

POSITION STATEMENT: IFATE REVIEW OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS - CONSULTATION

OVERVIEW

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) opened its consultation on the ‘future of degree apprenticeships’ on 16 July, with this closing on 16 September 2021¹. In advance of the launch, **CIC’s Apprenticeship and Skills Reference Group** (ASRG) discussed IFATE’s degree apprenticeship policy proposals. It considered their effect on current and future construction and built environment occupational apprenticeship standards. This included end point assessment and implications for professional recognition for apprentices and their employers. The ASRG membership contains significant employer representation, with members also being active trailblazer group chairs or members, and as such, we are responding with strong support from employers alongside professional, statutory and regulatory bodies within construction and built environment. This has resulted in preparing a position statement in order to develop an agreed collective response to the proposed changes within the IFATE consultation on degree apprenticeships.

BACKGROUND

Degree apprenticeships are defined as apprenticeships that have either a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree mandated within them. Degree apprenticeships can be structured in one of two ways – **integrated** and **non-integrated**, currently as determined by the trailblazer group and set out on the occupational standard and in the end-point assessment (EPA) plan:

Integrated: as part of the overall degree qualification awarded, the higher education provider carries out the end point assessment in line with the EPA plan;

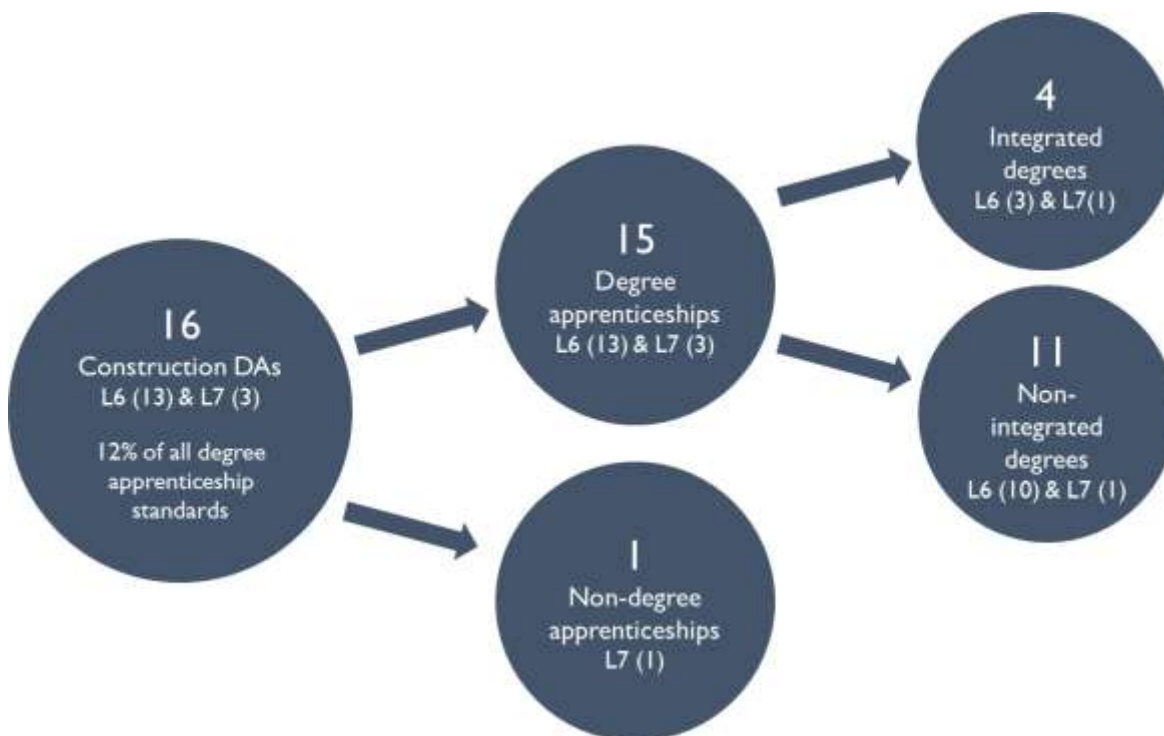
Non-integrated: end point assessment of the knowledge skills & behaviours (KSBs) is carried out by an external body in line with the EPA plan; this external body may or may not be a professional or regulatory body, and degree completion is needed prior to EPA taking place.

Since the development and introduction of degree apprenticeships in 2014, employer ‘trailblazer’ groups across all sectors have developed over 134 apprenticeships at level 6 (equivalent to experienced and occupationally competent graduates) and level 7 (equivalent to experienced and occupationally competent post-graduates), of which 93 are classed as degree apprenticeships.

