



Alex Burghart MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills

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29 June 2022

Dear Colleagues

As we near the end of the 2021/22 academic year, I am writing to you to set out my vision for the next steps on apprenticeship quality.

It is because of your dedication to delivering high quality apprenticeship education that so many young people and adults are able to better their lives and achieve their goals. I am always impressed to see examples on my visits of how the apprenticeships you deliver help young people to enter the labour market and progress, and employers to improve their productivity. I want to thank you for your continued dedication to supporting your learners, particularly during the extremely difficult circumstances throughout the pandemic.

I am also pleased to see the results of our apprenticeship reforms coming to fruition and I am grateful for the crucial role you have played in making these changes a success. It is not unexpected that as we have transitioned through these reforms and introduced a more rigorous programme, we have seen an initial impact on achievement rates. And I know that this has been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic and the associated significant challenges that you, apprenticeship employers and apprentices themselves have faced.

It is now time to focus our efforts on driving up those achievements as far as possible, to ensure that apprenticeships are delivering the maximum value both to those who undertake them, their employers, and to the labour market more widely.

We know that not all completions are within your control – including when apprentices withdraw for positive personal reasons, for example because they have found alternative employment or higher wages, or due to wider labour market changes in particular sectors of the economy. Yet we also know that apprenticeship achievement brings huge advantages in terms of future earnings and employment prospects, and as such the importance of achievements cannot be ignored.

We also know that successful apprenticeships happen when providers, employers and assessment organisations work in partnership to ensure a positive end-to-end journey for the apprentice. Apprenticeships need to be set up well from the start, with apprentices clear on what to expect and what training and assessment they will get based on a quality initial assessment of their needs, and there are things we can do at each stage of the apprentice journey to support continuation and achievement. I am calling for a renewed focus on these actions to ensure that every apprentice, no matter what their background, gets a high quality experience.

I am setting a stretching ambition to reach a 67% achievement rate on apprenticeship Standards by 2025. I have set out below how Government is going further to support this aim, which will result in thousands more apprentices reaping the benefits associated with achieving. We know that improving achievements is not something we can do overnight, particularly as we continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic, and reaching this ambition will require a strong collective effort from all involved in delivering the programme. The actions we are taking to support this include:

- Launching later this summer the next phase of our provider workforce development programme, providing free resources to leaders, teachers and trainers and helping to spread effective practice. The first phase was launched in January 2021 and has received extremely high user satisfaction rates, with over 4,000 participants to date. If you haven't already, you can enrol on the programme at <https://pdp.etfoundation.co.uk/>.
- Offering targeted support for employers to be great employers of apprentices, building on the resources we have already made available. This includes our Employer Quality Roadmap which provides guidance on what employers need to be doing at each stage of the apprenticeship, working with their provider.
- Making sure apprentices get the best possible advice and support at every stage of their programme, supported by new digital accounts we have created for apprentices. As part of this we have revamped our 'Find an Apprenticeship' website and continue to invest in careers advice so that apprentices know what to expect from the outset and are making informed choices.
- Launching a new exit feedback tool for apprentices who have withdrawn, to enable us to better understand reasons for non-completion. In time we want this to evolve so we can better predict those at risk of withdrawal allowing us to target direct support as needed.
- Reviewing whether there is further data we can publish to equip employers and providers with the information they need to improve achievements.

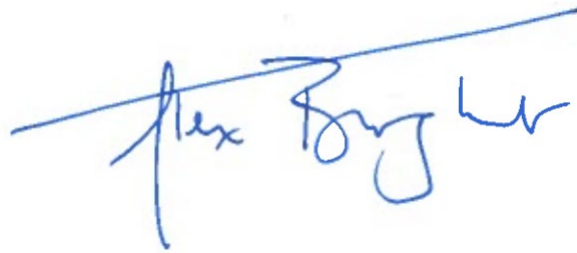
To further support quality and increase starts, particularly in SMEs, I want to simplify processes and remove unnecessary bureaucracy for providers and for employers, where we can. We have introduced a programme of work inspired by your feedback and premised on action: 'you said, we did'. We are already working with you to identify and address barriers in the system and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to achieve this.

I very much see the work needed to move towards our achievement rate ambition as a joint effort. As such I am keen to hear from you whether there are other things we can do to support you. For example if there are any particular barriers or issues around which I can ask my officials to explore further options. If you would like to share your feedback please contact the department using the email address you-said-we-did.apprenticeships@education.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can feed back via your representative body.

I know you will also have questions about how this achievement rate ambition will interact with existing policy, including the quality and intervention thresholds included within the new Apprenticeship Accountability Framework. I want to reassure you that the information we published as part of the updated Apprenticeship Accountability Framework Technical Specification (11 May) has not changed. We recognise that progress towards this ambition will be incremental over time, and the Regions and Providers Team in the Department will continue to work with you to support improvements where issues have been identified.

I know that you are already committed to supporting apprentices at every stage of their programme, and together we can re-double our efforts to ensure achievements continue to improve year-on-year. I look forward to working with you on this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Alex Burghart". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the "Yours sincerely," text.

Alex Burghart MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills