



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 have been working 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, RCSLT has published [guidance for universities and employers](#), with an accompanying business case template, to help support the profession to deliver quality apprenticeships.

Which universities are offering the apprenticeship?

Currently, The University of Essex are starting delivery of the apprenticeship from autumn 2022 and Birmingham City University from January 2023. The University of Sheffield are planning to start in autumn 2023. Other universities are still considering their plans and several have worked closely with us developing the standard and in taking part at recent workshops.

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:

- Identify the skills gaps of your workforce and their current qualification level relating to their role. Think about any vacancies that could be considered as a future apprentice role.
- Estimate how much salary funding you have to spend on apprenticeship roles. Find out about support available in your organisation to take on apprentices.
- Many organisations have apprenticeship units and understand how the processes work. If you work in the NHS your Trust will have an 'Apprentice lead', they normally work within the Training or HR functions of Trusts. Your apprenticeship lead will be able to help you access apprenticeship levy and start apprentices on programme.
- Other AHP professions are ahead of SLT in development - how are they working on implementation in your organisation?
- Build links with AHP Councils, AHP faculties and the ICS in your area – many are discussing how placements might work across wider areas for apprenticeships;
- Your HEE regional contact (see details at the end) may also be able to help you make these links, even for non-NHS organisations;
- Identifying funding to pay for an apprentice's wages – see RCSLT guidance on 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. How will the apprenticeship work?

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. Universities are likely to look at different models, for example one is looking at a foundation degree with SLT specialisation followed by the pre-registration degree.

What will the entry qualifications be?

It will be up to the employer and university offering the apprenticeship to decide, but we would not expect them to be significantly different to current entry requirements, which would normally be 3 A-levels or their equivalents, for example BTECs. This may be variable and be considered holistically with the level of work experience as well for example. For those with a previous apprenticeship the employer and university would need to consider in the context of the level and relevance of that apprenticeship. HEE can help with mapping different qualifications to UCAS points – see regional contacts at the end of this document. In addition, if the apprentice does not have either GCSE A*-C or Functional Skills level 2 maths and English Language, Government rules require them to obtain it before being allowed to take the End Point Assessment.

Apprentices who already have a non-SLT degree?

An employer and the university has to assess and quantify what relevant prior learning an apprentice has at the start of the apprenticeship. They will also need to meet the HEI specific

admissions criteria. A prior degree will not in the great majority of cases prove an obstacle to securing levy funding (this is dependent on the learning being new) given the unique nature of the SLT profession. In addition, if you have a relevant degree it may be possible to do the apprenticeship at masters level (if there are universities who eventually offer this route) in a shorter time than the expected four years.

Transfer of previous module credits?

This would need to be discussed with the university providing the academic learning on an individual basis.

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.

What are placement requirements for an apprentice?

RCSLT Curriculum Guidance reflects the expectation that all pre-registration programmes should provide experience of a range of different settings. RCSLT's new [practice-based learning guidance](#) covers how apprenticeships fit in the placement model. Apprentices will need to achieve 150 sessions of supervised practice-based learning before presenting for their end-point assessment. 100 of the 150 sessions must be overseen by a qualified SLT. In line with nursing and other AHP apprentice programmes, apprentices may remain with their own employer for one of their practice placements but this must be in a different area and under different supervision from their usual job role. This is aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest and to endorse the principle that apprentices need the opportunity for objective assessment on practice placement. Please see the RCSLT guidance for further details.

My organisation cannot provide all the placement settings required, how will my apprentice access these? What would apprenticeship placement rotation look like? Who is responsible?

Local and regional discussions, including the university, will be key to ensuring the apprenticeship placements can work. The employer will have a different role than with a traditional student as the employer of the apprentice. We know from other programmes, both in healthcare and outside (think of teacher training) that rotations of apprentices across different setting can work. Some universities are planning to look at rotations across their apprentice cohort. Both the employers and universities will need to work together on the details and to solve any problems at a local level. Working groups may be helpful to look at contracting issues (eg honorary contracts for apprentices with a different employer or MOU arrangements?). RCSLT's [practice based learning guidance](#) sets out in more detail the requirements for different types of placements in adult, child and other settings.

What is a suitable workplace role for an SLT apprentice?

It is in the nature of an apprenticeship that employees are an apprentice of that profession. Therefore an SLT apprentice must be contracted to work in an SLT role and be supervised by a qualified SLT. At the start the role it is likely to be similar to that of an SLT assistant, but will develop

as the apprentice moves through the apprenticeship. RCSLT has received a number of queries about whether certain roles are appropriate and in the points below we explore the issues around each:

- SLTA in a school – it may be possible to restructure an SLTA role in a school to that of an SLT apprentice, but it should be noted that the apprentice would need access to SLT supervision at all times and to provide the on the job learning required from an apprenticeship. In addition the apprentice would need to attend the required placements in other settings. This is not optional.
- Teacher or teaching assistant in a school – it is not possible to remain a teacher or teaching assistant and do the SLT apprenticeship. It is necessary to be employed in an SLT role – see above.
- Multi-therapy assistant – it would be necessary to be contracted specifically as an SLT apprentice, so the multi-therapy assistant role would likely need adjustment so the apprentice is focussed on SLT in order to meet the apprenticeship standard.