In the construction and built environment route, there are currently 16 apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7, of which 15 are classed as ‘degree apprenticeships’ (that is, apprenticeships containing a degree qualification) and only one ‘non-degree’ apprenticeship at level 7 [Figure 1].

¹ IFATE (2021) Degree apprenticeships consultation, Consultations, 16 July 2021 [online]. Available at: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/reviews-and-consultations/consultations/> [accessed 19 July 2021]

Figure 1: Current Landscape of Degree Apprenticeships (DAs) in Construction and Built Environment Sector



Whilst many other sectors have opted for the integrated approach (end point assessment of occupational competence being part of the degree itself), only four (4) of the 15-degree apprenticeships in the construction and built environment route are of this type.

The remaining 11 are classified as non-integrated, 25% of the total (43) apprenticeships available using this model. In the case of construction and built environment, the end point assessment (EPA) is often carried out by a professional body, and the award of the apprenticeship certificate also linked to the achievement of regulated and/or protected titles, and entry onto a professional register in this sector, for example, Chartered Surveyor, Chartered Town Planner, or Incorporated Engineer.

It is evident that employers in this sector place significant trust in the profession to carry out EPA of apprentices through the non-integrated degree apprenticeship model, with 8 of the 15 degree apprenticeships in place having a direct relationship with the profession via accredited degrees and EPA, with the final assessment of competence directly aligned to the professional registers in place. Five others also utilise professionally accredited degrees in order to meet the pre-requisite professional registration requirements, enabling graduating apprentices to move forward with their professional development journey.

This approach provides employers with the assurances they are seeking from an apprenticeship model, these being:

- Apprentices gain both a degree qualification and a route to professional registration through EPA with recognised and regulated bodies;
- Professional accreditation of the degree, and now accredited degree apprenticeships, serves to assure employers of the relevance, breadth and

depth, and quality of the underpinning education and training received by apprentices, with this being assessed by those competent to do so;

- A direct line of sight to the professional registers is provided for completing apprentices, which in return:
 - offers employers a means to readily demonstrate the competence of their workforce to their customers, clients and to those assessing their organisational competence (such as in ISO 9001 or ISO 14001 assessment);
 - offers apprentices a valuable and highly sought streamlined route to enter the profession and onto their registers through EPA; and
 - professional registration is granted through those with a charter to do so, on behalf of the profession, and in the interest of protecting society;
- Duplication of competence assessment is removed through the inclusion of the professional bodies as recognised EPA bodies; and
- Assessment of competence at the end of the apprenticeship is carried out by independent and trained professionals, who are themselves professionally registered abiding by a ready code of ethics, practice and conduct. This assures ongoing professional expertise and competence through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the minimisation of Conflict of Interest (Col).

CONSTRUCTION AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT TRAILBLAZER EMPLOYER EXPERIENCE

In order to mandate any qualifications within any apprenticeship standard, trailblazer groups have had to prove that the qualification(s) listed in the apprenticeship, complies with one of the following three criteria:

1. Regulatory requirement for the occupation;
or
2. Requirement of a professional body for professional registration relevant to the occupation;
or
3. Required by employers in the labour market for the occupation on such a widespread basis that an apprentice would be significantly disadvantaged without it. This is known as the 'hard sift' criterion.

In the case of construction and built environment, the requirements for professional registration have proven successful in terms of employers being able to mandate qualifications within apprenticeships, not only at undergraduate and postgraduate level degrees, but at all levels of apprenticeship delivery.

It is clear that employers in the construction and built environment are confident of the professional standards available and the opportunity and ability to link apprenticeships to statutory and regulated professions, and the broader professional titles offered by Chartered bodies, has been welcomed.

This chimes with the wishes of employers who responded to the 'Build back better'² report in October 2020, where recommendation 7 to Government from employers stated:

“Apprentices must have their competence assessed and recognised through professional registration which also proactively promotes routes into highly valued careers which often allow employers to demonstrate competence globally”.

CIC, UCEM & TAC 2020: 15

However, it has not always been straight forward for employers and the professions to gain the support of IFATE when seeking to mandate and fund qualifications:

- Employers have voiced considerable frustration over the lengths they have had to go to when presenting information and evidence to IFATE to secure mandated qualifications despite the published grounds of acceptance;
- Employers report that they had to prove to IFATE that a qualification must be taken in advance of the EPA gateway in order for the assessment of professional competence to commence;
- Employers report they have been challenged by IFATE to consider if the EPA of the apprenticeship, in particular for degree apprenticeships, can be integrated in preference to non-integrated modes of operation;
- Employers seeking to align EPA to professional review (particularly for regulated and protected professional titles) have reported frustration over the additional criteria and regulation required for EPA assessment over and above the professional review process; and
- In some cases, the funding band eventually allocated to some apprenticeships has led to significant lack of provision being developed and available to employers and apprentices. This reduces opportunities for employers to recruit the apprentices they need; employers need to be assured that high quality provision and assessment is available and funded appropriately.

