

MANDATING QUALIFICATIONS IN APPRENTICESHIPS



Mandating Qualifications in Apprenticeships?

Mandating a qualification in an apprenticeship means that all apprentices must pass the qualification as well as the End Point Assessment (EPA) to successfully complete the apprenticeship.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) have set criteria for mandating qualifications in apprenticeships.

There are two sets of criteria:

- (1) Mandating Qualifications (excluding degrees)
- (2) Determining whether a degree can be mandated in an apprenticeship

This documents sets out the Mandating Qualifications (excluding degrees) first, and then Determining whether a degree can be mandated in an apprenticeship.



Mandating Qualifications (excluding degrees)

IfATE decide whether a qualification can be mandated in an apprenticeship in two stages:

1. The trailblazer group, provide details of any specific qualification or group of equivalent qualifications they want to mandate. They also provide evidence to show the qualification(s) meet one of our criteria.
1. Subject to IfATE agreeing this, IfATE will then consider whether any additional equivalent qualifications need mandating. This includes checking with awarding bodies (ABs) and working through whether they can be integrated with the end-point assessment. Subject to the outcomes of this work, a final list of mandated qualifications can be included in the occupational standard and EPA plan. This ensures users are aware of the choices available in the market.

This policy applies to all apprenticeship submissions where mandatory qualifications (except degrees) are proposed.

The following two exceptions apply:

- Submission of a previously returned occupational standard or EPA plan in line with the outgoing policy. In such circumstances, IfATE will accept a resubmission based on that policy
- Where IfATE approved an occupation proposal in a previous cycle with significant work on drafting the occupational standard and EPA plan already undertaken in line with the outgoing policy



Criteria for mandating a qualification

Mandating a qualification in an apprenticeship means that all apprentices must pass the qualification as well as the End Point Assessment (EPA) to successfully complete the apprenticeship.

(1) Regulatory or legal requirement

The qualification is required by a regulator or other body with legal oversight of an occupation or key aspects of the role. It also provides details of professions regulated by law. This criterion also applies where there is a legal requirement linked to an activity which is not set by the occupation's regulator but which the individual needs to undertake as part of their role.

(2) Professional body (PB) recognition requirement

The qualification is required for professional recognition by a relevant PB. In this context, a relevant PB is a membership organisation generally recognised by employers as setting the benchmark competency requirements for individuals undertaking the occupation.

(3) Labour market requirement

The qualification is required by employers in the labour market. This is on such a widespread basis that an apprentice would be significantly disadvantaged without it. This disadvantage would prevent them securing employment in the occupation.

Level

The content of the MQ must be at the same level as the apprenticeship, or lower. This ensures that the qualification and its assessment requirements are appropriate for the apprenticeship. There may be an exception to this where a qualification at a higher level is a regulatory or legal requirement.



Potential exceptions to including a specific list of MQs

In some circumstances, it may not be appropriate to include a list of the specific qualifications in the apprenticeship. Examples of where a different approach may be needed include:

- Where a short duration qualification is required early on in an apprenticeship to ensure the apprentice can operate safely in the workplace and where there would be a large number of equivalent qualifications to list and keep up to date
- Where a regulatory requirement describes the content of an appropriate qualification rather than listing specific qualifications

In such circumstances, IfATE would consider including in the occupational standard and EPA plan a description of the required qualification or a link to the regulatory requirement rather than including a list of specific equivalent qualifications.

Proposing to mandate a qualification & providing evidence to support this.

Where the trailblazer group wish to mandate a qualification in a new apprenticeship, they must provide the following information as part of their occupation proposal.

Basic information requirements

- Qualification title
- Qualification level
- Awarding Body (AB)
- Total qualification time (TQT)
- Guided learning hours (GLH)
- Whether the qualification is Ofqual regulated
- Qualification number
- Sector subject area (SSA)

They also need to work with their IfATE Product Manager to decide which KSBs (Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours) they need the qualification to cover. This information will be used to ensure that the qualification aligns with the KSBs.

