SLT degree apprenticeships in England FAQs

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A. Apprenticeship implementation

How will the apprenticeship be implemented?
Following the approval of the standard and end-point assessment (EPA) employers and universities are starting to work together, across regions and Integrated Care Systems (ICS), to implement apprenticeships for SLT. It is not likely that there will be enough apprentices for an academic cohort from any one NHS Trust, or any STP or ICS region. We would encourage cross region discussions to work through the issues to be resolved, such as apprentice pay, banding, impact on placements and workload content.

Will there be RCSLT guidance?
Yes, the RCSLT has now published guidance for universities and employers, with an accompanying business case template, to help support the profession to deliver quality apprenticeships.

How long will the apprenticeship be?
The length of the apprenticeship will vary depending on how many days per week the apprentice attends academic learning. We anticipate that the apprenticeship will be approximately four years long if the apprentice is in academic learning for the equivalent of 1 day per week over 45 weeks of the year. It may also be shorter if the apprentice already has a relevant degree and is able to undertake a masters level qualification as part of the apprenticeship.

What will be the balance between workplace learning and study?
All apprenticeships must include a minimum of 20% of learning off the job. It can be more. It is likely that in addition to this, a student will need time for academic study, other training and for placements in other settings.
How will apprentices experience different settings?
RCSLT curriculum guidance reflects the expectation that all pre-registration programmes should provide experience of a range of different settings. The RCSLT is currently revising placement guidance and this revision will consider how apprenticeships fit in the placement model. It is due to be published in spring 2021. In providing an apprenticeship, employers will need to consider how to satisfy this requirement. Until the new guidance is available universities and employers should bear in mind the following:

- Requirements in RCSLT guidance relating to supervision, the role of practice educators and universities all apply in relation to an apprentice.
- The requirement to have placement hours in both adult and paediatric settings will apply to apprentices.
- The RCSLT will take a practical approach, ahead of the publication of any new guidance on practice education, in considering how the mandatory placement hours will be achieved in an apprenticeship.

How will apprentices be supervised in the workplace?
As with other student SLTs, apprentices will need appropriate supervision in the workplace to reflect that they are not yet qualified SLTs.

What is the cost to the employer?
The employer is responsible for paying an apprentice’s wage and giving them their contract of employment. They must pay apprentices at least the minimum wage rate for time spent training or studying for their apprenticeship, whether while at work or at university or a training organisation.

How is the apprentice’s learning funded?
Employers can get help from the Government to pay for an apprentice’s training/ tuition fees, for example that part of their training provided by a university, but not their wages. The amount received depends on whether the employer organisation pays the government apprenticeship levy or not. The Government publishes detailed guidance about the funding of apprentice learning using the apprenticeship levy. It is available at GOV.UK. There are rules on which apprentices can be funded and which cannot, what the levy funding can pay for, contractual requirements and the payment of training providers.

How much funding is available for the apprentice’s learning?
Each apprenticeship is allocated to one of 30 funding bands by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). For speech and language therapy the maximum funding has been set at £25,000 (ie this covers off the job training over the whole period of training). This sets the maximum amount of digital funds an employer who pays the levy can use towards an individual apprenticeship. It also sets the maximum price that government will ‘co-invest’ towards an individual apprenticeship, where an employer does not pay the levy.

Will SLT apprentices be supernumerary?
The RCSLT has noted the different approaches being taken to the status of apprentices in the healthcare sector and the positions taken by HCPC and other interested parties regarding this. We
think it is vital to come to a position that works for employers and allows pre-registration students the time they require for learning and that they are properly supervised when training in the workplace. This includes (but is not limited to) research, essay writing and specified learning that can take place on the job. In addition, employers will need to factor in that placements outside the normal workplace will also be required during the apprenticeship in order to ensure the breadth of experience required by the RCSLT curriculum guidance. This does not include any “study leave” the employer wishes to offer to allow the apprentice preparation time for exams.

What should I be doing as an employer?
It might be helpful to do the following to help build support in your organisation and prepare to take on apprentices:

- Find out about support available in your organisation to take on apprentices. Many organisations have apprenticeship units and understand how the processes work.
- Other AHP professions are ahead of SLT in development – how are they working on implementation in your organisation?
- Build links with AHP Councils in your area – many are discussing how placements might work across wider areas for apprenticeships.
- Identify funding to pay for an apprentice’ wages – see the RCSLT guidance for some ideas.
- The apprentice will need experience of more than one setting to ensure breadth of experience – are there opportunities to work together with other parts of NHS Trusts, independent providers or community providers to achieve this?

