

SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Chapter 1

1. Preamble

- 1.1 This document outlines special provisions which have been agreed in relation to Degree Apprenticeship programmes offered by the University of Exeter (the University). It contains specific provisions which amend, for those programmes only, the regulations, policies and procedures set out in the:
- a. Handbook for Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes
 - b. Credit and Qualifications Framework
 - c. Academic Partnerships Handbook
 - d. Learning and Teaching Support Handbook
- 1.2 The provisions set out in this document have the same status as the provisions set out in the document that they amend.
- 1.3 For the avoidance of doubt, responsibility for the curriculum design, quality and standards of the programmes lies with the University.
- 1.4 Degree Apprenticeships are designed to comply fully with the regulations of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Full details can be found within [the Apprenticeship funding rules for training providers](#).

2. Definitions

- 2.1 "Higher Apprenticeship" describes apprenticeship programmes with study at 4,5,6 or 7.
- 2.2 "Degree" describes apprenticeship programmes where the qualification of a Bachelor's or Master's degree are obtained through study at levels 4,5,6 and/or 7.
- 2.3 Degree Apprenticeship programmes fall into two categories:
- 2.3.1 "Integrated Degree Apprenticeship" describes apprenticeship programmes where the University provides the scheduled teaching as well as the End Point Assessment. A separate End Point Assessment organisation is not required.
 - 2.3.2 "Non-integrated Degree Apprenticeship" describes apprenticeship programmes where the employers search for a suitable independent assessor organisation to

provide the End Point Assessment. A separate End Point Assessment Organisation is required.

- 2.4 Programme names reflect the Apprenticeship category they fall in to (and the University of Exeter Award that is being awarded):
 - 2.4.1 Higher Apprenticeship (HA)
 - 2.4.2 Integrated Degree Apprenticeship (IDA);
 - 2.4.3 Non-Integrated Degree Apprenticeship (NIDA);
- 2.5 Exemplar:
 - 2.5.1 BSc (Hons) Applied Finance (Higher Apprenticeship)
 - 2.5.2 BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering (Non-Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)
 - 2.5.3 MSc Clinical Associate in Psychology (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)

3. Referral, Deferral, Condonement

- 3.1 Degree Apprenticeship programmes may permit 'in-year' referral/deferral for assignments and examinations, whereby students may be offered the opportunity to be referred/deferred in failed assessments on timescales as required by ESFA regulations, and without waiting for the Faculty (or delegated School) Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee to meet, unless otherwise instructed in the programme specification. Where permitted by ESFA regulations, and in line with condonement rules, students are able to opt-out of 'in-year' referrals/deferrals and await confirmation of final marks following the Faculty (or delegated School) Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee before sitting any referrals/deferrals. Students must be given clear guidance about their referral/deferral options once the module marks have been calculated, which may be prior to a formal Faculty (or delegated School) Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee.
- 3.2 Apart from the above specification, referral provisions are as per section 11.2, Chapter 11 of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.

4. Academic Conduct and Practice

- 4.1 Standard academic conduct and practice regulations as per Chapter 12 of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook will apply to all students on apprenticeship programmes with the additional requirements as below.

- 4.2 With reference to Chapter 12 section 12.16.2, should the marker of an assessment suspect Academic Misconduct then they **should** report any concerns about a piece of academic work to the Programme Lead/Cohort Lead who will then refer on to the named contact within their Faculty (or delegated School) responsible for academic misconduct. Programme Directors/Cohort Leads will also need to inform the Non-standard Programmes Hub Manager.
- 4.3 For apprentices who are also University of Exeter staff members: any Senior Academic Misconduct Officer, Academic Misconduct Panel, Review Panel or Committee of Academic Enquiry reviewing any stage of potential academic misconduct would need to be not directly involved in the ordinary employment or line-management of the individual.
- 4.4 For apprentices who are also University of Exeter staff members: if the outcome of the review panel is confirmed as 'Academic Misconduct' or 'Severe Academic Misconduct' as per the categories of Academic Misconduct in Chapter 12 section 12.6 – 12.7 *then the outcome of the panel will be referred to University of Exeter Human Resources. This is for further consideration as to any required considerations for the individual committing Academic Misconduct with regard to any breaches of contract or professional requirements in relation to the expectations of their employment contract. (Still to be confirmed by HR).*
- 4.5 Under the GDPR agreements signed by apprentices during Registration, the University will share relevant information on academic misconduct with the relevant employer.

5. Mitigation

- 5.1 Apprentices will follow the standard process and regulations for mitigation as per Chapter 10 of the Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
- 5.2 Client relationship managers and programme directors should engage in discussion with employers and applicants to ensure that they are fully aware of the demands of balancing professional/ contractual work and academic study during the apprenticeship. However, Programme Directors for Degree Apprenticeship programmes may approve exceptional mitigation for reasons of **unexpected** and **unavoidable** changes in a student's professional workload.

