

Driving the quality of apprenticeships in England

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Foreword from Antony Jenkins, Chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can change lives. We know 90% of apprentices go on to a job or further education. Apprenticeships offer a ladder of opportunity for people of all ages; they boost businesses and make a profound difference to the economic stability and productivity of this country.

That's why, continuing the ambitious agenda of skills reform, the government has established a new independent, public body to make sure apprenticeships are of the highest quality they can be. Supporting the plan to create 3 million apprenticeships by 2020, the Institute for Apprenticeships (the Institute) is now giving employers a stronger role in the leadership of the apprenticeship system, ensuring employees get the skills they need to succeed and the best apprenticeship possible.

Why an Institute for Apprenticeships? For too long this country has under-invested in skills and subsequently we've lost the support, and the confidence, of employers and apprentices along the way.

This time, it's different. This time, we have the funding in place, a broad agenda of skills-reform offering the opportunity to achieve comprehensive and coherent change, and employers embedded within the decision-making structure of the Institute.

The Institute is developing and maintaining apprenticeship standards and assessment plans and will review and approve them. It will maintain a public database of these standards and give advice on government funding as well as having a role in quality assurance. And the government's ambitious plans include expanding the Institute's remit to encompass technical education in England from 2018 – as set out in the Post-16 Skills Plan.

The Institute's aims and approach to improving quality are outlined in this document. We believe these are straightforward, direct and powerful, but the mechanisms for their delivery can be complex. We do not underestimate the work ahead and there's a lot more we need to do to deliver. This is just the beginning.

Employers are central to everything we are doing; they know what they want their employees to learn, and the skills that really drive productivity for their industry.

Apprenticeships are something we all care passionately about – as a powerful driver for social mobility and the engine of a future skills workforce that is robust and returns on investment for employers and apprentices alike. We are in an age in which the economy is changing at a great pace. Technology is a very significant driver of change and there are great challenges ahead. The Institute is an ongoing project that will require sustained commitment over many years – but the potential benefits and opportunities for the future are tremendous.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revolutionise the apprenticeship and technical education landscape, commit to supporting fundamental, long-term social mobility and cement the reputation of an Institute that will have credibility and longevity.

1. Executive summary: Our vision for the Institute

1.1. INSTITUTE

High quality apprenticeships, alongside reformed college-based technical education courses, are a central pillar in delivering the skills needed to forge a country that works for everyone. The benefits they bring are clear:

- **For apprentices**, apprenticeships are an important driver for social mobility, with significantly greater financial returns over a working life (up to £150,000 more) on average for someone completing a Level 4+ apprenticeship. 92% of learners say that their apprenticeship has improved their career prospects, while 97% say that their ability to do their job has improved. The lifetime benefits associated with the acquisition of apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 are very significant, standing at between £48,000 and £74,000 for level 2 and between £77,000 and £117,000 for level 3 apprenticeships.
- **For employers**, apprenticeships help to close the skills gap and deliver a skilled workforce, with 87% of employers satisfied with their apprentices' training and 75% noting an improved product or service as a result of the training.
- **For the taxpayer**, apprenticeships [generate a return](#) of between £26 and £28 for every £1 of government investment in apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 respectively – considerably higher than the average of £20 for every £1 of government investment in further education qualifications as a whole.

The opportunities presented by apprenticeships are vast and can be life changing. But these benefits are only realised when apprenticeships are of a consistently high quality and receive appropriate levels of funding. It is also vital to align apprenticeships with wider technical education, which is why apprenticeships and new technical qualifications will be based on the same standards.

The Institute for Apprenticeships was announced in November 2015 as an employer-led regulator with responsibility for securing the high quality of apprenticeships in England.

The Institute – and apprenticeships – are part of a wider programme of technical education reform. The Institute has launched as an independent Crown body in April 2017,¹ and we expect its remit will expand to encompass wider technical education in 2018.

The government published its strategic guidance for the initial work of the Institute on 3 April 2017. It states the Institute's core functions as:

- developing and maintaining quality criteria for the approval of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
- supporting the development of standards and assessment plans by employer groups and reviewing and approving them

¹ Note that the Institute's remit (and this document's scope) is restricted to the apprenticeships system in England only, as skills policy is a devolved matter. Each devolved administration will continue to determine how they manage their respective apprenticeship programmes.

- advising government on the maximum amount of funding that should be assigned to each apprenticeship standard
- maintaining a public database of apprenticeship standards and publishing information illustrating potential gaps
- at regular intervals, reviewing published standards and assessment plans
- ensuring all end-point assessments are quality assured
- having a role in quality assuring the delivery of apprentice end point assessments, where employer groups have been unable to propose one of the other 3 external quality-assurance models (employer-led, Ofqual, Professional Body-led) and have named the Institute in their assessment plan

1.1.1. Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships

The 2012 Richard Review into English apprenticeships was clear that the government should be encouraging more apprenticeships, but that significant changes were needed to increase provision. Of particular note were the importance of making apprenticeships more rigorous and making them more responsive to employers' needs.

Much progress has been made since then, including a clear commitment from the government to replace the old set of apprenticeship frameworks with employer-designed apprenticeship standards that are more aligned to the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers are looking for. We set out more detail on the existing reforms to apprenticeships in section 2.

To date, over 215 employer groups have stepped forward through the trailblazer programme to develop over 490 new apprenticeship standards. 157 of these are now 'approved for delivery'. This is compared to 4,661 Ofqual regulated qualifications in 597 pathways through existing frameworks.

But we know that more needs to happen.

The Institute will become a prominent and permanent feature of the apprenticeship delivery landscape, bringing long-term stability to the sector. It is led by an independent Chair and small Board made up primarily of employers of all sizes, people with public-sector experience, business leaders, and their representatives, enshrining the 'employer-led' nature of the apprenticeship reforms. Further details on the Chair and Board can be found in section 2. It will draw on the knowledge and experience of employers and industry experts to drive quality of apprenticeships in a way which will deliver the skilled workforce that businesses need to prosper.

The Institute will make decisions about apprenticeship quality independently of government, with the Department for Education (DfE) retaining responsibility for the overall apprenticeships policy framework, including issuing the Institute with annual Strategic Guidance.

The overall vision for the Institute is to play a leading role in securing a higher-quality apprenticeship experience and outcome for employers and learners. We will achieve this by focusing on 3 priorities in year one:

- becoming world class at regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and advising government on funding for training and assessment against apprenticeship standards
- taking a lead on collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system
- preparing for the expansion of the Institute's remit from April 2018

Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and advising government on funding for training and assessment against apprenticeship standards

The Institute's core business will be to become the guardian of quality for apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. Its initial focus will be on becoming world class at regulating their content and advising on the amount of funding that each should be allocated.

The principles for employers to follow when developing standards, including the criteria that they will have to meet for a standard to be approved will be published separately. The Institute is committed to speed up the development process, build in more transparency, and make it more predictable, so that employers know what to expect at each stage of the process. It will achieve this while retaining an overriding commitment to rigour and consistency, and establishing an effective quality assurance regime.

The Institute will advise government on the allocation of new standards to funding bands. Over time it will also evaluate the success of standards across a sector, for example looking at destination data and wage returns for learners, satisfaction levels and impact on skills gaps for employers, and alignment to productivity challenges in the wider economy. It will recommend changes to funding band allocations based on its analysis of this outcome data.

The government has emphasised the importance of a new, holistic industrial strategy to support and promote UK productivity. Ensuring the workforce and skills are in place to deliver against the strategy will be essential to its success. Apprenticeships will be an important part of this and the Institute will support employers to develop ambitious plans for good quality standards, not least in sectors where we have evidence of skills gaps and that are priorities for the industrial strategy. Supporting greater social mobility and tackling disadvantage is also a clear government priority. Apprenticeships can play a key role in helping to deliver this, through ensuring that people from all backgrounds are able to progress.

We provide more detail on the Institute's regulatory role in section 3.

1.1.2. Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system

The Institute is committed to playing a strong leadership role to champion apprenticeship quality, something that will require close collaboration with the other agencies who are involved in the apprenticeships sector.