One employer stated:

“the processes that trailblazer groups must go through to review and update live apprenticeships is no less cumbersome than any new proposal we have put forward in the last two years. There remains little regard for the implications that seemingly small policy details have on the eventual implementation, delivery or assessment of apprenticeships, particularly where employers are seeking to align outcomes of the end point assessment with professional registration”.

CIC, UCEM and TAC 2020: 15

Employers, with the support of the professional and regulatory bodies in the construction and built environment, need to have confidence in the apprenticeships being put forward to IFATE:

² CIC, UCEM and TAC (2020) Build back better: Improving the apprenticeship system to better support infrastructure [online]. Available at: <https://www.cic.org.uk/publications/> [accessed 01 May 2021]

- they are both seeking to ensure the high-quality and availability of the combined education and training that must be undertaken as part of an apprenticeship; and
- the independent assessment of the apprentices' competence, at the end of their journey, is of value to both the employer and the apprentice.

In this, employers and the professions are in alignment with IFATE and the Government's vision for a high quality, sustainable world-beating apprenticeship system that allows a more diverse access to the professions and increases productivity.

THE REVIEW OF DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

In response to feedback from some employers and higher education (HE) providers, IFATE has now embarked upon a review of degree apprenticeships, with a view to:

- Ensure that the Institute's policies and processes better recognise the role that degrees and graduate status play in the labour market;
- Provide a comprehensive development and approval framework for the creation and revision of degree apprenticeships; and
- Ensure that degree apprenticeships are a distinctive offer that secures the best of apprenticeships and the best of higher education.

In summer 2020, IFATE brought together a group of 6 employers (one from the construction and built environment sector) and 6 HE providers who, on behalf of IFATE, now propose five recommendations in order to support and achieve improved degree apprenticeships.

Before open consultation on these recommendations, CIC brought together its Apprenticeships and Skills Reference Group (ASRG)³, made of industry and professional bodies, to discuss the proposed recommendations and presented its initial feedback for IFATE's further consideration. The five changes that are now proposed by IFATE are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Changes proposed by IFATE Degree Apprenticeships Review
IFATE will amend its mandatory qualifications policy so that it better recognises the currency of degrees , including where there are no specific subject discipline requirements for entry to an occupation. In doing this, if they wish to, employers will be able to mandate degrees in apprenticeship standards that will be occupationally-specific for graduate-entry occupations at level 6 and level 7.
Degrees within a degree apprenticeship will fully integrate with the on-the-job training and development that apprentices experience . Providers should therefore ensure that off-the-job training (the degree) complements and integrates with on-the-job experience in the workplace (provided by the employer). This expectation will inform the ways in which degree apprenticeships are developed by trailblazer groups, and we will also provide better guidance about how employers and training providers are expected to integrate training delivered on- and off-the-job. This reflects good

³ See Annex A for ASRG Terms of reference, members and other consultees.

practice already delivered in many degree apprenticeships, and we would like to make this the norm.

In support of change 2, **IFATE will require that the learning outcomes of any degree mandated in an apprenticeship standard will reflect the requirements of the occupation through alignment with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) in the employer-specified occupational standard.** As with change 2, this is already best practice in some degree apprenticeships. This will require HE providers to develop and validate degrees specifically aligned to the apprenticeship standard, noting that this may already be the case for some regulated occupations.

Changes 2 and 3 will align degree achievement and learning for occupational competence. As a result, **IFATE will approve degree apprenticeships only where the end-point assessment (EPA) of occupational competence in a degree apprenticeship will integrate with the final assessment of the degree.** The objective is to ensure that neither the degree nor the apprenticeship can be awarded in isolation from the other, with the EPA acting as a capstone for both.

IFATE will require the integrated EPA of all degree apprenticeships to include assessment by trained individuals with appropriate occupational and industry expertise. All assessment panels will be required to have at least one suitable individual who is independent of the HE provider. In line with existing good practice in many HE providers, this will assist with securing the occupational specificity of assessment by mitigating the potential conflict of interests present in integrated degree apprenticeship assessment and drawing in an occupational perspective.

Whilst these changes are proposed in this consultation, further information about how these changes will be implemented and translated to work in reality is not yet available.

WHEN WOULD THESE IMPLICATIONS BE REALISED?

