OXFORD
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Apprenticeship Mentor Handbook

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Introduction

An apprenticeship is a job with training and assessment, which enables apprentices to gain highly transferable skills and knowledge in a specific occupation.

Apprentices have a contract of employment which is long enough to complete the apprenticeship successfully and ideally are employed for the long-term.

You can now employ apprentices at all different levels, from school leavers to people of any age who want to further or change their careers.

Name	Levels	Equivalent Educational Level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A Level
Higher	4,5,6,7	Foundation Degree and Above
Degree	6,7	Bachelor's or Master's Degree

Preparing for an Apprentice

- Before an apprentice starts you should consider sending them a starter pack/ email or arranging a call so that they know what to expect from their firstday. What time to arrive, how they should dress, lunch/break times etc
- Plan an induction and onboarding programme. If your organisation hasa standard induction, are there are additional elements required for your apprentice?
- Check if they have any questions or concerns about any details in theircontract, e.g. when they will be paid, working hours etc.
- Encourage an apprentice to be open and share information about any support needs or flexibilities that they would find helpful or any reasonable adjustments they may need and make necessary arrangements.
- Make sure the apprentice is happy with the chosen apprenticeship standard and that they have a full understanding of how the apprenticeship is delivered and what's involved.

The Mentor's Role

Mentoring, in a work-based setting such as an apprenticeship, is a short-medium term professional relationship where a more experienced individual (the mentor) uses their experience and expertise of an area of work or industry to advise, guide and support another individual (mentee) to achieve their stated goals.

Mentors play a key role in supporting apprentices. There is substantial evidence that good mentoring is the best way of inducting and supporting staff through the learning process. We also know from experience that mentoring colleagues is a highly rewarding experience.

During an apprenticeship, Mentors will be expected to:

- Support apprentices in developing the skills necessary to perform their role and complete their programme of study. This will be a developmental process and mentors will work alongside the apprentice to help set targets for their development
- Give the apprentice opportunities to gain wider knowledge and skills in certain areas
- Help them to recognise and realise their potential
- Be a positive role model
- Challenge the apprentice to move out of their comfort zones
- Challenge the mentee to look at their work from new angles
- Give honest and constructive feedback
- Signpost the apprentice towards other members of staff in the workplace who may also be a useful resource
- Attend the monthly one to one review meetings and contribute towards assessing their suitability to progress towards their End Point Assessment

Who Is An Ideal Mentor For An Apprentice?

- They should be experienced and competent in the apprentice's occupational field.
- Have a full understanding of the apprenticeship standard that the apprentice will be studying and what knowledge, skills and behaviours need to be covered.
- They must be good communicators as they are best placed to talk to their apprentice, listen to their concerns, guide and coach them. They will check the apprentice is meeting their targets and ensure they are committed to the business, as well as help guide their learning in relation to the job role.
- They should be committed to the wellbeing of their apprentice and be comfortable in encouraging an open and trusting relationship where support needs and/or flexibilities can be discussed. This may include making reasonable adjustments when needed.
- They must value the concepts of learning, development and progression in the workplace and understand, support and recognise opportunities for onand off-the-job training.
- They will ensure that team members are briefed, understand the role of the apprentice and know what is expected of them in relation to apprentices.
- They are responsible for managing an apprentice's performance, including when under-performance occurs.

Key Mentor Skills

Listening

- Employ active listening techniques
- Pay careful attention to what is being said and picking out the key points
- Think ahead to what you are going to say
- Do not interrupt when your Apprentice is speaking
- Keep an open mind - do not judge immediately
- Encourage your Apprentice to clarify if necessary

Looking

- Pay attention to the whole person
- Make eye contact with your mentee
- Show that you are listening
- Watch for expressive hand or body movements that might be a substitute for words

Levelling

- Be honest and clear about feelings and thoughts
- Encourage new ways of thinking and different viewpoints
- Be honest in replies to questions, but ensure the answer is not discouraging
- Speak for yourself, Use “I” statements instead of “you”
- Acknowledge your apprentice’s feelings
- Offer support where you can

What is Off-The Job Training?