The apprenticeships market is comprised of multiple bodies responsible for improving quality at different points of the system. This fragmentation has often come across as confusing and disjointed for those involved in making apprenticeships work on the ground. The Institute will take a lead role in coordinating more strategic, collaborative ways of working between these

bodies. It will provide the DfE Permanent Secretary additional assurance that the apprenticeships system is offering good value for money.

The Institute will take responsibility for certain elements of the registers of training providers and assessment organisations – for example the quality criteria which applicants must meet. More detail on this is set out later in the document. Responsibility for monitoring the quality of apprenticeship training will remain with Ofsted (or HEFCE/QAA for degree-level apprenticeships) and responsibility for monitoring the quality of qualifications within apprenticeship training (where applicable) will remain with Ofqual. The Institute will be able to advise the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to investigate where it has concerns about the quality of provider or assessment organisation delivery.

We say more about roles and responsibilities in section 4 and in the [Apprenticeship Accountability Statement](#).

1.1.3. Delivering the reforms to technical education

This document is largely focused on the Institute's remit of driving quality in the apprenticeships system during its first year. From 2018, we expect that the Institute's remit will expand to include a similar role for college-based technical education which will play an equally important part in helping young people and adults move to skilled employment.

The government published its Post-16 Skills Plan in July 2016, setting out an ambitious set of reforms for technical education. Legislation is being discussed in Parliament to implement the changes. As part of an expanded remit, it is expected that the Institute will determine the content of all publicly funded college-based technical education courses at levels 2 to 5, using occupational maps as the basis for identifying and clustering occupations with similar knowledge and skills requirements. The occupational maps will set out the relationship between occupations and routes and will ensure that reformed content is in line with employer need. It will also commission the development of standards for occupations where none exist, award exclusive licences to organisations to develop new qualifications for technical education courses and own a register of approved technical qualifications.

This document takes account of the likely structure of the Institute in the longer term and proposals are designed to ensure that the transition to this will be as seamless as possible. Section 5 provides more detail on how the Institute will prepare for its expanded role delivering the technical education reforms.

1.1.4. Implementing the new system

In the long term we aim to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and college-based courses. We recognise that this is a hugely challenging ambition, and one that previous reforms have tried, and failed, to achieve. We also recognise the need to engage and consult with employers, parents, technical-education experts and others. We have welcomed agreement, from those that responded to the consultation, regarding the Institute's focus on quality and rigour, the central role of employers in the new system, and the additional levy resource to support provision, and we are now better placed than ever to achieve our ambition.

1.1.5. Inviting views from employers and other interested stakeholders

A key part of our work to inform this plan has been a review of the existing standards development process. The proposals in the document are largely based on what employers, particularly those involved in the trailblazer programme, have told us would improve the system.

The apprenticeships market is undergoing huge change. We are under no illusion of the scale of the challenges facing the sector, and the Institute as a new regulator within it. The Institute will not be able to solve every problem that employers and learners face. But it can become world class at its core business – regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments and advising on how available funding should be allocated to individual standards – and have a catalysing effect on quality and collaboration across the sector. We are looking forward to working closely with employers from all sectors and of all sizes to make this ambition a reality.

1.1.6. The remainder of this plan

The remainder of this document provides further details on the areas set out above, under the following headings:

- Section 2: Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships
- Section 3: Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments
- Section 4: Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system
- Section 5: Delivering the reforms to technical education
- Section 6: Implementing the new system

2. Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships

This section provides further detail on the Institute’s governance structure, and its role as part of the ongoing reforms to apprenticeships, including apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, end point assessments, and external quality assurance.

2.1. THE INSTITUTE’S ROLE AS AN EMPLOYER-LED REGULATOR

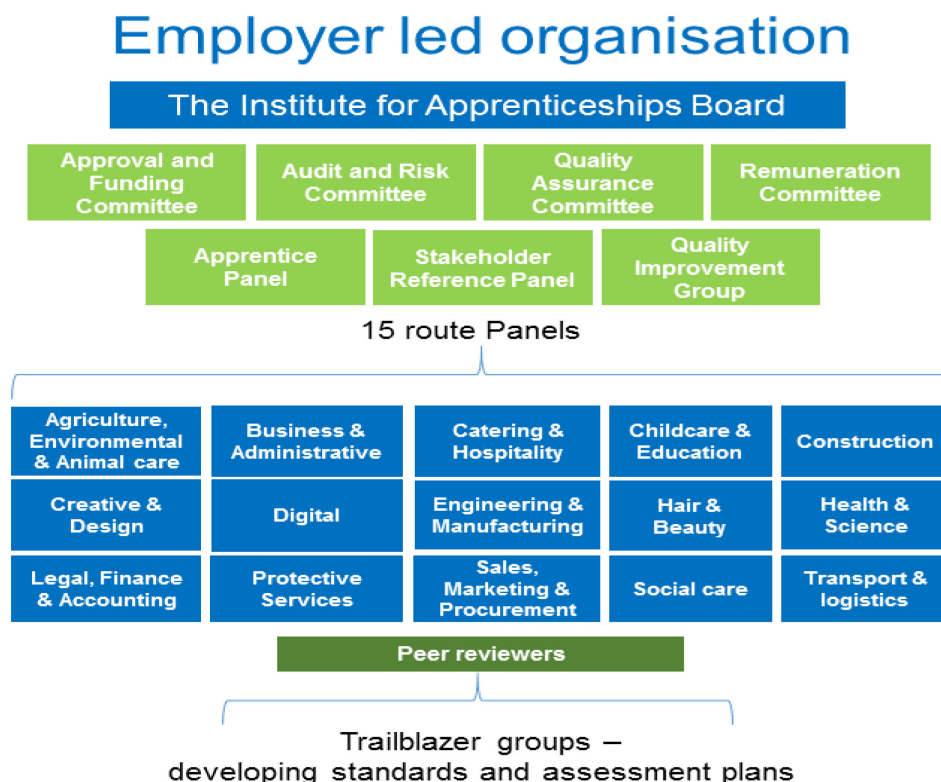
The Institute is being established to drive the quality of apprenticeships in England, primarily through its role as the regulator of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. It will be a permanent feature of the apprenticeships landscape, providing a sustained focus on quality in a sector that is undergoing huge amounts of change.

The Institute will continue to embed the central role that employers must play in the apprenticeships system if it is to operate effectively. Employers have a better understanding than government of the skills they require and the Institute will continue to put them in the driving seat of developing the high quality standards they need.

On 1 April the Institute was launched as a Crown Non-Departmental Government Body.

Figure 1 below sets out the governance structure for the Institute:

Figure 1: Institute governance structure



Key features of the structure include:

- **An Institute for Apprenticeships employer-led Board** comprised of eight members, plus a Chair and Chief Executive. The Institute's Board was appointed on 27 January 2017 with Antony Jenkins confirmed as Chairman. The Board are:
 - Dr. Katherine Barclay, Director Academic Liaison, Pfizer UK
 - Sir Gerry Berragan, former Adjunct General and British Army apprentices ambassador
 - Bev Robinson, Principal of Blackpool and Fylde College
 - Paul Cadman, Human Resources Director for Walter Smith Fine Foods Limited
 - Dame Fiona Kendrick, Chair and CEO of Nestle UK and Ireland since 2012
 - Dame Asha Khemka, Principal and Chief Executive of West Nottinghamshire College Group
 - Robin Millar CBE, Chair of Blue Raincoat Chrysalis Group
 - Toby Peyton-Jones, Human Resources Director for Siemens in the UK and North West Europe

The purpose of the Institute's Board is to ensure it discharges its statutory duties as set out in the Enterprise Act. The Board is supported in its function by 4 committees and advisory groups:

- **Approval and Funding Committee**, which has delegated authority from the Board to make final decisions on whether to approve or reject standards and assessment plans that have been scrutinised by the Route Panels and where the Route Panel has made a preliminary determination. It also ratifies funding band recommendations. It is comprised of 3 board members.
- **Quality Assurance Committee**, which reviews whether or not standards or assessment plans remain fit for purpose and whether end point assessments are being operated effectively. It will act as an expert adviser to the Board. This Committee is chaired by a designated Board member and membership is 3 independent members with significant expertise in assessment, one additional board member and up to 2 senior Institute staff.
- **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**
- **Remuneration Committee**
- **Stakeholder Reference Panel**, to help the Board to access the wider expertise that the apprenticeships sector has to offer. A consistent message from our engagement with employers and other stakeholders has been an appetite to get involved in making the Institute a success. Recognising that the Board itself is relatively small, the Stakeholder Reference Panel gives a much wider group of sector leaders the opportunity to inform the Institute's work.