- 5.3 Mitigation cases specific to Degree Apprenticeship students across the University will be escalated to the Degree Apprenticeship Mitigation Committee.
- 5.4 In addition to the mitigation principles and procedure outlined in Chapter 10, The Degree Apprenticeship Mitigation Committee should consider the ESFA funding rules and guidance, specifically in relation to changes in circumstance, breaks in learning, engagement, planned practical period, gateway and end point assessment.
- 5.5 A mitigation form is available on the Wellbeing pages of the University's website. Full details can be found within our Student Hubs webpages. Deferrals should be taken at the next available point in study in the absence of a specific referral/deferral period.

6. Procedures for a Break in Learning for Apprentices (Interruption)

- 6.1 Apprenticeship programmes do not use the term interruption, this should be referred to as a break in learning. A break in learning can be applied when the apprentice takes a period of leave from their work, for the following reasons: medical treatment, maternity or paternity leave, change in employment circumstances. This will be a break in the training they are to receive (break in learning).
- 6.2 Apprentices are permitted to take a break in learning, when they meet the ESFA eligibility criteria, normally for a minimum of four weeks and up to one year in the first instance. In exceptional circumstances, the start date of a break in learning may be backdated to a maximum of four weeks prior to the date of application. At the end of a first break in learning, a further break in learning can be granted by the Faculty (or delegated School) (again to a maximum of one year) under exceptional circumstances. The maximum period of approval that may be granted for a break in learning in total across the course of a programme should not exceed two years.
- 6.3 Exceptions beyond this may be made with the approval of the Faculty (or delegated School). Such a request will be considered by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty and will take account of the apprentice's circumstances, the needs and wishes of the employer, the resources available within the Faculty (or delegated School) and the academic feasibility of continuing study after a prolonged absence. Where a further break in learning is not approved an apprentice will be required to withdraw.
- 6.4 Apprentices should note that breaks in learning, or returns to study from breaks in learning, shall only be granted when academically viable and when in agreement with

the apprentice's employer. Where this is not the case an apprentice shall be required to withdraw. Apprentices are able to request a break in learning at any point during the academic year, including the summer, but any request must have the full support of their employer. The duration of the apprenticeship and the amount of off-the-job training needed to meet the 20% requirement would need to remain the same as though there had been no break in training (break in learning) and recorded in the Apprenticeship Agreement.

- 6.5 Requests for a break in learning should be discussed initially with the Programme Director/Cohort Lead. There is an apprentice specific Break in Learning form which should be accessed via [SID](#).

7. Credit and Qualifications Framework

- 7.1 As Degree Apprenticeships are required by ESFA regulations to deliver twenty percent of working hours as education. The ratio between the number of credits and notional study time at 1 credit equalling 10 hours of notional study as provided in Chapter 2 of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for standard programmes is not followed. The total programme study hours will meet the requirements of the ESFA 20% 'off the job' guidelines and therefore the notional study time per module may vary from the 1 credit equalling 10 hours.
- 7.2 For Degree Apprenticeship programmes, hours come from reflection on the taught material and its application in the workplace. This may involve the creation of work product that forms part of an assignment but has a positive influence on the apprentice's work and is hence part of that work. Or it may be work product that is not related to an assignment but brings learning benefit to the apprentice.

8. Partnership Boards and Boards of Study

- 8.1 Governance of Partnership Boards and Board of Studies will follow the standard process as per the Academic Partnerships Handbook with exceptions and clarifications as below.
- 8.2 A Board of Studies exists for each programme to oversee the ongoing performance and development of the Degree Apprenticeship programme. The Board shall be University-led, and chaired by the APVC-E, or nominated representative, of the relevant Faculty (or delegated School).

- 8.3 Each Board shall receive a report from the relevant Partnership Board and the relevant apprentice meeting, via the nominated employer and apprentice representatives.
- 8.4 The Board of Studies shall provide a report to the University's Education Board, as well as to the Degree Apprenticeships Steering Group chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education).

9. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

- 9.1 In order to comply with ESFA funding guidelines, APL (APCL/APEL) (see Chapter 16 of the Learning and Teaching Support Handbook) can be applied to portions of modules on Degree Apprenticeship programmes. APL decisions are made by the Programme Director as part of the admissions process and are based on the evidence provided by the applicant in the form of: CV, transcripts of previous qualifications, job description, employer supporting statement, initial needs analysis and if necessary a telephone discussion.
- 9.2 The APL decision as to which ILOs (Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) in apprenticeship terms) can be evidenced as previously achieved is then reflected by a reduction in the credits needed to be studied. This can result in the APL of whole modules or parts of modules. The cost of the apprenticeship programme for that one applicant is then discounted in accordance with the credit reduction applied and the new cost agreed with the employer. This process and the decisions that result from it are recorded for ESFA audit evidence.

