprentices and delivery staff also reported some teething problems relating to timetabling.

'I feel it's really disorganised, last-minute, and communication is not great. For example, I still haven't been told when we are going back in September.³⁷ I don't know what day it will be, what the hours will be or even whether it will be on campus or not, so it is difficult to organise my work schedule and childcare.' **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

6.22 Timetabling was one of the areas in which delivery staff reported that there had been internal challenges in the delivery of the programme. This was discussed in interviews with two HEIs. Timetabling is often undertaken by centralised departments within HEIs, and timescales for this work are commonly built around traditional degree cohorts. This has created challenges for some degree apprentices who require more advanced notice.

Partnerships between HE and FE

6.23 Most HEIs (5/8) delivering degree apprenticeships have a formal partnership with at least one FE college to support the delivery of the course, particularly so where they are delivering at scale (details of collaborations are presented in Annexe A). It

³⁷ This interview took place mid-August 2021.

should be noted, however, that very few of these partnerships (one or two at most) have been established as a result of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. In most cases, some form of partnership arrangement pre-existed the Degree Apprenticeship Programme; however, the programme has reportedly helped to strengthen partnership activity.

- 6.24 Two HEIs reported that their partner FE colleges had taken the lead on the work-based learning element of the course, recognising that this aligned well with their experience of delivering WBL qualifications previously. In addition to this responsibility, several HEIs reported that their partner FE college(s) held responsibilities for outreach, where they were able to utilise their existing relationships with employers or learners on other apprenticeship courses to support the promotion of degree apprenticeship provision.
- 6.25 Generally, HEIs and FE colleges reported that the partnerships were working positively. However, management and delivery staff did report a few teething issues. One HEI reported that they had to address differences in the marking approaches adopted by staff within the HEI and FE colleges. Management and delivery staff from a different partnership reported that they had experienced some challenges surrounding duplication due to a lack of shared systems, which had since been rectified.
- 6.26 Several HEIs (3/8) also reported that they were working with FE colleges and other WBL providers to map their apprenticeship provision to their degree apprenticeship provision to solidify the pathway between programmes.
- 6.27 Where HEIs were not currently working closely with FE colleges to deliver their programmes, there was consistently an ambition to build on partnership opportunities, suggesting that HEIs saw the partnership approach as an aspect that could add value. However, one HEI reported that this was challenging to do in the absence of certainty with respect to funding. More generally, this may be restricting the establishment of more strategic, sustained partnership activity, with a tendency to focus on the collaborations being more operational (rather than strategic) in nature, synonymous with time-bound initiatives.
- 6.28 Several wider stakeholders (3) reported that the collaboration between FE and HE was an area in which the programme could be improved. One stakeholder reported that they felt as though there had been “missed opportunities” regarding HE–FE

collaboration, with an absence of strategic collaboration, which left collaborations down to individuals. Similarly, another stakeholder reported that the programme had not necessarily driven new collaboration.

‘It has been effective in encouraging collaboration where there are existing collaborative arrangements in place. It’s not that it’s encouraged newer collaborations. Some of the lead providers have strong collaborations with local FE partners, but it didn’t develop new relationships (as far as I can tell). I think it was dependent on where there was strong existing collaboration as well as the location [...] I think that one of the strengths was that colleges have more experience with WBL, which HEIs don’t have so much experience doing, so that was a real strength in working through FE delivery partners. The one area we didn’t see much evidence of was WBL providers. I think that’s much stronger in higher apprentices (rather than degree level).’ **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Work-based provision

- 6.29 As identified in the degree apprenticeship frameworks, a Degree Apprenticeship Programme is fundamentally designed to be a work-based programme, whereby HE-delivered learning can be immediately applied by apprentices in a real work context.³⁸ The framework describes how, wherever possible, the assessment requirements are undertaken using project-based methods with real-world workplace examples, ensuring that any knowledge elements in the modules are learned in the work and organisational context. The expectation is that this is planned, reviewed and evaluated jointly between the apprentice, university lecturers, the employer and the mentor/manager through directed study, projects, feedback, and assessments.³⁹
- 6.30 The work-based learning elements of courses are used to provide opportunities for degree apprentices to relate what they are learning back to the specific context and processes within their employment setting, helping to put theoretical concepts into practice.

³⁸ Apprenticeship Certification Wales (2019) Digital Degree Apprenticeship (Wales), Instructus.

³⁹ Ibid.

- 6.31 HEIs have taken differing approaches to on-the-job and off-the-job learning in the acquisition of knowledge and skills within the degree apprenticeship courses. One HEI reported that they had taken a holistic approach to WBL, wherein it is interwoven into the fabric of the course, with employers involved in agreeing provision and assessment criteria through Industrial Liaison Panels.
- 6.32 In several other institutions, specific modules are dedicated to the WBL element; for example, students might undertake a particular project or independent research task within the employer setting to embed the WBL element. Furthermore, the dissertation or final-year research project was used as a key opportunity for WBL, with the project being designed around a specific problem or task within their employment setting.
- ‘Every term they study 60 credits, so that is one 20-credit module that comes from the standard degree and a 40-credit module that is specific to the degree apprenticeship [...] We put in place a framework and we develop an assessment based on what they’re doing at work, so the nuance comes from their place of work. They join up the theory and practice. The assessments are usually a technical or written project with an element of reflection on what they’ve done.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**
- 6.33 At a minority of institutions, the delivery of 12-week modules contextualised to the workplace had culminated in a WBL assignment. However, feedback from apprentices had led to the timescales being elongated in recognition that it was difficult for students to complete the assignment within 12 weeks whilst balancing work commitments and family life.
- 6.34 The approach to engaging employers within assessment was varied. One institution reported that they currently invite managers to presentations, but that they are in the process of exploring how employers can be more involved in assessment. Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, one institution had employers involved in developing the assessment approach. This was felt to be an area in which the programme could be further developed (and was also identified by the QAA review). One stakeholder reported that across the programme, employer engagement in the assessment design and assessment process was “very low”.

‘There is certainly more opportunity to involve employers in assessment and delivery. There’s little employer-led assessment. There’s some formative assessment, but no summative assessment. There seemed to be reluctance on the part of HEIs to involve employers, and maybe employers don’t feel they are experts, but we’ve seen more involvement in foundation degrees in the past. That struck me. It’s a big area of potential improvement. It relates back to integration of WBL and the [on-the-job] and off-the-job learning. Integrating that, it could be improved a lot more. But that might require more time and [resources].’ **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

6.35 Amongst employers there were mixed views on the extent to which they felt able to influence the content of the degree apprenticeship. One third of respondent employers with apprentices in the digital framework felt as though they could influence content “to a great extent”, whilst almost half felt that they had no influence over content. Employers felt that they had a greater influence over the content of degree apprenticeships within the engineering and advanced manufacturing pathway, with almost half reporting being able to influence the nature of provision to a great extent. Often, in expanding on their response, employers at times recognised that HEIs had a difficult job in trying to bring together the requirements of multiple employers whilst also ensuring that they could deliver the core teaching.

Table 6.1: To what extent have you been able to influence the content of the degree apprenticeship course to ensure that it is based on the specific needs and demands of your workplace?

	Digital (n=46)	Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (n=27)	Overall (n=73)
To a great extent	33%	48%	38%
To some extent	20%	30%	48%
To no extent	48%	22%	33%

Source: Employer telephone survey

Work-based mentoring

6.36 As part of the programme there is an expectation that tripartite updates happen between the degree apprentice, the employer and the course provider/HEI every 60 days. These updates are intended to provide an opportunity to discuss the apprentice’s progress through the course and any support needs.

6.37 There is, however, evidence that updates might not consistently be taking place at this level of regularity. In response to the employer survey, 66 per cent (46/70) of employers reported that they had received updates at least termly or more often, with two per cent (19/70) receiving at least monthly updates. However, 11 per cent (8/70) of employers reported that these were happening only two to three times per year, 14 per cent (10/70) stated that these meetings were infrequent, and 11 per cent (8/76)⁴⁰ reported that they had not had any updates or meetings with the college/university delivering the degree.

6.38 Most employers reported that these updates were “very useful” (57 per cent; 42/74) or “somewhat useful” (32 per cent; 24/74). Three quarters of employers felt as though the updates enabled them to understand how the degree apprentice was progressing and if any additional support was needed. Through update meetings a small number of employers (4/75) also reported that they were able to find out more about the course content and plans for the future.

‘Useful to know how the course is going. Updates on the individuals, specifics on their abilities, how best to achieve anything not quite working due to their different job needs — it’s all confidential and we are able to see if anyone might need more mentoring over a particular part of the course.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.39 However, 11 per cent of employers (8/74) reported that updates were “not at all useful”. Three of those who reported that updates were not useful reported that they had received no updates or limited updates, whilst two reported that they felt as though the updates were not always necessary.

6.40 The latter was echoed by a small number (3/75) of employers who reported that updates were “somewhat useful”.

‘I am in contact with the learners anyway on a regular basis and I don’t really need any more updates, but we can contact each other at any time should either need anything further. They are fantastic to work with and very forthcoming. I don’t get anywhere near this when dealing with

⁴⁰ Two employers were responding with more than one answer to reflect that they are engaging with degree apprenticeships at two different educational institutions and that the frequencies of updates differ between the two.

the same in England, [where] you need to try really hard to get anything at all.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.41 The responses from degree apprentices to the telephone surveys also suggest that the extent to which tripartite updates are taking place between apprentices, their employers, and course staff is variable. Whilst 70 per cent (33/47) of degree apprentices who participated in telephone interviews reported that they had received workplace visits and associated in-work support (from the FE college or university) as part of the programme, 30 per cent (14/47) of degree apprentices reported that they had not. One degree apprentice also spontaneously reported issues surrounding accessing support in a free-text response regarding challenges experienced in the programme.

‘Not so much a challenge, but I have not had much contact with my practice tutor. And though I have not necessarily required the support, I haven’t had the regular reviews that were expected. I have not chased these up, as I do not feel it is my role to do so [because] I am working full-time as well as studying.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Online Survey of Degree Apprentices)**

6.42 This echoes findings from the QAA review which reported that despite conditions for apprentices to have their progress reviewed every two months, implementation was “variable”.⁴¹

6.43 Where this support had been received, 70 per cent (23/33) of degree apprentices described elements of this support that had been good, including having apprentices describing the opportunity as “helpful” and having the opportunity to ask questions. However, 45 per cent (15/33) of respondents also highlighted negative experiences of update meetings.⁴² In some cases these related to degree apprentices not feeling as though they necessarily needed the meetings, and in one case a degree apprentice described them as a ‘tick a box’ exercise.

⁴¹ QAA, Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales: Overview Report (2021).

⁴² Some responses contained both positive and negative feedback. As a result, these numbers amount to over 33.

Role of professional, statutory and regulatory requirements in course provision

- 6.44 The degree apprenticeship frameworks do not currently require courses to be accredited by particular professional bodies. However, there is evidence that several courses have sought accreditations from relevant professional bodies or have plans to apply for accreditation in the future.
- 6.45 Most HEIs include information on their course webpages regarding how the course aligns with professional, statutory and regulatory requirements. For example, three HEIs detail that some of their courses are accredited by the relevant professional bodies, and a further two HEIs include statements on their intentions to seek accreditation for their engineering provision at the earliest opportunity, and report that their courses have been designed to meet the requirements of professional bodies. In addition to statements regarding professional requirements, several HEIs also include references to frameworks with which their courses comply, such as the QAA frameworks for their subject, or accreditation of the first two years of the course through the higher apprenticeship frameworks. The inclusion of these requirements in course material may suggest that HEIs view these as key information for prospective applicants and their employers to assure them of the quality of the courses.
- 6.46 Within interviews, management and delivery staff were asked how professional, statutory and regulatory requirements had been integrated into curriculum design. Four HEIs reported that some of their provision was accredited through relevant bodies such as BCS (The Chartered Institute for IT) or the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. However, not all courses are currently accredited.
- 6.47 Three HEIs reported that with some courses, they were awaiting the opportunity to get their courses accredited. However, staff reported that before courses can be accredited, they need students to have completed the courses.

‘We follow our undergraduate programme, which pulls in the standard requirements. For the degree apprenticeships we haven’t yet got accreditation, as a full programme has to have run through the programme before we can apply, and we’re not quite at that point.’

(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)

6.48 This is also reflected in the published information relating to courses on the websites of HEIs. For example, a small number of institutions had included information indicating that their courses had not yet been accredited, but had reported that they were seeking accreditation. For example, Cardiff University is currently seeking accreditation from the Institution of Engineering and Technology and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers to meet the requirements for students to be accredited as Chartered Engineers.⁴³

6.49 Two institutions reported that professional, statutory and regulatory requirements were built into their design, as their Degree Apprenticeship Programme followed the content delivered through their existing undergraduate degree programmes.