- **15 Route Panels** of industry experts aligned to occupational groupings, who review and recommend apprenticeship standards and assessment plans to the Approvals and Funding Committee, and provide a strategic perspective across each route. The concept of 15 occupational routes is felt to be the right organising framework to bring together related occupations with shared training requirements, and is an adoption of the model used in leading international systems. It was introduced in July's [Post-16 Skills Plan](#) (see Annex 1 for details of these) following the recommendations of the Sainsbury panel reviewing technical education. The 15 Route Panel Chairs have been appointed.
- **An Apprentice Panel**, which reports directly to the Board. The panel is made up of apprentices from different occupations and experiences. The panel decides for itself which issues to focus on and challenges, and makes recommendations to the Board. This ensures vital input from apprentices up and down the country. The Institute will further consider how best to engage with apprentices on an ongoing basis, and how best to represent technical education students ahead of taking on technical education responsibility in April 2018.
- **Peer reviewers** who review new apprenticeship standards and assessment plans provide comments and recommendations to the relevant Route Panel to inform the approval process.
- **Trailblazer groups of employers** that come together to propose a new standard for their occupation, develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours for that standard, and design an assessment plan to support it.

2.2. DESIGNING AN IMPROVED APPRENTICESHIPS SYSTEM

The Institute will take the lead on a number of ongoing reforms to improve the apprenticeships system. Many of these reforms were initially driven by the [2012 Richard Review findings](#) on the old apprenticeships system, including that:

- the system was overly complex – with a huge number of qualifications and possible combinations, and overly-detailed specifications
- continuous assessment only tested the incremental progress of the apprentice, rather than whether they had reached the desired level of competency
- providers didn't respond first and foremost to employer needs

The Richard Review argued that the government should be encouraging more apprenticeships, but that significant changes were needed to increase provision. Of particular note was the importance of making apprenticeships more rigorous and more responsive to employers' needs.

The government trailblazer programme was launched as a result of these findings, with the creation of the Institute the latest step on this journey.

There are 3 defining features of the emerging system that the Institute will regulate:

- employer-designed apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
- graded end point apprenticeship assessments
- external quality assurance of end point assessments

2.2.1. Employer-designed apprenticeship standards and assessment plans

Trailblazer groups

Since the Richard Review, successive governments have been implementing reforms to replace apprenticeship frameworks with new standards that are aligned to single occupations and set out what learners should know and be able to do at the end of their apprenticeship.

The move away from frameworks has been led by groups of employers – ‘trailblazers’ – approved by government to design an apprenticeship standard, or set of standards, for occupations in their sector. Since 2013, trailblazers have been developing apprenticeship standards which set out the skills, knowledge and behaviours they expect to see in an occupationally competent and capable individual. Standards are developed with employers at the heart of the design process, so that they are closely aligned to business need. Trailblazer groups are supported by a team of relationship managers, who guide the group through the development process.

Each standard is underpinned by an assessment plan, also designed by the trailblazer group. The assessment plan helps to reassure employers that apprentices completing a standard will have a comparable set of skills, and that those skills will be transferable between employers. The plan should clarify what will be assessed and how, who will carry out the assessment and who makes the final decision on grading. It must set out quality-assurance arrangements to ensure reliability and consistency across the country and between different employers.

Transitioning from frameworks to standards

In parallel to helping employers design new standards, the government is turning off apprenticeship frameworks, with the ambition that all apprenticeship starts will be on new standards by 2020. Frameworks will be withdrawn in batches. The creation of the Institute will provide a sharper focus on progressing standards through the development process as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a rigorous and consistent commitment to quality.

2.2.2. End point apprenticeship assessments

One of the principles of the Richard Review was that we should move away from ‘extraordinarily detailed’ occupational standards and bureaucratic box-ticking qualifications. Instead, government was encouraged to free up its process requirements and focus more on the outcome of an apprenticeship: the skills, knowledge and behaviour that an apprentice can demonstrate at the end of their apprenticeship.

End point assessments (EPAs) are a synoptic assessment taken at the end of an apprenticeship to assess whether the individual has achieved the required level of knowledge, skills and behaviours to be deemed competent in the occupation. They are an attempt to address employers’ concerns that under the old system they could hire someone who had successfully completed an apprenticeship but they would not always be capable of actually doing the job they were meant to be trained in.

Assessments will be carried out by organisations that have met a number of quality criteria to be allowed onto the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). These organisations, and the assessors directly conducting the end point assessment, will be independent from those delivering training, and in some cases of the employer too.

2.2.3. External quality assurance of end point assessments

Multiple organisations can be approved to deliver an end point assessment against a given standard and employers, apprentices and government will expect the outcomes to be reliable and consistent between each of these organisations, regardless of when and where an assessment is carried out. External quality assurance (EQA) provides an additional check on the consistency with which end point assessments are conducted by different assessment organisations.

Employer groups are given a choice between 4 options for delivering EQA when they submit their assessment plan:

- an employer group-designed approach
- EQA delivered by a Professional Body
- EQA delivered by Ofqual
- EQA delivered by the Institute (as a last resort)

Relationship managers will support employers in choosing the right option for them. Section 3 provides more information on the external quality-assurance options available to employer groups, including more detail on the Institute's offer.

2.3. EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR THE INSTITUTE TO ADDRESS

The Institute will not be starting from scratch with most of its functions. The transition from frameworks to standards is well underway and much progress has been made. However, feedback from employers and others in the sector have highlighted a number of challenges that the Institute will have to address. This section provides a summary of some of these challenges, along with our proposals for how the Institute should tackle them.

2.3.1. Emerging challenges

Time taken to complete the development process

Employers have frequently told us that the end-to-end process of designing a new standard and assessment plan has taken longer than they expected when they embarked on the trailblazer journey. On average, it takes just over a year for a standard to progress from proposal stage through to 'approved for delivery'. However, this masks a wide range of experiences for trailblazer groups, with some achieving this in around 3 months, and others well over 2 years.

There are multiple reasons why a standard can take time to design, and a number of employers told us that they need the time and flexibility to move at their own pace, seeking sector buy-in as they go. However, others highlighted that a lack of understanding of the process, coupled with delays at the approvals stage had resulted in a loss of momentum from their group. Employers participate in the standard development process on top of their day job, and often because they have a passion for improving apprenticeships in their occupation. It's vital that the Institute supports this with a clear, efficient and speedy end-to-end process.

Overlap between different standards

The current approach to developing apprenticeships is employer-led throughout, from employers submitting proposals for new standards to address their skills needs, to employers designing standards and assessment plans to meet these needs.

With nearly 500 standards now in development, there is the challenge of how to deal with overlap between new proposals, and those already in development. There is a risk of duplication and proliferation of standards which are too narrow to develop apprentices' transferable skills. The narrower a standard, the harder it is likely to be for a vibrant provider market to emerge in that area.

Regular policy changes and guidance updates

Perhaps the most common issue raised by trailblazer employers has been the frequency of changes to the policies and guidance that sit behind the process. The initial trailblazer groups piloted the new approach and offered an opportunity for open policy making. This resulted in lessons learnt and employer feedback being incorporated into a refined approach, but with the downside of regular changes to the guidance.

Limited use of outcome metrics to influence provision

A recent [NAO report](#) challenged DfE to draw on its evidence of benefits from apprenticeships to actively influence the sectors and levels where apprenticeships take place. The report felt that research on wage returns, destination data and wider economic impact were examples of outcome measures that could be used more within the apprenticeships system.