Off the job training is a requirement for all apprenticeships undertaken and employers have the responsibility to ensure that their apprentices are given the required time. The off-the-job training for an apprenticeship refers to the learning activities that are completed away from the normal work duties and responsibilities. This is training that is received by an apprentice during their normal paid working hours, for the purpose of working towards their apprenticeship. This training doesn't necessarily require the apprentice to be physically away from the workplace; it can be carried out flexibly to accommodate both the apprentice and the employer. The apprentice should be supported by their line manage and/or mentor.

We map the correct hours needed against the tasks which are essential for apprentices to gain the theoretical knowledge and skills needed to complete their practical on-the-job experience. Apprentices must spend at least the minimum number of 'off the job' training hours as published by the new Apprenticeship Funding Rules.

Off the job training must:

Be relevant to the apprenticeship programme.

Be separate from the normal day-to-day job role and working environment.

Focus on developing new knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

Take place during normal paid working hours.

Off-the-job training may take various forms, including:

- Formal workshop and training sessions
- Independent study during work hours
- Participation in webinars/reading materials related to the apprenticeship
- Work shadowing

Ongoing Support and Monitoring

There are a number of ways to support apprentices through their programmes and the approach chosen will be determined by the type of business, size of organisation/team, and the needs of the apprentice.

These include:

- Regular catch up meetings with your apprentice to ensure they are feeling supported
- Working with your apprentice to update objectives, goals and projects
- Identifying and encouraging networking opportunities with other apprentices and others within the professional community which may be beneficial to their development
- Check the apprentice is getting their allowed off the job time
- Look for ways within the workplace to complement the knowledge,skills and behaviours
- Making time for their formal appraisal and working with the apprentice to write their self-appraisal. Remember this could be their first time so, help them to understand the process and purpose
- Attend the progress reviews to check on progress and targets
- Encouraging and supporting your apprentice to try new things
- Making sure you work with your apprentice to identify areas they might struggle with and build in extra support or training to help them

End Point Assessment

Once the apprenticeship training is completed, an independent assessment will take place, called an 'end point assessment'. The assessment is the apprentice's opportunity to demonstrate that they are fully competent in their occupation at the end of their training. The apprentice can't achieve their apprenticeship without satisfying all the requirements listed in the apprenticeship standard, including the end-point assessment.

- It is crucial that the mentor is aware of what is in involved in the End Point Assessment.
- You will need to agree and 'sign off' that the apprentice is ready for final assessments (known as the Gateway), it's important that you understand the requirements for this.
- Help your apprentice to prepare for their EPA activities, for example, if they have to give a presentation, arrange opportunities for them to practice.
- Make contact with the wider network about any opportunities there might be for the apprentice after completing if they are not remaining in a role in your team.
- When your apprentice succeeds and achieves – you should feel like you have achieved too! Do something celebratory within your team/department to share the achievement.
- If your apprentice doesn't achieve all of the EPA components first time round, work with them to support their confidence and preparation for any resits or retakes.
- Help your apprentice with relevant advice or support regarding next steps. This may relate to new responsibilities if staying in post, careers guidance and planning, CPD opportunities, or help with internal application processes or interview practice.

General Responsibilities of Employers

Health and Safety:

All employers must take responsibility for the apprentice's safety at work. This is particularly relevant if the apprentice is under 18 years of age. Therefore, as an employer it is worth conducting a Health and Safety assessment of your organisation and the apprentice's workplace before the apprentice starts with you, and might require some actions to be taken if risks are identified.

Protective Equipment:

Identify any personal, protective equipment that might be required by the apprentice. As the mentor, you might not be a designated Health and Safety representative but as an employee, you do have an obligation to always consider health and safety in the workplace. You will be ideally placed to identify any potential risks to the apprentice and certainly obliged to act on any concerns raised by the apprentice.

Welfare and Safeguarding:

In addition to the normal duty of care that an employer has towards any employee, there is an enhanced responsibility for ensuring that the apprentice is not at risk of harassment, discrimination or abuse. Therefore, there needs to be adequate supervision in their place of work. Employers also need to ensure that they have appropriate Safeguarding of any apprentices who are under 18 years of age.

Our Safeguarding Policy is available from the publications page of the OxPE website. Any specific concerns may be raised through the OxPE Trainer/ Assessor or OxPE's Safeguarding Team who are available on safeguarding@oxfordpeg.com or 07591 104118.

Prevent Duty

A second aspect of duty of care is around the government's Prevent Duty. Apprenticeship employers have a shared responsibility with the training provider to minimise the risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism, and to ensure vulnerable individuals receive timely and appropriate support. As a mentor it is your responsibility to remain vigilant to ensure that the apprentice is not liable to be exposed to these risks. Again, if you have any concerns, you can ask the apprenticeship team.

Mental Health

Navigating conversations with a team member experiencing mental health challenges can feel daunting. Although it might feel easier to sidestep the issue altogether, it's always best to address it directly with empathy and understanding. Initiating an open dialogue allows for the opportunity to offer support and resources, fostering a culture of compassion and trust within the workplace.

A mentor who believes their apprentice may be experiencing mental health challenges should take the lead and arrange a private meeting. The conversation should be approached in a positive and supportive way. Managers should be aware of what additional support their organisation can offer staff experiencing mental ill health and how to signpost them to it.

Further services could include:

- **Mental health champions or advocates within the organisation.**
- **Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme funded by the organisation.**
- **NHS Every Mind Matters – wellbeing tips and self-help techniques.**
- **Mind – confidential help, advice, and information.**
- **Samaritans - listening and support in times of need.**
- **OxPE's Safeguarding Team. Contact us at safeguarding@oxfordpeg.com or 07591 104118.**

If in doubt, contact our Safeguarding Team:

Paul Jones

07591 104118

Melanie Ash

07903 022144

Using OneFile

We provide learners with access to our OneFile e-portfolio system as well as our learning platform Oxcom Learning for some of our standards.

OneFile is used for tracking and monitoring the apprenticeship progress as well as communication between trainer and apprentice and also a platform to upload content such as videos, session recordings, weekly readings, podcasts and other useful resources.

OneFile is also used to log the apprentices off the job hours and evidence any work-based learning.

Employers are also given access to the platform to allow them to track the progress of their apprentices.

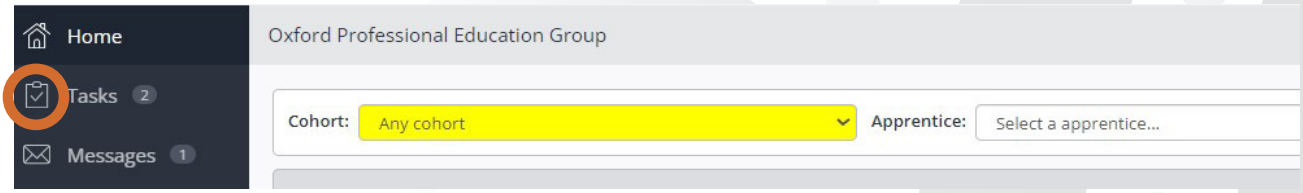
As a mentor, you will be responsible for signing off and approving your apprentice's learning activities as they work through their programme. This will include:

- Workbooks
- Test Your Understandings
- Multiple Choice Tests
- Work Based Evidence
- Witness Testimonies
- Gateway Preparation Activities
- Progress Reviews

Signing off your apprentice's learning activities is a requirement before the task is sent to the apprentice's trainer for feedback and marking and is therefore very important.

The aim of this requirement is to help provide you with greater visibility of your apprentice's hard work and what they are submitting as part of their apprenticeship programme. Reviewing the learning activity submissions could form a part of your monthly mentor meetings with the apprentice or review of their apprenticeship progress.

You will receive a task on OneFile to let you know that you have a learning activity which will need to be signed off. You can also access your apprentices current learning activities/assessments through navigating to their portfolio and clicking on 'Learning Activities/Assessments'.

