

Apprenticeships

Delivering business benefits



Ready for take-off

Apprenticeships bring huge opportunities to businesses as well as employees

The ACCA Trailblazer scheme Upskilling the workforce
Education in place Training providers are running with the ball
Climbing high Views from finance apprentices already on the ladder
Government support Chair of Institute of Apprentices backs employers



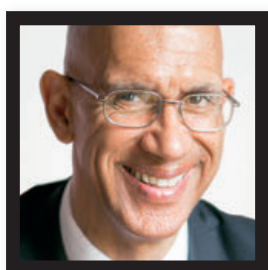
Think Ahead

Attract talent with clear paths for career progression and funded training

Skills shortages are still one of the biggest threats to the UK economy. Apprenticeships offer flexible funded routes to fill your skills gaps.

Register your interest in our
Level 4 apprenticeship today
accaglobal.com/apprenticeships

Think Ahead



Welcome

With government funding readily available, ACCA apprenticeships are a great opportunity for employers

As the UK enters an unprecedented era of change, businesses are seeking ways to remain globally competitive. However, following the financial crisis and having seen skills shortages in the financial sector double over the past few years, accountancy is continuing to report difficulty in attracting suitable staff.

Professional accountants will form the bedrock of reliable financial advice as the UK exits the EU. Securing finance professionals with the right skills will be vital in seizing the opportunities that emerge.

Grow your talent

Want to talk about the ACCA apprenticeship? Email apprenticeships@accaglobal.com and we'll get back in touch with you quickly. For more information, go to bit.ly/ACCA-apprenticeships

We need to widen access to our profession to keep business resilient to change and drive growth. We work hard to ensure our flexible pathways develop professional accountants with the skills that meet future business needs. Our research suggests there has never been a better time to recruit, with 57% of 14-21 year olds wanting to explore alternative higher education routes.

We're advising employers large and small to invest in apprenticeships in order to bridge skills gaps in a way that requires minimal financial investment while delivering workplace-ready individuals. We can advise on drawing down funding and on recruitment processes, and can connect you with high-quality training providers.

We've put together this special guide to help you understand this developing area. I hope you find it useful and that you'll get in touch to explore how apprenticeships could strengthen your business.

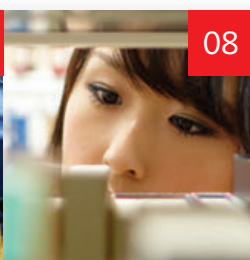
John Williams, head of ACCA UK



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Editors:

Jo Malvern
Bianca Nicholls
Chris Quick

Designers:

Jackie Dollar, Robert Mills

Sub-editor:

Dean Gurdin

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About ACCA

ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) is the global body for professional accountants. It offers business-relevant, first-choice qualifications to people of application, ability and ambition who seek a rewarding career in accountancy, finance and management. ACCA supports its 198,000 members and 486,000 students in 180 countries. accaglobal.com

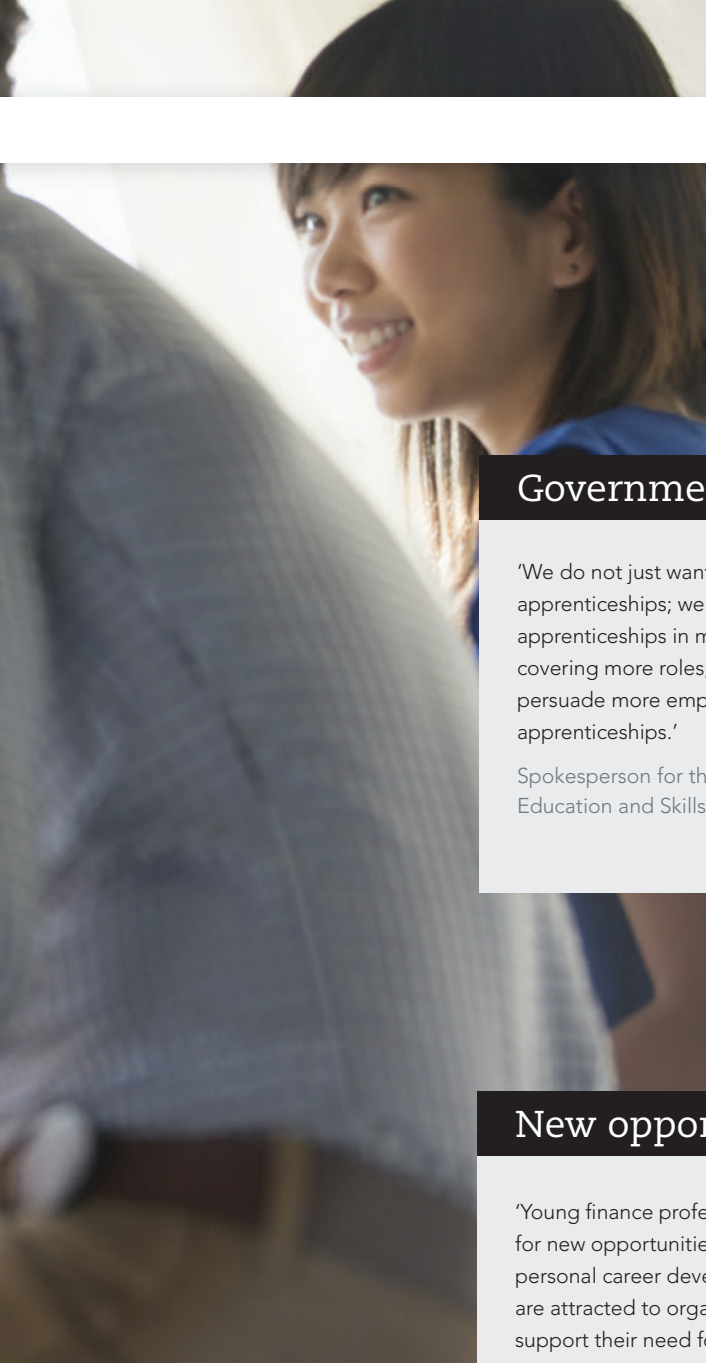


Bridge the gap

Apprenticeships improve the capabilities of new and existing employees – filling the skills gap with motivated staff

The shortage of highly skilled workers is a common business complaint. Evidenced by the Confederation of British Industry and Pearson, three-quarters of businesses are looking to increase the number of highly skilled jobs but 61% feared they wouldn't be able to fill those roles.

Successive UK governments have backed apprenticeships as an important part of the solution. However, numerous shifts in policy have caused frustration and confusion. We view the



diverse mix of school leavers, graduates and staff.

We understand some employers are still hesitating. There is confusion about the working practicalities of apprenticeships and we are here to help. Alex Falcon-Huerta, FCCA, CEO and founder of Soaring Falcon Accountancy says: 'I'm a small entity, and it is

really important for me to bring in the right staff. One of the routes was to take on an apprentice through ACCA. The cost to my business has been zero and that was key, I am a new business and the cost of recruitment is generally high.'

Apprenticeship training develops highly skilled people, benefiting business in various ways. 'If you have better talent, you have a better business,' says Nick Jeffrey, ACCA's regional head of policy for Europe and the Americas. 'You have more productive people who are motivated and it becomes a virtuous circle.'

'Businesses in many sectors have expressed concern that their new joiners don't have the skills they need,' he adds. 'They have the technical knowledge, but not the work skills that make them instantly productive or client-friendly. They need too much care and attention to bring them up to speed. So the role of apprenticeships in addressing that issue is good for business.'

Whether as employers themselves, or as accountants advising clients, ACCA members are well placed to advise on the benefits of employing apprentices. 'The professional accountant gets close to the business and so can advise on where apprenticeships are most needed and offer best value,' Jeffrey says.

Government support

'We do not just want to see more apprenticeships; we want high-quality apprenticeships in more sectors, covering more roles; and we want to persuade more employers to offer apprenticeships.'

Spokesperson for the Department for Education and Skills

New opportunities

'Young finance professionals are looking for new opportunities that support their personal career development plans and are attracted to organisations that can support their need for skills growth.'

ACCA's Generation Next survey



recent move towards employer-led initiatives as positive, and it's the first time employers can use government funding to clear pathways for progression and support training all the way to chartered certified status. A Department for Education spokesperson says: 'Our reforms give employers a real stake in this, being at the heart of the decision-making processes and supporting the quality of the new apprenticeship standards being developed by employers themselves.'

The funding for apprenticeships is encouraging employers to review their talent acquisition strategies. And it's working. Apprenticeship starts are up year on year. Now is a prime opportunity for employers to use those monies to develop a

Generating loyalty

Our Generation Next survey identified that the opportunity for young finance professionals to learn and develop skills is the key factor in retention, closely

followed by career progression opportunities. Our pathways can be aligned to employer's talent strategies and used to develop people at all levels. Apprenticeships offer a non-traditional route into the world of work. There is widespread belief that a degree will lead to a well-paid job and fulfilling career, when in fact 58% of graduates end up in non-graduate jobs (CIPD). Some are simply not suited to traditional learning styles. See page 14 for stories from ACCA members who decided not to go to university. We need employers to recognise the value of, and create demand for, apprenticeships as a vehicle for developing top talent.

Reap the rewards

With the established apprenticeship levy, organisations now have a real incentive to take a long, hard look at their staff development needs

According to the National Apprenticeship Service, 19,000 companies are paying the apprenticeship levy. 'We want to raise the quality of apprenticeships, but also make it straightforward,' says Sue Husband, executive director at the National Apprenticeship Service, part of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, which sits within the Department for Education.

Whether companies pay the levy or not, the tax is an investment in businesses' talent pipelines. There are rules that

apply to this expenditure. Apprenticeship levels attract different funding bands. And the funds are only available to use for 24 months – a clear case of 'use it or lose it'. But the levy presents fantastic new opportunities for employers to rethink their recruitment strategies and many are doing so.

Anita Brook FCCA, founder and CEO of People for Practice says: 'I am more confident that now employers are in the driving seat, apprenticeships can fill the skills gaps. They



Advantages for employers

'Employers tell us their business becomes more productive and staff retention improves, as apprentices feel more confident and supported, and therefore want to stay with the business,' says Sue Husband, executive director at the National Apprenticeship Service.

Another benefit for employers is that hiring can become simpler and cheaper, as training providers, alongside bodies such as ACCA, can provide help with the recruitment process.

Organisations can also enjoy the fresh perspectives and new ideas that apprentices bring with them. By widening access, organisations can increase the diversity of their recruits, especially if the apprenticeship scheme is seen as a realistic and viable alternative to university. See also page 14.



Delivering benefits

'Almost nine out of every 10 employers of apprentices hoping to achieve business benefits tell us that apprenticeships deliver.'

Department for Education and Skills spokesperson



should be viewed as a long term solution to training. If employers recruit apprentices trained to the new standards set by industry, they will have skilled workers to help grow business.'

The £2.5bn levy funding is driving large company engagement. Awareness is growing amongst smaller employers and they are beginning to understand the support available to them by the government and champions of apprenticeships such as ACCA. A large proportion of SMEs are still motivated to give young people training opportunities. We have been working with employers interested in our apprenticeships and we are happy to advise and discuss your options.

Other beneficiaries

Accountancy firms and finance departments of other businesses are the obvious beneficiaries of the scheme, provided that apprentices can work with experienced staff, learn job-specific skills and spend 20% of their time on off-the-job training.

Mark Dawe, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, believes that higher apprenticeships can play a significant role in widening access to the accountancy profession. 'The Higher Level Apprenticeship helps organisations keep an eye on the social mobility agenda,' he says. 'Apprenticeships are about good, sustainable employment. Once someone gets on the ladder, they can

progress through the profession.' We can take people beyond being an accountant with our pathways. Our apprenticeships are for those who want to understand how business and finance works, not just for career accountants. We also offer unique differentiators with the opportunity to gain BSc and MSc degrees.

University alternative

Dawe observes that apprenticeships can be seen as a clear alternative to university. 'The big shift in this policy is that the student with three A grades at A-level may be thinking that they might be better off going to work at an accountancy firm now, rather than going to university and joining them three years later,' he says.

Under the apprenticeship schemes, employers will now have good access to those whose talent was not developed under the more rigid school examination system. Such access will provide a boost to the accountancy profession as it seeks to become more representative of the whole population.

For more information:

Are you an employer interested in ACCA apprenticeships? Email us at apprenticeships@accaglobal.com. Find out more information at bit.ly/ACCA-apprenticeships

ACCA's apprenticeships

There is a range of benefits to you and your employees of an ACCA apprenticeship, and we are with you every step of the way

Apprenticeships widen access to our profession and give employers the ability to recruit top local talent from a bigger pool. The programmes allow employers to build a productive and motivated workforce to help grow business.

We have the biggest talent pipeline in our sector; working with schools to build interest at a young age, and our fast-track Accelerate programme is also a feeder for graduate talent. As

testament to our progression on behalf of our students, the NHS in London has opened up its finance placement scheme to our accounting students.

Leading apprenticeships for a changing world

Working with employers to reduce the cost of talent recruitment and shorten the time for skills development, we can connect



Supporting you

As your go-to experts on apprenticeships, we are here to help.

- Contact us by emailing apprenticeships@accaglobal.com or visit our web page at bit.ly/acca-apprenticeships. Our dedicated employer relations team provide an end-to-end service and will support you through the full recruitment process and beyond.
- We can provide clarity over the levy and the funding available to you, and explain which of our qualifications are eligible for apprenticeships, outlining the different pathways available to you and your apprentices.
- We can talk you through your role and responsibilities as an employer in setting up an apprenticeship, and can advise and pair you with an approved local training provider.
- As a government-approved Apprentice Assessment Organisation, we also assess your apprentice. If they successfully pass the three applied knowledge exams, we award them with our Diploma in Accounting and Finance.

ACCA Accounting Technician Apprenticeship (Level 4 Trailblazer)

Continue your journey to ACCA membership with options of an undergraduate and Masters degree along the way.

End-point assessment



Technical Role Simulation Exam



Portfolio & Reflective Statement (PRS)

On-programme assessment



Diploma in Accounting and Business

Foundations in Professionalism online module



Accountant in Business

Financial Accounting

Management Accounting

ACCA's applied knowledge exams



Apprenticeship training log

Studying with ACCA means you can record the skills and behaviours you gain through the apprenticeship, which will also count towards the experience you need for full ACCA membership. That means you will already be on the way to being a fully qualified ACCA accountant.



Core requirements

Knowledge

Technical knowledge, business awareness, ethical standards, regulation and compliance, systems and process.



Skills

Analysis, communication, leadership, planning and prioritisation, production of quality and accurate information, team working and collaboration, use of systems and processes.



Behaviours

Adaptability, adding value, ethics and integrity, proactivity and professional scepticism.



you with school leavers, undergraduates and those who wish to progress further with our apprenticeships and other pathways.

At ACCA, we embrace change and shape futures, developing leading qualifications that set the standard for others to follow. Along with our apprenticeship pathways which are structured around real-world scenarios, we offer powerful solutions to support employers in building their talent pipeline. We can give employers access to funded, leading qualifications which are the

best fit for a changing business world and designed to develop professional accountants of the future.

To add value, accountants need an optimal combination of professional competencies: a collection of technical knowledge, skills and abilities, combined with interpersonal behaviours and qualities. These principles underpin our Level 4 and 7 Higher Apprenticeships, which have been developed for employers by employers based on industry standards set by the accountancy and financial sector.

ACCA Professional Accountant Apprenticeship (Level 7)

Continue your journey to ACCA membership

Ensure you have 36 months relevant experience and have completed the Practical Experience Requirement.

End-point assessment



Strategic Business Leader Exam



Project Report

On-programme assessment



ACCA Strategic Professional level exams

Strategic Business Reporting
+ pick two from four options:

Advanced Financial
Management

Advanced Performance
Management

Advanced Taxation

Advanced Audit
and Assurance

+ Ethics and Professional Skills Module



Study for an optional MSc Professional
Accountancy which is exclusive to ACCA



Applied Skills

Corporate and
Business Law

Performance Management

Taxation

Financial Reporting

Audit and Assurance

Financial Management



Study for an optional BSc (Hons) Applied
Accounting which is exclusive to ACCA



Applied Knowledge

Accountant in Business

Management Accountant

Financial Accountant



Working towards
ACCA's Practical
Experience
Requirement
to become
a member

If you wish to become
an ACCA member after
successfully completing
your apprenticeship,
you will need
to build your
Practical Experience
Record.

Record information
relevant to your
apprenticeship such
as employer provided
learning and evidence
from performance
appraisals.



Core
Requirements

Knowledge

Assurance, risk and
control, business acumen,
financial information,
legislation, strategic
business management
and governance.



Skills

Building relationships,
business insight,
ethics and integrity,
leadership, communication
and problem solving.



Behaviours

Adds value, continuous
improvement, flexibility,
and professional scepticism.

'The support I've received from ACCA has been really important because we are a small firm and don't have a trainee department – but trainees are key to my business growth. Knowing that resource from ACCA is available to support my trainee so I don't have to be involved too much with the study side has been pivotal'

Alex Falcon-Huerta FCCA, CEO and founder of Soaring Falcon Accountancy

Our offer

Our programmes stand apart from other accounting apprenticeships and allow apprentices to progress towards the full ACCA Qualification in a number of ways. There are many and varied opportunities for apprentices to continue studying with ACCA, including gaining a BSc in Applied Accounting from Oxford Brookes University and an MSc in Professional Accounting from the University of London.

Our apprenticeships train apprentices to understand the structure and functions of different businesses, as well as giving them the necessary technical knowledge required to support financial planning in a variety of business contexts. And our Level 7 Professional Accountant apprenticeship is a new funded gateway to ACCA professional membership and chartered certified status.

The modules focus on real-life work scenarios and use the latest technologies to ensure that your apprentices gain the practical knowledge needed, as well as technical skills, and are more work-ready than ever. The programmes also develop transferable skills, including English and Maths to progress careers. Our Level 4 Accounting Technician

ACCA Careers

You can advertise your apprenticeship opportunity on ACCA Careers, ACCA's accountancy and finance jobs board. We can also enhance your search through our work to engage with schools.

Visit careers.accaglobal.com to discover more

Apprenticeship only has three online exams plus the final assessment, which we believe offers the right balance to enable rigorous testing of apprentices' knowledge, while minimising the time spent focusing on exam preparation away from the workplace.

A graphic outlining the structure of our Level 4 Apprenticeship can be found on page 9.

Meanwhile, with the introduction of our Level 7 apprenticeship, which focuses on complex business issues as well as financial analysis,

there are even more flexible routes to widen access to our profession. See the graphic outlining the structure of our Level 7 Apprenticeship opposite.

Find out more

Are you an employer interested in ACCA apprenticeships? If so, email us at apprenticeships@accaglobal.com. You can find out more information at bit.ly/ACCA-apprenticeships



Helping you to deliver

Employers must follow a number of essential steps to recruit an apprentice. ACCA and training providers can help with flexible, high-quality solutions

Recruiting an employee for an apprenticeship involves more than placing a job advert. ACCA provides end-to-end service and support. We can advise on funding options, recommend approved local training providers and initiate discussions between employers and providers to agree a price for their training and assessment services.

'We are working with some strong training partners – some local, some national,' says Nick Jervis, ACCA's regional head of sales and marketing for Europe and the Americas. 'They are all gold or platinum training providers, so by definition they are high quality.'

Jervis sees ACCA's apprenticeships as an exciting development: 'This is an opportunity for students, employers and training

providers to work with a globally recognised organisation – ACCA – that can take students all the way to fully chartered certified accountant.

The training providers are also seeing growing interest in apprenticeships among employers, largely due to the apprenticeship levy. 'Most of our clients are in favour of the apprenticeship levy,' says Scott Brady, head of corporate solutions at BPP. 'They see it as an opportunity not just to provide training to entry-level employees, but also to develop their existing staff.'

Brady says BPP has a number of strengths as a training provider, including its flexible delivery model (with tuition programmes designed in partnership with employers,



Elizabeth Stanley, financial systems accountant, Newport City Homes

'Traditionally, apprentices are young, at the start of their careers, although this not always the case. Apprentices bring with them digital skills that most of the business have had to learn in-

between their day jobs – this can be a great two-way relationship. Apprentices are generally more willing to learn something new, especially as there is high competition for the opportunities.

Career progression is essential for an organisation as individuals retire and some move on to pastures new. Apprenticeships can help to bridge this gap in the long term.'

which can include either in-centre or online tuition, or a blend of both), its qualified coach practitioners who support apprentices, and its proactive support model. He says: 'We are in regular contact with all the apprentices, monitor their progress and highlight any areas where they may require additional support.'

Cassandra Macdonald, Kaplan's head of client solutions: apprenticeships, also thinks the levy is encouraging employers to 'professionalise' their workforce. She believes they value the new apprenticeships' focus 'not just on acquiring knowledge, but also on developing the skills and behaviours that are needed'.

'The apprenticeship levy has shaken things up and increased the number of employers that are thinking about apprenticeships,' says Becki Hunter, head of apprenticeships at First Intuition. 'In certain sectors we are seeing clients revolutionise their recruitment strategy in order to maximise the benefits of the levy.'

'Everyone has the right to education and the opportunity for progression,' says Gillian Saieva, head of business, finance and accounting in Southampton Solent University's School of Business, Law and Communications. 'We see apprenticeships as another way that individuals can succeed in the world of employment.' She believes employers can benefit from a range of the university's apprenticeship programmes, including the Senior Leader Apprenticeship currently in development and which will form part of an MBA programme.

Flexible delivery

Training providers are offering a range of classroom, online and blended learning. For example, Kaplan's blended package of tuition delivery – classroom, live online or on-demand online – offers flexibility to students. 'We also have a full suite of e-learning packages for the skills and behaviours, and

'We have identified some strong training partners – all gold or platinum providers, so by definition they are quality'

incorporate live development days – face-to-face workshops designed by our expert leadership team,' Macdonald says. Employers can have specific behaviours or values built into the programme.

Southampton Solent University's tuition is provided in the format that employers prefer, including day-release and weekend-block delivery. 'We have a strong focus on student retention and supporting students through their journey,' Saieva says.

Training provider Avado has launched an apprenticeship

where students study via an online campus. 'We're offering apprenticeships for the digital age,' says Anita Skurr, head of corporate partnerships for Avado's professional qualifications. The technical content is taught online and consolidated with interactive live classes. The skills and behaviours elements of the apprenticeship are also supported online, with students logging their activities via an app, which their apprenticeship adviser (who they initially meet face to face) can access to offer feedback. Students and their advisers will also have regular online catch-ups via Skype or Google Hangouts. 'Our new digital apprenticeships will create a different style of employee – more self-motivated, forward-thinking and digitally capable,' Skurr says.

First Intuition's approach to tuition provision is again highly flexible, including teaching in classrooms and online (live and recorded), workshop-based development days and placement-focused development tasks. 'We believe in personal contact, an open-door policy and a student-focused experience,' Hunter says. 'We've invested heavily in systems to support that.'

For more information:

Are you an employer interested in ACCA apprenticeships? Email us at apprenticeships@accaglobal.com. Find out more information at bit.ly/ACCA-apprenticeships

Morlai Kargbo FCCA, managing director, Moracle Limited

'ACCA-trained professionals have the strategic thinking, technical skills and professional values to drive organisations forward. When apprentices study with ACCA, they

can accelerate their career with their company. They can build a strong professional network needed in today's fast-paced business world, and are part of an organisation that thinks ahead

in shaping the future of accountancy and business. ACCA has a worldwide reputation for excellence and our rigorous qualifications are recognised and respected across the globe.'

Frontline apprentices

We talk to five ambitious finance professionals who have taken the non-university route, including apprenticeships, as a launchpad for their careers

Wahid Rob

Semi-senior accountant, TaxAssist

Working with TaxAssist has been an amazing journey. I came in as a Level 3 Apprentice and am looking forward to completing my ACCA Qualification. The wealth of experience I have around me is incredible. I have learned so much here and have now progressed to being a client accountant/semi-senior accountant.



Emily Thorne

Assistant finance analyst, Sainsbury's Argos

I proactively researched alternative routes and an accountancy apprenticeship sounded perfect – I could



gain a respectable professional qualification while earning money and gaining invaluable experience in a finance role at the same time. My long-term career goals are to finish the ACCA Qualification within the next couple of years and work towards making an impact as a finance leader.

Jack Boorman

Finance analyst, Virgin Atlantic

Joining as an apprentice at Virgin gave me the right balance between being independent at work and getting support. A lot of companies want previous experience, and students leaving university don't have that. An apprenticeship allows you to start networking earlier, while people your own age are still studying at university.



'With ACCA you can achieve a stable and high-profile career without attending university'

Laura Sturland

Finance manager, Avon

The real pull for me doing an apprenticeship was the ability to qualify by the time I turned 21 and to be three years ahead in my career. I also really liked the prospect of earning money while studying. The people at Avon are great. I work with such a large pool of talent who are all passionate about our business, and that is always really inspiring and motivating.



Amandeep Banga

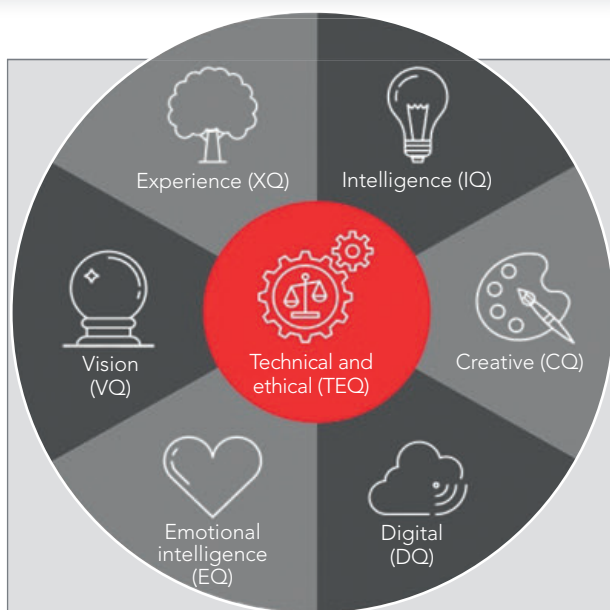
Head of finance UK, NL and DK, Kuoni Global Travel Services

I took the ACCA route instead of university, due to its global presence and clear career scope. With ACCA you can achieve a stable and high-profile career without attending university. Also, by the time you finish your exams you've already gained three years' work experience, allowing you to complete your ACCA Qualification and likely receive a big promotion.