2.3.2. The Institute's proposals to address these challenges

CHALLENGES FOR THE INSTITUTE	THE INSTITUTE'S PROPOSALS TO TACKLE THIS
<p>1. The end-to-end process of developing a new standard takes too long</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer expectation-setting at the outset, including the Institute and trailblazer signing up to an 'Expectations of the role' document. • Review of proposals, standards and assessment plans submitted for approval to identify those that require additional work. These will be provided with additional support to address each of the areas before they are reviewed by Route Panels. • Flexibility for trailblazers to submit their assessment plan alongside, rather than after, their standard, if this is what would work best for them. This will halve process time. • An offer for the trailblazer chair to participate in the approvals meeting to answer questions in the moment. • Tailored support for trailblazers, including access to assessment specialists when needed. • Digital notification of progress and next steps.

2. Overlap between different standards

- Better signposting for trailblazers to find out about standards that are in development.
- Development of an occupational map – all new proposals will be expected to align to an occupation in the map. If it doesn't align, the trailblazer will be asked to present further evidence on why it should be approved.
- Short term activity with partner bodies to kick-start the provider and assessment markets for particularly narrow standards.

3. Guidance material changes too regularly and is hard to navigate

- While policy could still change over time, the Institute will make every effort to limit these changes and communicate them clearly to employers when they are needed.
- Guidance will be made available digitally to all employers (and other stakeholders), and tailored to the stage of the process that the employer has reached.

4. Professional expertise needed to review and approve standards

- Industry-led Route Panels and the Institute Board to replace the government minister as approver of new standards.
- Relationship managers to be aligned to routes and increasingly become specialists in a limited number of sectors.
- Offer to employers of their relationship manager spending half a day shadowing their workplace to build understanding.
- Enhanced peer review added to the approval process.

5. Limited use of outcome metrics to influence provision

- The Institute's route-based evaluations of standards will enable it to build a holistic picture of the impact that different standards have on outcomes for learners, employers and the wider economy.
- The Institute will draw on a wide range of data for this, including wage returns, destination data and economic impact where available. The outcome of these evaluations could lead to recommended changes to funding allocations.

There is more detail on the Institute's proposals for addressing these challenges in the next 2 sections.

3. Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments

The Institute's core business in its first year will be to:

- support the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
- provide advice on apprenticeship funding to government
- quality assure apprenticeship end point assessments and certificates

This section provides further detail on how it will deliver each of these roles.

3.1. SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT PLANS

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS IN THIS SECTION:

- **The Institute will develop a 'getting started' support package for employers at the pre-proposal stage**, including up-front clarity on expectations of the role, improved signposting to existing standards, digital guidance on the end-to-end process and a forum for connecting new employer groups with experienced trailblazer Chairs.
- **The Institute will introduce greater industry expertise into the review and approval of standards**, including aligning standards to one of 15 occupational routes, reinforcing peer review of the standard, and publishing an occupational map across each of the routes.
- **The Institute will review all proposals, standards and assessment plans submitted for approval to identify those that need additional work.** Relationship managers will work with trailblazers to address the areas so they are in a stronger position to be approved by the Route Panel.
- **The Institute will tailor support for trailblazers based on an early assessment of their needs**, including a baseline of core support for all and access to a relationship manager with the appropriate assessment knowledge where needed.
- **The Institute will combine flexibility and rigour in the approvals process**, including creating Route Panels to lead on the review and approvals process, with an option for the trailblazer chair to attend the review meeting, and piloting digital ways of keeping employers notified of progress with their standard.
- **The Institute will publish the list of 'in-development' and 'approved for delivery' standards and assessment plans**, so that they are easier to find than at present.
- **The Institute will make more use of learner, employer and wider economy outcome data when reviewing the success of standards**, including introducing a strategic route-based evaluation of all standards under a route where we will review the allocation of

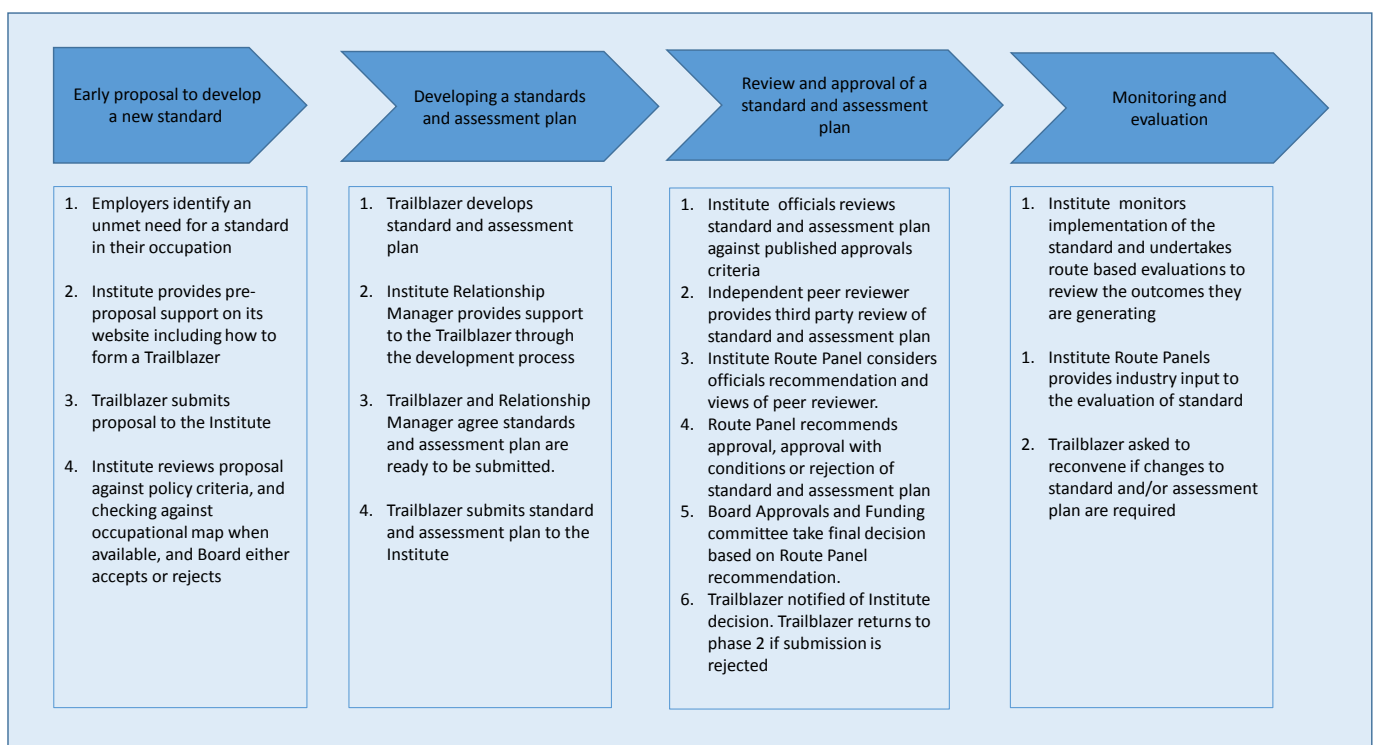
funding against the relevant standards.

There are 4 key stages involved in developing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan:

1. **Proposing a new apprenticeship standard**
2. **Designing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan**
3. **Reviewing and signing off a new standard and assessment plan**
4. **Monitoring and evaluating the success of an apprenticeship standard**

Figure 2 below provides a high level summary of roles and responsibilities included at each stage. The section following the diagram provides further detail on the Institute’s approach to regulating the quality of apprenticeships at each of the 4 stages.

Figure 2: The Institute’s role supporting the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans



3.1.1. Proposing a new apprenticeship standard

Advice on ‘getting started’ for employers looking to develop a new apprenticeship standard

Proposals for new apprenticeship standards need to meet a set of criteria to ensure that the

occupation is suitable for an apprenticeship, and that the trailblazer is representative of the relevant sector(s), including SME membership alongside larger organisations. If trailblazers are able to meet each of the criteria, we will invite them to formally submit their proposal through an online portal system.

Currently government officials provide ad-hoc advice to trailblazers as they are developing a new proposal. The Institute will put in place a more consistent support package at the pre-proposal stage, including:

- **An up-front ‘expectations of the role’ agreement between trailblazers and the Institute.** Once a new proposal has been approved by the Institute for development, trailblazers will be provided with a dedicated relationship manager who will set out respective roles and responsibilities, including the service levels that the employer group can expect from the Institute and what will be expected of them in return.
- **A clear and easily-located list of approved and in-development apprenticeship standards.** These are currently all published on gov.uk but can be difficult to locate on the site. All approved standards that are ready for delivery are already available in searchable format on the digital apprenticeship service. The Institute will also explore options for making it easier for employers to find standards that are in development but not yet approved for delivery.
- **A user-friendly, digital guide to the standard development process.** The Institute will provide guidance digitally, through an interactive guide that tailors information to the stage that the employer has reached in the development process, but also allows them to view the end-to-end guidance if they want to find out more. Examples of the digital support, available whenever employers want to access it, could include:
 - an introductory webinar for employer groups to give them an overview of the process and support available
 - an easier to use online portal for developing and submitting proposals
 - automatic notifications if guidance material or policies change
 - open access to an employer group’s progress through the standard development process so that anyone can see where it is up to in the process
- **A forum for connecting new employer group chairs with existing groups** to minimise the risk of competing standards between groups and share learning with newcomers to the process.

Reviewing proposals for new apprenticeship standards

To introduce greater industry expertise, we propose that the Institute will:

- **Establish 15 Route Panels aligned to occupational groupings and comprised of industry experts** to review and approve proposals, standards and assessment plans. Panel members will replace DfE and ESFA officials as the panel that review and approve proposals. The panels will be made up of a range of experts with a broad knowledge of occupations and training across a particular route and could include academics, employers, professional bodies, sector/trade organisations, and National Colleges or other training providers. A chair has been appointed for each of the Route Panels, with the advertisement for further members launched in April 2017.
- **Publish an occupational map** for each route that will act as a master list of mutually-exclusive occupations. The map will be a live document, with amendments owned by the respective Route Panel. Where the occupation contained in a proposal is recognised on the map, approval to develop a new standard should be relatively straightforward. Where it is not recognised on the map, the Institute will invite the employer group to provide further evidence to support its argument that it is a distinct occupation. The draft occupational maps will be published for consultation before they are finalised.

3.1.2. Designing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan

Support for employer groups ('trailblazers')

We are proposing that the Institute moves towards a tailored package of support based on an early assessment of the trailblazer's needs once their proposal has been accepted.

A core package of support for all

We will direct all trailblazers towards an on-boarding pack that will include:

- a step-by-step 'how-to' guide; this will include templates for standards and assessment plans
- advice on how employer groups can run effective standard development sessions
- examples of best-in-class standards and assessment plans from the relevant route
- an offer of connecting the group to selected trailblazer Chairs who have experience of leading a standard through the approvals process
- contact details for Institute support in case they have any questions that are not answered in the guidance

For some trailblazers this might be the appropriate level of support to guide them through the process, for example if the group's chair and other employers have extensive prior experience of developing standards.

A relationship manager for groups that need one

Relationship managers are a core feature of the current support offer for trailblazers, providing advice on all aspects of the development process. We are proposing that relationship managers will focus their support on the employer groups that are most in need of it, for example those that are new to the standards development process.

Trailblazer feedback on relationship managers has generally been very positive, with suggestions that this support could be even better if they were equipped with additional sector expertise. In response to this, we have: **aligned relationship managers to specific Routes** which will help them to develop greater sector knowledge and identify potential overlaps

between standards. They will **draw on industry expertise from the Route Panels** to help resolve sector-related issues that arise. Trailblazers also have the option of their relationship managers spending **half a day shadowing on site** with them at the outset to help understand their occupation.

In addition to greater sector knowledge, relationship managers will retain their position as, first and foremost, the Institute's experts on the process and criteria for developing standards and assessment plans.

Access to assessment specialists

While employers are best placed to set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for their occupation, feedback from trailblazers indicates that they do not always have the expertise to design a robust assessment plan to sit alongside it.

To reinforce this part of the process, we are proposing to offer in-house assessment support for trailblazers, with those that are developing their first assessment plan being prioritised for this support.

3.1.3. Reviewing and signing off a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan

Submissions and approval meetings

At the Institute:

- **Relationship managers use their professional judgement to advise trailblazers on the best point at which to move onto their assessment plan.** This might be after they have received Institute approval of their standard (as at present), but it might also be before if the relationship manager feels that they are ready to do so. This point will also trigger the allocation of an indicative funding band against the draft standard so that this can be factored in as the assessment plan is developed. The relationship manager's role is purely one of support for the trailblazer group – they will not have any role in approving their group's standard or assessment plan.
- **A number of independent, third-party reviewers will comment on the standard and assessment plan.** The peer review will focus on key quality criteria set by the Institute and should reach a judgement on whether the learner would reach full occupational competence by following the apprenticeship standard. Areas for review are likely to include:
 - the clarity of the submission
 - how applicable it is to employers who are not part of the trailblazer group
 - whether it is deliverable
 - whether it includes up-to-date occupational requirements, including use of the latest relevant technology

For the interim, while the Peer Review approach is being established the Institute will continue to use Citizen Space to seek feedback on proposals, standards and assessment plans submitted for approval.

- **Industry-led Route Panels lead the review and approvals process**, supported by Institute officials. trailblazers will respond to initial Route Panel questions in advance so that the review meeting itself is focused on the few really critical areas of the submission, with more minor queries cleared up in advance.
- **The trailblazer chair will be invited, where necessary, to attend the approvals meeting**, either via video conference or conference call. While this will add some logistical complexity to organising the Route Panel approvals meetings, we anticipate that it will save time overall, with issues being resolved within the meeting rather than being relayed to the trailblazer outside of the meeting and the submission then having to be looked at a second time. It should also increase transparency and ensure that key points are clearly relayed to the wider trailblazer group and avoid messages being lost in translation.
- **Emerging digital platforms will be piloted** to keep employers informed of where their standard and assessment plan is in the development process and when they can expect it to reach the next stage.

3.1.4. Monitoring and evaluating the success of an apprenticeship standard

One of the Institute's core roles will be to regularly monitor the mix of available apprenticeship standards to ensure that employer demand is being met and advising government on how available funding should be allocated to individual standards. It is important to stress that responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the apprenticeship programme *as a whole* will continue to rest with DfE (which remains accountable for the overall objectives and affordability).

We are proposing 2 approaches to reviewing standards:

1) Ongoing monitoring of individual standards

The Institute will draw on a range of data sets to monitor the implementation of apprenticeship standards. The Institute will analyse emerging trends and outlying data and escalate concerns to its Board. Where issues are highlighted, the Institute will consider commissioning a deep dive into the standard to better understand the cause and impact.

Much of the data for ongoing monitoring already exists and is currently reported to the ESFA, for example learner starts, completions and withdrawals. Where data is not currently captured, the Institute will put steps in place to do so. Of particular importance will be user feedback – from employers, apprentices, training providers, end point assessors, and external quality assurers. We will work closely with the ESFA to source feedback in a way that works for users as well as the Institute itself.

2) Route-based evaluations of multiple standards

We are also proposing a cyclical strategic evaluation of all standards under a route. This evaluation will take a holistic look at the different standards under that route to help the Institute to build a picture of the impact that they are having for learners, employers and the wider economy.

The Institute will evaluate each route roughly once every 3 years, with around 5 routes reviewed per year, on a rolling basis.