10. Assignment Confidentiality

- 10.1 In order to ensure confidentiality of the content of submitted assignments on Degree Apprenticeship programmes, the following policy will apply:
- 10.1.1 Assignments will be visible to the student when submitting and receiving feedback from the markers.
- 10.1.2 A defined group of markers (size dependent on number of registered students) will have access to all assignments submitted for an individual module. This group is:
- a. Recorded by the Module Lead.
 - b. Managed by the Degree Apprenticeship Administration Team.

- 10.1.3 An External Examiner (appointed per programme) will have access to all assignments submitted for an individual module:
- a. Access is managed by the Degree Apprenticeship Administration team.
- 10.1.4 A limited number of staff with system administration rights may be asked to provide technical support by the Degree Apprenticeship Administration Team when required. This access will be fully logged and undertaken with identifiable administration accounts.
- 10.1.5 University academic and administrative staff other than the above will not be allowed to view submitted assignments, except and unless if necessary for review of breaches of University teaching regulations such as Academic Conduct and Practice.
- 10.1.6 Staff from agreed End Point Assessment Organisations will have access to all material presented by the apprentice as part of their portfolio of evidence or mentioned in their professional discussion.
- 10.1.7 In consultation with employers, and on a programme by programme basis, Faculties (or delegated Schools) can elect to disable the link for submitting assignments to plagiarism testing systems either at the point of submission or by a student in advance of formal submission.
- 10.1.8 Employer partners can elect to prevent apprentices from submitting work to external on-demand study help services that are normally supported by the University.
- 10.2 Submitted assignments are retained by the University following the completion of the student's programme plus six years as per University Student Administration retention policies.
- 10.3 Any exceptions to this policy will be notified in advance to apprentices and employers.

11. External Examiners

The External Examiner must be appointed in accordance with the University's External Examining Handbook.

11.1 Non-Integrated degree and higher apprenticeships

In addition for non-integrated degree and higher apprenticeships:

- 11.1.1 As a minimum Faculties (or delegated Schools) must provide new External Examiners with information regarding the larger number of assessments requiring examination, than standard programmes.

- 11.1.2 Faculties (or delegated Schools) must ensure that specific Degree and Higher Apprenticeship requirements regarding External Examiners are met. Where required, given the larger number of APACs, a programme should appoint multiple External Examiners.
- 11.1.3 The Faculty should apply the higher fee level available, this would be appropriate to External Examiners on Degree and Higher Apprenticeships, given the increased workload from standard programmes.
- 11.1.4 The External Examiner will ensure that they have sufficient time available to undertake the higher number of duties required for a Degree and Higher Apprenticeship, including those required by the affiliated PSRB.
- 11.2 Integrated degree and higher apprenticeships**
- 11.2.1 The University must engage an External Examiner to undertake external scrutiny of the End Point Assessment of the Integrated Degree and Higher apprenticeship programmes, where the University acts as the End Point Assessment Organisation.
- 11.2.2 The University's External Examiner recruitment criteria and other guidance outlined in the External Examining Handbook of the TQA Manual should be applied to the EPA External Examiner, in addition to any requirements outlined in the relevant EPA Assessment Plan.
- 11.2.3 Where appropriate, and providing the individual(s) have appropriate industry experience, the University may engage an existing External Examiner to oversee the EPA, which will then be in addition to the external examiner role held with the associated qualification.
- 11.2.4 The role of EPA External Examiner should not be confused with the role of EPA Independent Assessor and vice versa.
- 11.2.5 The role of the EPA External Examiner will be remunerated in addition to the external examiner remuneration for the associated qualification.

12. Withdrawal

- 12.1 If an apprentice becomes ineligible to continue on programme, in accordance with ESFA guidelines, then a withdrawal form will need to be completed.

13. Complaints

- 13.1 Any complaints will follow the University procedure in the Student Cases Handbook.

14. Glossary

- 14.1 **External Examiner:** Provides external, impartial and independent expertise to ensure that the academic components of integrated degrees are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks, Subject Benchmark Statements, Characteristics Statements and any relevant professional or other requirements. In integrated Degree Apprenticeships, both the associated qualification (degree programme) and the End Point Assessment must be subject to an External Examiner's scrutiny.
- 14.2 **Independent Assessors:** Conduct the End Point Assessment, separate from the External Assessor. Please refer to the following additional guidance:
- 14.2.1 Annex 1: Conflict of Interest Policy for Independent Assessors
- 14.3 **Integrated:** Apprenticeship that mandates a degree, which incorporates the end-point assessment. The higher education institution delivering the degree must be on the register of apprenticeship training providers and the register of end-point assessment organisations. Please refer to the following additional guidance:
- 14.3.1 Annex 2: End Point Assessment Process for Integrated Degree Apprenticeships
- 14.4 **Non integrated:** A non-integrated degree apprenticeship features separate processes for the end-point assessment and the achievement of the degree element.