‘In terms of the regulatory and statutory element, it is effectively the same content as a normal degree, so it’s in there.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

6.50 There was mixed feedback on how the inclusion of professional, statutory and regulatory requirements had influenced employer engagement with the programme. Staff from one HEI reported that employers in engineering felt that it would be a good thing if the course were accredited. Similarly, a staff member from another HEI reported that accreditation helps in demonstrating the “quality” of the course. However, feedback from another HEI suggested that in that setting, the drive for accreditation has come from the HEI (rather than from the employers).

‘For engineering, the degree hasn’t been validated yet because we haven’t had a complete cohort [...] There is also derogation from the engineering council setting a minimum level of attainment (30 per cent) and above. Employers not that interested in these aspects [...] seem to be quite unconcerned about engineering [standards] and are not bothered about them getting Chartered status. I want to make sure that they are accredited.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

6.51 More commonly, HEIs stressed the importance of ensuring that their provision aligned well with employer needs.

⁴³ Cardiff University, Degree Apprenticeship. Available here: [Degree apprenticeship - School of Engineering - Cardiff University](#) (accessed on 27th May 2022).

6.52 As degree apprentices are typically entering a particular HEI based on their employer's existing involvement in a particular Degree Apprenticeship Programme, it is not possible to identify whether the accreditation status is impacting on degree apprentices' preferred course providers. However, survey data suggest that professional accreditation is a motivator for potential apprentices when deciding to embark on a degree apprenticeship. Indeed, 69 per cent (158/197) of apprentices reported that achieving professional accreditation was a "very important" factor in shaping their decision to undertake a degree apprenticeship, and a further 24 per cent (34/197) reported that this was "somewhat important". This may suggest that it would be beneficial for HEIs who have not already achieved accreditation to seek out opportunities to become accredited by the relevant professional bodies.

Impact of COVID-19 on mode of delivery

- 6.53 The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales and the associated lockdowns meant that HEIs had to move the taught elements of courses online for extended periods of time. HEFCW provided guidance to providers on considerations for responding to the pandemic and adaptations to provision through a series of published circulars.^{44,45,46} Delivery was mediated through online learning platforms and the use of video conferencing platforms like Microsoft Teams and Blackboard.
- 6.54 In addition, the impact of the pandemic upon learners' wider lives sometimes meant that HEIs had supported degree apprentices in suspending their studies or submitting "extenuating circumstances" requests. Furthermore, the pandemic had resulted in some degree apprentices being furloughed, whilst other degree apprentices had seen their workload increase.
- 6.55 Perspectives on the impact of online learning upon course delivery were mixed. Staff recognised that remote delivery had brought benefits to some learners, particularly through access to recorded sessions and the elimination of travel time, which had helped to alleviate some of the difficulties that degree apprentices face with regard to balancing work, study, and home life. Additionally, a small number of

⁴⁴ [W20/24HE: Covid-19 impact on higher education providers: information on equality, diversity and inclusion - HEFCW](#)

⁴⁵ [W20 19HE COVID-19 impact on higher education providers consumer protection student expectation quality \(hefcw.ac.uk\)](#)

⁴⁶ [W20 11HE COVID-19 impact on higher education providers \(hefcw.ac.uk\)](#)

staff members reported that remote delivery was preferred by some employers, as it offered greater flexibility.

- 6.56 However, several members of delivery staff also reported that the absence of face-to-face teaching had resulted in some degree apprentices being more “disconnected” and receiving less interaction.

‘For some students who started last year, they didn’t get to come on site, and so they feel a little disconnected, but, surprisingly, one of the important things about it that has come up in panel [meetings] is that all industry wants us to keep some online delivery because the advantage is that all sessions are recorded, and for the part-time students, they are very busy. Most are in full-time employment, doing the degree, and most have a family to look after as well, so the fact they can have recorded sessions has made a positive impact and a good difference.’

(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)

- 6.57 Degree apprentices also reported that they had been able to benefit from access to recorded lecture content.

‘Having everything delivered online has been a massive bonus, as it has reduced travel time and I can access all the lectures online at a time that is convenient and rewatch material I haven’t quite understood the first time.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

- 6.58 A substantial number of degree apprentices (17/48 telephone interviewees) reported that the reduced travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic had been beneficial. Degree apprentices reported that they had been able to save time by avoiding the need to commute to the university, which for some learners constituted more than a one-hour journey each way. Degree apprentices had benefitted from being able to use this time to study or to spend more time with their family.

‘I’ve actually preferred working from home or studying from home. It lessens the commute time. I have more time with the family. I’ve got my home comforts to hand. During my first year there’d be an hour break and I’d just be walking around campus, not really sure what to do, but now being home, I can do assignments. I can spend time with the kids in that hour.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

6.59 However, remote/online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic had also brought about adverse impacts. For example, many degree apprentices reported that they had experienced less socialisation and interaction with their peers and teaching staff (reported by 23/48 telephone interviewees) during this period. This, they felt, had adversely impacted on learning opportunities, as degree apprentices had less opportunity to informally discuss challenges or questions with their peers.

6.60 Some degree apprentices also reported that online delivery had been resulting in fewer students actively participating in online sessions.

‘It can be frustrating with the lack of input from other students on the course. Only three or four of us tend to speak in the Teams meetings. Maybe the others are younger and don’t have the confidence.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

6.61 A small number of degree apprentices who participated in the telephone interviews (6/68) also reported that they had faced challenges regarding additional distractions in the home. Often these comments came from degree apprentices who had children in the home, some of whom had also had to assume additional responsibilities for home schooling during the pandemic.

‘The balance between study and home life is more difficult. You can be a bit more focused when you go into the university and utilise the time between lectures to go to the library etc., but it is much more difficult to justify when you are at home with a one-year-old and your wife needs help.’ **(Current Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

6.62 Whilst the move to remote or blended delivery had been catalysed by the pandemic, several HEIs reported that they were likely to retain a blended model of delivery and retain lecture recordings that could offer flexibility to degree apprentices. The ability to meet with tutors online had also helped to make “help sessions” or tutor meetings more accessible to degree apprentices, as degree apprentices could book in at a time that suited them without the need to add travel time.

6.63 It should, however, be noted that at the time when management and delivery interviews were conducted (September 2021), the pandemic situation and the associated restrictions were still evolving. As a result, there may still be shifts in learning preferences among degree apprentices, their employers and HEIs to which

institutions may need to respond over time. Many staff members reported that the delivery model would be something that they would need to review in order to identify the “optimum blend of provision” as the pandemic situation shifted and evolved. This is an area of the programme that HEIs should continue to monitor and evaluate.

Alignment with the Welsh language strategy

- 6.64 [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) is the Welsh Government’s Welsh language strategy and includes the overarching target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. There are a host of underpinning targets within the strategy, including plans to ‘reform the post-16 Welsh-medium and bilingual education and skills offer to ensure that young people have the opportunity to continue developing bilingual skills to support a prosperous economy’.⁴⁷
- 6.65 HEFCW sets out that as part of degree apprenticeship proposals, HEIs must demonstrate that there are arrangements in place for delivery through the medium of Welsh.⁴⁸ Stakeholders acknowledge that the use of the Welsh language within degree apprenticeships has been somewhat limited across the programme. The analysis of management information in section 3 reported that 27 per cent of those in degree apprenticeships had described themselves as Welsh-speaking. Amongst those who responded to the online survey, 19 per cent (37/199) described themselves as a Welsh speaker. Those who described themselves as Welsh speakers were asked whether any of their degree apprenticeship was delivered in Welsh. Three respondents (eight per cent) confirmed that it was, whilst a further 11 (30 per cent) responded that whilst the course was not delivered in Welsh, pastoral and study tutors were offered who would deliver parts of the degree in Welsh if they desired it. Several HEIs echoed this perspective, reporting that they had the capacity with which to deliver some elements of the course in Welsh and that students were invited to submit assignments in English or Welsh and could receive some university materials in Welsh.
- 6.66 The capacity of institutions to deliver course materials and lectures through the medium of Welsh, however, tended to vary, depending on the staff within individual HEIs. For example, one HEI reported that they had 10 Welsh-speaking staff within

⁴⁷ Welsh Government (2018) *Cymraeg 2050 – A million Welsh speakers*, Welsh Government.

⁴⁸ HEFCW (2019) Circular: Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and Proposals for Funding 2019/20.

the department, with another HEI reporting that delivering teaching through the medium of Welsh would be challenging because they had a lack of academic staff who were Welsh speakers.

- 6.67 Despite the availability of some Welsh language provision and capacity at all HEIs, management and delivery staff frequently reported that they had not seen demand, with degree apprentices often electing not to take up opportunities to use the Welsh language within their studies. As set out in this quote, staff reported challenges in offering materials in Welsh, given the dominance of English and American English in technical languages. Many of these technical languages do not come with guidance manuals available in Welsh. Similarly, engineering was viewed as a sector in which the English language was more dominant and some terms were not easily translatable.

‘We have lecturers that can present in Welsh and can mark assignments in Welsh and [that] students are aware of. Some of the students may be struggling with the technical translation, which may be why some students don’t prefer to take up Welsh. There is a great team and as employees we can all take part in a Welsh language programme. For students the provision is offered and it is well promoted.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

- 6.68 There is a slight mismatch in perspectives between staff and apprentices here because amongst degree apprentices who are Welsh speakers, 20 (54 per cent) stated that no Welsh provision was delivered in their degree apprenticeship, and amongst this group, when asked if they wanted all/any of their degree in Welsh, one responded that they wanted some of it in Welsh, whilst another wanted the entire degree in Welsh, thereby suggesting some, albeit minimal, demand for provision in the Welsh language.
- 6.69 More widely, apprentices were asked the extent to which their degree provided opportunities to undertake Welsh language skill development training. Four per cent (7/199) felt as though they did provide such opportunities to a great extent, whilst a further 22 per cent (44/199) stated that they did so to some extent. A further 36 per cent were unsure, with the remainder replying that they did so to no extent.

Alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations Act

- 6.70 The Well-being of Future Generations Act sets out [seven well-being goals](#). The design of the degree apprenticeship provision aligns with the goals of delivering (1) A Prosperous Wales, (2) A More Equal Wales, and (3) A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language. Moreover, it sets out the Five Ways of Working, which are principles that public bodies must demonstrate in their decision making in order to show that they are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.⁴⁹ There are Five Ways of Working, two of which are perhaps most pertinent to the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, i.e. “thinking for the long term” and “collaboration”.
- 6.71 The subsection below sets out how the Degree Apprenticeship Programme is contributing to each of these goals and to the Ways of Working.

A Prosperous Wales

- 6.72 This goal includes an ambition for people in Wales to be able to access “decent work” and to develop “skills for the future”.⁵⁰ The Degree Apprenticeship Programme is contributing to these aims from design through to delivery. The programme has targeted industrial sectors that are considered to have existing and emerging skills gaps and shortages across Wales. In doing so it is hoped that those participating in the programme are better equipped to respond to the skill needs of the future. In this regard the approach to the programme is thinking for the long term by pursuing skill development that will respond to the needs of tomorrow within the economy as well as to the needs of today.
- 6.73 Furthermore, the opportunity to upskill employees is one of the key motivations for employers to participate in the programme (as discussed in the previous section). Responses to the online survey of degree apprentices also evidence that the programme is helping to upskill employees. As a consequence of participating in the programme, 28 per cent of degree apprentices (55/195) reported that they had been promoted or progressed within their role or organisation. Additionally, 96 per cent (189/197) of degree apprentices reported that participation in the programme had resulted in improvements in their learning and academic skills.

⁴⁹ Defined as ‘acting in a manner that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

⁵⁰ [A Prosperous Wales – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

A More Equal Wales

6.74 This goal includes “ensuring equal access to decent jobs” and “educational opportunities”.⁵¹ The Degree Apprenticeship Programme has sought to contribute to this goal through an emphasis on widening participation and ensuring that the programme is accessible to all. Additionally, degree apprenticeships seek to widen access to higher education for a broader range of individuals who may not have accessed traditional higher education opportunities. The programme appears to have made strong progress in enabling people to access higher education from families who have not previously done so, with evidence showing that degree apprentices are much more likely to be the first generation in their family to attend higher education than are those participating in first degrees. This was also echoed by project delivery staff based in HEIs, who frequently reported that the programme had supported learners in accessing higher education who may have never previously engaged with higher education.

‘What we have noticed is that the degree apprenticeship offer has widened access to HE, particularly from those from lower IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) groups, so it’s bringing young white males into [an] HE environment, and some of them have said [that they] would never have dreamt [that they] would have done a degree had it not been for degree apprenticeships. They are the first in their family. That particular cohort we’re really proud of. The programme has really worked for them.’ **(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

6.75 More generally, however, promoting equal opportunities is one of the areas in which the programme has faced challenges in realising its ambitions.

6.76 There were lower participation rates for female participants and for participants from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds among degree apprenticeship entrants in comparison to the level of students enrolling in first degrees in Wales, as set out in section 4. This in part seems to have been influenced by the programmes selected for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. For example, the rates of female participants are broadly aligned with the proportion of female students enrolled in first degree courses for engineering & technology or computing courses.