Key questions to consider as part of the evaluation could include:

- What does demand look like for the standard?
- What does outcome data such as learner wage returns and post-apprenticeship destination data indicate about the benefits that these standards are delivering for learners, employers and the wider economy?
- Are there occupations not covered by a standard where a skills gap exists, which could be covered by apprenticeships? Should the Institute encourage the market to come forward to form an employer group, and how should it do so?
- Are there areas of overlap between standards that are causing problems for employers and apprentices?
- Do the funding band allocations reflect the economic and social priorities within the route? If not, what would represent a more appropriate allocation?
- Are end point assessments sufficiently high quality and consistent within and across standards?
- What information is there about progress made with regard to people from disadvantaged backgrounds

The Institute might decide to re-convene a trailblazer group if the evaluation indicates that changes are needed to a standard and/or assessment plan. Where data is clearly showing that a standard is not attracting any learner or employer demand, the Institute could decide to withdraw it from the list of approved apprenticeships.

3.2. PROVIDING ADVICE ON APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING TO GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS IN THIS SECTION:

- **The Institute will provide apprenticeship funding advice to government. Its role will be to advise on allocating new standards to agreed funding bands and changes to existing funding band allocations as part of its cyclical evaluation of standards within selected routes.**
- **Government will also be able to take advice from the Institute on the nature and level of additional payments for different segments of learners or employers.**
- **The Institute will explore options for building a better understanding of the social and economic impact of individual standards** so that it can include a greater recognition of the strategic return from the apprenticeship in its funding advice to government.

The introduction of an apprenticeship levy from April 2017 represents the biggest set of changes to apprenticeship funding since the re-introduction of modern apprenticeships in the mid-1990s.

SUMMARY OF APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING REFORMS IN ENGLAND FROM APRIL 2017

In the recently-published details on apprenticeship funding in England from May 2017, the government has confirmed that all existing and new apprenticeship frameworks and standards will be placed within one of 15 funding bands, depending on what is deemed to be the cost of the level and type of apprenticeship.

The upper limit of each funding band will cap the maximum amount of digital funds an employer who pays the levy can use towards an individual apprenticeship. The upper limit of the funding band will also cap the maximum price that government will 'co-invest' towards, where an employer does not pay the levy or has insufficient digital funds and is eligible for extra support.

Beyond being part of the mechanics of the overall apprenticeship funding system experienced by employers, funding bands are designed to achieve 4 key aims:

- ensure employers can purchase apprenticeships of sufficient quality
- ensure that employers can purchase apprenticeships in sufficient quantity, to drive the growth in apprenticeships government has committed to
- ensuring that the funding system is simple and easy for employers to engage with
- ensure value for money for the employer and taxpayer

At present, the allocation of apprenticeship standards to funding bands follows a 2-step process. The first comes at the point that a standard is approved by government. This has been an indicative allocation designed to help trailblazer groups design an affordable assessment plan. The second comes at the point that the assessment plan is approved by government. This is the final allocation decision and is rarely different from the indicative one, unless the employer group has provided new evidence to warrant a change.

This model of allocating standards to funding bands is largely cost driven (how much the ESFA thinks the required learning will cost to deliver), informed by:

- a comparison with any framework pathway it is replacing
- a judgement of the likely delivery cost, based on overall content of the standard and assessment plan and taking account of likely guided learning hours, learning inputs and duration, and evidence from trailblazer groups
- an economic uplift formula

The model largely assumes that the higher the cost of the training provision, the higher the quality and value of the apprenticeship. However, we know that some types of apprenticeship might cost a lot to provide, but can offer relatively poor labour market returns, for a variety of reasons. From April 2017, the Institute will provide advice to government on:

- allocating new standards to agreed funding bands

- changes to existing funding band allocations as part of its cyclical evaluation of standards within selected routes
- the nature and level of additional payments for certain types of learner or employer

The parameters of the funding advice will be established through the annual remit letter from the DfE to the Institute, with final decisions remaining with the Secretary of State. The operational interaction between the DfE, ESFA and the Institute relating to funding advice will be set out in the framework agreement and supporting service level agreements where appropriate.

Advice will need to be given in the context of overall affordability and the government's manifesto commitment of delivering 3 million new apprenticeship starts by 2020. The Institute will need to consider difficult trade-offs between employer and provider expectations and recognise other factors such as the availability of funding, and will build a strong analytical function to inform this.

3.3. QUALITY ASSURING APPRENTICESHIP END-POINT ASSESSMENTS AND CERTIFICATES

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS IN THIS SECTION:

- **It is intended that the Institute will be responsible for proposing key quality criteria. The ESFA will continue to run the register process, including assessing applications against the criteria that the Institute sets, and government will retain overall ownership.**
- **The Institute will offer an external quality assurance model as a last resort and will charge for this service.**
- **The Institute will establish a Quality Assurance Committee that will operate as an escalation route if concerns arise through the external quality assurance process. The Institute will be able to require the ESFA investigate an assessment organisation if it has concerns about the quality.**
- **The Institute will be responsible for apprenticeship certification, with the ESFA delivering the operational administration of certificates.**

The introduction of end-point assessments should enhance the market value of a learner's apprenticeship. Knowing that the apprentice has had to pass a robust, employer-designed assessment at the end of their training should give employers confidence that the individual is competent in their occupation, in turn de-risking a decision about whether to recruit them into their business.

For this to work, employers must be able to look across their occupation and see that successful apprentices are of roughly comparable ability. Consistency across the standard is key, and the Institute intends for an apprenticeship certificate to become a trusted mark of quality in the labour market, held in the same high regard as a university degree.

3.3.1. Consistent end point assessments

There will be 2 main controls in place to maintain consistently high quality EPAs:

1. The Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations

Employers have the flexibility to select an organisation of their choice to deliver the EPA from a nationally-approved Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). The RoAAO provides the first layer of quality assurance, with assessment organisations having to satisfy a number of entry criteria to be allowed onto it. The register can contain multiple organisations that have been approved to deliver EPAs against a single standard and employers will expect the outcomes to be reliable and consistent between each organisation to ensure that the apprenticeship brand is maintained.

2. External quality assurance

We are building an additional layer of external quality assurance into the system to mitigate against the risk of inconsistencies emerging. Employer groups can choose between 4 approaches to delivering this additional assurance:

- **an employer-led model**, where the employer group proposes its own approach
- **a professional body-led model**, where an industry association delivers the role on behalf of employers
- **an Ofqual-led model**, where Ofqual will regulate the EPA
- **an Institute-led model**, where the Institute will provide the external quality assurance itself, as a last resort

The Institute will create a simple comparisons table to highlight the main differences between the options, as well as promoting the importance of external quality assurance to the overall success of the system.

3.3.2. The Institute's quality assurance model

The Institute's approach to quality assuring EPAs will consist of checks on 4 areas:

- **Readiness for EPA:** Assessment organisations must conduct checks on the completion of on-programme qualifications and English and mathematics requirements before a learner can take their EPA. The Institute will test whether these checks are being carried out consistently within and between assessment organisations.
- **Assessment materials:** Trailblazers are asked to set out how EPAs will be graded, and the parameters for determining a pass/merit/distinction grade overall. Each assessment organisation will develop methods and materials to conduct the EPA and the Institute will test how comparable these are between different assessment organisations.

- **Internal quality assurance:** Trailblazers set out their minimum expectations for internal quality assurance (IQA) which each assessment organisation must then follow. When carrying out EQA checks, the Institute will test whether these requirements are being upheld.
- **Data and compliance:** The Institute will conduct sample checks to test whether assessment organisations have the necessary back office functions and audit processes in place to provide timely and accurate data to those who require it.

The Institute is proposing to charge assessment organisations to cover the costs of its external quality assurance service.

3.3.3. Responding to concerns

The Institute will establish a Quality Assurance Committee that will operate as an escalation route if concerns arise from the external quality assurance. The committee will be comprised of senior Institute officials and led by a designated Board member. It will review concerns that are reported and have the power to launch a full investigation into the issue if appropriate.

If the investigation concludes that the concerns are valid and significant, it will formally write to the assessment organisation requiring them to immediately address the identified issues and demonstrate improvement within a defined time period. If performance remains unsatisfactory, or if the issue is sufficiently serious, the Institute retains the right to recommend to the ESFA the removal of the organisation from the register.

