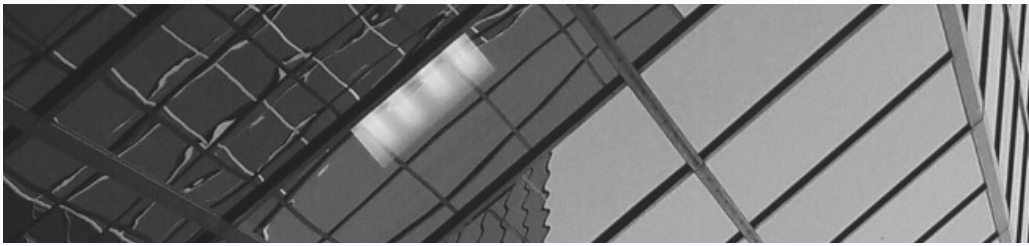




# **APPRENTICESHIPS**

**NOVEMBER 2023**





# OVERVIEW

The series of apprenticeships roundtables was initiated to focus on how schools can better understand the process involved in degree apprenticeship applications and support students in their applications for these.

With the UK apprenticeship landscape regularly shifting and expanding, apprenticeships are becoming increasingly attractive as an option for school leavers. The support for apprenticeship applications within schools and colleges has not however developed at the same rate, leaving students under-prepared and at a disadvantage in the selection process, specifically in relation to the complex assessment centres that feature in the process.

With this in mind, CIRL in collaboration with other school partners established this roundtable series to understand changes in the apprenticeship landscape; what skills are required to complete an apprenticeship, and how we can better equip our students to prepare for the application process.

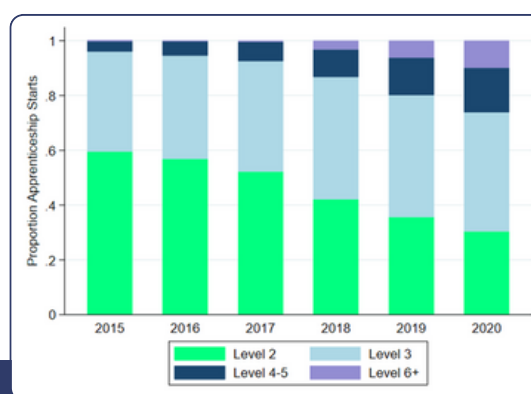
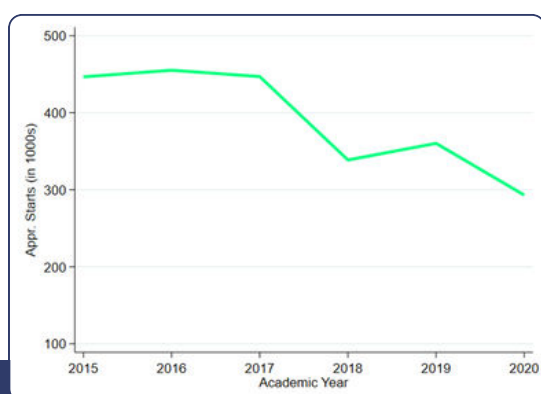
The keynote speakers in the first of this series were:

- Dr Chiara Cavaglia, Research Economist at the Centre for Economic Performance and at the Centre for Vocational Education Research at the London School of Economics
- Shannon Wilson, Managing Consultant, IBM
- Danielle Ariyo-Francis, Product Owner, IBM
- Nathalie Peach, Executive Coach and former Director of Work Integrated Learning (Pearson)

## APPRENTICESHIPS - KEY TRENDS

The following trends were summarised from the 2022 Sutton Trust Report “The Recent Evolution of Apprenticeships: Participation and Pathways”

- Apprenticeships had two drop-offs in up-take, in 2017 with the new apprenticeship levy, and in 2020 with the COVID pandemic
- Over 2015-2020, there has been an increase in the number of Level 4 and 5 apprenticeships and a decrease in Level 2s.
- The number of apprentices from deprived areas has reduced over time
- Affluent students are over represented in Level 6 schemes
- Students are often over 25, especially in higher level apprenticeships
- There are marked gender differences across apprenticeship sectors
- Ethnic minorities are under-represented in younger groups but over-represented in older age groups
- Greater number of apprenticeships are offered in Business and Administration sector
- Students on Level 6 apprenticeships are mostly from highest quintile of GCSE performance
- Ofsted have introduced inspections of apprenticeship schemes - both for providers & employers



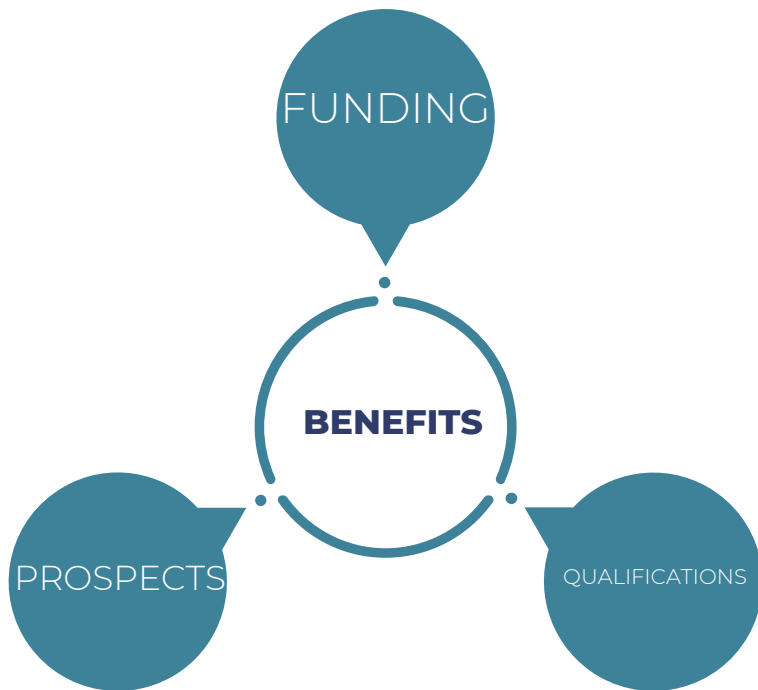
Due to the demanding nature of degree apprenticeships, the fundamental character traits of a successful apprentice are their ability to multi-task, adapt and be good time managers. This route also appears to suit those with drive and self-determination as the pressing nature of the apprenticeship programme requires the student to manage their own priorities in both academic and work settings. The following highlights the key skills required:

### Degree Apprenticeship Skills

Time management / organisational skills	Problem-solving skills
Flexibility	Initiative
Technical knowledge	Self-motivation
Communication skills	Drive to achieve
Adaptability	Stamina & resilience
Ability to prioritise	Solid intellectual ability and agility
High energy levels	Ability to speak up if things are difficult

# BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

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## Funding

- Graduate debt free
- Funded degree
- Competitive salary whilst studying

## Employability

- Accelerated career path / promotions
- Credible experience
- Industry recognition
- Job security
- Practical, on-the-job experience
- Two-way application of learning
- Networking opportunities
- Employer social events
- Greater experience than peers

## Qualifications

- Chartered management status
- Additional qualifications
- Leniency in application grade offers

## Application Process

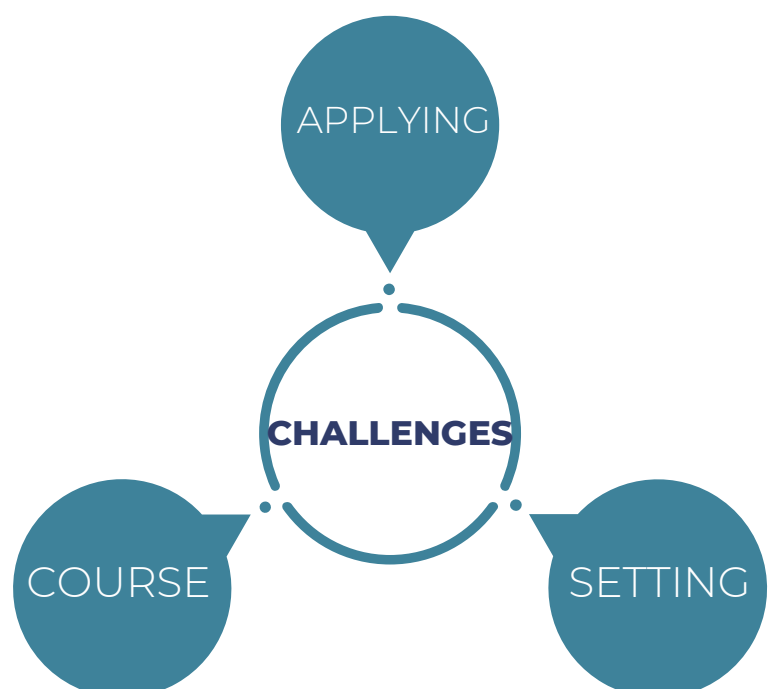
- Lack of consolidated application process
- Difficult to compare schemes
- Competitive application process
- Limited advice on assessment centres
- Difference in assessment centres
- Restricted availability of places
- Reduced subject choices
- Rejection

## Course Challenges

- 3 years of full time study & work
- Challenging course - requires discipline
- Awareness of rigorous nature of course
- Impact on social life
- Poor reputation of apprenticeships

## Institutional Setting Issues

- Not all provision is equal
- Misalignment between role & academic needs
- Potential lack of employer support
- Lack of support among social circle



# EMERGING QUESTIONS

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The key questions to emerge from the roundtable discussion to be addressed by schools and colleges with regards to apprenticeships focused mainly around preparing students; firstly to understand apprenticeships as an alternative route to university and secondly to provide appropriate scaffolding for the application process.



How do we prepare our students for the apprenticeship application process, specifically the assessment centres?



How do we develop skills during a student's school career that will be applicable to the application process - specifically how to apply personal experiences to questions asked?



How do we ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to access the same apprenticeship opportunities?



How do we educate students and parents about apprenticeship routes?



How do we change perceptions of apprenticeships so they are no longer considered Plan B?



## **Student Preparation**

To prepare students for the rigorous and competitive apprenticeship application process, schools should focus on developing key competencies (such as team building, presentations, leadership skills, resilience) which would reach across different styles of assessment centre. These could be incorporated into standard classroom practices as well as focusing on additional qualifications such as the EPQ. Schools could also explore internal tracking systems for apprenticeship applications and encourage more applications and application support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.



## **External Collaboration**

Schools can work with a number of external agencies to increase student knowledge and understanding of apprenticeships. These could include visits to / from universities, employers, degree apprentices as well as charities and institutions set up to enable the apprenticeship application process and match candidates with opportunities.



## **Standardisation**

There is much work that could be done to standardise the application process for apprenticeships bringing it in line with UCAS process. Educational establishments should be working with existing bodies such as UCAS, Institute of Apprentices, DfE, Ofsted, universities and employers to provide a consolidated platform for comparison of apprenticeship offers and application processes.



References:

“The Recent Evolution of Apprenticeships: Participation and Pathways” (Cavaglia, McNally and Ventura) and other work by CEP/CVER (LSE)



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