For more information:

Thinking of becoming an ACCA apprentice? You can find out how to do this and read more case studies at: bit.ly/Discover-ACCA-apprenticeships



Seven key qualities for success

Research from ACCA on the qualities finance professionals will need to succeed in the future has found that technical and ethical competencies remain at the core of professional accountants' expertise, but these must be combined with additional qualities or quotients. It is this combination that will enable professional accountants to succeed and add value to their employers and clients. You can find out more and take an interactive skills test at future.accaglobal.com



Technical and ethical (TEQ): The ability to perform activities to a defined standard while maintaining integrity, independence and scepticism.



Intelligence (IQ): The ability to acquire and use knowledge: thinking, reasoning, solving problems and the ability to understand and analyse situations that are complex and ambiguous.



Creative (CQ): The ability to use existing knowledge in a new situation, to make connections, explore potential outcomes and generate new ideas.



Digital (DQ): The awareness and application of existing and emerging digital technologies, capabilities, practices, strategies and culture.



Emotional intelligence (EQ): The ability to identify your own emotions and those of others, harness and apply them to tasks, and regulate and manage them.



Vision (VQ): The ability to predict future trends accurately by extrapolating existing trends and facts, and filling the gaps by thinking innovatively.



Experience (XQ): Understanding customer expectations, meeting desired outcomes and creating value.



Government support

Antony Jenkins, chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships, explains how the government is putting employers at the heart of its apprenticeships initiative

Why are apprenticeships so important?

Apprenticeships are powerful. Employers equip their workforce with the skills they need to do the job effectively; learners turn their passions into a real career; and together they can increase the productivity of this country, acting as a powerful driver of economic growth and social mobility.

What is the long-term vision for apprenticeships in the UK?

Apprenticeships are becoming an increasingly important component of the British economy as more and more employers are realising the benefits. We've seen over 880,000 apprenticeship starts since 2015, and the government wants to build on that momentum, setting an ambitious target of three million starts by 2020. But we have to remember that it is not just about numbers – apprenticeships must meet the needs of both learners and employers, and that means ensuring the highest quality. That is the role of the Institute for Apprenticeships – quality will make apprenticeships more desirable and credible.

How will they help FDs, senior partners at accountancy firms and other employers of finance professionals?

We know that the financial services sector faces a significant skills gap but, if done right, apprenticeships can provide a way for employers to cultivate the skills they need, both in broadening the talent pool and by upskilling motivated existing members of staff.

The emergence of degree apprenticeships is also something of a game-changer – ambitious learners can kickstart their careers by combining a paid job in their chosen field with university. We're seeing more and more businesses and bodies – such as ACCA – look beyond traditional graduate recruitment by setting up their own apprenticeship courses in partnership with higher education institutions.

What are the aims and responsibilities of the Institute for Apprenticeships?

We are a new, independent, employer-led body that primarily governs the creation of apprenticeship standards and recommends funding for them.

We launched in April this year – I'm proud of what we've achieved in such a short time. There are now more than 150 apprenticeship standards already approved for delivery, with many hundreds more in development, meaning an engagement of over 2,600 employers. Our job is to equip employers with the



right tools to create apprenticeships that work both for their industry and for the learner.

Rigour and quality of training are important to ACCA members. How are you going to support this?

The drive for quality is right at the Institute's heart. In order for businesses to get the skills they need and learners to have lasting careers, apprenticeships must be shaped by those who know the job and the industry best – the employer.

We are putting employers at every stage of the process. Our 'Trailblazer' groups – groups of employers working together to propose and develop new apprenticeship standards – are exclusively employers within the sector. We ask other employers to monitor and check the development of those standards as part of our 'route panels'.

Alongside moving to employer-led standards, an important aspect of the reform of apprenticeships is the use of an 'end-point assessment' to focus on the outcome of an apprenticeship – apprentices have to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers have identified they need. We also put in place checks on the suitability of assessments so that assessors are also held to account, and standards will be periodically reviewed to ensure they reflect changes within the industry. And there are also rules to make sure that all apprentices get a significant amount of off-the-job learning.

Accountants have always been pioneers in technology. How will apprenticeships help produce the skillsets required in the future?

