



Northern Ireland
Assembly

SECTION 1.12

APPRENTICESHIP AND PLACEMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

1. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ('the Assembly Commission') may engage apprentices (directly or through an approved third party) and support them through a relevant qualification, or facilitate other work placements through a range of mechanisms. The Assembly Commission is also committed to providing opportunity for people with a disability to avail of short-term supported placements.

Purpose of the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework

2. The purpose of the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework ('the Framework') is to set out:
 - How formal apprenticeships are initiated and managed by the Assembly Commission;
 - The range of other (non-apprenticeship) work placements which are facilitated by the Assembly Commission and how these are managed; and
 - Opportunities for people with a disability, to avail of a short-term supported placement, to develop their skills and confidence.

Scope

3. All apprenticeships and other work placements fall within the scope of this Framework.

Apprenticeships

4. For the purpose of the Framework, an apprenticeship is defined as the engagement of an individual (directly by the Assembly Commission or through another body/organisation) to work within the Secretariat while being supported (financially or through work-based training and development, or a combination of both) in the completion of a specific course of study leading to a nationally recognised qualification. An apprenticeship will last a minimum of two years.
5. Apprenticeship opportunities with the Assembly Commission may be in a range of business areas e.g. Finance, IS, Human Resources, Legal Services and Parliamentary Services. Apprenticeships will normally be aimed at those aged 18 and over who have already achieved qualifications at 'A' Level standard or equivalent (Higher Level Apprenticeship).

Apprentices engaged directly by the Assembly Commission

6. Should a Head of Business determine that there is a need for an apprentice within their work area, they will submit a bid for an apprenticeship to the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) as part of the overall staff complement and budgetary management process. An apprentice will normally, but not always, be over and

above the approved staff complement within a business area. SMG will decide on the engagement of apprentices and the business areas to which they should be allocated.

7. The qualification associated with the apprenticeship will be determined by the Head of Business, in consultation with the Human Resources Office. The apprentice will complete their qualification through a university or further education college within Northern Ireland, or through distance learning or the Open University, as determined by the Assembly Commission. The relationship between the Assembly Commission, the education provider and the apprentice will be established in a formal Training Agreement which will be developed by the Human Resources Office for each individual apprenticeship, in consultation with the Head of Business (and taking into consideration specific professional regulations pertaining to the apprenticeship). The Training Agreement will set out the roles and responsibilities of the business area/line manager, the apprentice and the education provider; the academic training, attendance and conduct standards which the apprentice must achieve; and formal review points and how these will be assessed. During an apprenticeship, the apprentice will be required to comply with the Assembly Commission's Standards of Conduct Policy and all other relevant policies.
8. The Human Resources Office will also develop Terms and Conditions of Engagement for each apprenticeship. These Terms and Conditions of Engagement will include the facility to end the apprenticeship early, should the required standards in relation to academic training, attendance and conduct not be achieved.
9. The engagement of an apprentice will be overseen by the Human Resources Office and will be undertaken in accordance with established recruitment and selection procedures.
10. The salary paid to an apprentice (for their actual hours worked within the Secretariat during the course of the apprenticeship) will be based on National Living Wage. In addition, the Assembly Commission has discretion to pay some or all of the tuition fees associated with the course of study undertaken by an apprentice. Tuition fees will normally be paid directly to the relevant university/further education college.
11. In addition to completion of their formal qualification, an apprentice will receive induction and other corporate training, provided through the Learning and Development Team or within the business area.
12. The Head of Business will appoint a line manager/mentor for each apprentice who will be responsible for liaison with the education provider (as set out in the Training Agreement); ensuring that the apprentice receives all relevant workplace training and development and line management of the apprentice on a day to day basis. In fulfilling this role, the line manager/mentor will be provided with advice and support from the Human Resources Office, particularly in relation to supporting the wellbeing of the apprentice.
13. On successful completion of an apprenticeship and attainment of the necessary qualification, the Assembly Commission has discretion to offer employment to an apprentice on a permanent or temporary/fixed-term basis (permanent employment may only be offered if the apprentice was recruited in the first instance through fair and open competition as defined in the Assembly Commission's Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement). Any offer of employment (permanent or temporary/fixed-term) will be subject to the availability of an appropriate post (the grade of which will be determined by the Assembly Commission's Job Evaluation methodology) within the structure of the business area.
14. Alternatively, on successful completion of an apprenticeship and attainment of the necessary qualification, the Assembly Commission may deem the apprentice as meeting the essential criteria to apply for specific posts advertised internally and/or externally, subject to the availability of a suitable vacancy and other selection mechanisms deemed appropriate by the Assembly Commission.

Apprenticeship through another body/organisation

15. The Assembly Commission may receive an apprentice from another body/organisation through a formal partner arrangement. In such circumstances, while the terms of engagement for the apprenticeship, including salary, will be a matter for the formal partner and the apprentice, the Assembly Commission must be content with such terms and conditions before accepting the apprentice. The Assembly Commission will be a party to an agreement with the formal partner, for the work-based training and development of the apprentice and for providing support in the completion of the relevant qualification.
16. Where an apprentice is received through a formal partner arrangement, the Assembly Commission may not offer employment (permanent or temporary/fixed-term) at the end of the apprenticeship. However, the Assembly Commission may deem the apprentice as meeting the essential criteria to apply for specific externally advertised opportunities.

Non-apprenticeship Work Placements

17. In addition to formal apprenticeships, the Assembly Commission may choose to facilitate a range of non-apprenticeship work placement opportunities at undergraduate and graduate level. These may include, for example, undergraduate work placement in the IS Office through the NICS programme; trainee accountant placement through CIPFA or another accounting institute; funded PhD student placements through the Research Council UK; the Assembly Bursary Scheme; and short periods of work experience.
18. Such work placements should be organised at business area level, seeking assistance from the Human Resources Office (and Education Office in relation to work experience) as required. In the event that a work placement will incur a cost to the Assembly Commission, the Head of Business should seek the necessary funding/approval through the established budgetary management process prior to entering into any arrangements.

Short-term Supported Placements

19. The Assembly Commission is committed to providing opportunity for people with a disability to avail of short-term supported placements. Such placements will be arranged by the Human Resources Office, working in partnership with a relevant umbrella body which supports a range of organisations that work with individuals with a disability.
20. The Human Resources Office will work with Heads of Business to identify potential placement opportunities. Placements are anticipated to be short-term and part-time in nature. The Head of Business will, in consultation with the Human Resources Office, establish the type of work that will be carried out during the placement and the basic skills the individual will require.
21. The Human Resources Office will liaise with the umbrella group to identify a suitable individual for the placement and will ensure that adequate guidance and support is provided to the business area hosting the placement. The Human Resources Office will also consider any adjustments that may be required to support the individual, in consultation with the Head of Business. The Head of Business will be asked to identify a member of staff to carry out the role of mentor/buddy for the duration of the placement.
22. Supported placements do not attract salary. However, the Assembly Commission will provide support for the placement through payment of public transport expenses actually incurred by the individual travelling to and from Parliament Buildings.

Roles and Responsibilities

Apprenticeships

23. Human Resources Office

- Assist the Head of Business to identify the appropriate qualification for the apprenticeship;
- Engage the Apprentice in accordance with established recruitment and selection procedures;
- Where the apprentice is not engaged directly by the Assembly Commission, liaise with the formal partner regarding the arrangements for the apprenticeship, as necessary;
- Work with the Head of Business, education provider and apprentice to develop the Training Agreement;
- Develop the Terms and Conditions of Engagement for the apprentice;
- Work with the Head of Business to ensure provision of induction and other workplace training to the apprentice;
- Provide guidance and support to the line manager/mentor and apprentice throughout the apprenticeship, including in relation to wellbeing issues.

24. Head of Business

- Submit the business case for an apprenticeship to SMG for consideration/approval;
- Work with the Human Resources Office to identify the appropriate qualification for the apprenticeship;
- Participate in the process to select/engage the apprentice;

- Assist in development of the Training Agreement;
- Appoint a designated line manager/mentor for the apprentice;
- Ensure provision of induction training within the business area;
- Ensure proper management of the apprentice in relation to their ongoing workplace training and development, attendance/conduct/performance issues and implementation of the Apprenticeship Agreement;
- Where an apprentice is engaged through a formal partner, ensure that the terms and conditions of the agreement between the formal partner and the Assembly Commission, are fully complied with.

25. Apprentice

- Participate in the development of the Training Agreement;
- Comply with the standards of conduct and attendance required by the Assembly Commission;
- Fulfil their academic obligations as set out in the Training Agreement.

Non-Apprenticeship Work Placements

26. Human Resources Office

- Provide advice and assistance to the Head of Business regarding the work placement, if required;
- Prepare formal documentation in relation to the work placement, if required.

27. Head of Business

- Seek approval/funding for the work placement from the Director or SMG, as appropriate;
- Arrange the work placement through the appropriate body, seeking advice and support from the Human Resources office if required;
- Day to day management of the work placement.

Short-term Supported Placements

28. Human Resources Office

- Work with Heads of Business to identify suitable opportunities for supported placements, duties that will be undertaken and required ability level of the individual;
- Liaise with the umbrella body to identify a suitable individual for the supported placement;
- Consideration of adjustments that may be necessary in the workplace to support an individual;
- Arrange provision of advice and guidance to the Head of Business; placement mentor/buddy and other staff within the business area, as appropriate.
- Provide ongoing advice and support to the business area during the supported placement, as required.

29. Head of Business

- Work with the Human Resources Office to identify support placement opportunities and in relation to the work that will be done and required ability level of the individual;
- Appoint a designated mentor/buddy from their staff to support the candidate during the placement;
- Monitor progress throughout the placement, seeking support/advice from the Human Resources Office, as required.

General Information

30. The Apprenticeship and Placement Framework is effective from 17 June 2019.
31. Apprenticeships and Placements arranged under the Framework will be monitored by the Human Resources Office, in consultation with the appropriate Heads of Business.
32. Enquires in relation to the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework should be referred to the Human Resources Office.

Related Policies, Guidance & Forms

33. [Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement](#)
34. [Internal Recruitment Procedures](#)
35. [External Recruitment Procedures](#)