Evidence requirements

For each qualification (or set of equivalent qualifications), the trailblazer group must provide evidence that it meets one of IfATE's criteria as follows.

Regulatory and legal requirement

They must provide a link to - or a copy of - the regulation that refers to the required qualification or qualifications. Only qualifications listed as accepted by the regulator meet this criterion.

Where qualifications are mandated to meet legal requirements, they must show how the legislation relates to the activities undertaken in the occupation.

(For example, an occupation may involve use of machinery for which a licence is needed. In this situation, IfATE would need to see the legislation showing that a certain qualification is needed for use of the machinery.)

Professional body (PB) recognition requirement

A professional body may require an individual to hold a qualification before recognising them as eligible for membership. In such cases, IfATE prefers the PB to recognise the apprenticeship as providing the required level of competence.



Professional body (PB) recognition requirement

Where the PB does require a qualification to be mandated, the trailblazer group must provide third party evidence of the value and necessity of PB membership in securing employment in the occupation.

This evidence may include:

- Job adverts
- Testimony from recruitment consultants
- Evidence from a range of people in the role that hold PB membership

They must also submit the following information from the PB. The PB should use IfATE's template for this purpose:

- Confirmation that the qualification is an absolute requirement for professional recognition.
- Confirmation that the apprentice would be eligible for registration and at what level.
- The title and required information for the specific qualification(s) included in the mandate.
- Confirmation that the PB will continue to work with the trailblazer group to develop the apprenticeship.



Labour market requirement

The trailblazer group must submit both a rationale and supporting evidence to justify mandating a qualification under this criterion. If ATE would expect the rationale to be no longer than two pages. It should address the following issues:

- How the evidence satisfies the labour market criterion
- How the trailblazer group have engaged employers and ensured input from a range of employers
- What information or data they have accessed beyond via direct employer engagement
- How they have validated that there is employer demand for an apprentice who has obtained the qualification
- How not having the qualification would disadvantage the apprentice
- What steps have been taken to ensure the qualification continues to meet the needs of employers

Where they are proposing to mandate a qualification on the basis that it is essential for further career progression in the same field, they must show that the qualification will support movement along clear and established occupational routes.



The supporting evidence

The trailblazer group must also provide qualitative and quantitative evidence from a range of sources.

IfATE may already hold much of the above evidence where a qualification has been submitted through one of their other approvals processes. Where this is the case, IfATE will review the evidence they already hold. The trailblazer group are not required to submit new evidence, unless IfATE request further information. The trailblazer group can also choose to supplement what IfATE already have.

The following are examples of information sources that may evidence the need for a qualification in the labour market, but the trailblazer group are also free to submit other types:

- Qualification-specific student progression data, demonstrating progression into relevant employment
- Job board data / labour market information (LMI) and testimony from industry recruiters confirming that employers request individuals with the qualification
- Information from IfATE publications, Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which evidence demand
- Records from individual employers or employer surveys (including who the respondents represent) supporting the importance of the qualification in relation to the occupation, and its inclusion in the apprenticeship
- Where the qualification supports progression along established occupational routes as detailed above, details of the study programme that holders of the qualification progress to, including entry requirements where applicable



The supporting evidence

IfATE also need evidence to show how employers have been engaged (and continue to be engaged) in the development of the qualification to ensure it meets their needs. To address this, IfATE will seek the following information from the relevant AB (unless it is an IfATE approved qualification) on how employers have been involved in the qualification development process, including in planned qualification review cycles:

Evidence that a range of employers have been consulted, which is representative of the occupation.

Evidence showing that employers agree that the qualification's content reflects their needs, the assessment represents realistic industry requirements, and the pass grade is set at a level which assures them of an apprentice's competence in relation to the KSBs covered by the qualification.

This information may be from surveys, workshops or other consultation activities.

MQ and KSB alignment

The trailblazer group will work with IfATE to develop a list of qualifications to consider for mandating. IfATE will contact the relevant AB(s) to obtain evidence that any qualification meets IfATE's criteria, aligns with the KSBs appropriately, and can be integrated into the end-point assessment if appropriate. IfATE will provide a form for this purpose. IfATE will use this information to produce a list of qualifications that they plan to mandate. IfATE will then give other ABs an opportunity to propose equivalent qualifications to mandate in the apprenticeship.



MQ and KSB alignment

Once IfATE have obtained this information, they will use it to determine whether each qualification:

- Aligns with KSBs in the apprenticeship and does not go wider than the apprenticeship, unless it meets an exemption outlined in this policy
- Is comparable with other qualifications to be mandated in terms of size and content
- Could be integrated with the end-point assessment in way that is consistent with other equivalent qualifications

Any qualification that extends beyond the coverage of the KSBs would not normally be mandated. Exceptionally, where a trailblazer group regards some of a qualification's content as essential, but it is not reflected in the KSBs, it may be possible to mandate the qualification.

Determining whether there are any additional equivalent qualifications to mandate

Effective integration is a condition of mandating a qualification except where it is not practical. IfATE will also consider if there are any other equivalent qualifications that should be mandated. This is to ensure that employers and apprentices have the widest possible choice.

To decide if there are any equivalent qualifications that meet the mandate, IfATE will:

1. Check the Ofqual database to see if there may be any similar equivalent qualifications.
2. Consider if there are IfATE approved HTQ, Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications which are equivalent to those the TB Group are seeking to mandate.
3. List qualifications proposed for mandating in new and revised apprenticeships on IfATE's website so that ABs can complete a survey if they think they have an equivalent qualification that should also be listed.

Where an approved for delivery apprenticeship already includes an MQ, an AB is free to alert IfATE, at any time, to any qualification they believe is equivalent to the MQ. The apprenticeship does not have to be under revision at that time.

End-Point Assessments where there are mandated qualification(s)

Where a qualification is mandated, at least one of the mandated qualification's (MQs) assessments should be integrated into the EPA.

Where the MQ has separate units or modules, at least one of these should be integrated into the EPA. Where the MQ does not have separately assessed units, the assessment of the MQ must be integrated into the EPA. The integrated assessment forms one of the EPA's assessment methods. This integrated assessment method contributes to the overall outcome of the EPA. This means both the MQ and apprenticeship need to be completed, passed and awarded during the same period.

The EPA of apprenticeships with an integrated assessment method must be delivered by:

- An end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) and
- The awarding body (AB) for the MQ

The AB is accountable for the integrated assessment method. The EPAO must take responsibility for all other assessment methods in the EPA

The EPA must have sufficient coverage of KSBs and include different types of assessment methods. EPAs will typically include an integrated assessment method and two non-integrated assessment methods. All assessment methods must be distinct from each other.

Exceptional circumstances where qualification integration may not be possible are:

- When the MQ must be completed and passed early in the apprenticeship.
- When there are significant risks to the integrity of the EPA. For example, where there is a conflict of interest

[For further information please visit the IfATE website.](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/)

Determining whether a degree can be mandated in an apprenticeship

There is no requirement to mandate a qualification in a Level 6 or Level 7 apprenticeship. However, it is possible to mandate a degree where this is desired by employers, where it meets IfATE's criterion, focused on current labour market requirements and is applied as follows:

- A Level 6 degree can be mandated in a Level 6 apprenticeship covering a 'degree level entry' occupation
- A master's degree can be mandated in a Level 7 apprenticeship covering a "master's level entry" occupation

To determine whether an occupation is a degree or master's level entry occupation, IfATE uses the following evidence sources:

1. **Estimated occupation entry level:** based on a study which defines each SOC code as either a graduate role or a non-graduate role. Source: Universities of Warwick and West of England via the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
2. **Percentage of graduates in occupation:** the proportion of employees who hold a degree or equivalent as their highest educational attainment in each SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) code. Source: ONS Annual Population Survey
3. **Most common educational attainment level:** the highest educational attainment most found to be held by employees working in the SOC code. For example, this might show most people in an occupation have their highest qualification as a GCSE or equivalent. Source: ONS Annual Population Survey
4. **Percentage of postgraduates in occupation:** the proportion of employees that hold a postgraduate degree in each SOC code. Source: additional data requested from ONS from the 2019 Annual Population Survey
5. **Typical career entry requirements:** the entry requirements description from the ONS SOC coding tool. Source: ONS

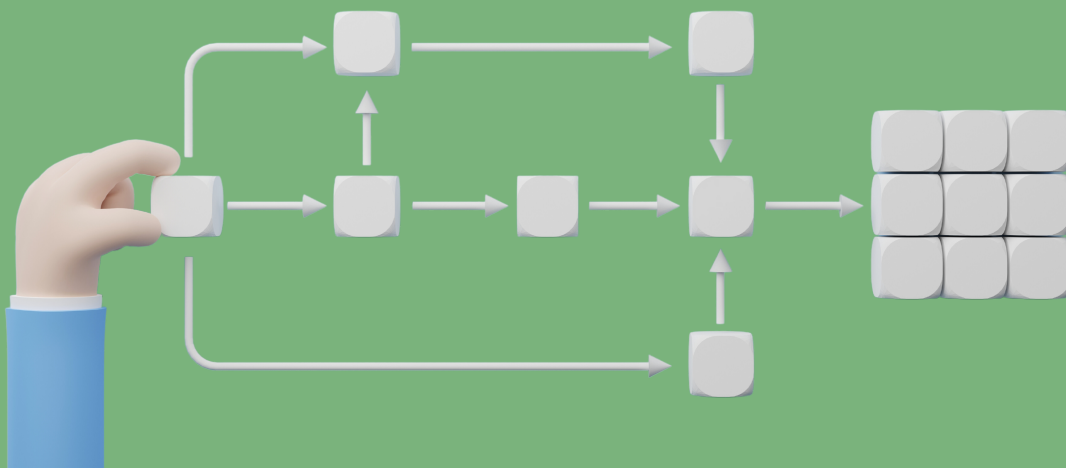
IfATE makes decisions on mandating degrees based on evidence of current labour market practice. The trailblazer group can also provide additional evidence.

IfATE will consider any evidence that meets all the following criteria:

- Is specifically relevant to the occupation rather than just to the broader sector
- Is based on a sufficiently broad and representative sample
- Has a clear methodology in terms of how the data has been collected
- Reflects evidence of a degree being required in practice now, rather than simply being desired in future

The formal decision relating to mandating a degree in a new apprenticeship is taken by the Institute following advice from the relevant route panel when the occupation proposal is submitted.

For revisions to existing Level 6 and Level 7 apprenticeships, the submission of an occupation proposal is not generally required. This means that the formal decision on whether a new degree can be mandated will continue to be taken by the Institute following advice from the relevant route panel when the revised occupational standard (and EPA plan) is submitted. However, IfATE would normally expect to be able to provide a strong steer prior to submission.



Alignment

The degree learning outcomes must be aligned with the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) in the apprenticeship standard.

Given the need for alignment, IfATE now require any trailblazer developing a degree apprenticeship to fully involve relevant HEPs (Higher Education Provider) in the apprenticeship development process.

Titling of degrees

IfATE would expect any degree title to always include the name of the occupation covered by the apprenticeship.

Integrated EPA in non-regulated and regulated occupations

How EPA integration is applied in degree apprenticeships will depend on if and how the occupation is regulated:

- **Category 1:** For degree apprenticeships without a regulator or professional body - the integrated EPA will operate as set out by the Institute and meet the typical requirements of EPAs. The EPA and the degree will be fully integrated.
- **Category 2:** For degree apprenticeships with a statutory regulator (i.e. set up by Parliament) – if approved by the Institute, the regulator’s assessment procedures can be used as the EPA.
- **Category 3:** For degree apprenticeships where there is not a statutory regulator but there is a professional body - the usual rules (as in category 1 above) will apply (unless category 4 applies).
- **Category 4:** For degree apprenticeships where the professional body has a regulatory role which controls access to the occupation - the EPA must be integrated with the professional body’s assessment procedures rather than the degree itself.

[To access the full policy, please visit the IfATE website.](#)

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