

Apprenticeships in England

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) are actively supporting the development of a speech and language therapy degree apprenticeship that is being led by employers and by universities.

The RCSLT Board of Trustees has agreed apprenticeships could offer important new opportunities for career progression to those already working in healthcare settings and to the existing SLT assistant workforce. In addition, apprenticeship routes may appeal to a new cohort of students who had not previously considered speech and language therapy as a career. Flowchart 1 shows how this route towards becoming a qualified speech and language therapist (SLT) might work, and explains the different levels of apprenticeships available.

Expectations of any pre-registration apprenticeship standard

The RCSLT has an important role to play in the accreditation of all speech and language therapy pre-registration courses. The RCSLT requirements for the accreditation of any pre-registration speech and language therapy apprenticeship course will not be any different to those of existing pre-registration courses. This is likely to have implications for the design of an apprenticeship standard, as it will need to ensure that it does not preclude the possibility of future accreditation by RCSLT; in particular:

- the RCSLT will not approve any apprenticeship course for entry to the profession unless it provides at least a degree-level qualification that will capture graduate-level learning outcomes – this is therefore relevant to the level of the standard;
- any standard will need to allow for courses to be developed that will be able to adhere to curriculum guidelines published by the RCSLT, which includes international mobility under the Mutual Recognition Agreement;
- the standard will need to reflect the breadth of UK speech and language therapy practice, i.e. with clients of all ages and in all settings, and be explicit about the range of learning that needs to be demonstrated and assessed, including relating to practice-based learning;
- the apprenticeship will be of sufficient length to cover the expected learning outcomes;
- the apprenticeship will define a high-quality learning experience and support for apprentices;
- the standard will align with HCPC requirements for eligibility to register to practise as an SLT in the UK and to use the protected title.

Progress so far and next steps

Employers and universities have a crucial role to play in the development of the apprenticeship standard. We were pleased to see the positive response from them during the development to date of the apprenticeship standard. We have also been contacted by many assistants keen to study via an apprenticeship who have not previously been able to consider the traditional routes.

The trailblazer group has been working hard to develop a rigorous apprenticeship standard that will enable apprenticeship courses to be developed that meet RCSLT accreditation requirements and HCPC requirements for registration. The Group has taken as a basis the newly published RCSLT curriculum guidelines. Those have been translated into the very different format required of an apprenticeship standard. We are pleased that the consultation is now out for consultation, which closes at noon on 15th November.

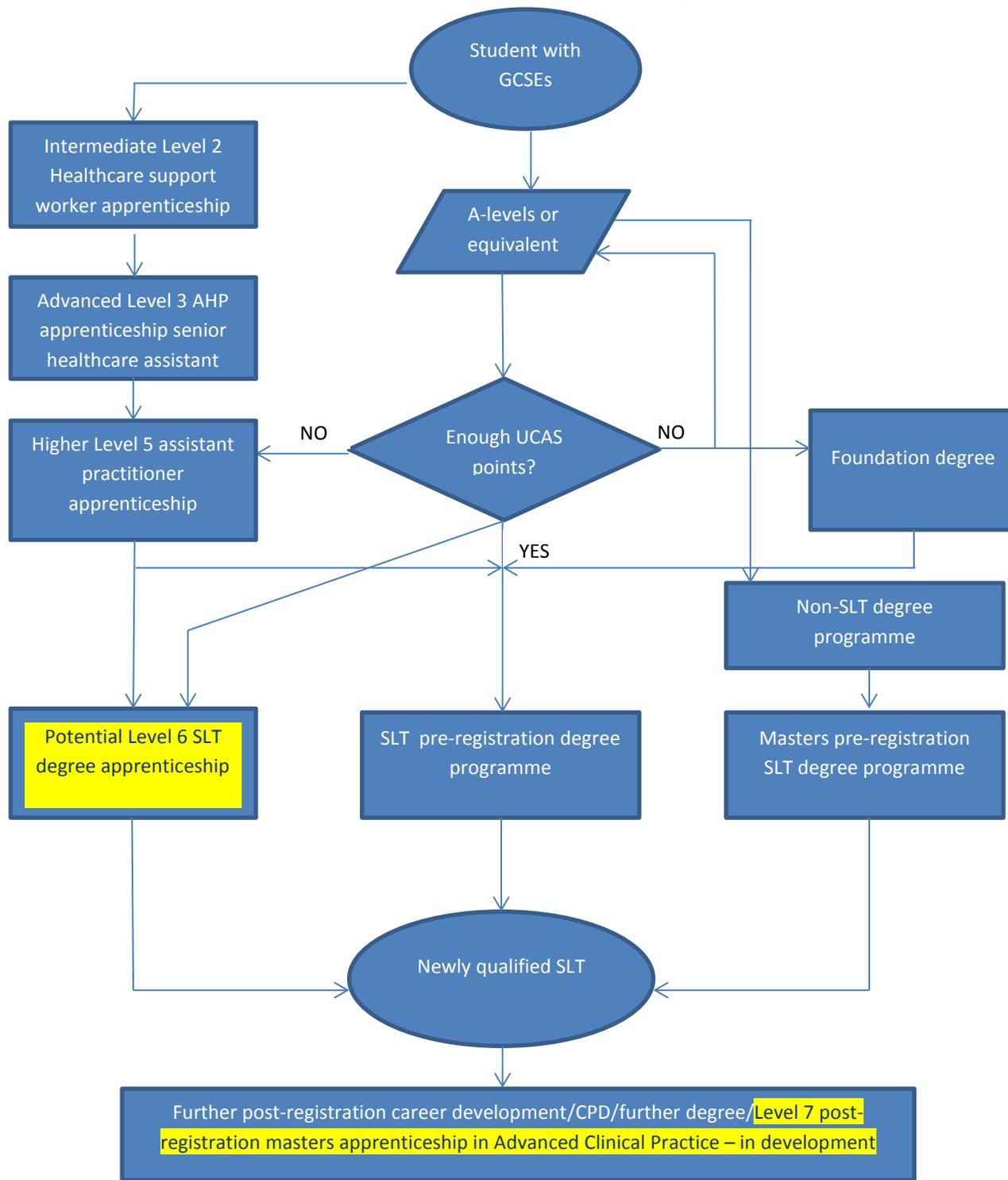
There will be a further short opportunity to comment once the standard is submitted to the Institute for Apprenticeships for approval next year.

We are excited to be working with a committed group of universities and employers in the development of the apprenticeship. The profession and potential new students have much to gain from a potential additional route to qualification, especially in the light of the removal of the NHS Bursary in England, and we are committed to supporting it.

This document will continue to evolve as policy develops on apprenticeships. Please check back for updates.

RCSLT
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Flowchart 1: Routes to SLT qualification in England (including potential future routes)



The NHS is promoting four levels of apprenticeship:

Intermediate-level apprenticeships

Intermediate-level apprentices follow work-based learning towards Level 2 - equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C. These apprenticeships may be of interest to those interested in a career as a generic assistant working in general activities to support the Allied Health Professions or nursing.

Advanced-level apprenticeships

Advanced-level apprentices follow work-based learning towards Level 3 - equivalent to 2 A-levels. This level of apprenticeship usually requires five GCSEs (grade C or above) or to have completed an intermediate-level apprenticeship, and may be of interest to those in a career as an assistant working in a specific area.

Higher-level apprenticeships

Higher-level apprentices follow work-based learning towards Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 - equivalent to a foundation degree and above. To enter this level of apprenticeship, the candidate should ideally have 2 A-levels or have completed an advanced-level apprenticeship. This would be of interest to an individual working towards entering one of the healthcare professions.

Degree-level apprenticeships

Degree-level apprentices follow work-based learning towards Levels 6 and 7 - equivalent to a full bachelors or masters degree – this may be pre- or post-registration.

FLOWCHART 2: Practical steps to developing a pre-registration degree apprenticeship in speech and language therapy