⁵¹ [A More Equal Wales – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#)

6.77 In interviews when discussing widening participation, the majority of delivery staff reported that they had been limited in the extent to which they had been able to improve the gender balance, partly because recruitment predominantly comes through employers; therefore, low gender diversity aligns with existing patterns within employment settings. Additionally, many staff members reported concerns that the dominance of male participants in engineering and digital was in part entrenched much earlier than they could influence; for example, several participants discussed how the issue of male dominance in STEM subjects becomes engrained during school education. There was, however, evidence of good practice being delivered by HEIs to improve participation from female participants, e.g. the delivery of [Technocamps](#) to inspire an interest in digital technology at Swansea University.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language

6.78 As set out in the previous section, the programme aspired to offer opportunities in the Welsh language; however, there has been limited provision that has sought to promote the Welsh language and, to date, provision delivered in the Welsh language has been limited, partly influenced by a lack of demand from apprentices. That being said, there are increasing numbers of Welsh speakers in the programme, with over 35 per cent (110/310) describing themselves as Welsh speakers amongst the 2020/21 intake.

Collaborative working

6.79 The Degree Apprenticeship Programme has sought to increase the rates of collaborative working across HEIs, FE colleges, and work-based learning providers to best meet the needs of employers. Reflecting on the findings from the research, there is a sense, as outlined previously in this section, that there has been some progress in collaboration; however, this has primarily built on pre-existing relationships between educational establishments, with new instances of collaborative activity being less common and, typically, less embedded in operational practice as part of the programme.

Areas for improvement

6.80 All interviewees were asked for their views on potential improvements to the delivery model of degree apprenticeships. Consistent themes have been identified and summarised below.

Workload

- 6.81 One of the key challenges associated with the Degree Apprenticeship Programme related to difficulties surrounding balancing work, study, and home life for apprentices. This challenge was reported by two thirds of degree apprentices (131/195), 43 per cent of employers alongside management and delivery staff within HEIs, and wider stakeholders.
- 6.82 Consistent with this challenge, degree apprentices commonly reported that they needed more time or a slower pace within the course. This included more time with which to complete assignments. This was reported by 23 per cent (11/47) of degree apprentices who participated in the telephone surveys.

Alignment of course with work

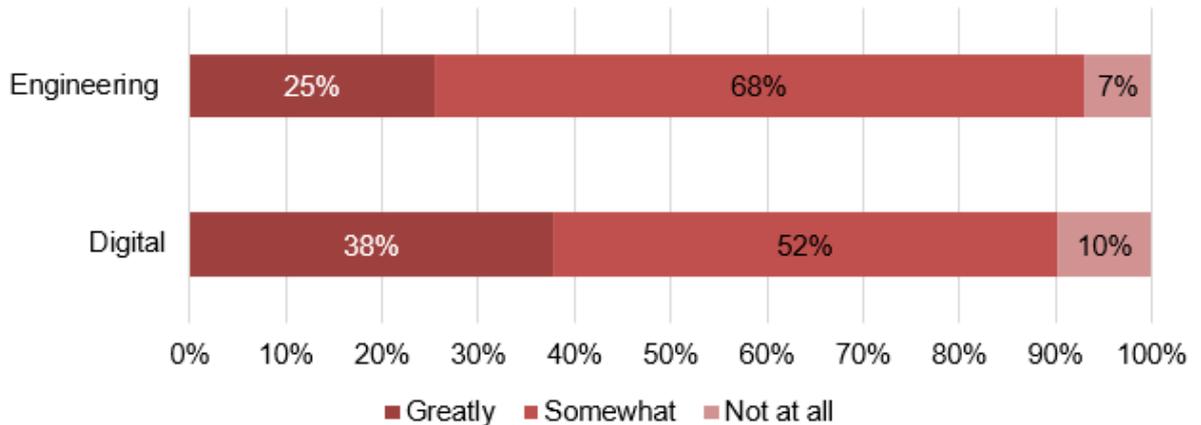
- 6.83 Degree apprentices (36 per cent; 17/47) also reported wanting to see more content relevant to their job or industry. They wanted use of more “real-life examples” that applied theoretical learning to their context. This sometimes reflected a potential missed opportunity in tying together the academic elements of the programme with the work-based elements of the programme. As these were responses from apprentices, it was unclear as to the extent to which this was influenced by factors that may be outside of the HEIs’ control, like professional accreditation requirements or the degree apprenticeship frameworks.

[Regarding] the work-based assignments, it felt more like they had to fit the workplace and academia than with the workplace itself. You had to sort of make it fit. For quite a long time I came across assignments where I had to try and make things up from what I’m doing in work, where it might have been easier to have a discussion with the employer and say these are the kind of things we’d like to do and have it done in collaboration so that it’s actually useful.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Survey)**

- 6.84 Similarly, several employers (nine per cent; 7/76) reported that they wanted to have more input on their course, or the course made more relevant to their setting.
- 6.85 Related to this, 33 per cent (64/193) of degree apprentices who participated in the online survey reported that the degree apprenticeship aligns with their existing job role “greatly”. Meanwhile, 58 per cent (112/193) of degree apprentices stated it

aligns “somewhat”, and nine per cent (17/193) reported that it does “not at all” align, with the breakdown by framework being presented in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Perceived extent of alignment of degree apprenticeship to job role by framework



Note: n=122 (digital) and n=71 (engineering)
Source: Online survey

6.86 Employers were mostly positive about the degree apprenticeship provision. Eighty-four per cent (66/78) of employers who participated in the employer telephone survey reported that the courses had matched their expectations “to a great extent”. Additionally, 78 per cent (62/79) of employers reported that the courses align with the types of services/activities that their organisation currently undertakes “to a great extent”, and 77 per cent (61/79) agreed that the courses align with the types of activities and services that they would like to undertake in the future “to a great extent”. The extent of the mismatch between employer and apprentice feedback on course alignment is worth exploring further and may reflect varying degrees of familiarity with the specific nature of work being undertaken through the apprenticeship or differing expectations.

Administration of the course

6.87 A further area for improvement amongst apprentices related to the administration of the programme. This included issues surrounding timely communication regarding when university holidays would fall, what modules the degree apprentice would be taking that year, inconsistency in the recording of lectures, and notifying apprentices of start dates. Issues of this nature were discussed in 26 per cent (12/47 respondents to the degree apprentice telephone survey) of degree apprentice interviews.

6.88 Similarly, employers frequently reported that they would like to see increased communication from the university or more feedback on employee progress. This was suggested as an improvement to the programme by 14 per cent (11/76) of employers who participated in the telephone surveys.

‘I would like to see the results along the way of the students and see what assignments they are having and more feedback from the university on their progress.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

Employer influence over course content

6.89 Whilst most employers reported that they had been able to influence the content of the course, 39 per cent (29/74) of employers reported that they had not been able to influence the course content. However, some employers reported that it was unnecessary to influence course content because it currently reflected their needs. That being said, 19 per cent (14/74) of employers reported that they had not been given opportunities to input, and some employers reported that the HEIs were “not flexible”.

‘The course is the course — it covers certain subjects and those cover the framework of the degree. We were told what the content was and had no opportunity to input into that.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.90 These comments were sometimes tempered with an acknowledgement that the courses could not necessarily be “flexible to the needs of every employer”. This “balancing act” was also reported by management and delivery staff within HEIs. Indeed, staff from two HEIs reported that they had experienced some challenges in responding to competing priorities from employers and ensuring that courses could align with other essential requirements.

‘We work with [companies] to look at their needs and where we can tailor our programme. We visit the companies regularly and talk to mentors. [The] college does a lot of that as well [...] We’re open to suggestions but, ultimately, our course has to be aligned with the assessments and QA processes within the universities. In addition to that, we have the BCS accreditation to consider. If we were to suspend one module in favour of another module, every [criterion] that

module was providing, we'd have to ensure that it was still covered.'

(Management and Delivery Staff, Stakeholder Interviewee)

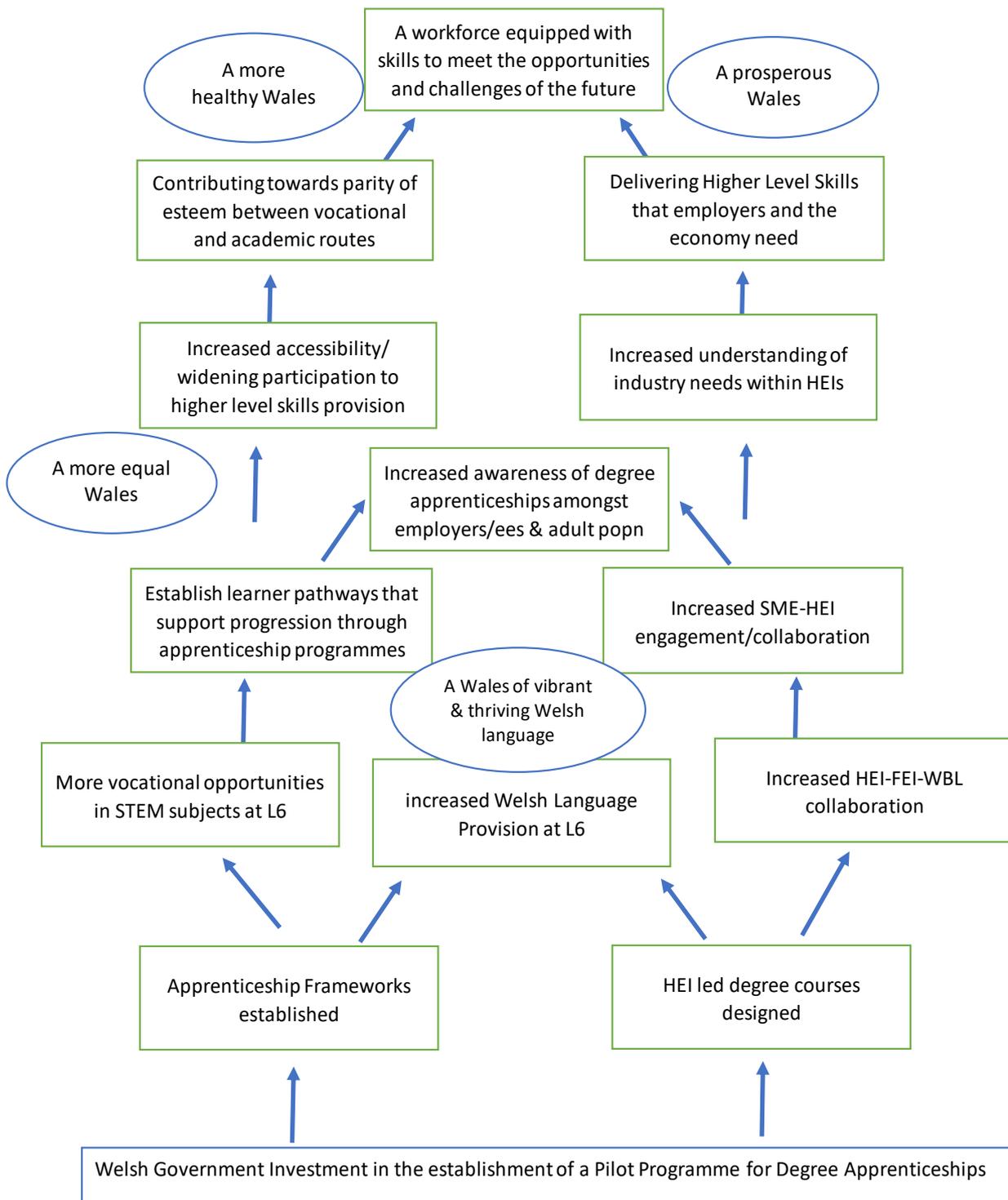
- 6.91 Some employers (19/74) did, however, report that the universities had been “flexible”, “supportive”, and had engaged them in dialogue regarding their needs and explained openly when they had been unable to deliver against these. However, the number of employers reporting that they do not have the opportunity to input may suggest that greater effort needs to be made to ensure that all employers feel as though they have adequate opportunities to feed into the programme. Those who felt that they had fewer opportunities for input typically reported that they had less frequent meetings with colleges/universities in comparison to those employers who felt that they had opportunities to input.

Benefits and impacts arising from degree apprenticeship

Benefits and impacts for degree apprentices

- 6.92 In considering the benefits, outcomes and impacts arising from the degree apprenticeships, it is worth reflecting on the outcome pathway designed as part of the theory of change for the scoping phase of the evaluation (Figure 6.2 below).

Figure 6.2: An outcome pathway for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme



6.93 The majority of degree apprentices were positive about the programme and their opportunity to participate in it. Indeed, 96 per cent (187/195) of degree apprentices who participated in the online survey reported that they would recommend the scheme to others. Of these, 32 per cent (60/187) reported that they had already done so.

‘I do think it is a really good scheme. I know people on it who have come straight out of school [...] can you imagine the careers they are going to have, being 21 and having three years of experience in the field?! But for people like me, I am 31, and it is such a good way of doing a really quick career change without having to dip into your savings. It’s great — it’s a really, really good scheme and I hope they are going to make more.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Survey)**

‘Very grateful for the opportunity to do a degree apprenticeship. Without the funding I would never have even thought about doing a degree-equivalent course.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Survey)**

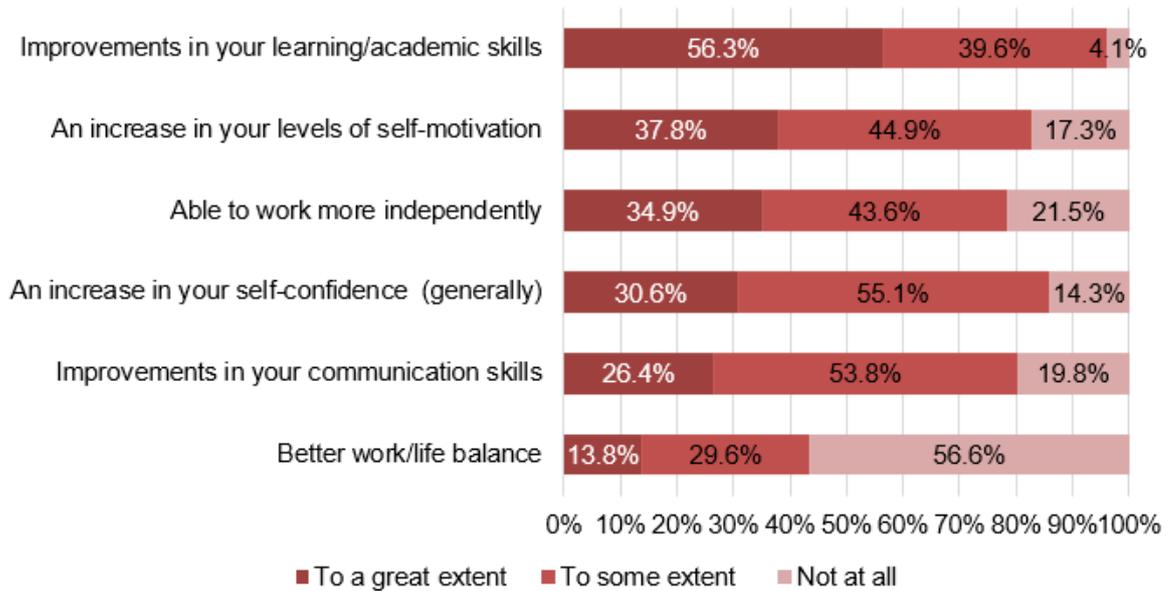
6.94 A small number of degree apprentices (four per cent; 8/195) reported that they would not recommend the course. These degree apprentices cited issues regarding course delivery and the impact on the work–life balance as reasons as to why they would not recommend the course.

6.95 Most degree apprentices believed that participation in the programme has positively impacted on their skills. Indeed, 96 per cent (189/197) of degree apprentices reported that participating in the programme had led to improvements in their learning or academic skills, and 80 per cent (158/197) reported that participating had led to an improvement in their communication skills.

6.96 Degree apprentices also reported increases in their self-confidence (86 per cent; 168/196) and self-motivation (83 per cent; 162/196) and that they were able to work more independently (78 per cent; 153/196). When analysed by framework, there were minimal variations in these responses. Whilst not an outcome of the programme, degree apprentices were also asked at this point about the role of the degree apprenticeship in contributing to their work–life balance (reflecting on the perceived challenges for participants reported by stakeholders within the scoping evaluation). As expected, participating in the programme did not appear to be

contributing to a better work–life balance for the majority of degree apprentices (57 per cent; 111/196).

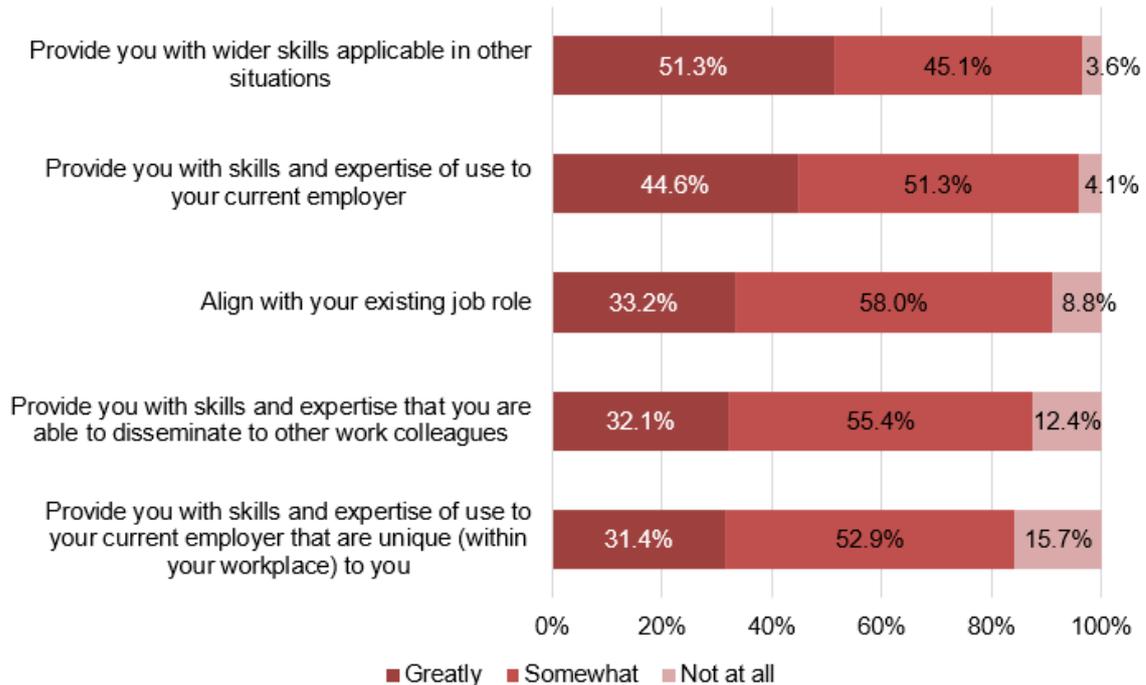
Figure 6.3: To what extent has participating in the degree apprenticeship led to ...?



Note: n=197

6.97 The Degree Apprenticeship Programme is also contributing to more general upskilling. For example, 96 per cent (186/193) of degree apprentices reported that the degree had provided them with wider skills applicable in other situations, and 96 per cent (187/195) reported that the course had provided them with skills and expertise of use to their current employer, with little difference when analysed by framework (see Figure 6.4 below).

Figure 6.4: To what extent does the degree apprenticeship ...?



Note: n=195

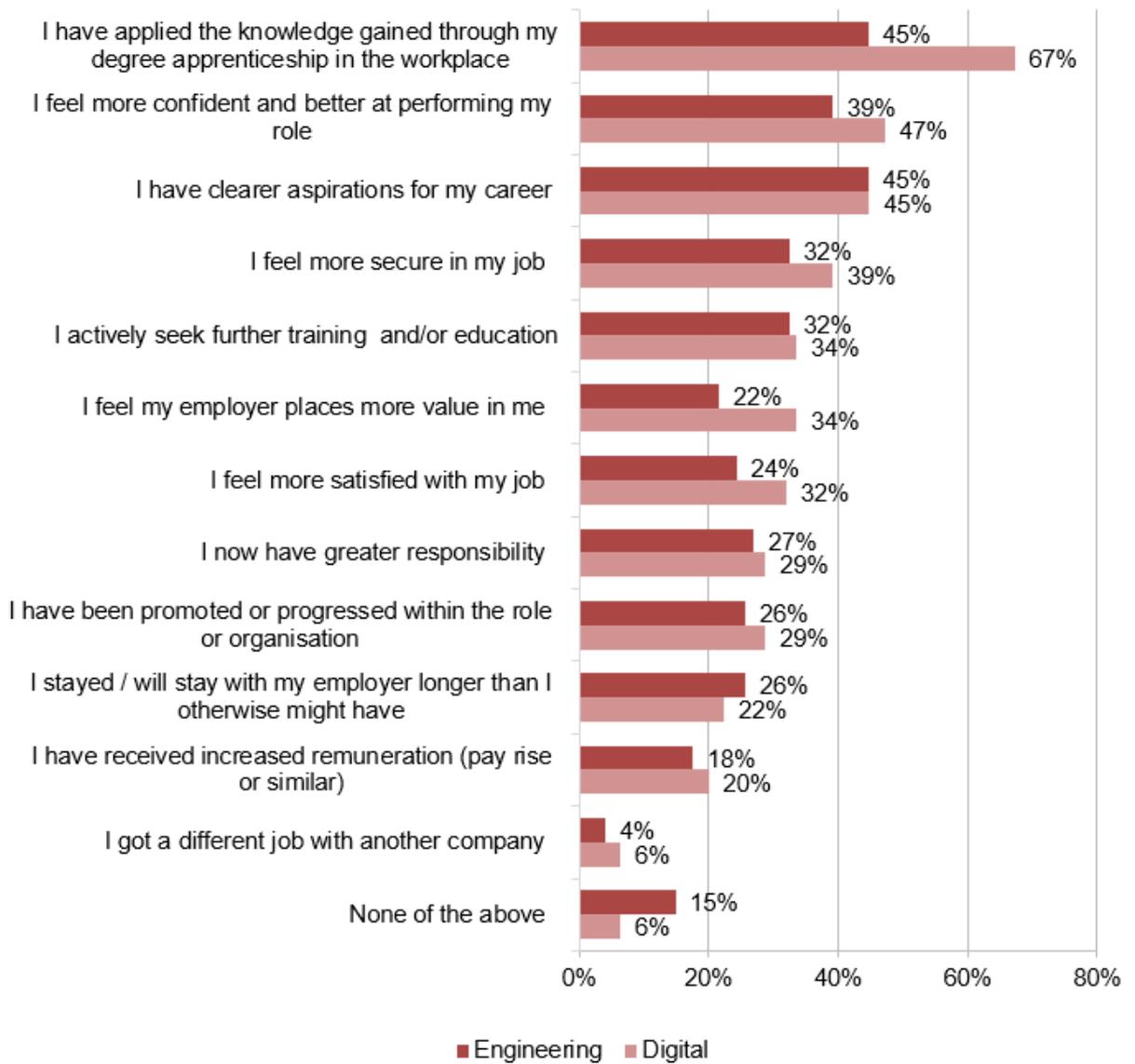
‘I think it is just really positive — being given a platform to upskill — and it has given me a lot of confidence to branch out into roles I probably wouldn’t have looked at before.’ **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

- 6.98 In terms of outcomes for apprentices, a large proportion of degree apprentices (46 per cent; 89/195) reported that they have clearer aspirations for their career, and 37 per cent (73/195) reported that they feel more secure in their job (Figure 6.5 below).
- 6.99 In some cases, participation in the programme appears to have brought about hard outcomes for degree apprentices. For example, 28 per cent (55/195) of degree apprentices reported that they had been promoted, and 29 per cent (56/195) reported that their responsibilities had increased. However, only 19 per cent (38/195) of apprentices reported that their remuneration had increased, although this rises to 30 per cent (11/37) for those enrolled in the programme prior to 2019, which likely reflects the fact that remuneration is a longer-term outcome indicator.
- 6.100 The programme has also brought about softer impacts. For example, 45 per cent (88/195) of degree apprentices reported that they feel more confident about and better at performing their role.

'It has been brilliant, to be honest. I have gained knowledge that I never would have gained, and have learned how to code, which is amazing for a dyslexic person — I have been able to do it successfully and get a first! I have learned skills that I never would have known I could do in the past and it has given me the confidence to know that I could do things.' **(Degree Apprentice, Telephone Interviews)**

- 6.101 The impacts reported by degree apprentices also suggest that the Degree Apprenticeship Programme could be supporting employer retention. For example, 30 per cent (58/195) of degree apprentices reported that they had increased job satisfaction, 30 per cent (58/195) reported that they feel more valued, and 24 per cent (47/195) reported that they have stayed or will stay with their employer longer than they otherwise might have.
- 6.102 The breakdown in responses by framework is presented in Figure 6.5 overleaf. The difference in the proportion able to apply the knowledge gained in the workplace may in part relate to the fact that 23 per cent of respondents in the digital framework enrolled in 2018 (and, therefore, have had more opportunity to apply that knowledge) in comparison to 11 per cent of respondents in the engineering and manufacturing framework.

Figure 6.5: How (if at all) has participation in the degree apprenticeship impacted on your role in the workplace? Tick all that apply



Note: n=74 (engineering) and n=125 (digital)

6.103 To provide further insight into the net additional impact arising from the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, participants were asked what they would have done in the absence of a degree apprenticeship. Table 6.2 illustrates that in the absence of the programme, more than one third of apprentices (and 41 per cent of those in the digital framework) would not have opted for any other qualifications or training, whilst less than one quarter would have opted to study a traditional degree at university.

Table 6.2: Which of the following statements would best capture your situation if you had not had the opportunity to study for a degree apprenticeship?⁵²

I would not have opted to do any kind of qualifications or training	71	36%
I would probably have opted to look at other non-university forms of training schemes	62	31%
I would probably have opted to study for a traditional degree at university	45	23%
I would probably have opted to get qualifications through a further education college	21	11%
I would probably have opted to do another kind of apprenticeship	20	10%
I would have been in a different situation	18	9%

Note: n=199

Benefits and impacts for employers

6.104 The majority of employers were very positive about the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. When asked for final comments, 72 per cent of employers (53/74) spontaneously reported praise for the programme. These comments frequently described the programme as a “win-win” for employers, apprentices and Wales. This exact term was used by 10 employers in their interviews.

‘For the apprentice it gives them a wonderful life experience they would not normally get from just going to university. They actually see what the actual roles are like, learning on the job but also gaining a degree. It works well for them and us. And just win-win really.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

‘It is absolutely stunning, one of the best things that has been implemented to help the industry in the last 10 years. It is making a massive difference to our business and the industry.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

‘Win-win for employee, employer, business, Wales.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.105 Eighty-seven per cent (66/76) of employers reported that staff participation in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme had helped to address skills gaps in the workplace either “to a great extent” (58 per cent; 44/76) or “to some extent” (29 per cent; 22/76). Additionally, 45 per cent of employers (34/75) reported that

⁵² Multiple choices were possible, hence the percentage totalling in excess of 100.

participating was helping to increase the rate of staff retention among degree apprentices, whilst 43 per cent of employers (32/75) stated it was too soon to say.

‘The degree apprenticeship has allowed us to back-fill at a lower level and move people through the business — it is creating a solid pipeline for a stable workforce in the future.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.106 A high proportion of employers (66 per cent; 50/76) also reported that participation in the programme was increasing the rates of productivity amongst degree apprentices. Several employers also reported that employees’ participation in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme was helping to bring up-to-date knowledge into the organisation. This was reported by 11 per cent (8/72) of employers in response to an open-ended question about the benefits of the programme.

‘Cutting-edge, up-to-the-minute skills [are] transferred into the workplace too, and working and learning on the job obviously filters through.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

6.107 There is a strong appetite amongst employers to continue the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. The majority of employers (80 per cent; 61/76) reported that they anticipate enrolling additional staff in degree apprenticeships, and most employers (75 per cent; 56/75) were keen to see the range of degree apprenticeships expanded.

‘These programmes are critical to our business and many other companies due to the lack of skills in this area, and being able to give these opportunities to grow and develop people has been a win-win all round.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

‘It’s a wonderful opportunity to give to employees and we would like to continue to support people, especially local people, with employment and their personal development progression. And all we need is just a little more feedback and updates.’ **(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)**

7. The Future Development of Degree Apprenticeships

Section Summary

- HEIs and employers expressed a desire for an increase in the range of degree apprenticeships available as well as an expansion in degree apprenticeships to Level 7.
- Stakeholders are concerned that a failure to expand the degree apprenticeship offer in Wales will lead to increasing numbers of employers sending their employees to England to access that provision.
- Any expansion of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme requires additional funding. If additional public sector funding is unavailable to facilitate this expansion, this will likely need to be drawn from either additional contributions from employers or from the employees participating in a degree apprenticeship.

7.1 This section considers the future of degree apprenticeships, the extent of the interest in and demand for their expansion, and options regarding how the programme might be sustainably funded.

CTER

7.2 The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill was introduced into the Senedd in autumn 2021. The Bill establishes CTER, a new Welsh Government–sponsored body, and dissolves HEFCW. The intention is to establish CTER in 2023 with responsibilities for strategy, funding and oversight regarding the following sectors:

- Further education, including colleges and school sixth forms
- Higher education, including research and innovation
- Adult education and adult community learning
- Apprenticeships and training.⁵³

⁵³ Welsh Government (2021) Commission for Tertiary Education and Research – A Summary of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, Welsh Government.

- 7.3 The Bill is currently being passed through the Senedd. Degree apprenticeships will fall within the Commission's remit, with funding for the programme, if modelled consistently with the approach applied currently, being awarded as a grant to the Commission for distribution to HEIs.
- 7.4 The [Stage 1 scrutiny report](#) of the Bill, which focused on the Bill's general principles, was published in March 2022. In relation to degree apprenticeships, the report identified how a number of stakeholders had called for clarity surrounding quality assurance arrangements for degree apprenticeships.⁵⁴ Estyn believed that if responsibilities in relation to quality assurance were more clearly defined, it would 'provide an integrated and joined-up approach to the quality assurance and improving quality of all work-based learning apprenticeship provision at whatever the level'.⁵⁵ As part of the opportunity to clarify opportunities for a more joined-up approach, Estyn reported that they 'could collaborate with the expertise of a body such as QAA in reviewing the higher education content of the degree apprenticeships programmes, combining with Estyn's experience of inspecting higher apprenticeships, particularly in the workplace'.⁵⁶ The National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) stated that degree apprenticeships should come under the same quality assurance mechanisms as other levels of apprenticeships, believing that this would make it a 'much more collaborative' approach.⁵⁷

Process to identify future programme priorities

- 7.5 There is widespread desire for an expansion in the range of degree apprenticeships offered in Wales across employers, HEIs and FE colleges, and wider stakeholders. Amongst employers, three quarters described a desire for the expansion of degree apprenticeships (rising to 85 per cent of employers associated with the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework).
- 7.6 Amongst HEIs and employers there were aspirations for not only an expansion in the nature of topics and sectors in which degree apprenticeships would be available, but also an increase in the level at which provision is available to Level 7 (master's equivalent).

⁵⁴ [Written evidence, TER 16, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, paragraph 26. 2021.](#)

⁵⁵ [Written evidence, TER 11 Estyn. 2021](#)

⁵⁶ [Welsh Parliament. 2021. Children, Young People and Education Committee. Paragraph 367.](#)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* – paragraph 102.

- 7.7 In 2021, HEFCW requested views from HEIs, based on employer demand, for areas for framework expansion. The views echoed feedback obtained through the evaluation in relation to both an increase in the diversity of sectors and the introduction of provision to Level 7. As a process of engagement, obtaining HEI perspectives would appear to be a sound approach to take; however, it is unclear as to the extent to which FE colleges and work-based learning providers were engaged by HEIs as part of that review. Moreover, it is understood that Regional Skills Partnerships would set out any priorities for degree apprenticeships within their regional employment and skill plans.
- 7.8 There are concerns amongst stakeholders that failure to expand the degree apprenticeship offer will lead to increasing numbers of employers sending their employees to England to access provision there (with the inherent risk that they may not return). Furthermore, degree apprenticeship courses are now being made available to search for in the UCAS database. Whilst this will provide a considerable boost in the opportunities available to those looking to study at university, it will illustrate the extent of disparity in the range of degree apprenticeships on offer in England in comparison to those offered in Wales.
- 7.9 There is also a need to consider the inherent gender bias that currently exists, with provision being limited to the current approved sectors for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme. When exploring options regarding the expansion of the programme, the gender profile of the workforce in the proposed sectors of expansion should be reflected upon. Some of the sectors being put forward for expansion (e.g. construction and compound semiconductors) are at risk of exacerbating this bias. Therefore, whilst a consistent rationale of skill needs and skill shortages in growth sectors should be maintained, which also reflects on the theory of change and the associated outcome pathway for the programme (see Figure 6.2), the gender profile of those sectors needs to be factored into the consideration of that expansion.
- 7.10 The evidence presented within this report also illustrates several interlinking factors that have been influential in the progress of the programme to date. These need to be considered as part of any future expansion or rollout and relate to:
- The time-bound nature of the programme and the associated use of the term “pilot” or “initial phase”. This has been perceived by some stakeholders

(including employers and HEI and FE college representatives) with a lack of long-term commitment (and potentially funding) from the Welsh Government to degree apprenticeships and has created some reluctance (amongst HEIs and employers) to invest resources in the programme.

- Annualised funding announcements which have limited the ability of those seeking to engage employers and enrol employees as degree apprentices to gain such commitment without a guarantee of funds to confirm the go-ahead of the programme.
- The timing of annualised funding announcements (typically between January and June each year) provided limited opportunity for HEIs and FE colleges seeking to enrol for a September start, to engage with new employers, or, in partnership with employers, to build a recruitment exercise around.
- The timings also limiting the ability to gain any traction with schools and FE colleges (as students would likely have left by that point or would have already determined their next destination). This is compounded by the lack of a national promotional campaign for degree apprenticeships, which would likely boost awareness amongst school leavers of the degree apprenticeship route as an option to explore.

Options for a sustainable funding model for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme

7.11 When considering how the expansion of degree apprenticeships may be funded, it is useful to consider the financial scale of the programme to date. The 2018–2021 programme secured £20m of funding over three years:

- 2018/19 – £3m
- 2019/20 – £5m
- 2020/21 – £12m.

In June 2021 the Welsh Government made a further commitment to supporting the programme for an additional year. The 2021/22 annual extension to the Degree Apprenticeship Programme secured a further £9.5m.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ [HEFCW. 2021. Degree Apprenticeships in Wales and Proposals for Funding 2021/22.](#)

- 7.12 There are several key issues relating to the potential expansion of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in Wales. The existing programme is yet to meet the allocated numbers of degree apprentices and for the digital framework (by 2020/21) was almost 50 per cent short of the allotted figures (which may have been influential in the financial reduction in the programme allocation for 2021/22). This inability to generate the expected demand for provision may lead to the programme's expansion being called into question. The lack of central promotion or confirmed sustained investment (beyond annual funding announcements), the perception of the programme as a pilot, and the timing of funding announcements have collectively impacted on the ability to generate demand for the programme. However, the inability to reach the allocated numbers of degree apprentices within the existing sectors perhaps provides the rationale, if funding levels similar to that secured in 2020/21 can be sustained, behind diversifying provision to meet those numbers.
- 7.13 There are also concerns regarding the cost of degree apprenticeships (up to £9,000 per person per annum up to a maximum of £27,000) relative to apprenticeship fees for qualifications at a lower level, with the Senedd inquiry recommending the utilisation of a consistent costing model for all apprenticeship provision.⁵⁹ There is an associated desire to better understand the relative return, the added value and the additional impact of degree apprenticeships relative to other apprenticeships to better understand if this cost represents value for money. A Technical Paper developed alongside this report outlines a potential model for understanding the return; however, its use relies on data that are not available for several years.
- 7.14 Funding for degree apprenticeships benefits from contributions from employers via the apprenticeship levy (which equates to 0.5 per cent of an employer's annual wage bill where this exceeds £3m). In Wales, however, that funding contribution is initially paid to the UK Government and then integrated within the block grant to the Welsh Government, with adjustments to the value of the block grant being determined through the use of the Barnett formula. This makes it challenging for an employer to easily link levy contributions to the apprenticeship funding budget in Wales and to understand the scale of funding generated for Wales through the

⁵⁹ Senedd Cymru (2020) Degree Apprenticeships, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, Senedd Cymru.

apprenticeship levy and, in particular, the relative restrictions regarding the range of degree apprenticeships available in comparison to England.

- 7.15 When considering expansion of the programme in the context of the existing funding envelope, it is also worth noting that Level 7 provision (which requires 120 learning credits for each Level 7 (master's degree) awarded) is, if funded at similar rates to those of Level 6 provision, much less a demand on resources than is a degree apprenticeship (which requires 360 learning credits). Were Level 7 apprenticeships to be allocated comparative levels of funding to those at Level 6, it would be possible to deliver three Level 7 apprenticeships for every Level 6 apprenticeship (dependent on the levels of demand and the level at which a degree apprentice enrolls in the programme).
- 7.16 A further consideration within the existing funding envelope is the nature of degree apprenticeships into which the programme may expand. Course provision in the digital and the engineering and advanced manufacturing sectors in particular is typically some of the more expensive provision to deliver (primarily due to the nature of equipment associated with these courses).⁶⁰ There may therefore be scope to consider exploring the true cost of delivery with HEIs of the existing provision alongside the potential sectors of expansion in which skill shortages exist in order to better understand the potential scope of expansion possible within the existing funding envelope.
- 7.17 Were it necessary to consider securing funding from other sources (either to sustain funding allocations at the current levels or to aid the programme's expansion), there are several options available, all with associated challenges.

Employer contributions

- 7.18 As outlined by Bravenboer (2019), the current version of the UK tuition fee system followed the Browne Report (2010), wherein the key rationale behind increasing student tuition fees was that because students are the main beneficiaries of higher education (through higher income), it is fair that they pay for it. In the original proposals, Browne contrasted the needs of students with those of employers in the new higher fee system. With degree apprenticeships, however, there is a dual

⁶⁰ Department for Education (2019) - Understanding costs of undergraduate provision in Higher Education – Costing study report.

responsibility to both employers and apprentices/students, given that both groups benefit from the intervention. This is illustrated by the fact (as outlined in section 6) that 87 per cent of surveyed employers reported that staff participation in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme had helped to address skills gaps in the workplace, whilst two thirds of employers reported increasing rates of productivity amongst degree apprentices.

- 7.19 In England, employers who do not pay the levy are required to pay 10 per cent of the tuition fees. The application of this approach in Wales would therefore lead to consistency in the funding model for the programme. However, only a minority of employers engaged in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme are SMEs; therefore, the influence on the overarching budget is likely to be marginal. Furthermore, the introduction of the fully funded Personal Learning Accounts programme (and the employer-led strand within the programme), the adjustment to existing European Social Fund (ESF) workforce development provision in Wales so that a private sector match is no longer necessary, and the fact that all other apprenticeships are fully funded mean that any request for financial contributions from employers could lessen the popularity of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme.

‘The challenge is apprenticeships across the board are fully funded. If there is one that isn’t, it will be less popular. There is also PLA and ESF funding, [which] we can access to avoid [employers] having to pay anything. Therefore, it would stand out as being a barrier.’

(Stakeholder, FE College)

- 7.20 Furthermore, when asked if there were any barriers that might have limited the extent to which employers have sustained their involvement in the Degree Apprenticeship Programme, issues associated with costs and funding were most commonly mentioned (32/75) by employers as a key barrier to ongoing engagement.

‘Being fully funded, we can give a few more apprentices this opportunity that they would probably not be able to have. We are also upskilling staff and filling skills shortages. If this opportunity was not available, then we would have to look at the numbers we could put forward. Like now, [we] look at each on a case-by-case basis.’

(Employer, Employer Telephone Survey)

7.21 One stakeholder involved in the recruitment of employers to the Degree Apprenticeship Programme flagged how enrolment was already challenging relative to PLA, given the flexibility of that offer and the associated ability to deliver short-term, modular provision through the programme that directly responds to skills shortage needs within their organisation.

7.22 However, one stakeholder reported that there may be a rationale behind passing on some cost to employers. As the quote below illustrates, they reported that there are additional benefits from participation in the scheme that accrue only to the apprentice's specific employer.

'I think employers have a responsibility to contribute. Whether that's through salary or the stated amount needed, I think they have a responsibility in some form, and those options should be considered by government with employers. There's a need to remind employers that they will get a degree-qualified employee who has spent three years getting to know the DNA of the business, so there is a hidden benefit to the employer, so they should make some kind of contribution.' **(Wider Stakeholder, Stakeholder Interviewee)**

Employee contribution

7.23 A further alternative would be to consider contributions from degree apprentices to the programme. The survey illustrated that the median average annual salary for apprentices in the programme stands at £30,000–40,000 and that in several of the HEIs the degree apprentices attend the same lectures as those of undergraduate students (who are paying tuition fees to study). There is, therefore, the potential to consider contributions to the degree apprenticeship from individuals (and/or employers) through a form of means testing in which salaries are above a certain threshold. Again, this is not without challenges. Administratively, it could prove to be difficult and costly to deliver and may dissuade potential employed applicants, leading them towards short-term provision or away from upskilling entirely. That being said, it would likely have a minimal impact on those newly recruited by an employer for a role with a degree apprenticeship alongside.

7.24 Another model that may help to facilitate employee contributions would be to consider the inclusion of degree apprenticeships within the student finance system so that apprentices could access loans with which to pay their tuition fees. Inclusion

within that system would provide apprentices with a choice as to whether they wished to secure a loan so as to pay for tuition fees, thereby providing some flexibility in how the fees are paid. In this scenario, employers (particularly non-levy-paying employers) may be encouraged to contribute towards the fees (particularly if they are competing with other employers to recruit new employees to a degree apprenticeship). However, against a backdrop of employer expectations for free provision, there is likely to be a reluctance, amongst some employers, to do so. Gaining a better understanding of the employer returns from degree apprenticeships may provide useful clarity with regard to the role and value of degree apprenticeships in order to provide the narrative with which to justify employer contribution alongside their employees.

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Annexe A: Degree Apprenticeship Provision by HEI and Pathway

Subscript numbers are used to identify where courses are delivered in partnership with an FE college.

HEI	Digital Pathway	Engineering Pathway
Bangor University Delivery Partners: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai ¹ and Coleg Cambria ²	BSc (Hons) Applied Data Science ¹ BSc (Hons) Applied Cyber Security ^{1,2} BSc (Hons) Applied Software Engineering ^{1,2}	BSc (Hons) Applied Mechanical Engineering Systems ¹ BSc (Hons) Electrical/Electronic Engineering Systems ¹
Cardiff University Delivery Partner: Gower College		BEng Integrated Engineering Degree Apprenticeship
Cardiff Metropolitan University	BSc (Hons) Applied Data Science BSc (Hons) Applied Cyber Security BSc (Hons) Applied Software Engineering	
The Open University in Wales	BSc (Hons) Applied Software Engineering	
Swansea University Delivery Partners: Gower College ³ and Coleg Cambria ⁴	BSc (Hons) Applied Software Engineering ³	BEng (Hons) Advanced Manufacturing Engineering ⁴ BEng (Hons) Aeronautical and Manufacturing Engineering ⁴
University of South Wales	BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Science) BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions (Cyber Security)	BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering BSc (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering BSc (Hons) Mechanical Engineering BSc (Hons) Semiconductor Technologies

HEI	Digital Pathway	Engineering Pathway
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	BSc (Hons) Cloud Software Development	BEng (Hons) Advanced Manufacturing Operations
Delivery Partner: Coleg Sir Gâr ⁵	BSc (Hons) Cloud Computing	BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering ⁵
	BSc (Hons) Computing (Software Engineering)	BEng (Hons) Manufacturing Systems Engineering
	BSc (Hons) Computing (Data and Information Systems)	BEng (Hons) Materials Science
	BSc (Hons) Computing (Computer Networks and Cyber Security)	BEng (Hons) Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
		BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering ⁵
		BEng (Hons) Engineering Management
		BSc (Hons) Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (Technical Research and Development)
		BEng (Hons) Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (Safety)
		BEng (Hons) Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (Test and Evaluation)
		BEng (Hons) Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (Manufacturing and Processing)
		BEng (Hons) Ordnance, Munitions and Explosives (Breakdown and Disposal)
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	BSc (Hons) Computing	BEng (Hons) Industrial Engineering Design (Electrical and Electronic) ⁶
Delivery Partners: Grŵp NPTC ⁶ – Neath Port Talbot College and Coleg Powys	BSc (Hons) Cyber Security	BEng (Hons) Industrial Engineering Design (Mechanical) ⁶
		BEng (Hons) Production Engineering
		BEng Low Carbon Energy, Efficiency and Sustainability

Annexe B: Research Tools

Stakeholder Interview (Delivery)

Introduction

1. As an introduction, could you please set out your (and your organisation's) role in relation to the Degree Apprenticeships Programme?

Applying for the Programme

2. What would you describe as the key motivation(s) for your organisation to engage with the Degree Apprenticeships programme?
3. What steps did you take in designing your response/proposal to each funding round?
 - a) How (if at all) did these evolve with each round?
4. How did you determine employer demand for your provision?
 - a) When engaging with employers to determine demand what (if any) challenges did you encounter?
 - b) How were these dealt with?
5. To what extent did the model proposed (and delivered) align to pre-existing HE provision? What adaptations and/or investments (in staff/infrastructure) did you make to enable you to deliver the degree apprenticeship?
6. In engaging with the programme what approaches to collaboration (between HEIs, FE Colleges, WBL providers and employers) were considered?

Collaboration and partnership activity

In what ways (if at all) have you collaborated with other partner organisations to deliver degree apprentices? For example, is the collaboration approach more strategic or more transactional in nature? Are there any formal franchise arrangements in place?

- a) Was the partnership newly established in response to the Degree Apprenticeship opportunity or did it exist prior to the programme?
 - b) How (if at all) have partner roles evolved over time?
 - c) How (if at all) do you anticipate the role of partners (or the organisations you partner with) developing in the future?
 - d) (if your organisation hasn't collaborated with partner organisations to deliver Degree Apprenticeships) Why was this the case?
7. Reflecting on the collaboration(s), how successful do you consider those partnerships to have been?
- a) Why do you say that?

Promotion and Engagement

8. What approaches have you used to promote degree apprenticeships and to engage with employers and/or their representative networks? How successful have these been?
- a) What role (if any) has regional coherence played in influencing your approach to employer engagement?
 - b) How (if at all) have you adapted your approach to employer engagement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
9. Has there been any progression routes to the programme of note?
- a) Which progression routes have been successful?
 - b) Why do you think this the case?
 - c) Approximately what number of apprentices have you secured through this/these route(s)?
10. What approaches are taken with employers following their initial engagement? How are they supported to enrol staff onto the programme?
11. What approaches are used for enrolling apprentices on to the programme?
- a) How (if at all) does the approach differ when enrolling existing employees of an employer and those newly recruited by an employer?
 - b) What types of prior learning do the degree apprentices on your programme typically have?

- c) Following enrolment, how (if at all) are essential skills needs being assessed?
 - i. Where essential skills needs are identified, how are these needs being met?

Delivering Apprenticeships

12. What model of delivery do you adopt on the degree apprenticeship course you are involved in? (for example the timing of enrolment (September/in-year intake) duration of delivery (matching academic terms of year round), structure/hours of delivery, location of delivery (blended learning, or learning on employer premises for example)
- a) What impact has COVID-19 had on this delivery model?
13. How has work based learning been integrated into curriculum design?
- a) More specifically, how have Professional, Statutory and Regulatory requirements (PSBR) been integrated into curriculum design, and to what extent does this influence employer engagement?
 - b) Have there been any tensions between employer requirements and the university approach?
14. What approaches are you using to quality assure the degree apprenticeship courses you are delivering?
- a) What role (if at all) has the apprenticeship framework and the QAA Characteristics Statement played in supporting effective delivery of Degree Apprenticeships?
15. Following enrolment of apprentices on to a Degree Apprenticeship what is the nature of ongoing engagement and support to employers?

What approaches to engagement and support are used with apprentices?

Would you say that sustainable partnerships are being established with employers and/or their representative bodies?

- a) If so, what approaches have proved most effective in establishing these?

16. Reflecting on your ongoing engagement with employers
- a) Have there been any tensions of note (for example between academic criteria and employer requirements)
 - b) How (if at all) have tensions been overcome?
 - c) What support could help overcome these tensions?

Welsh language

17. How are Welsh language skills being promoted and supported through the design and delivery of the programme?

18. More specifically, is any of the provision that you are offering through the programme being delivered in Welsh?

a) Is any of the provision being delivered bilingually?

19. What mechanisms (if any) are in place to identify and act upon opportunities to develop and offer provision through the medium of Welsh

20. In the design and delivery of the programme, how are the ways of working and the objectives of the Well-Being for Future Generations Act being promoted and supported?

Progress

21. To your knowledge, how is the degree apprenticeship programme that you are involved in performing (in terms of employer engagement and apprentice enrolment) against profile?

a) What factors have influenced that performance?

Widening Participation

22. What approaches are being used to widen participation, particularly in terms of participation from:

a) Females?

b) Individuals from ethnic minority communities?

c) Single parents

d) Individuals with other protective characteristics?

23. How successful have these approaches been?

24. What barriers are these groups typically encountering that are limiting their ability to engage with degree apprenticeships?

25. What are the more general barriers that employers/learners are encountering that means they are not engaging with Degree Apprenticeships?

a) Is there anything that could be done to help reduce these barriers?

Reflections

26. Reflecting on the degree apprenticeships programme, how might the delivery model that you adopt be improved?

27. How has the HEI sector supported (e.g. what investments have been made to) the degree apprenticeship programme?

a) In what ways do HEI/FE Colleges feel supported by policy teams within HEFCW and Welsh Government to deliver the degree apprenticeship programme

b) Do you think that the support (from HEIs and Policy leads) for degree apprenticeships sustainable?

28. What would you say are the aspirations within the sector for future development of the degree apprenticeships programme?

a) What barriers exist to meeting those aspirations and how they might be mitigated?

29. What sustainable funding opportunities could be considered going forward?

30. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered?

Stakeholder Interview (Strategic)

Introduction

1. As an introduction, could you please set out your (and your organisation's) role in relation to the Degree Apprenticeships Programme?
2. From your perspective, what do you consider to be the aims/objectives of Degree Apprenticeships?

Implementation

The next set of questions look to capture your perspectives on the success of the implementation and delivery of the Degree Apprenticeships Programme in Wales.

