

Alternative Options to University

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7th May 2026

Alternative Options to University

- Apprenticeships
- Employment
- Gap Year Paid Placements (e.g. Year in Industry)
- Gap Year (e.g. gaining more work experience or volunteering, temporary employment, travelling, re-sitting exams or gaining more qualifications)

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprentice will:

- work alongside experienced staff.
- gain job-specific KSBs (Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, apprenticeship industry recognised standards) to become fully competent in your chosen occupation.
- be given time for study related to their role (the equivalent of one day a week, often at the employer's premises, a college, university or training provider) and gain a nationally recognised qualification.
- earn a wage and get holiday pay (20 days plus bank holidays).

What is an Apprenticeship?

- Your training is funded by contributions from the government and your employer.
- Apprenticeships take 1-6 years to complete, depending on which apprenticeship you choose, what level it's at, and your previous experience.
- Sustained positive destination rates for apprenticeships over the past 5 years have remained stable at 93%*, substantially higher than other types of further education and skills provision, as many apprentices remain with their employer following their apprenticeship.

*DfE Apprenticeship Achievements: An update for the sector (March 2024)

March 2026 Update: 94% of apprentices that achieve their apprenticeships remain in sustained employment

Apprenticeship Wage & Benefits

- The national minimum wage for apprentices aged under 19 rose from £7.55 to £8.00 per hour in April 2026, however many employers pay much more than this.
- If an apprentice is aged 19 or over and has completed the first year of their apprenticeship, they are entitled to the National Minimum Wage, which is currently £10.85 per hour.
- Apprentices can also apply for the NUS Apprentice Extra Card.
- A study* showed that former apprentices make almost the same amount of money as graduates over their whole careers (1.8% less) and they also have no student debt.

*Productivity and Lifetime Earnings of Apprentices and Graduates, A report by Barclays and CEBR, August 2016

Apprenticeship Levels

- **Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2)** – equivalent to 5 GCSEs at Grade A*-C/9-4
- **Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3)** – equivalent to 2 A Levels
- **Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4-5)** – equivalent to Foundation Degree or above
- **Degree Apprenticeships or Sponsored Degrees or School Leaver Programmes (Level 6-7)** – equivalent to a Bachelor's or Master's Degree

Apprenticeship Sectors

- Nearly 70% of occupations can now be entered via an apprenticeship*.
- Many Level 2-7 apprenticeships are available in a large range of job roles and industries, and many new apprenticeships are also in development.
- The Skills England website has an up-to-date list of apprenticeships that are approved for delivery or in development. The employers involved in creating the apprenticeship standard and the apprenticeship training providers that deliver the apprenticeship standard of interest are also listed on this website.

*DfE Apprenticeship Achievements: An update for the sector (March 2024)

Labour Market Information

From 1st January 2020 to 30th November 2024 (256 weeks):

- **37,061 new Degree/Professional Apprenticeships (Levels 6/7) and**
- **28,987 new Higher Apprenticeships (Levels 4/5)**
- giving a **total of 66,048**

From 18th to 30th November 2024 (1 week):

- **201 new Degree/Professional Apprenticeship vacancies (Levels 6/7) and**
- **122 new Higher Apprenticeship vacancies (Levels 4/5)**
- giving a **total of 323 for the 2 weeks**

The average weekly totals across all 256 weeks have been:

- **145 Degree Apprenticeships + 113 Higher Apprenticeships = 258 average weekly total**

Source for Slides 8-11:

*<https://alanbullockcareers.com/2024/12/02/week-256-degree-higher-apprenticeships-overview-and-latest-2025-employer-list/>

Labour Market Information

The **66,048** Degree and Higher Apprenticeships advertised in England since January 2020 have been distributed as follows:

- **Greater Manchester (3,689, approx. 5.6%)**

As a way of quantifying this further:

(The first number indicates cumulative number of vacancies for the region, the largest number indicates resident population of 15-24 year olds in the region using ONS data rounded to the nearest 100, and the last number indexes apprenticeship figures against the 15-24 year old population, showing the combined number of Degree and Higher Apprenticeships since January 2020 per 1,000 of that population)

- **8,809 North West (884,600: 9.96)**

There are more opportunities in London (**13.56**) and the South West (**11.20**)

Degree/Professional Apprenticeship Vacancies

In total there have been **37,061 new vacancies spread across 123 occupational areas** and minimum starting salaries have ranged from £5,590 to £38,269pa. **The average is around £19,000-£20,000pa.**

Those with over 475 vacancies:

5,921 Accountancy/Tax/Audit Professionals

5,081 Police Constables

3,548 Digital Technology Solutions: General

1,575 Civil Engineers

1,499 Chartered Managers: General Business

1,465 Software Engineers/Developers

1,307 Project Managers: General

1,143 Chartered Quantity Surveyors

976 Data Scientists/Analysts/Engineers

858 Nurses (637 Adult, 153 MH, 55 LD, 13 Child)

801 Nuclear Engineers

733 Electrical & Electronic Engineers

690 Design & Development Engineers

634 Manufacturing Engineers

608 Solicitors

554 Supply Chain Professionals / Logistics Professionals

513 Banking / Financial Services / Investment Professionals

499 Building Services Design Engineers

481 Chartered Surveyors: Project Management / Real Estate / General

475 Aerospace Engineers

Higher Apprenticeship Vacancies

In total there have been **28,987 new vacancies spread across 151 occupational areas** and minimum starting salaries have ranged from £5,002 to £40,300pa. **The average is around £17,000-£18,000pa.**

Those with over 400 vacancies:

2,385 Sales Executives

2,047 Accounting Technicians

1,725 Data Analysts

1,702 Software Developers

1,691 Project Management Associates

1,419 Sports Coaches (Children & Young People)

1,122 Nursing Associates

872 Construction Site Supervisors

821 Manufacturing Engineering Technicians

754 Quantity Surveying Technicians

733 Taxation Technicians

687 Network Engineers

643 Business Analysts

549 Procurement & Supply Chain Practitioners

518 Cyber Security Technologists

511 Social Care Practitioners (Adults/Children/Families/Young People)

489 Electrical & Electronic Technician Engineers

459 Software Testers

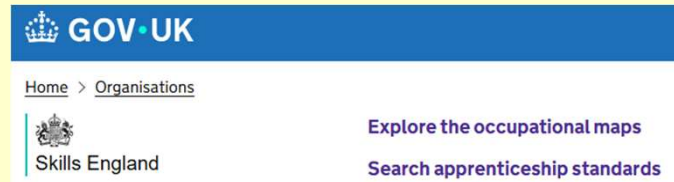
447 Public Relations & Communications Assistants

404 Building Services Engineering Technicians

Apprenticeship Sectors

- Many different apprenticeships are available at small, medium and large companies, and from local organisations to large national brands.
- Apprenticeships are available with many different training providers.
- Around 100 universities across the country now offer a wide range of degree apprenticeships.
- Not all apprentices will leave school and go straight onto a degree apprenticeship. Most apprentices will need to complete an advanced or higher apprenticeship before progressing on.

Apprenticeship Sectors



- Search for apprenticeship standards that are approved for delivery on the **Skills England website**.

Occupational Maps (to explore 15 routes):

<https://occupational-maps.skillsengland.education.gov.uk/>

Apprenticeship Search (to explore Level 2-7 apprenticeships):

<https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/>

- You can also find the **employers involved in creating the apprenticeship standard** and the **apprenticeship training providers that deliver the apprenticeship standard** of interest on this website.

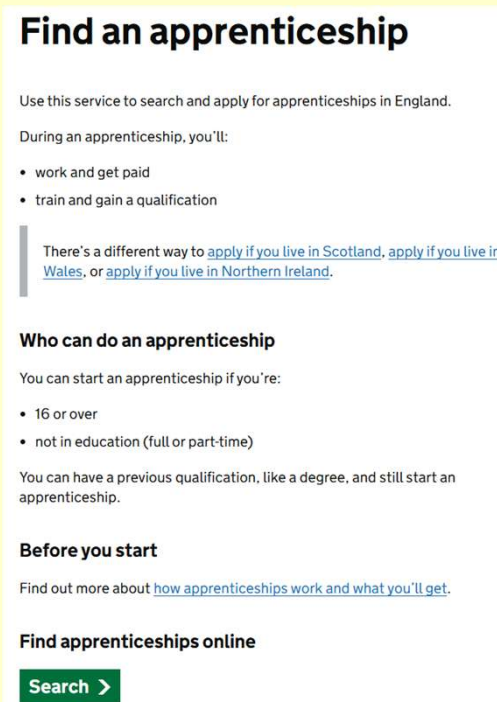
Examples of Local Training Providers

- Employer: Barclays
- College: Trafford College, Salford City College
- University: MMU, Salford
- Training Provider: The Growth Company, The Apprentice Academy, Total People (in partnership with The Manchester College)

Find an Apprenticeship Website

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

- The government has a website called 'Find an apprenticeship' where you can search for many apprenticeship roles.



Find an apprenticeship

Use this service to search and apply for apprenticeships in England.

During an apprenticeship, you'll:

- work and get paid
- train and gain a qualification

There's a different way to [apply if you live in Scotland](#), [apply if you live in Wales](#), or [apply if you live in Northern Ireland](#).

Who can do an apprenticeship

You can start an apprenticeship if you're:

- 16 or over
- not in education (full or part-time)

You can have a previous qualification, like a degree, and still start an apprenticeship.


Before you start

Find out more about [how apprenticeships work and what you'll get](#).

Find apprenticeships online

[Search >](#)

Amazing Apprenticeships Website



HIGHER AND DEGREE LISTING

JANUARY 27, 2026

Explore **1,600+** Higher and Degree apprenticeship vacancies in the **January 2026** edition of the Higher and Degree listing.

Discover vacancy details from over **65+** employers, including locations, salary information and direct application links.