IFATE's construction route summit on 24 March 2021 heralded the start of a new sector review process, trailblazer groups with older standards being asked to come forward to discuss their plans for the updating of, and revisions to, their standards and EPA plans (often combined with a review of the funding band allocated when initially approved).

As early adopters of degree apprenticeships, some as far back as 2015, many apprenticeships in construction and built environment now need formal review due to their age, their mismatch with current IFATE policy and the quality framework that has since been implemented, and simply to reflect changes to professional standards that have occurred since their publication.

Based on IFATE's published implementation timeline, the results of this consultation will be agreed and communicated in Autumn 2021, with all new apprenticeship developments and revisions having to be compliant with revised requirements from Spring 2022.

This means that many of the degree apprenticeships in the construction and built environment sector will be some of the first to be impacted by the outcomes of the degree apprenticeship review, several of which are already planned for late 2021 and early 2022.

Whilst some trailblazer groups are in a position to come forward, other groups have lost chairs, members moved onto other roles, or have disbanded completely; the need to review apprenticeships combined with the challenges of changing degree

apprenticeship policy will need greater coordination and support from Government, via IFATE, to achieve successful outcomes.

Employers have already voiced the need for this support to the CIC, but also recognise that they must remain in the driving seat of apprenticeship development and review to ensure the apprenticeships remain fit for purpose.

In the 'Build back better'⁴ report (2020), it was recommended that:

“The Government (IFATE) should consider how it can better resource employers to develop and review apprenticeships in a more cost effective and quicker manner”.

CIC, UCEM & TAC 2020: 13 (Recommendation 6)

“Employers must remain in the driving seat of apprenticeship reform, taking the lead in the creating, development and review of apprenticeships, ensuring they are right for business”.

CIC, UCEM & TAC 2020: 15 (Recommendation 8)

OUR RESPONSE

The CIC, via its Apprenticeships and Skills Reference Group (ASRG), has reviewed the IFATE proposals being made in relation to Degree Apprenticeships from both an employer as well as professional, statutory and regulatory body perspective. The ASRG welcomes:

- IFATE’s stance on employer leadership, embedding greater quality, reducing burden of assessment on apprentices, employers and the public purse, support for the development and security of the apprenticeship brand, and its approach to greater engagement and interaction with the construction and built environment sector employers and its professional bodies;
- the recognition from IFATE through this review that degree apprenticeships are distinctive and different from other apprenticeships and standard degrees;
- the need to ensure independence of EPA using appropriate occupational and industry experts, whilst recognising that more needs to be done collectively to raise the completion rate of the mandatory EPA (demonstrating the value and prestige that this process can bring to employers and apprentices); and
- that more needs to be done to more clearly articulate the benefits of professional registration and the engagement of the professions in the apprenticeship development, delivery and assessment processes; how this can support apprentices with access into and progression through the professional registers; and how EPA can be more proactively combined with the professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies in construction and built environment for the benefit of employers and apprentices.

However, the ASRG, in consideration of the changes being proposed by IFATE, would like to raise the following concerns and potential solutions.

Whilst IFATE’s first recommended change (Table 1, change ‘1’) aims to establish and safeguard the ‘currency of degrees’ and their relation to graduate occupations, through

⁴ CIC, UCEM and TAC (2020) Build back better: Improving the apprenticeship system to better support infrastructure [online]. Available at: <https://www.cic.org.uk/publications/> [accessed 01 May 2021]

the mandation of degree qualifications for those occupations with clear graduate status, it must be made clear that a degree qualification is only part of the process in developing occupational, and ultimately professional, competence.

In this, we welcome the need to change the manner in which HE providers approach degree apprenticeships in order to address and better integrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) stated in the apprenticeship standards, in order that they are promoted and achieved coherently, and are quality assured appropriately within the HE providers validation and performance measuring mechanisms (Table 1, change '2').

In the case of the degree apprenticeships put forward by employers in the construction and built environment sector, they are looking to assure themselves of both the occupational and professional competence of their apprentice workforce.

The ASRG would very much welcome the addition of professional development as a formal part of such apprenticeships: this would ensure that both the occupational and professional currency of a competent apprentice workforce is recognised, often at an international level, and for this to be embedded into the guidance that is proposed.

Whilst this approach is welcomed, our members report that the underpinning degrees that employers have used within the apprenticeship standards have changed very little since the introduction of apprenticeships. When validating degree apprenticeships, HE providers often use existing programmes and map them against the KSBs presented in the standard.

Whilst employers in this sector are often comfortable with the knowledge, or the learning outcomes delivered from a traditional degree, in part due to the strong professional accreditation process in place, the gaps between the completion of the degree and the degree apprenticeships are often less well known and publicised.

