

Professional Economist Apprenticeship Integrated Degree Standard - Consultation Response Document

Thank you to all who took the time to express your views in the consultation. It is hugely important that this new route into economics works for the entire profession and the Trailblazer and project team are fully committed to this.

If you have any outstanding points, would like to find out more about this project or would like to hold a discussion with the project team please contact us - economic.apprenticeships@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk

How was the consultation approached and conducted?

The public consultation on the standard ran between 30th November 2017 and 8th January 2018. The online consultation was hosted via a link on the public Government Economic Service website to the online consultation. This site also provided links to a number of supporting documents, including a Q&A document and details of how to complete the consultation via email as an alternative, if preferred.

Approximately 300 interested parties were e-mailed directly by the Trailblazer chair at launch, including Trailblazer and Working Group members, the Government Economic Service (GES) Board, and GES alumni members who represent the full range of sectors that professional economists work in including higher education establishments. A reminder e-mail sent in early January. Social media was also used to promote the consultation, as well as further cascades from Trailblazer members.

Key findings from the consultation

The consultation elicited 63 responses:

- ✳ 52 of the 63 respondents (83%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the occupational profile text appropriately outlines the core responsibilities of professional economists, with eight of the remaining 11 being neutral.
- ✳ 41 of the 55 respondents (75%) who completed the question asking if the appropriate knowledge had been captured in the standard either agreed or strongly agreed that it had, with five being neutral, eight disagreeing and only one strongly disagreeing. This question also included a free text field to add narrative to the decisions. Many of the comments expressing disagreement in both this question and the ones relating to skills and behaviours, suggested that particular elements of core and in some cases very niche economic knowledge were not explicitly mentioned in the knowledge section. However, for knowledge, skills and behaviours the majority of the core aspects are identified, but are included in Plain English. We subsequently made some amendments to this section and other relevant sections of the standard to make these clearer. A few additional areas were identified from the comments where more

emphasis should be placed, such as data and statistics, regional economics and cost benefit analysis and were either added or expanded.

- * 42 of the 51 respondents (82%) who completed the question asking if the appropriate skills had been captured in the standard either agreed or strongly agreed that they had, with six being neutral and only one disagreeing. This question also included a free text field to add narrative to the decisions. Changes have been made to include communicating with impact and synthesising evidence.
- * 42 of the 47 respondents (89%) who completed the question asking if the appropriate behaviours had been captured in the standard either agreed or strongly agreed that they had, with two being neutral and three disagreeing. This question also included a free text field to add narrative to the decisions. Cross-profession working has been strengthened in the standard as a result of these comments.
- * 36 of the 46 respondents (78%) who completed this question agreed or strongly agreed that four years was the appropriate duration for this apprenticeship, with a further five being neutral and five disagreeing. There were a variety of views from those who did not agree. However, as the standard state that the duration is typical and therefore can be varied (lengthened or shortened) if particular employers choose, the wording has been kept the same.
- * Respondents were broadly representative of the sector, with 11 of the 44 respondents to this question being from the public sector (25%), 13 private sector (30%), 2 third sector (5%), 13 higher education (30%), 1 professional body (2%) and 5 other types of organisation (11%). This question also inquired about organisational size for public, private and third sector employers. Of the 26 respondents from these categories, 12 (46%) had 1000+ employees, 3 (12%) had 250-999 employees, 7 (27%) had 50-249 employees and 4 (15%) had less than 50 employees.
- * 32 of the 44 respondents (73%) who completed the question asking if the new professional economist standard would be suitable for use in their organisation answered yes or possibly, with six answering not applicable and only six no.
- * There was then a final catch all question asking for anything else that respondents would like to feedback. Several respondents took this opportunity to praise the initiative; for example: "Brilliant initiative, should make a real difference. Well done!" and "I agree that this new route into the economics profession is likely to both widen participation in the discipline and resulting improvements in business and workplace decision making". Others used the space to recommend potential additional stakeholders e.g. the Society for Professional Economists (SPE) and the Royal Economic Society (RES) – both of which are already engaged – or to make final technical comments.