3. Two sectors were prioritised for the programme, Digital and the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector. From your perspective do you consider these the appropriate sectors to have been targeting? (Yes/no)
 - a) (If no) which others should have been priorities and why?
4. Are you familiar with the frameworks developed for the two sectors? (yes/no)
 - a) (If yes) to what extent do you consider the design of these to have responded to the needs and potential needs of the sectors
 - b) To what extent have the frameworks supported effective delivery of the degree apprenticeship programme? Could any improvements been made in their design (and if so, what type of improvements would you recommend?)
5. The degree apprenticeship programme has sought to encourage collaboration between HEIs, FE Colleges and Work Based Learning providers. From your perspective how successful has the programme been in encouraging collaboration?
 - a) Why do you think that?
6. The programme is seeking facilitate the expansion of engagement and partnership working between HEIs, FE Colleges and employers. How successful do you feel this has been?
 - a) What challenges (if any) has the programme, HEIs or FE Colleges faced in building these partnerships
 - b) What models of best practice exist
7. The programme has also sought to facilitate a widening of participation in higher education provision. To your knowledge, how successful do you feel the programme has been in doing this:

8. More widely, to your knowledge, how is the degree apprenticeship programme being promoted?
 - a) How effective has the approach been?
9. What aspirations do you have for the degree apprenticeship programme in Wales over the next few years?
 - a) What changes would you make to the current approach?
 - b) What barriers (if any) are there that may limit the extent to which your aspirations for the programme may be met?
 - i. How (if at all) could they be overcome?
10. What would you measure the performance of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme?
 - a) From your perspective how do you feel the programme has performed so far?
 - i. Why do you say that?
11. What improvements (if any) would you make to the Degree Apprenticeship Programme?
12. What would you consider to be the priorities for the Degree Apprenticeship Programme in the future?
13. What sustainable funding opportunities could be considered going forward?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered?

Degree Apprenticeship Participant Online Survey

Introduction

The Welsh Government has commissioned Wavehill to evaluate its Degree Apprenticeships Programme, in order to understand its success and impact.

As someone who is enrolled on the programme, feedback on your experience and your views of degree apprenticeships will be very important in helping shape the approach to degree apprenticeships in the future. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes and participation is voluntary, but we very much hope you will take part?

SurveyCheck Are you happy to continue with the survey? Please note you can stop completing the questionnaire at any time if you decide you do not want to continue.

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Are you happy to continue with the survey? Please note you can stop completing the questionnaire... = No

SurveyClose Thank you for your time. To exit this survey, you can close this tab in your browser.

Q1 Please note if you would like to conduct the survey in Welsh please use the drop down menu on the top right and select "Cymraeg"

Display This Question:

If StartDate Is Not Empty

Q88 Is it correct that you began your degree apprenticeship on [\\${e://Field/StartDate}](#)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Display This Question:

**If Is it correct that you began your degree apprenticeship on
\${e://Field/StartDate}? = No**

**Or Is it correct that you began your degree apprenticeship on
\${e://Field/StartDate}? = Not sure**

Or If

StartDate Is Empty

Q87 When did you start on your degree apprenticeship?

	Month	Year
(1)	▼ January (1 ... December (12)	▼ 2016 (1 ... 2021 (6)

Display This Question:

If Framework Is Empty

Q92 Which degree framework are you enrolled on?

- Engineering
- Digital

Display This Question:

If Pathway Is Empty

Q89 Which degree pathway are you doing?

- Pathway 1 Mechanical Engineering
- Pathway 2 Electrical / Electronic Engineering
- Pathway 3 Advanced Manufacturing
- Pathway 4 Chemical Engineering
- Pathway 5 Power Engineering
- Pathway 1: Applied Software Engineering
- Pathway 2: Applied Data Science
- Pathway 3: Applied Cyber Security Management

Q90 Are you studying your degree apprenticeship at [\\${e://Field/University}](#)?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Are you studying your degree apprenticeship at \${e://Field/University}? = No

Q91 Which higher education institution are you studying for your degree apprenticeship at?

Q3 Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Apprenticeship?

- In full-time education (school, college, university)
- In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)
- In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)
- Self-employed
- Not in employment, education or training but actively looking for work
- Not in employment, education or training and not actively looking for work
- Other

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = Other

Q3i Please tell us what your situation was:

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3a On average, how many hours a week did you work?

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3b **Before** taking part in your degree apprenticeship, did you change employer to enable you to participate in a Degree Apprenticeship?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3bi Did you enrol onto your Degree Apprenticeship with your **current** employer?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3c At the start of your Degree Apprenticeship for how long had you been with your employer?

- Number of years _____
- Number of months _____

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3d Which of the following would best describe your job role at the start of the Degree Apprenticeship?

- Manager, director or senior official
- Professional occupational role
- Associate professional or technical occupational
- Administrative or secretarial occupational role
- Skilled trades occupational role
- Caring, leisure or other service occupational
- Sales or customer service occupational role
- Process, plant or machine operative
- Unskilled or manual role
- Other/none of the above

Display This Question:

If Which of the following would best describe your job role at the start of the Degree Apprenticeship? = Other/none of the above

Q3di What was your job title at the start of the Degree Apprenticeship?

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or Which of the following best describes your situation immediately before starting your Degree Appr... = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q3e Within which of the following bands does your annual salary fall?

- £0-£10,000
- £10,001-£15,000
- £15,001-£20,000
- £20,001-£25,000
- £25,001-£30,000
- £30,001-£40,000
- £40,001-£50,000
- £50,001-£75,000
- £75,001-£100,000
- Over £100,000
- Prefer not to say

Q4 Prior to the start of your degree apprenticeship what was the highest level of qualification that you held?

Please tick one only

- Entry level (e.g. entry level diploma / ESOL)
- Level 1 (e.g. level 1 NVQ, GCSE's grades (D-G))
- Level 2 (e.g. GCSE grades (A*-C))
- Level 3 (e.g. A level, level 3 NVQ)
- Level 4 (e.g. certificate of higher education, higher apprenticeship)
- Level 5 (e.g. foundation degree)
- Level 6 (e.g. undergraduate degree)
- Level 7 or above (e.g. masters degree, postgraduate certificates, PhDs)

Q4a Have you previously undertaken an apprenticeship?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Have you previously undertaken an apprenticeship? = Yes

Q4ai Did you undertake that apprenticeship with your current employer?

- Yes
- No

Awareness and influence

This section seeks to find out how you become aware and what influenced your decision to enrol on a Degree Apprenticeship

Q5 Where did you first hear about Degree Apprenticeships?

Please tick all that apply

- From a teacher at school/tutor at college
- From a careers advisor
- From your employer
- From a colleague at work
- From a friend or a family member
- From someone currently doing a Degree Apprenticeship
- From a job service or a jobs website
- From a website for students (e.g. university, college)
- Social media
- Elsewhere on the internet
- Other kinds of advertising or marketing materials
- Other

Q6 On hearing about the Degree Apprenticeship, where did you gather the most relevant information that informed your choice to enroll?

- From a school teacher or tutor at college
- From a careers advisor
- From your line manager or a staff member responsible for training/HR
- From another colleague at work
- From a friend or a family member
- From someone currently doing a Degree Apprenticeship
- From a job service or a jobs website e.g. Working Wales
- From a website for students (e.g. university, college, or UCAS)
- Social media
- Elsewhere on the internet
- Other kinds of advertising or marketing materials
- Other

Display This Question:

If On hearing about the Degree Apprenticeship, where did you gather the most relevant information th... = Other

Q6a Please tell us where you gathered the most relevant information that informed your choice to enroll

Q9 Which of these statements best outlines the process you went through when choosing to pursue a Degree Apprenticeship?

- My employer/Line Manager/HR representative convinced me that it would be good fit for me
- Somebody else (other than my employer) convinced me that it would be a good fit for me
- I decided by myself that it would be a good fit for me
- I thought it might be a good fit for me, but somebody else helped me make my decision
- Somebody else suggested it to me, but in the end, I made the decision on my own

Q10 How important were each of the following in shaping your decision to do a Degree Apprenticeship?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Not applicable
To be able to undertake on the job training				
Getting a qualification through a recognised university				
Having contact with academic staff				
Achieving a professional accreditation in my chosen career				
Getting a salary while simultaneously getting a degree qualification				
Being able to apply new knowledge in my job				
To enhance my career prospects				
The fact that I wouldn't have to pay tuition fees				

Q11 Which of the following statements would best capture your situation if you had **not** had the opportunity to study for a Degree Apprenticeship?

Tick all that apply

- I would probably have opted to study for a traditional degree at university
- I would probably have opted to get qualifications through a further education college
- I would probably have opted to look at other non-university forms of training schemes
- I would probably have opted to do another kind of Apprenticeship
- I **would not** have opted to do any kind of qualifications or training
- I would have been in a different situation

Display This Question:

If Which of the following statements would best capture your situation if you had not had the opport... = I would have been in a different situation

Q11a Please tell us what your situation would have been if you had **not** had the opportunity to study for a Degree Apprenticeship.

Q12 Prior to starting, which of the following statements captures any concerns you may have had about studying for a Degree Apprenticeship?

Tick all that apply

- Degree Apprenticeships are quite new and I did not know what to expect
- I would find it hard to balance working, my home life and studying for a degree at the same time
- Other people might not see a Degree Apprenticeship as a 'real' degree
- I had no real concerns
- I had other concerns not specified above

Display This Question:

If Prior to starting, which of the following statements captures any concerns you may have had about... = I had other concerns not specified above

Q12a Please tell us what other concerns you had

Q13 How did you find the enrolment process for the degree apprenticeship?

- Very straightforward
- Relatively straightforward
- Somewhat complicated
- Very complicated

Display This Question:

**If How did you find the enrolment process for the degree apprenticeship? =
Somewhat complicated**

**Or How did you find the enrolment process for the degree apprenticeship? =
Very complicated**

Q13a Why was the enrolment process complicated?

Welsh provision

Q18 Would you describe yourself as a Welsh speaker?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Would you describe yourself as a Welsh speaker? = Yes

Q19 Was any part of your degree delivered in Welsh?

- Yes all lectures were delivered in Welsh
- Yes some lectures were delivered in Welsh
- Yes all lectures were delivered in English and Welsh (via a translator)
- Yes, some lectures were delivered in English and Welsh (via a translator)
- No, however pastoral and study tutors were offered who would deliver parts of the degree in Welsh
- No
- Other

Display This Question:

If Was any part of your degree delivered in Welsh? = Other

Q19a Please explain what parts of your degree were delivered in Welsh

Display This Question:

If Was any part of your degree delivered in Welsh? = No

Q20 Did you want any/all of your degree to be delivered in Welsh?

- I wanted all of my degree to be delivered in Welsh
- I wanted some of my degree to be delivered in Welsh
- No

Q21 To what extent does your degree provide opportunities for you to undergo Welsh language skills development training?

- To a great extent
- To some extent
- To no extent
- I don't know

Reflections on the Degree Apprenticeship

Q24 To what extent has the Degree Apprenticeship met your expectations?

- To no extent
- To some extent
- To a great extent
- I don't know

Q24a Why do you say that?

Q25 Aside from any challenges that may have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have any of the following arisen as key challenges through your participation in the Degree Apprenticeship program?

Tick all that apply

- Securing support from the HEI/FE College/training provider
- Managing the balance of workload between the degree apprenticeship and your pre-existing in-work demands
- Liaising/connecting with other apprentices on your degree apprenticeship
- Utilising the learning you have gained in your current role
- None of the above

Q25b Were there any other challenges you have faced during your degree apprenticeship? What were these?

Impact of the degree apprenticeship

This section seeks to understand what participating in a degree apprenticeship has led to.

Q26 What is your current situation?

- In full-time education (school, college, university)
- In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)
- In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)
- Other

Display This Question:

If What is your current situation? = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q26a On average, how many hours a week do you work?

Display This Question:

If What is your current situation? = In full-time employment (30+ hours per week)

Or What is your current situation? = In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week)

Q27a Within which of the following bands does your annual salary **currently** fall?

- £0-£10,000
- £10,001-£15,000
- £15,001-£20,000
- £20,001-£25,000
- £25,001-£30,000
- £30,001-£40,000
- £40,001-£50,000
- £50,001-£75,000
- £75,001-£100,000
- Over £100,000

Q28 To what extent has participating in the Degree Apprenticeship led to....?

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all
An increase in your self-confidence (generally)			
Improvements in your communication skills			
Improvements in your learning/academic skills			
An increase in your levels of self-motivation			
Better work/life balance			
Able to work more independently			

Q29 How (if at all) has participation in the degree apprenticeship impacted on your role in the workplace?

Tick all that apply

- I now have greater responsibility
- I feel more confident and better at performing my role
- I have been able to apply the knowledge gained through my degree apprenticeship in the workplace
- I have been promoted or progressed within the role or organisation
- I have received increased remuneration (pay rise or similar)
- I feel more secure in my job
- I feel more satisfied with my job
- I have clearer aspirations for my career
- I stayed / will stay with my employer longer than I otherwise might have
- I got a different job with another company
- I actively seek further training and or education
- I feel my employer places more value in me
- None of the above

Q29a Has the degree apprenticeship impacted on your role in any other ways?

Display This Question:

If How (if at all) has participation in the degree apprenticeship impacted on your role in the workp... = I have received increased remuneration (pay rise or similar)

Q30 Roughly, what percentage increase was this on your original salary (for example a 2% pay rise)

Please answer as a number

Q31 To what extent does the degree apprenticeship....?

	Greatly	Somewhat	Not at all	Don't know
Align with your existing job role				
Provide you with skills and expertise of use to your current employer				
Provide you with skills and expertise that you are able to disseminate to other work colleagues				
Provide you with skills and expertise of use to your current employer that are unique (within your workplace) to you				
Provide you with wider skills applicable in other situations				

Q33 Would you recommend a degree apprenticeship to others?