3.3.4. Apprenticeship certificates

Certification of apprenticeships has historically been a time and resource intensive process, with around 1.5 million pieces of evidence being checked annually to issue certificates under apprenticeship frameworks. The certification process under apprenticeship standards is significantly simpler because the assessment organisation is responsible for checking that all requirements have been met:

- all mandatory qualifications on programme have been achieved
- the apprentice has successfully passed the end point assessment
- the apprentice has returned a completed version of the apprenticeship declaration form giving their permission for the assessment organisation to apply for the certificate on their behalf

Government retains responsibility for certification. The Institute will set the parameters for the ESFA. The ESFA will administer the certificates, i.e. physically issuing them to learners, with the Institute setting the parameters for the ESFA to operate within and ensuring the overall integrity of the certification system.

The Institute will work with the ESFA to design a high quality apprenticeship certificate that will be awarded to learners who successfully complete their training. Every apprentice will receive the same design and, in time, learners who pass an approved college-based course will also receive a similar Institute-designed certificate.

4. Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS IN THIS SECTION:

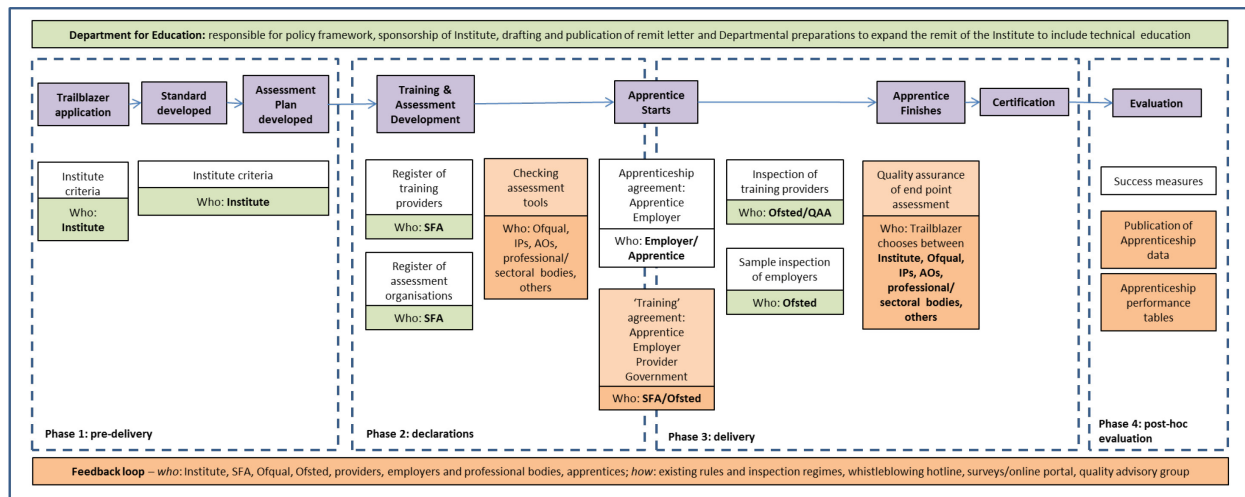
- The Institute will chair a Quality Improvement Group to monitor quality across the apprenticeships sector and provide assurance that investment in apprenticeships is generating value for employers' and taxpayers' money.
- It is intended that the Institute will propose the key quality criteria for the Register of Apprenticeships Training Organisations. The ESFA will maintain responsibility for its administration.

Improving quality in the apprenticeships system is embedded in the Institute's remit. However, we are very clear that the Institute cannot operate in isolation if we are to succeed in our aim of securing a higher quality apprenticeship experience and outcome for employers and learners.

4.1. CREATING AN APPRENTICESHIPS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Figure 3 below provides a view of the different organisations involved in the apprenticeships system.

Figure 3: Who will do what within the apprenticeships system, 2017-18 (for SFA read ESFA)



Roles and responsibilities:

- **Department for Education** will have responsibility for the policy framework, overseeing how the system functions, developing and publishing the annual Strategic Guidance from government and preparing for the expansion of the Institute's remit to include technical education from 2018 onwards.
- **The Institute** will regulate the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments, and advise government on the funding of training and assessment against apprenticeship standards. It will also work closely with DfE in 2017 to 2018 on preparations for expansion of its remit, including close cooperation with the shadow technical education functions that will operate from the Department.
- **The ESFA** will continue to be responsible for the administration of the register of apprenticeship training providers and the register of assessment organisations, as well as running the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The ESFA will continue to fund the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships throughout England and provide a dedicated, responsive service for both employers and apprentices.
- **Ofsted** will continue to inspect training providers and sample inspection of employers.
- **Ofqual** will continue to regulate any qualifications included as part of an apprenticeship standard and for quality assuring some end point assessments.

Driving real and tangible improvements to quality through the system will require these organisations (and others) to work together in a more joined-up way than in the past. The Institute is committed to play a leading role in this, bringing together the ESFA, NAS, Ofsted, Ofqual, The Office for Students (when established), HEFCE, and the Quality Assurance Agency to form a Quality Improvement Group which the Institute will chair. The group will meet on a quarterly basis to begin with, to monitor quality across the sector, intervene where necessary, and provide assurance to the DfE Permanent Secretary that investment in the sector is generating good value for money.

4.2. APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT ORGANISATIONS

Future access to the apprenticeship training and assessment markets will be governed by 2 apprenticeship-specific registers – the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). The Institute will have a role in maintaining the quality on each of these, including:

- **Proposing the quality criteria for the registers** which training and assessment organisations would have to meet. Provider feedback indicates that the current process for accessing the registers can lack transparency and sometimes hinder smaller providers' chances of becoming an approved provider. The Institute will follow up on these concerns as a priority during its first year of operation.

- **Recommending the ESFA to take action where the Institute has concerns over the quality of particular organisations**, including proposing an organisation is removed from the relevant register if needed. We anticipate that the primary route of discovering any such examples of poor quality delivery will be through employer or learner feedback, monitoring data and outcomes or the external quality assurance function that the Institute will oversee.

Overall responsibility for both registers remains with government, with the ESFA continuing to operate it on a day-to-day basis.

5. Delivering the reforms to technical education

5.1. IMPLEMENTING THE POST-16 SKILLS PLAN

The Post-16 Skills Plan was published in July 2016 alongside a report from an expert panel chaired by Lord Sainsbury. It set out an ambitious framework for a reformed technical education system – one that supports young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

Its ambition was that every young person, after an excellent grounding in the core academic subjects and a broad and balanced curriculum to age 16, would be presented with 2 choices: the academic or the technical option. The academic option is already well regarded, but the technical option must also be world class. Adults who want to change careers or advance their technical knowledge should also have access to high quality technical qualifications, suited to their specific needs.

The technical option will prepare individuals for skilled employment which requires technical knowledge and practical skills valued by employers. It will cover college-based and employment-based (apprenticeship) education, building on our apprenticeship reforms. Employers will sit at the heart of the system and take the lead in setting the standards. Crucially, standards will be designed by considering what is needed to move into skilled employment and then working backwards to develop the qualifications which lead to this point.

5.2. THE INSTITUTE'S ROLE IN DELIVERING THESE REFORMS

The plan proposed an expansion to the Institute to lead on this framework from April 2018. This will create a single body responsible for technical education with the remit to develop a coherent strategy and bring together employers and education experts to design the standards across all technical education – college-based as well as apprenticeships.

The Institute's expanded role will include:

- **Establishing a common framework of 15 routes across all technical education**, encompassing both college-based and employment-based learning. These routes will focus on skilled occupations where there is a substantial requirement for technical knowledge and practical skills. The routes will group occupations together to reflect where there are shared requirements, and use this occupational mapping to commission new standards where needed.
- **Convening panels of professionals for each route** to advise on the content of new technical qualifications and overall T-Level programme requirements for the 15 new technical routes to skilled employment. They will also propose new standards for occupations, where there is not a standard in place or under development for apprenticeships.

