

HEIs and apprenticeships confidence index survey

October 2017

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships has provided the HE sector with an opportunity to grow and expand their offer. For some HEIs however, apprenticeships aren't always an easy fit with their organisation's approaches, systems and delivery.

Building on previous research, SDN conducted a short snapshot 'confidence index' survey to benchmark the current level of confidence among HEIs in their delivery of apprenticeships, and the key factors to their future success.

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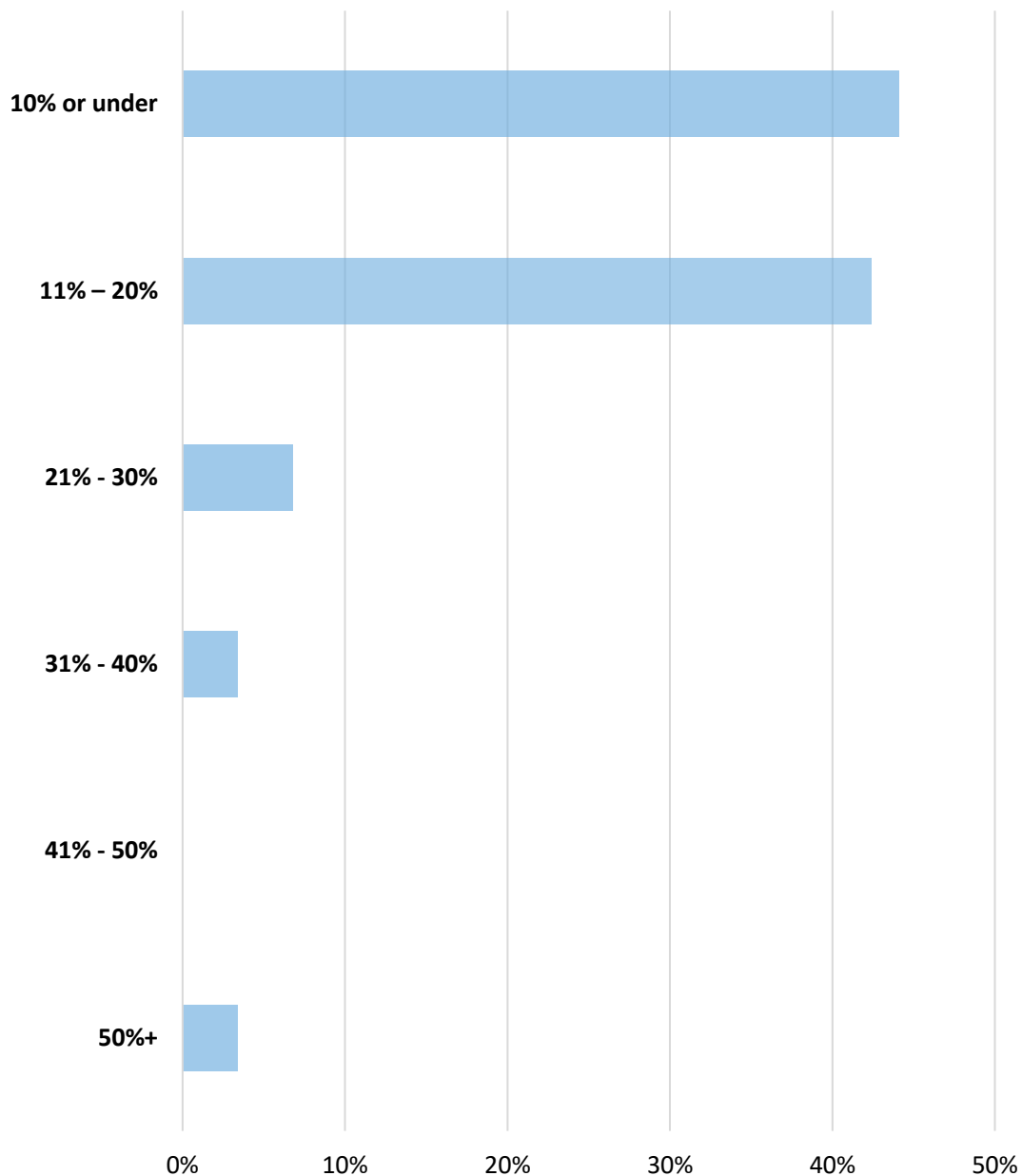
Headline findings