- Yes I would
- Yes I already have
- No I wouldn't

Q34 Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of the degree apprenticeship course?

Q35 Finally, we are really keen to understand more about your experience of participating in a degree apprenticeship. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up discussion (either by telephone or virtually MS Teams/Zoom etc – whichever is your preference) of around 15 minutes?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Finally, we are really keen to understand more about your experience of participating in a degree... = Yes

Q35a Please provide details of how best to contact you to book in a discussion below:

- Your name _____
- Telephone number _____
- Email address _____

Participant Interviews – Telephone Interview Follow-up Survey

Are you happy to continue with the interview? Please note you can choose to end the interview at any time.

- Yes
- No - end survey

Would you like to conduct the interview in Welsh or English?

If Welsh interviewer - conduct in Welsh (if fluent in Welsh or pass to a Welsh speaking interviewer if available or agree a time as to when a Welsh speaking interview could call them).

- English
- Welsh

Awareness and Engagement

In the online survey you said how you were [situation of respondent] prior to enrolling on the Degree Apprenticeship. Could you tell us a bit more (probe for how long with organization, in that role etc.)

1. What would you describe as the main motivation that led to you enrolling on a degree apprenticeship? (open answer)
2. What other factors led to you starting a degree apprenticeship?
 - a. You mentioned in the survey that [online survey response] influenced your decision to start a degree apprenticeship, could you outline how/in what ways that they influenced you?
 - b. Did you ask anyone for advice before deciding whether or not to undertake a degree apprenticeship? If so, who were they and what advice did they offer?
3. What key concerns did you have about degree apprenticeships prior to enrolling?

The Degree Apprenticeship

(If enrolled post March 2020 – else Q8) How has the degree apprenticeship been structured:

- How many hours a week of lectures/seminars/tutorials do/did you have
- Over how many days
- Approximately what proportion of lectures are delivered virtually?

- Are/were lectures/seminars/tutorials with other students who were undertaking “traditional degrees” or only with those on degree apprenticeships?
- Were this delivered year round or during academic term time only or over a different timeframe?

Now go to q10

(if enrolled before March 2020) Prior to Covid-19 how was your course structured:

- How many hours a week of lectures/seminars/tutorials did you have
 - Over how many days
 - Approximately what proportion of lectures were delivered virtually?
 - Were lectures/seminars/tutorials with other students who were undertaking “traditional degrees” or only with those on degree apprenticeships?
 - Were lectures/seminars/tutorials delivered year round or during academic term time only?
4. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, what adjustments were made to the delivery of the degree? (open answer_____)

(Ask all) The COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in the way the degree apprenticeship can be delivered. What impact has this had on your experience of the apprenticeship?

(open answer)

5. In what ways have you been able to use what you have learnt in your degree apprenticeship in the workplace?
6. In what ways have you been able to use your experience in your workplace in the completion of your degree apprenticeship?
7. You mentioned [participant response] challenges/barriers encountered through participating in the degree apprenticeship? Could we discuss those a bit further to understand the issues you encounter and how (if at all) you were able to overcome them?

In work support

8. Have you received any support from your employer to assist you in fulfilling your degree apprenticeship? (if so) what type if support did they provide?
9. Did/do you receive workplace visits and associated in-work support (from the local FE College or from your University) as part of the degree apprenticeship programme?
- a. How often do you have these and what approach is usually taken in the provision of that support?

b. How useful have you found this support?

Reflections

10. Reflecting on your experience of the degree apprenticeship to date would you suggest any improvements to:

- The academic content of the degree apprenticeship
- The delivery of the degree apprenticeship course
- The in-work support that you receive
- Any other elements of the degree apprenticeship?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of the degree apprenticeship course?

Degree Apprenticeship Employer Telephone Survey

Q1 Are you happy to continue with the survey?

Please note you can stop completing the questionnaire at any time if you decide you do not want to continue.

- Yes
- No

Q2 Would you like to conduct the interview in Welsh or English?

If Welsh interviewer - conduct in Welsh (if fluent in Welsh or pass to a Welsh speaking interviewer if available or agree a time as to when a Welsh speaking interview could call

Q3 We understand that you have employees involved in degree apprenticeships at **[Read out name of university they worked with]** associated with either digital or engineering degree pathways is that correct?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If We understand that you have employees involved in degree apprenticeships at [Read out name of uni... = No

Q3a Can you confirm which university / universities you worked with?

Awareness

Q4 Where did you first hear about Degree Apprenticeships?

Read out - Please tick all that apply

- From a university
- From an FE College
- From a training provider
- Word of mouth (from another employer)
- Word of mouth (from another employee)
- From a friend or family member

- On the internet
- Other

Display This Question:

If Where did you first hear about Degree Apprenticeships? Read out - Please tick all that apply = Other

Q5 How did you first hear about degree apprenticeships?

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "Where did you first hear about Degree Apprenticeships? Read out - Please tick all that apply"

Q6 From which of the following did you then obtain further information? Tick all that apply

- From a university
- From an FE College
- From a training provider
- Word of mouth (from another employer)
- Word of mouth (from another employee)
- From a friend or family member
- On the internet
- Other

Q7 Do you think degree apprenticeships are promoted effectively?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Do you think degree apprenticeships are promoted effectively? = No

Q7a What channels of promotion would you consider to be more effective?

Display This Question:

If Do you think degree apprenticeships are promoted effectively? = Yes

Q7b What worked well in terms of promotion?

Q8 To what extent do you feel the promotional activity provided sufficient information about the offer associated with a degree apprenticeship?

- To a great extent
- To some extent
- To no extent
-

Q9 Why do you say that?

Motivations

Q10 What first prompted you to consider options such as a degree apprenticeship for your staff?

For example, were you facing specific skills needs or demands? Prompt on challenges

Q11 What was it that attracted or motivated you to explore the opportunity of a degree apprenticeship to overcome these challenges?

Q12 Did you consider any alternatives or other training provision?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Did you consider any alternatives or other training provision? = Yes

Q13 Why did you ultimately choose a degree apprenticeship over other forms of training/workforce development?

Q14 As an employer, have you been involved with apprenticeships in the past?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Display This Question:

If As an employer, have you been involved with apprenticeships in the past? = Yes

Q14a At what level and through what routes have you offered apprenticeships?

Q15 How many employees have you put forward for a **degree apprenticeship** in Wales?

Q16 Were employees that you put forward for a degree apprenticeship:

- Existing employees
- Newly recruited employees
- A mixture of both

Display This Question:

If Were employees that you put forward for a degree apprenticeship: = Newly recruited employees

Or Were employees that you put forward for a degree apprenticeship: = A mixture of both

Q17 Did you make any adaptations to your recruitment process to recruit staff for degree apprenticeship roles?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Display This Question:

If Did you make any adaptations to your recruitment process to recruit staff for degree apprenticesh... = Yes

Q18 What were these adaptations?

Q19 Was the university (or universities) involved in the recruitment process?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Display This Question:

**If Was the university (or universities) involved in the recruitment process? =
Yes**

Q19a In what ways?

Display This Question:

**If Was the university (or universities) involved in the recruitment process? =
Yes**

Q19b How helpful did you find their involvement? (why was this the case?)

Q20 In which of the following occupation areas have staff you have put forward for degree apprenticeships been employed?

Tick all that apply

- Manager, director or senior official
- Professional occupational role
- Associate professional or technical occupational
- Administrative or secretarial occupational role
- Skilled trades occupational role
- Caring, leisure or other service occupational
- Sales or customer service occupational role
- Process, plant or machine operative
- Unskilled or manual role
- Other/none of the above

Q21 Would you typically describe the choice to participate in a degree apprenticeship as:

- An employer led decision
- An employee-led decision
- A joint decision

Q22 In terms of the training offered through the degree apprenticeship, which of the following statements would best capture your situation if your employee(s) had not had the opportunity to study for a Degree Apprenticeship?

- We would have supported them to study for a traditional degree at university
- We would have supported them to gain qualifications through a further education college
- We would have supported them to look at other non-university forms of externally delivered training schemes
- We would have support them through the delivery of in house training and development opportunities
- We would have supported them to do another kind of Apprenticeship
- They would not have undertaken any kind of qualifications or training

The Degree Apprenticeship

Q23 From your perspective, how straightforward have you found the enrolment process for a degree apprenticeship for your employee(s)?

- Very straightforward
- Relatively straightforward
- Somewhat complicated
- Very complicated
- Don't know

Display This Question:

If From your perspective, how straightforward have you found the enrolment process for a degree appr... = Somewhat complicated

Or From your perspective, how straightforward have you found the enrolment process for a degree appr... = Very complicated

Q23a What elements of the enrolment process were complicated?

Q24 Did you explore the opportunity of degree apprenticeships with other universities?

- Yes
- No

Q25 What led you/your organisation to choose this/these university(ies) to deliver the degree apprenticeship?

For example they approached us, their reputation, prior relationship etc.

Q26 To what extent does the content of the degree apprenticeship course:

	To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent
Match your expectations?			
Align to the type of services/activities that your organisation undertakes currently?			
Align to the type of services/activities that your organisation would like to undertake in the future?			

Q27 To what extent do you feel you have been able influence the content of the degree apprenticeship course to ensure it is based on the specific needs and demands of your work place?

- To no extent
- To some extent
- To a great extent

Q27a Why do you say this?

Q28 How frequently do you receive updates or have meetings on progress with the college/university delivering the degree apprenticeship?

Q29 How useful do you find these?

- Not at all useful
- Somewhat useful
- Very useful

Q30 What makes you say this?

Q31 What other support do you receive (if any) from those involved in delivering the degree apprenticeships programme to your employee(s)?

Q32 How useful have you found this support? (and why)?

Q33 From your perspective, what are the key challenges that your employee(s) face when undertaking a degree apprenticeship?

Costs

Q34 To date, have you incurred any additional financial costs as a result of employees participating in degree apprenticeships?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Display This Question:

If To date, have you incurred any additional financial costs as a result of employees participating... = Yes

Q35 What were these costs for?

Display This Question:

If To date, have you incurred any additional financial costs as a result of employees participating... = Yes

Q36 Approximately, what was the (level of costs incurred?)

Display This Question:

If To date, have you incurred any additional financial costs as a result of employees participating... = Yes

Q37 Approximately what is that cost per apprentice over a year?

Q38 In what ways (if at all) have you managed to offset the loss of staff resource whilst they are undertaking their academic studies as part of the degree apprenticeship?

Impacts

Q39 From your perspective what impact (if any) has COVID-19 had on:

	No impact	Some impact	Significant impact
The ability of your staff to continue on their degree apprenticeship			
Your ability as an employer/organisation to enable your staff to continue on their degree apprenticeship			
The ability of your staff to balance their degree apprenticeship with their existing workload			
The extent to which you can monitor progress of your employee(s) on their degree apprenticeship			
The value that your staff are gaining from the degree apprenticeship			

Display This Question:

If From your perspective what impact (if any) has COVID-19 had on: [Some impact] (Count) > 0

Or From your perspective what impact (if any) has COVID-19 had on: [Significant impact] (Count) > 0

Q40 In what ways has it impacted on these?

Q41 To what extent have the following benefits emerged as a result of staff participation in a degree apprenticeship?

	To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent	Too soon to say
Increased rates of staff retention – across the organisation				
Increased rates of staff retention – amongst degree apprentices				
Increased rates of productivity – across the organisation				
Increased rates of productivity - amongst degree apprentices				
More embedded culture of work based learning amongst employers				
Skills gaps in the workplace addressed				
Skills shortages in our sector addressed				

Display This Question:

If To what extent have the following benefits emerged as a result of staff participation in a degree... = Increased rates of productivity – across the organisation [To some extent]

Or To what extent have the following benefits emerged as a result of staff participation in a degree... = Increased rates of productivity – across the organisation [To a great extent]

Or To what extent have the following benefits emerged as a result of staff participation in a degree... = Increased rates of productivity - amongst degree apprentices [To some extent]

Or To what extent have the following benefits emerged as a result of staff participation in a degree... = Increased rates of productivity - amongst degree apprentices [To a great extent]

Q42 Has this led to staff securing...?

	No	Yes - some	Yes - all
Remuneration to reflect this improvement			
Internal promotions			

Q43 Has staff participation in degree apprenticeships brought about any other benefits not already mentioned?

Reflections on the Degree Apprenticeship

Q44 Reflecting on your experience of the degree apprenticeship programme, what improvements (if any) would you like to see?

Q45 Would you like to see the range of degree apprenticeships available expanded at all?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Would you like to see the range of degree apprenticeships available expanded at all? = Yes

Q46 In what areas and at what level?

Q47 Would you anticipate enrolling additional staff onto degree apprenticeships?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q48 What (if any) are the barriers to your organisation's future involvement in degree apprenticeships?

Q49 How, if at all, might these be addressed?

Q50 Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of degree apprenticeship?