In practice, this often presents and leads to gaps that the broader apprenticeship will need to deliver against, with these gaps most often relating to the need to encourage and embed a supportive work-based learning package that is clearly underpinned by a tripartite agreement: a partnership between an apprentice, the training provider and employer, with each party supporting and taking a pro-active part in the development of competence, as outlined by employers through the KSBs, prior to EPA.

The ASRG welcomes the inclusion of a minimal level of learning outcomes integrated into all degree apprenticeships as stated in Table 1, change '3'; but to truly support the development of competence, HE providers will need to move beyond learning and into robust competence development through truly open and transparent education and training programmes where there is clarity on what is expected of each party. Whilst there is a minimum of 20% off the job training required for all apprenticeships, employers need to know that they are part of the training agreement and must be prepared to support and develop their apprentices accordingly.

Furthermore, the difficulty in this approach will be for employer trailblazer groups either developing new or reviewing the KSBs within the standards ensuring that is fit for final assessment. Both learning outcomes and KSBs must be open to a wide range of employers, deliverable by education providers, and assessable in a coherent and cost-effective manner. If employers were to review the degree apprenticeships in place, and list not only the competence, but learning outcomes, required of an apprenticeship, it is felt that the standard and the EPA would become unfeasible, particularly for programmes that are designed to deliver competence to a novice entrant over a period of years.

To truly embrace the development of high quality and employer endorsed learning outcomes from degree apprenticeships in this sector, many employers are not only asking for learning opportunities, but go that step beyond occupational competence, into occupational and professional competence, through professionally recognised and assessed apprenticeships.

Whilst a traditional degree delivers an educated graduate, the level of occupational competence can be minimal: employers are expected to develop and support the transition of a graduate into the workplace: this often takes the form of embedding employability skills, contextualised understanding and development of the learning outcomes delivered in the full time degree, and a time period for the graduate to establish themselves and the competences needed to be occupationally competent and routinely working at this level. Employers with well-established graduate development programmes cite between 2 and 4 years post-graduation to achieve the same outcome as an apprenticeship.

If employer trailblazer groups are required to reduce the duration of an apprenticeship to reflect degree learning outcomes alone, employers do not feel this appropriate or fair to apprentices. The considered 'co-development' of apprentice competence must be undertaken in a manner that will provide employers with the confidence that a competent professional will be achieved by the end of the apprenticeship.

Employers in this sector have been long term proponents of the already available part-time degree method of education combined with working on the job, with many of these programmes taken into account when developing the apprenticeships now in place; even through this route, part-time and degree apprentices achieve competence before their full-time graduate counterparts.

With the responsibilities expected of all employees working in this sector stepping beyond the traditional full-time educational pathways delivered by HE providers, the typical content (learning outcomes) and duration proposed by trailblazer groups reflects the realities of an increasingly regulated sector requiring competence to be independently verified and demonstrated.

This is also supported by the long-established and well-respected professional bodies in the sector, which have assured the quality of education and training over many years, utilisation and integrating its trained and experienced assessors to provide trusted independent assessment of competence.

With this well respected professional and regulated sector in place, the ASRG welcomes the review into the methods of EPA, and the need to ensure that employers, and apprentices, respect and value this process as is proposed in Table 1, changes '4' and '5'.

Whilst we agree that neither degree certificate nor degree apprenticeship certificate should be obtained separately from one another, the ASRG disagrees that the full integration of EPA into degree assessment is a preferred route in this sector, and other solutions should be considered that are fully employer endorsed.

As we have already seen, the trailblazer groups and the professional and regulatory bodies in this sector are committed to EPA and its external quality assurance (EQA), but the majority of degree apprenticeships, and many below this level, are directly linked to regulated and protected professional titles, with many stating this outcome is the one needed for industry beyond a degree, or degree apprenticeship, certificate.

The ASRG recognises the need for high quality provision to be incentivised and cost effective, but our employers need to be assured of the quality of the outcome of an

apprenticeship, via a trusted EPA experience. However, there are reports on the lack of uptake of the EPA after an apprentice has graduated from their degree: this is a real concern not only to IFATE, but to all HE providers and employers. This concern is not solely restricted to degree apprenticeships, but affects apprenticeships at all levels of delivery.

Given that IFATE proposes to mandate an integrated EPA model for all degree apprenticeships, a response that is potentially being used to address non-completion, there does need to be clear evidence that non-completion is an issue for degree apprenticeships.

As degree apprenticeships were only introduced in 2015, with those in construction and built environment being of a significant delivery length (typically 4 to 5 years to complete), apprentices are only now coming through to their EPA. With little publicly available data on completion and non-completion of degree apprenticeships, it is hard to evaluate the scale of the issue. It will also be important to distinguish between apprentices withdrawing before completion of the degree, which may be for a number of reasons, and those withdrawing after receiving their degree certificate.