- Survey responses were received from 59 HEIs, all of whom have an interest in apprenticeships
- Overall, HEIs are confident about their future in apprenticeships, although degree apprenticeships are expected to provide the most significant opportunities, compared with higher apprenticeships
- Respondents have a greater confidence in the opportunities apprenticeships will bring over a five-year time horizon (particularly degree apprenticeships), compared with the short term. In the majority of cases, respondents have either just started to offer apprenticeships, or are developing plans, systems and processes to do so. This will take time to develop and grow, in response to employer demand – particularly from levy-payers
- In many cases, FE providers are already offering higher apprenticeships and so degree apprenticeship provide HEIs with an obvious place in the market. Those delivering higher apprenticeships often work collaboratively with FE providers
- The top factors underpinning the future success of HEIs in apprenticeships include effective engagement with employers (both levy-paying and SMEs), the effective development and approval of new standards to meet this demand, and understanding / establishing internal systems and processes. In regard to apprenticeships, HEIs are currently less concerned about the delivery of the training and the wider political agenda (e.g. localism, Brexit)
- HEIs expect their confidence to accelerate if:
 - they are able to establish effective internal systems, processes, funding models and 'buy-in' from staff across their organisation
 - the current IfA system for standard development / approval was quicker, less fraught, and more flexible - particularly in allowing the use of integrated end-point assessment
 - there was greater clarity from the ESFA on the funding system and rules, standard contracting templates, and greater clarity around inspection and the role of Ofsted and HEFCE

Current or future plans to deliver Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

All HEI respondents already, or plan to, deliver Higher and/or Degree Apprenticeships in the next three years

Percentage of total HE provision expected to be apprenticeships in three years' time

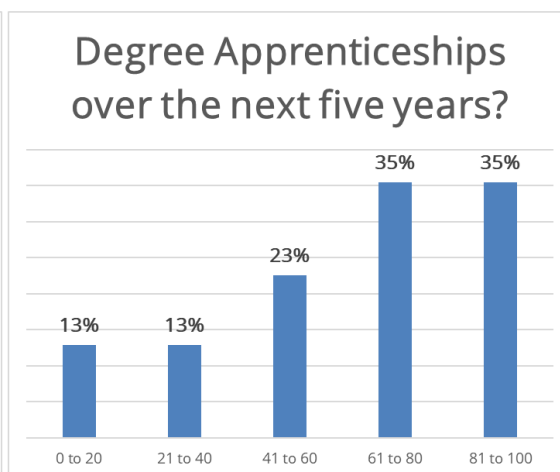
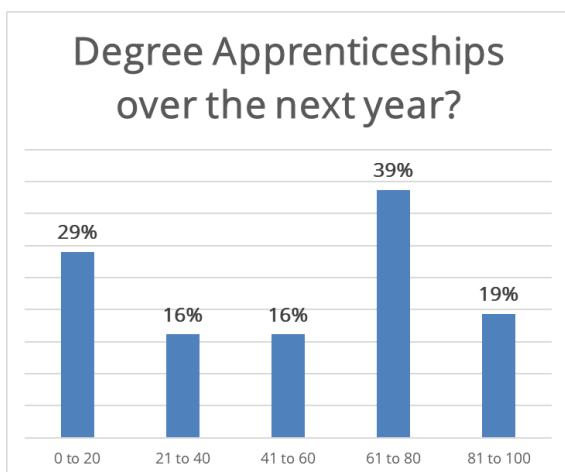
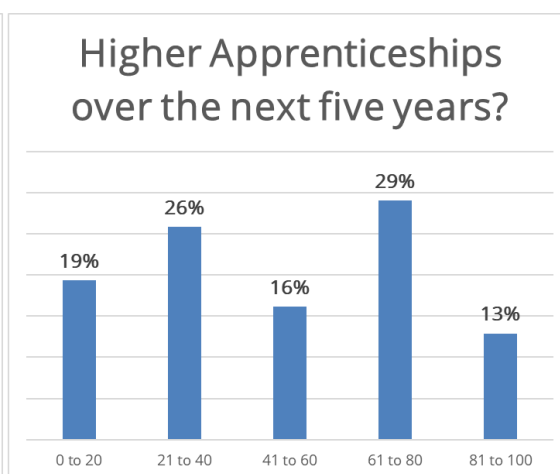
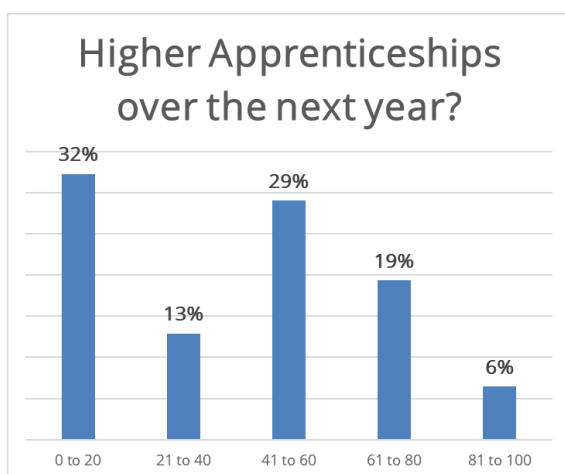


One respondent expected apprenticeships to make up 85% of their total HE provision in three years' time

Level of confidence

What is your level of confidence that apprenticeships will be a significant opportunity for you as an HEI?