The next edition of the Higher & Degree Listing is **due for release in the summer term 2026**.

Visit our [Higher and Degree page](#) to find out more.

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)



- Three times a year (in October, January and April) this website publishes the **Higher & Degree Apprenticeship Vacancy Listing**, with each listing featuring around 2,500 opportunities with around 100 employers.
- They also have many excellent information and resources, including a **Step-By-Step Guide to Applying for Apprenticeships** (which also includes information on CVs and Covering Letters).

What support can I offer students at UGS?

- Advising on what the different options are, what they involve and the entry requirements.
- Support in deciding what sector or opportunity is of interest.
- Helping to develop an action plan detailing clear steps to take following any guidance interviews. This includes noting any useful apprenticeship websites.
- Inviting providers into school to deliver presentations to groups of interested students or liaising with the Sixth Form Team or Mrs. Kinder (Head of Careers & Head of Sociology) to do this.

What support can I offer students at UGS?

- Promoting alternative provider events and careers fairs with many providers available to speak to and a chance to obtain information.
- Helping to register on relevant websites where opportunities are advertised and helping to make direct referrals to providers.
- Continuing to forward on any vacancies that may be of interest, often by e-mail.
- Offering support with completing application forms and writing high quality CVs and covering letters.
- Preparing for assessments and interviews.

Useful Apprenticeship Websites & Resources

- **Skills England Website:** <https://occupational-maps.skillsengland.education.gov.uk/> and <https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/>
- **Gov.UK Apprenticeships Websites:** <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/> and <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- **Amazing Apprenticeships Website:** <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/higher-degree-listing/> and <https://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/your-step-by-step-guide-to-applying-for-an-apprenticeship/>
- **Student Ladder Website:** <https://www.studentladder.co.uk/>

Useful Apprenticeship Websites & Resources

- **Prospects Website:** <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- **Higherin Top Employers 2026/2027:** <https://higherin.com/top-employers> (includes Graduate, Undergraduate, Small-to-Medium Sized Schemes, Apprenticeship, SME Apprenticeship Employers)
- **Not Going to Uni Website:** <https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>
- **UCAS Apprenticeships Website:** <https://wwwucas.com/apprenticeships>
- **The Apprenticeship Guide Website:** <https://apprenticeshipguide.co.uk/>
- **Urmston Grammar School Student SharePoint:** Access resources in the 'Careers' folder, including 'Apprenticeships/Vacancies', 'CVs' and 'Interviews' folders

Examples of Student Leaver Destinations (Summer 2025 Leavers)

- Solicitor with Addleshaw Goddard (Degree Apprenticeship Level 7)
- Building Services Engineer with Ridge (Degree Apprenticeship Level 6)
- Chartered Manager with Capgemini (Degree Apprenticeship Level 6)
- Cyber Engineer with BAE Systems (Degree Apprenticeship Level 6)
- Project Manager with AtkinsRéalis (Degree Apprenticeship Level 6)
- Cyber Security (Higher Apprenticeship Level 4)

Examples of Student Leaver Destinations (Summer 2020-2024 Leavers)

Professional Apprenticeship Level 7:

- Accounting with Beevers & Struthers
- Assurance with Chartered Accountancy at PwC
- Audit with KPMG & Consulting with KPMG
- Solicitor with Taylor Wessing

Degree Apprenticeship Level 6:

- Aerospace Engineering with BAE Systems
- Construction Management with BAM
- Data Science with Barclays
- Forensic Accounting with LitAcc Forensic
- Nuclear Engineering with Sellafield
- Software Developer with GCHQ

Examples of Student Leaver Destinations (Summer 2020-2024 Leavers)

Higher Apprenticeship Level 4:

- Property Management with Jisc
- Quantity Surveyor with BAM Nuttall

Advanced Apprenticeship Level 3:

- Business Administration with Manchester City Council
- Electrical & Instrumentation Technician with Cargill
- Human Resources with Regatta
- Light Vehicle Mechanic with Urmston Service Station

Employment:

- Independent Sales Advisor with AOS Marketing
- Royal Marine Officer with The Royal Marines
- Sales with Sales Employment Services

Examples of Student Leaver Destinations Pre-2020

- Pharmaceutical Development with AstraZeneca
- Quantity Surveying with Seddons
- Engineering with Jaguar Land Rover
- Civil Engineering with Atkins
- Accountancy with PwC
- Paralegal with DWF
- IT with IBM
- Social Media & Digital Marketing with Hut Group
- Project Management with Atos
- Optical Assistant with Vision Express

Next Steps for Year 12 Students

- ‘Apprenticeships & Alternative Options to University’ Talk in school (20th April 2026).
- Research options and look at information on the school website (About Us/Careers/Useful Resources & Websites – Apprenticeships).
- Gain additional work experience, voluntary work and extra-curricular activities if required.
- Create or update CV over the summer.
- Read school e-mails regularly in order to receive useful information and at appropriate times.
- Access more advice during the Sixth Form.