- **Agreeing the content of T-Levels for each technical education route at levels 2 and 3.** Each certificate achieved through college-based study is likely to include achievement of a technical qualification alongside other elements, for example successful completion of a substantial work placement. We will put in place only one approved qualification for each occupation or cluster of occupations within a route. These could play a role within the relevant apprenticeships, but only if employers decide that should be the case and the Institute will need to consider the implications of this single qualification approach. We intend to grant exclusive licences for the development of technical qualifications following a competitive bidding process.
- **Maintaining a register of technical qualifications at levels 4 and 5, whether existing or new,** which are eligible for public subsidy through government-backed student loans. Where an existing technical qualification is considered by employers to do the best job of meeting national standards, it could be placed on the register. Otherwise, where there is a need but no existing suitable qualification, the Institute could commission its development.

5.3. PREPARING FOR THE INSTITUTE'S EXPANDED REMIT

We expect that the Institute's remit will expand to include wider technical education from April 2018. More details about how an expanded Institute will operate will be available when the government sets out plans over the coming months for implementing the reforms outlined in the Post-16 Skills Plan. We can though highlight some critical work now to prepare for the wider remit of the Institute:

Legislation

Securing the legislative changes to expand the Institute to cover wider technical education beyond its current apprenticeship functions. The Technical Education and Further Education Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament, will extend the Institute's role so that it can implement key recommendations within the Skills Plan and Sainsbury report.

DfE operating routes in shadow form

In the interim period until April 2018, it will be important to prepare the Institute to take forward the reforms to technical education, so that we can maximise their impact, and ensure that the Institute can hit the ground running when it formally takes on the relevant functions. Therefore, we will work with DfE in delivering key functions in shadow form in advance of April 2018, but we will make these as aligned as possible with Institute functions from April 2017 onwards, in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Learning from the initial rollout of routes and occupational maps in the Institute's first year

The first year of the Institute provides a great opportunity to make sure we manage the Institute's wider remit in the right way. For instance, we can learn from how the routes are developing and take on board the lessons from the occupational maps, and shape the way in which the wider remit is carried out accordingly.

6. Implementing the new system

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS IN THIS SECTION:

- **The Institute’s long-term ambition is to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and classroom-based courses.**
- **The Institute’s priorities for year one include providing continuity to the sector while kicking off initial activities to make progress against each of the proposals in this document.**
- **Our priority until April 2017 is to set up the Institute in the way that gives it the best chance of success now launched.**

Stakeholders have been clear that the sector is looking for the Institute to play a leading role in improving quality within the apprenticeship system. The need for continuity and stability has come through loud and clear from our engagement and our recent consultation as has the request for a clear plan for the future.

The creation of the independent Institute as a permanent feature of the apprenticeships and technical education landscape is designed to provide long-term stability and certainty to the sector. It will allow us to talk confidently about our long-term plans for apprenticeships and technical education.

6.1. OUR AMBITIONS BY 2020

In the long term, the Institute’s ambition is to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and college-based courses. We recognise that this is a hugely challenging ambition, and one that previous reforms have tried, and failed, to achieve. We are confident that the Institute’s focus on quality and rigour, the central role of employers in the new system, and the additional levy resource to support provision all mean that we are now better placed than ever to achieve this ambition.

By 2020, we would expect to see:

- **a simplified system that is easier for users to navigate** than at present, with clear information and guidance available whenever it is wanted by any stakeholder
- a suite **of mutually exclusive, employer-designed standards** that better meet employers’ skills needs and deliver improved outcomes for learners
- **funding allocated to standards in a way that provides the greatest strategic return** (either to the learner, employer or wider economy)
- **a coordinated approach to quality assurance across the system**, with organisations collaborating proactively and effectively to identify issues, respond to concerns, and intervene to address them in a timely manner

- **the Institute playing a leading role alongside others to do more to celebrate learners' successes** (establishing apprenticeship certificates as a hallmark of high quality will be one of multiple contributions to this)
- **apprenticeships and wider technical education recognised as a highly prestigious alternative to the established academic route**, whilst recognising that achieving real parity of esteem will take longer to achieve
- **the Institute recognised as an organisation of excellence** across the apprenticeship landscape – by government, employers, learning organisations, colleges and schools and parents

We would welcome your comments on both the proposed content of these aims, and also suggested approaches to measuring their success.

6.2. YEAR ONE OBJECTIVES

Our priority until April 2017 was to set up the Institute in the way that gives it the best chance of success. Below, we have set out priorities for the Institute for the 12 months from April 2017, aligned to its core functions and its wider role in the apprenticeships system. The Institute will report to the Secretary of State on these and other objectives through its annual report.

Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards – in its first year, the Institute will:

- improve access to information and guidance on the development process, including making it easier to navigate the system and locate 'in development' and 'approved for delivery' standards
- develop a clear support package for trailblazers to help them develop standards, including access to assessment specialists to help with drafting the assessment plans
- explore opportunities to speed up the end-to-end process for developing an apprenticeship standard, whilst retaining appropriate scrutiny and rigour of review
- introduce greater industry expertise into the review and approval of apprenticeship standards, including setting up Route Panels and Peer Review Panels
- establish a monitoring and evaluation function within the Institute, including initiating the first route based evaluations of standards

Providing advice on funding of apprenticeship standards to government – in its first year, the Institute will:

- establish a robust process for providing advice to DfE on the appropriate funding band allocation for new apprenticeship standards, in line with the Secretary of State's remit letter to the Institute.
- research and test an improved approach to allocating standards to funding bands, in order to move further towards an allocation model that incentivises the standards that provide the greatest strategic return on investment

Quality assuring apprenticeship end point assessments – in its first year, the Institute will:

- establish an approach to Institute-led external quality assurance, including the legislation, processes and systems required to support this service (the first of these approaches have been published as part of this plan)
- set up an Assessment Committee to review concerns reported through the external quality assurance of end point assessments, including where the Institute is not selected as lead quality assurer
- create a consistent apprenticeship certificate design and work with the ESFA to issue the certificate to successful learners

Collaborating with partners to drive quality – in its first year, the Institute will:

- establish and chair quarterly Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Group meetings comprised of key organisations responsible for quality within the apprenticeships system
- agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the ESFA, including provisions to support Institute-led interventions where low quality is observed from apprenticeship training or assessment organisations

Preparing for the expansion of the Institute's remit – in its first year, the Institute will:

- publish occupational maps that aligns standards to 15 industry routes
- expand Route Panels during the year so that they are ready to operate at scale from April 2018

Annex 1: The Route Panels

ROUTE NAME	TYPICAL JOB ROLES
Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care	Conservationist, park ranger, farmer, horticulturalist, agricultural manager, agricultural technician
Business and Administrative	Human resources officer, office manager, administrative officer, housing officer
Catering and Hospitality	Chef, butcher, baker, catering manager, events manager
Childcare and Education	Nursery assistant, early-years officer, teaching assistant, youth worker
Construction	Bricklayer/mason, electrician, building/civil engineering technician, carpenter/joiner, construction supervisor
Creative and Design	Arts producer, graphic designer, audio-visual technician, journalist, product/clothing designer, upholsterer, tailor, furniture maker
Digital	IT business analyst/systems designer, programmer, software developer, IT technician, web designer, network administrator
Engineering and Manufacturing	Engineering technician, vehicle mechanic, aircraft fitter, printer, process technician, energy plant operative
Hair and Beauty	Hairdresser, barber, beauty therapist
Health and Science	Nursing assistant, pharmaceutical technician, sports therapist, laboratory technician, dental nurse, food technician
Legal, Finance and Accounting	Accounting technician, paralegal, financial account manager, payroll manager, finance officer, legal secretary
Protective Services	Police officer, fire service officer, non-commissioned officer (NCO), maritime operations officer (coastguard)
Sales, Marketing and Procurement	Buyer, procurement officer, sales account manager, market research analyst, estate agent
Social Care	Care worker, residential warden, home carer, probation officer, welfare counsellor
Transport and Logistics	Ship's officer, railway signalling technician, HGV driver

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