	Higher Apprenticeships	Degree Apprenticeships	
1 year	44 (-)	54 (+)	0 = low confidence
5 years	50 (-/+)	64 (+)	50 = <i>neutral</i>
			100 = high confidence



1 = low confidence / 50 = neutral / 100 = high confidence

Key themes behind the confidence rating

Higher Apprenticeships

- Overall, HEIs are less confident that higher apprenticeships will be a significant opportunity for them in the future, particularly in the short term. Some are only focusing on degree apprenticeships
- Some HEIs are operating in industries where there seems to be little demand for higher apprenticeships. Others recognise that FE providers will continue to offer this provision
- Some HEIs, in response to levy-paying employers, see higher apprenticeships as a significant part of their apprenticeships strategy and a key stepping stone to degree and post-graduate apprenticeships. Others are working collaboratively with FE providers to offer these programmes
- Those who are more confident longer-term are still developing their strategy and analysing industry trends and employer demand

Degree Apprenticeships

- Overall, HEIs are more confident that degree apprenticeships will be a significant opportunity for them in the future, particularly in the longer term
- Although most do not expect degree apprenticeships to dominate their HE offer, many see them as an opportunity to diversify and grow their programmes and meet levy-paying employer demand
- Ex-polytechnic universities have been quicker to market and are more confident in the short term. A wider spectrum of universities do however see this as an opportunity longer term, although it will take time to develop the programme, systems and staff in what is currently a predominantly academic setting
- Those who are less confident showed frustration with the ever-changing nature of the apprenticeship reforms, the disparity between standards and the IfA's lack of flexibility around integrated end-point assessments, thus prohibiting engagement

Factors important to the future success of HEIs in apprenticeships

Factor	Rating (low score = important)
Working with levy-paying employers	2.9
Development and approval of new Higher and Degree Apprenticeship standards	3.9
Working with SMEs	4.6
Apprenticeship funding policy, systems and processes	5.6
New government policies and reforms	6.7
Working with your own organisation as a levy-payer	7.6
Higher and Degree Apprenticeships careers advice in schools and colleges	8.2
Delivery of end-point assessment	8.5
Partnerships and collaboration with other training organisations	8.5
Recruiting / training staff with the right level of skills	8.7
Localism / LEPs	9.5
New technologies for learning and skills delivery	9.9
Introduction of technical education routes	10.4
English and maths	10.9
Brexit	11.7

Other issues of importance to the future success of HEIs in apprenticeships

- The need for strong partnerships between FE and HE and developing clear progression routes
- Establishing internal apprenticeships systems and processes that are fit for purpose
- Gaining appropriate understanding of apprenticeships and 'institutional buy-in' from staff across the university, particularly at senior level
- Speed and flexibility from the IfA in the development and approval of standards
- Successful outcome of the non-levy tender
- Developing a funding model that works for lower funding bands assigned to some standards, and accounting for internal development and design costs

What would help HEIs succeed, or increase their confidence?

- Standardising systems, processes and contracting, which can quickly become over-burdensome
- Greater HE presence on trailblazer groups and IfA groups and panels
- Clearer guidance from the ESFA around the funding system and rules
- Increasing the speed of standard development and approvals and clearer external quality-assurance structures
- Templates for common documents e.g. apprentice evidence pack, advice around initial assessments, maths and English requirements, and subcontracting implications
- Clarity around inspection, and the role of Ofsted and HEFCE

Other comments / quotes

"Higher and Degree Apprenticeships are a significant opportunity for the sector, but getting to grips with them is a major piece of work; and getting a clear and consistent message out to employers is also a challenge. We are ploughing on and firmly committed to making this work as a means of building strong relationships, helping businesses to grow and creating the right opportunities for a wider pool of graduates."

"The financial sustainability of apprenticeships will be a critical factor in determining the extent of HEIs engagement – the lowering of funding caps would cause us to revise our optimistic assessment of our institution's involvement with apprenticeships."

"There is a generational opportunity to transform the education system in the country for the better. To align the worlds of work and learning and to move beyond unhelpful divide between 'technical' and 'academic' learning. This opportunity requires employers, providers (including universities) and professional associations to collaborate. Where this collaboration is facilitated, employers, providers and professional associations can work together to produce innovative and high quality apprenticeships that raise professional standards and enhance innovation and productivity."

Who responded?

Responses were received from 59 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across England. The majority of SDN / UVAC HEI contacts relate to apprenticeships – the results of this survey do not represent the confidence of the whole HEI sector.

The survey was promoted through a number of channels including direct mailings to SDN and UVAC contacts and through social media.

<i>Respondents by job role</i>	
Senior Manager (Director / VC)	31%
Head of Department / Programme	32%
Manager / Lead	28%
Officer	6%
Practitioner / Teacher	3%