No one knows better than employers what skills the next generation of the workforce will need, and nowhere is this more true than in highly skilled, technical subjects such as accountancy. We need apprenticeships to be agile, reflective of changes within each industry and of new technological developments, which is why they need to be led by those within each industry. Our job at the Institute is to make it as easy as possible for the experts to put that knowledge into practice in creating high-quality apprenticeships.

Would you advise an ambitious young person seeking a career in finance to do an apprenticeship, or take out a student loan and go to university?

It's all about choice and really depends on the individual. But the ability to 'earn and learn' via an apprenticeship is a powerful additional route for a young person.

Matching needs

Apprenticeships give employers more control over the types of individual they want to nurture and more options for recruiting this talent

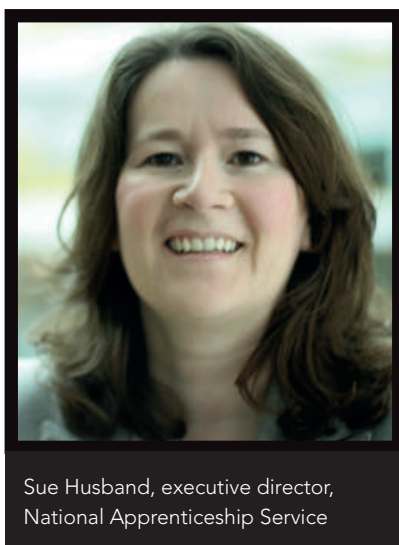
By 2020, it might be difficult to recognise the apprenticeship landscape. At least, that is what the government is hoping as it begins to operate the apprenticeship levy, which will help fund its objective of hitting a three million start figure in three years' time.

For the accountancy profession, this move represents an ideal opportunity to broaden its access to talent, whether it is in an accountancy practice, the finance department of a commercial organisation or the public sector.

So what is driving this commitment to apprenticeships, and how are employers responding to this new world of employee development? The first point to make is that there is still a skills gap. 'For a number of years, we have had a challenge with filling skills gaps, and we see that apprenticeships can contribute significantly to addressing this,' says Sue Husband, executive director of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), part of the Department of Education's Education and Skills Funding Agency. 'They are not the only answer, but it is important that we have a variety of different options for people to be able to bring talent into their workplaces, and then develop it.'

The second point is that the apprenticeship programmes are designed to be employer-led. 'In the past, businesses have felt that young people coming out of education are not necessarily work-ready,' Husband says. 'Apprenticeship programmes are going to be up to date and designed for the organisation that they are going to be working for. And employers are going to be involved in designing the apprenticeship standard around which the employee is going to be trained.'

A report for the Education and Skills Funding Agency found that 76% of employers who take on apprentices agree that they make the workplace more productive, and 77% say they make them more competitive. The same research indicated that 59% of employers report that training apprentices is more



Sue Husband, executive director,
National Apprenticeship Service

cost-effective than hiring skilled staff, and that apprenticeships lead to lower overall training costs. More than half say that hiring apprentices reduces overall recruitment costs. In addition, retention rates have improved, as the apprentices feel they have been supported throughout their training.

From the apprentice's point of view, such training (especially ACCA's Higher Apprenticeships) offers a viable and credible alternative to a university education. The escalating level of student debt has been cited as one reason why apprenticeships could prove increasingly popular; such programmes are also attractive to those that simply did not have a good experience of formal education.

This final point also addresses the move to improve access to professions such as accountancy. As Husband observes, levy-paying organisations will be thinking very seriously about how they can access the training funds that are put aside for apprenticeships, and will now be taking a wider view and changing their approach towards training and development. 'It widens the talent pool, and many companies are now saying that they should have done this sooner,' Husband says.

Of course, apprenticeships are not just for the large organisations. According to NAS, small- and medium-sized enterprises provide more than half of all apprenticeship schemes. 'The levy is great news, as it means we have sustainable funding for the future, but SMEs are especially important for bringing through young people,' Husband says.

Looking more widely, the push to increase the number of apprenticeship programmes is also seen as a key driver for economic growth, a point that Husband recognises. 'Companies that are growing rapidly, particularly in the technology industries, are seeing apprenticeships as absolutely the way forward, so that they can grow their businesses rather than being suppressed because they can't get the talent,' she argues.

The ACCA logo is a red square with the letters 'ACCA' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the entire advertisement is a blurred image of a person in a white lab coat, possibly a scientist or researcher, holding a tablet. The overall color palette is light blue and white, with a red border framing the text area.

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