In discussion with the HE providers in the sector, they report they are compelled to provide the degree certificate despite the significant and real financial and performance penalties that affect the training provider, but they report this across all apprenticeships, and not solely for construction and built environment apprenticeships currently in operation.

It is now known by some trailblazer groups in this sector, that the messaging relating to degree apprenticeships often relates to the completion of the degree itself, and not the completion of the KSBs stated in the standard and EPA; we must again stress that degrees and degree apprenticeships are not cognate.

Furthermore, some employers are using the apprenticeship system poorly: many are using the apprenticeship levy, or public apprenticeship funds, to simply support part time degrees. This results in apprentices leaving their apprenticeship prior to the start or completion of the EPA, or apprentices not being provided with the time their employer committed to at the start to complete the entire apprenticeship; both of which leave HE providers out of pocket as they stand to lose 20% of the funds locked in the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) digital account until EPA is completed. HE providers are also further penalised in terms of their completion and other performance statistics. Employers using the system poorly should be held to account, as they stand to lose little in terms of finance when compared to the costs of a full-time or part-time degree model, which will affect the brand of apprenticeships in the longer term.

We share the view that good education and training providers should not be unfairly penalised for poor employer practice.

Whilst good practice guidance is needed to truly reinforce the value and currency of an apprenticeship above that of a degree, the ASRG would welcome more open performance monitoring of training providers (and the employers themselves via the digital system) to ensure poor practice is identified and addressed promptly.

As apprenticeships are in part public funded, there must be greater consideration that employers and apprentices are made more aware of the mandatory EPA requirements of an apprenticeship, and that the ESFA enforces penalties on the appropriate party where non-completion is occurring, and where repeating or prevalent, restrictions from taking on further apprentices using any apprenticeship levy or public funds obstructed.

The ASRG is however, open and welcoming of IFATE's stance on the introduction of 'regulated professions aligned EPA', which was introduced in October 2020⁵ for health-related apprenticeships. This approach to simplifying and strengthening how EPA works for apprenticeships where the statutory regulator has an established professional competency test is likely to be utilised by the employers in this sector, where regulated and/or protected professional titles are sought, reducing the burden of assessment on apprentices, and protecting public funds.

However, the current restrictions to this model need to be discussed much more broadly with employers and the professions in the construction and built environment sector, to ensure the outcomes sought by employers for apprenticeships are secured.

Whilst integrated and aligned EPA may be useful to the employers of architecture apprenticeships which align to the statutory regulator, the Architects Registration Board (ARB), there will need to be some flexibility for the professions, who are the only organisation that can carry out the assessment of, and confer protected titles to, using regulated and established tests of professional competency.

In terms of the proposed changes to independent assessors with occupational expertise (Table 1, change '5'), the ASRG very much welcomes this inclusion.

From the EPA plans already in operation in the construction and built environment sector, this is already routine for degree apprenticeship standards, and other standards at different levels where professional bodies are engaged.

Competent and independently recognised industry experts, who are also required to maintain their competence through appropriate CPD, as well as assessor training, are routine specifications embedded within the EPA plans approved by IFATE.

Should the changes proposed by IFATE be applied, the assessor voice will only be an **equal to other members of the assessment panel in the assessment of degree apprenticeships**.

It is here that the ASRG is concerned that ultimate judgement and assessment of an apprentices' occupational, and often professional, competence by an independent assessor could be compromised. Whilst this approach is routine for the awarding of degree qualifications, the panel members have often engaged with the students directly, and as such conflict of interest could be compromised, and the independent assessor voice be reduced in significance.

The ASRG, with trailblazer groups, would welcome greater discussion on the aligned EPA model that has been devised for healthcare professionals, but for this process to be reflective of the regulated and protected titles that demonstrate and secure professional competence as an outcome to appropriate construction and built environment apprenticeships, using well established and independent industry experts to assess competence.

We currently have well developed apprenticeship packages for existing career pathways, with the underpinning education and training appropriate to these careers, complete with the assurance that the professional bodies can assess competence.

⁵ IFATE (2020) End Point Assessment to be aligned in statutorily regulated professions, Latest news, 15 October 2020 [online]. Available at: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/newshub/news-events/end-point-assessment-to-be-aligned-in-statutorily-regulated-professions/> [accessed 01 May 2021]

However, the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) 'Industry Skills Plan' has identified that there is a need to collaborate to enable and support the design and delivery of new curricula, and to assess how accredited routes into the professions can produce more hybrid managers for the future, tackling significant and growing demand from employers in the construction and built environment to address the future skills it needs to improve efficiency, productivity, digital transformation, sustainability, and building safety⁶.