How many hours would the apprentice be working on the job?

We estimate that over a 4 year BSc course that the apprentice would be working on the job for around 1000 hours per year (approximately 3 days per week). This may vary depending on whether the apprenticeship is a BSc or MSc or where the course structure is different. Separate to that is the time an apprentice will be on placement or in academic learning.

How will apprentices be supervised in the workplace?

As with other SLT students, apprentices will need appropriate supervision in the workplace to reflect that they are not yet qualified SLTs. In addition apprentices should normally also have a mentor, who is ideally not also their line manager or supervisor, although it is recognised that this may not always be possible.

Is there an ongoing commitment to continue to take apprentices once you have started?

No, it is up to you as an employer to decide how many apprentices you can support. Universities will however need a clear idea of your planned commitment so they can build into their own projections and business cases too.

C. Costs

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 that part of their academic learning provided by a university, but not their wages. The amount received depends on whether the employer organisation pays the government apprenticeship levy or not (all organisations with a pay bill of £3 million or more pay into the levy). The Government publishes detailed guidance about the funding of apprentice learning using the apprenticeship levy.

It is available [here](#). 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. Some universities have apprenticeship hubs that can help and advise you with the funding process.

My organisation doesn't pay into the Government apprenticeship levy, can I still receive funding to pay for my apprentice's learning?

Yes. If you don't pay the apprenticeship levy you can reserve funding, where the government pays 95% of the training costs and the employer pays the remaining 5%. Some universities have apprenticeship services that can actively support you to reserve funds.

Levy paying employers can also transfer some of their annual levy to other employers if they wish. These transfers cover 100% of the training costs of the apprenticeship (you still need to cover salary).

How much funding is available for the apprentice's learning?

Each apprenticeship is allocated to one of 30 funding bands by the IfATE. For SLT 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? Are there backfill costs?

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 practice learning guidance. This does not include any "study leave" the employer wishes to offer to allow the apprentice preparation time for exams. At present the NHS does not provide backfill costs for the time that the apprentice is in academic learning. RCSLT has flagged this as a significant issue with HEE, as have other AHPs.

Will I need to pay for the travel costs to university of my apprentice?

It is up to you to decide what travel costs you can support for your apprentice. They will not be provided by the HEI. Those will obviously depend on a range of factors such as distance and cost of fares, whether the academic learning is in blocks or day release and whether any of the learning is virtual. Whatever you decide you should ensure the apprentice knows what the position is before you both formally agree the apprenticeship.

D. SLT apprenticeship standard and quality

Where can I find the SLT apprenticeship standard and End Point Assessment?

They are available [here](#).

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 HCPCⁱ 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 so it needs to be written in an inclusive manner.

Will the apprenticeship meet Mutual Recognition Agreementⁱⁱ 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, 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), which is integrated into their degree.

E. How was the apprenticeship standard and End Point Assessment developed?**The trailblazer**

An SLT apprenticeship trailblazerⁱⁱⁱ group developed the SLT degree apprenticeship standard and End Point Assessment (EPA). The organisations involved were those below:

2gether NHS Foundation Trust	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust	Derbyshire Community Health Care NHS Foundation Trust
Your Healthcare CIC	ChatterBug Speech and Language Therapy
Sarah Buckley Therapies Ltd	Anglian Community Enterprise (ACE) Community Interest Company
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust	Barts Health NHS Trust Outpatient Therapies
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Birmingham City University
South Tyneside Foundation Trust	University of East Anglia

Two Can Talk Speech and Language Therapy	University of Reading
Manchester Metropolitan University	The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Skills for Health	

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^{iv} as its basis. There was a further consultation on the End Point Assessment in March 2019.

Who approved the apprenticeship standard and EPA?

The IfATE approved both the occupational standard^v and the End Point Assessment (EPA)^{vi}. 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.

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/developing-new-apprenticeships/developing-new-apprenticeship-standards-overview/>

Information about employing an apprentice is on gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

F. HEE regional contacts

Your HEE regional relationship manager will be able to help you identify useful apprenticeship contacts across your region. They can help you with everything from understand apprenticeship to procuring provision to establishing apprenticeships in your organisation as part of your long term workforce strategy.

London – Jennie Stone – jennifer.stone@hee.nhs.uk

EOE – Rob Brooks – rob.brooks@hee.nhs.uk

SW – James Orpin-Wright – james.orpin-wright@hee.nhs.uk

SE – Elaine Lancaster – elaine.lancaster@hee.nhs.uk

NE & Y – Fay Lane – fay.lane@hee.nhs.uk

NW – Gemma Hall – gemma.hall@hee.nhs.uk

Midlands – Liz Sahu – liz.sahu@hee.nhs.uk

Notes and glossary

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

ⁱⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱⁱ 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.

^{iv} RCSLT Curriculum Guidance – set out the curriculum for pre-registration training for speech and language therapists.

^v 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.

^{vi} End Point Assessment - all apprentices must take an independent assessment at the end of their training to confirm that they have achieved occupational competence.