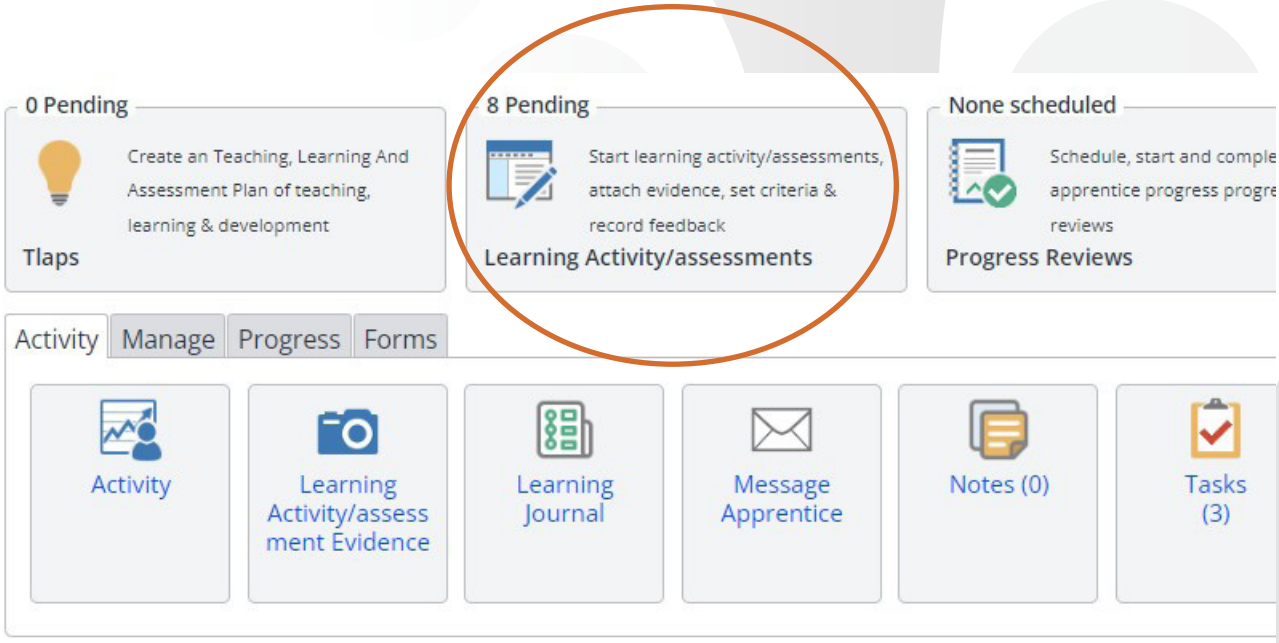


Click through to your task list on the left hand tab. This will take you to all learning activities which are to be reviewed. If you click through each learning activity, there will be a tick box at the bottom for sign off.

If an activity is not in your task list to sign off; however, there is a learning activity which must be reviewed, you will need to navigate directly to your apprentice's portfolios. Please note, this may occur if you have taken over as an apprentice's line manager part way through a programme.

Navigating to an Apprentice's Portfolio:

In the dropdown menu, please click the apprentice's name to navigate to their portfolio.



Clicking on the apprentice's Learning Activity/Assessments link which will lead you to any activities which are currently outstanding or in completion.

ce	Ref	Learning Activity/assessment Title	Method	Trainer Learning Activity/assessment Time (minutes)	Apprentice Learning Activity/assessment Time (minutes)	Related Teaching, Learning And Assessment Plan	Action Required By	Options
'2024	PRJ1	ME - Gateway Project Report Plan	Project	0	360	Marketing Executive - Gateway Preparation	Trainer	Edit
'2024	AGR1	ME - Gateway EPA Agreement	EPA Agreement	0	0	Marketing Executive - Gateway Preparation	Apprentice	Edit
'2024	PD9	ME - Gateway Mock Professional Discussion	Professional Discussion	0	0	Marketing Executive - Gateway Preparation	Trainer	Edit
'2024	MCT7	ME - Gateway Mock MCT	Multiple Choice Test	0	30	Marketing Executive - Gateway Preparation	Apprentice	Edit

If the 'Action Required By' is the 'Line Manager/mentor' you will be able to click into the Learning Activity/assessment title and sign this off to send the work to the trainer.

You can also use the apprentice's portfolio to review their task list, learning journal entries and general progress on the apprenticeship programme.

Contact Us

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