B. SLT apprenticeship standard and quality

Where can I find the SLT apprenticeship standard and end-point assessment?
The apprenticeship standard and end-point assessment are both available on the Skills for Health website.

Will the apprenticeship meet HCPC/ RCSLT standards?
The standard was developed with the RCSLT curriculum guidance at its core. It has also been mapped to HCPC standards of proficiency. Universities and employers will need to develop apprenticeship programmes that meet the usual processes for HCPC approval and RCSLT accreditation.

Why does the apprenticeship standard use simple language? Why doesn’t the standard use more clinical terms?
The IfATE require the standard to be written in a way that an 18-year-old school leaver can understand. The standard is our shop window for prospective apprentices to it needs to be written in an inclusive manner.

Will the apprenticeship meet Mutual Recognition Agreement standards?
The apprenticeship standard was drafted to be in line with the RCSLT curriculum guidance and is mapped to HCPC standards. We believe it will meet the MRA requirements.
How will quality be measured?
The EPA sets out both internal and external quality assurance arrangements for the apprenticeship. The EPA must be carried out by an independent party. The EPA will set out the skills, knowledge and experience that we would expect assessors to have and as the relevant professional body we would expect that person to be registered with the HCPC as a speech and language therapist. In addition, we understand that for an integrated degree apprenticeship the usual higher education quality assurance processes will also apply.

How will apprentices be assessed for professional competence?
In addition to completing a degree (following normal degree assessment processes), the apprentice will also be required to pass an end-point assessment (EPA). The assessment must be independent of the employer, must be carried out by an SLT and must assess the duties, knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard. The EPA will consist of a live observation of practice with a question-and-answer session afterwards, plus a professional discussion.

C. How was the apprenticeship standard and end-point assessment developed?

The trailblazer
An SLT apprenticeship trailblazer group developed the SLT degree apprenticeship standard and end-point assessment (EPA). The following organisations were involved:

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<td>Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust</td>
<td>Derbyshire Community Health Care NHS Foundation Trust</td>
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<td>Your Healthcare CIC</td>
<td>ChatterBug Speech and Language Therapy</td>
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<td>Sarah Buckley Therapies Ltd</td>
<td>Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE) Community Interest Company</td>
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<td>The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>Barts Health NHS Trust Outpatient Therapies</td>
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<td>King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>Birmingham City University</td>
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<td>South Tyneside Foundation Trust</td>
<td>University of East Anglia</td>
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<td>Two Can Talk Speech and Language Therapy</td>
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<td>Manchester Metropolitan University</td>
<td>The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists</td>
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<td>Skills for Health</td>
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What was the role of the trailblazer group?
The role of the trailblazer group was to develop a standard and assessment plans for a SLT degree apprenticeship for approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). It was not to design the implementation or deal with the funding or development of courses.

What consultation was there on the standard and EPA?
Skills for Health issued a consultation in October 2018 on the draft standard. It asked if the standard sets out all the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by a newly qualified speech and language therapist. The standard was been developed with the RCSLT curriculum guidance as its basis. There was a further consultation on the EPA in March 2019.
Who approved the apprenticeship standard and EPA?
The IfATE approved both the occupational standard and the End Point Assessment (EPA). The Secretary of State for Education decided how much funding will be available to pay for an apprentice’s tuition off the job.

What rules are there about apprenticeships?
The formal requirements for developing an apprenticeship can be found on the IfATE website. Information about employing an apprentice is available at GOV.UK.

RCSLT
January 2021

Notes and glossary

1 HCPC – the Health and Care Professions Council – they are the regulatory body for speech and language therapists.

2 Mutual Recognition Agreement – The Mutual Recognition of Credentials Agreement, known as ‘the MRA,’ is an agreement between the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), Speech Pathology Australia (SPA), the Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT), the New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists Association (NZSTA). The agreement enables full RCSLT members to join any of the others.

3 Trailblazer group – the group of employers, universities, RCSLT and Skills for Health who came together to develop the SLT apprenticeship. They are responsible for jointly drafting the standard and the end-point assessment.

4 RCSLT Curriculum Guidance – set out the curriculum for pre-registration training for speech and language therapists.

5 Apprenticeship standard – a standard is a short and concise document that describes what someone who is competent in the occupation does – ‘duties’, and the ‘knowledge, skills and behaviours’ required to carry out the duties competently, along with any qualifications that must be taken and alignment with professional recognition if applicable.

6 End-point assessment – all apprentices must take an independent assessment at the end of their training to confirm that they have achieved occupational competence.