The IFATE degree apprenticeship consultation is also a real opportunity to come together with construction and built environment employers, its professional bodies, and education providers of all types. This will allow tackling the bigger issues that the construction and built environment sector must face in order to drive forward a more responsive and adaptable skills system to address employer needs in a timely manner.

SUMMARY

It is clear that IFATE seeks to secure the unique characteristics of degree apprenticeships: which it states as 'where training provider, end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) and awarding body of the qualification can be a single organisation'; this proposed approach is being used to justify a move that will turn all current and future degree apprenticeships into 'integrated degree apprenticeships'.

IFATE also judges that integrated degree apprenticeships will benefit most from establishing a clear brand and distinctive characteristics that employers, apprentices, their parents, and the rest of the education system can engage with and understand.

There is a need to establish degree apprenticeships as equal to, if not more than, a traditional degree, supported by employers and the profession.

The benefit of the existing non-integrated degree apprenticeship is that for the first time it provides a comprehensive package including the accredited degree, structured on-the-job training, and professional registration (on demonstration of occupational competence). This would be diminished if all degree apprenticeships were required to be integrated.

The integrated approach raises real and significant concern to employers in the construction and built environment sector and the trailblazer groups who have worked hard to secure the links to long established and well-respected professional registers in the sector. One employer stated:

"What is important to our clients (and therefore us) is professional registration – it illustrates verified industrial competence. A degree is merely a means to gain the knowledge base to achieve this. We see the proposed integrated degree apprenticeship model as preventing professional registration linked apprenticeships being a seamless way to achieving this objective. The value and importance of professional qualification and registration to our clients, and our apprentices, shows the importance of this to the industry. We must retain this as a key element to degree apprenticeships, securing our employer leadership within apprenticeship development and assessment, ultimately ensuring our apprentices meet our industry needs".

The CIC Apprenticeships and Skills Reference Group (ASRG) has already raised real and significant concerns to IFATE in terms of this approach relating to integrated

⁶ Construction Leadership Council (2021) Industry Skills Plan for the UK Construction Sector 2021 – 2025 [online]. Available at: https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/B06322_CLC_SkillsPlan_v27.pdf [accessed 01 May 2021]

assessment. However, it recognises that whilst it may work for some degree apprenticeships, it is not a move supported nor welcomed by employers for the degree apprenticeships in construction and built environment.

Furthermore, there is little evidence in the public domain that degree apprenticeships are not already understood, nor evidence to demonstrate that the 'distinct brand' sought specifically for degree apprenticeships is not already there. We do believe that the proposals made will in fact, make a degree apprenticeship equivalent to a degree qualification, and could do more damage to the brand than enhance it.

The employer and trailblazer groups involved with the ASRG are clear: **degree apprenticeships are much more than a degree qualification** and this distinction must remain clear.

The proposed integrated degree apprenticeship model may well damage the reputation of degree apprenticeships, with an employer-led apprenticeship development system being placed at significant risk with employers withdrawing their commitment to and investment in such apprenticeships, if the returns do not assure the competence of apprentices in a manner that employers see true value in.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The CIC Apprenticeships and Skills Reference Group (ASRG) welcomes the review into degree apprenticeships and the approaches being made to secure the quality of apprenticeships for the benefit of all. Whilst this is the case, there are also significant implications to the employers, and the apprenticeships, in place that must be reflected and acted upon.

These must be worked through by IFATE with employers and the professional bodies in the construction and built environment sector to ensure degree apprenticeships, and other apprenticeships leading to professional registers, remain fit for purpose.

We propose three recommendations to IFATE which are supported by employers and the professions in construction and built environment:

Recommendation 1:

The ASRG would welcome the opportunity to support IFATE in its development of its good practice guidance, but also enhance it for the purposes of professional recognition for apprentices through high quality delivery and promoting this guidance widely through its available channels.

Whilst the ASRG welcomes many of the proposals made, we question the impact this will have on this sector in particular, and the timescales that will need to be achieved in order to review the standards in place, many of which are due for renewal at this stage.

Recommendation 2:

The ASRG believes that an open conversation with trailblazer chairs and its group members needs to be carried out in parallel with the IFATE route review discussions in order to ensure that employers are utilising their time effectively and constructively, and to achieve the combined aspirations of employers and IFATE for high quality apprenticeships.

The ASRG would like reassurance from IFATE that degree apprenticeship reviews take on board employers' wishes to retain the non-integrated degree apprenticeship approach where strong links to the professions are needed by employers, that these degree and other apprenticeships (at all levels) remain appropriate for and deliver the competence needed over suitable timescales and remain recognised by industry and the individuals that work within it.

Recommendation 3:

The ASRG and the trailblazer groups within construction and built environment would welcome the opportunity to discuss how 'aligned' EPA models may work for our well established and respected professional, regulatory and statutory bodies, to ensure value for money, and the reduced burden of assessment on apprentices and their employers, as part of the review of degree apprenticeships (and in response to the recent construction route summit held by IFATE on 24 March 2021).

It is important that these IFATE proposals on degree apprenticeships are authentic and have true industry wide representation with strong support from employers alongside professional, statutory and regulatory bodies within construction and built environment to achieve a successful outcome for learners, providers and wider industry.

Recommendation 4:

IFATE must work in partnership with the CLC, CIC, employers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and apprenticeship providers, to improve the efficiency of the current apprenticeship development and review systems in order to achieve a much more responsive skills system that meets current and future skills needs. Through this partnership, all stakeholders must work to collectively to identify and develop apprenticeships, complete with appropriate training and funding mechanisms, that support new hybrid career pathways into and through the construction and built environment sector.

The IFATE review into degree apprenticeships and the consultation with all stakeholders is welcomed and timely. However, there is also a real opportunity to work collaboratively to drive forward a more responsive 'demand-led' skills system that will begin to tackle the future skills needs of construction and built environment, thereby responding to rapidly developing and evolving careers that will position this sector to improve efficiency, productivity, sustainability and building safety, whilst delivering the digital transformation it needs.

**ANNEX A:
CIC APPRENTICESHIPS AND SKILLS REFERENCE GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The CIC Apprenticeships and Skills Reference group was established in February 2021 in order to respond to and take forward the recommendations presented in the report ‘Build back better: Improving the apprenticeship system to better support infrastructure’⁷, published in October 2020. This group was tasked with specific activities on behalf of the CIC, and to support the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) People and Skills Workstream.

The aim of the ASRG is to be responsive to, and respond to, a range of Apprenticeship and Skills policies and initiatives for the period February to July 2021, and to inform and present a single voice on the technical and professional skills (and apprenticeships) needed for the sector, with the following **Terms of Reference** agreed:

1. Membership to come together and generate the evidence base to inform and present a united front with regards to technical, professional apprenticeships and skills.
2. Support input into the wider work of the CLC.
3. Influence others through appropriate stakeholder engagement.

The ASRG has met regularly since February 2021, identified key issues, prioritised these, and presented potential solutions to others to adapt and gain greater traction where supported.

The CIC supports the ASRG by ensuring there is clarity of collective voice for CIC members and its stakeholders, enabling better informed actions by Government bodies and through the CLC and its action plans.

MEMBERSHIP

CIC wishes to thank the membership for their invaluable support during workshops and feedback throughout the development of the report:

Abi Field	Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM)
Aled Williams	CIC ASRG Chair, CIC Champion, Education University College of Estate Management (UCEM) Chair, Council of Heads of Built Environment
Aman Gill	Arup
Andrew Close / Trish Murphy	Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
Caroline Sudworth	Consultant to CIC/UCEM Technical Apprenticeship Consortium (TAC) Association of Consulting & Engineering (ACE)

⁷ CIC, UCEM and TAC (2020) Build back better: Improving the apprenticeship system to better support infrastructure [online]. Available at: <https://www.cic.org.uk/publications/> [accessed 01 May 2021]

Cat Goumal / Sue Stevens	Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT)
Chris Welch	Gardiner & Theobald Chair, Chartered Surveyor Trailblazer Group
Emma Matthews	Architects Registration Board (ARB)
Gareth Drought	Tony Gee and Partners Chair, Technical Apprenticeship Consortium
Helen Taylor	Scott Brownrigg Chair, Architecture Trailblazer Group Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
Holly Savage	Mott MacDonald
John Barfoot	Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE)
Mike Cox	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
Neil Weller	Troup Bywater and Anders Chair, Building Services Design Engineering Trailblazer Group Chair, London Apprenticeship Ambassador Network
Noora Kokkarinen	Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT)
Richard Davis	Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
Ron Frost	Institute of Specialist Surveyors and Engineers (ISSE)

OTHERS CONSULTED

Graham Watts	Construction Industry Council (CIC)
Mark Reynolds	Construction Leadership Council (CLC) / Mace
Sarah Beale	Construction Leadership Council (CLC) / Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
Lara Potter	Arcadis
Katy Turff	Engineering Council
Stephen Bartle	University College of Estate Management (UCEM)
Laura Webb	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)
Sean Harris	Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
Katie Holt	Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES)
Sally Hayns	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)