

Institute for Apprenticeships

Driving the quality of apprenticeships in
England

January 2017

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Foreword from Antony Jenkins, Shadow Chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can change lives. We know 90 per cent of apprentices go on to a job or further education. Apprenticeships offer a ladder of opportunity for people of all ages; they boost businesses and make a profound difference to the economic stability and productivity of this country.

That's why, continuing the ambitious agenda of skills reform, the Government has decided to establish a new independent, public body to make sure apprenticeships are of the highest quality they can be. Supporting the plan to create three million apprenticeships by 2020, the Institute for Apprenticeships will start operating in April 2017 – its ultimate goal to give employers a stronger role in the leadership of the apprenticeship system, ensuring employees get the skills they need to succeed and the best apprenticeship possible.

So – why an Institute for Apprenticeships? For too long this country has under invested in skills and subsequently we've lost the support, and the confidence, of employers and apprentices along the way.

This time, it's different. This time, we have the funding in place, a broad agenda of skills reform offering the opportunity to achieve comprehensive and coherent change, and a plan to embed employers within the decision-making structure of the Institute.

The Institute will develop and maintain apprenticeship standards and assessment plans as well as reviewing and approving them. It will maintain a public database of apprenticeship standards and give advice on government funding as well as having a role in quality assurance. And the Government's ambitious plans include expanding the Institute's remit to encompass Technical Education in England from 2018 – as set out in the Post-16 Skills plan.

At this point we are looking at the broader picture, and involving the people who understand what will constitute success and longevity in this field – you.

The Institute's aims and approach to improving quality are outlined in this document. We believe these are straightforward, direct and powerful, but the mechanisms for their delivery can be complex. We do not underestimate the work ahead and there's a lot more we need to do to deliver. There are challenges we want to face now, with your help, to ensure we make this ambition a reality.

That's why we are consulting and seeking feedback – particularly from those of you with an understanding of the government's vision for apprenticeships and skills, a passion for delivering social reform and a determination to see the Institute succeed. Employers are central to everything we are doing; they know what they want their employees to learn, and the things that really drive productivity for their industry. They are central in the delivery and content creation of the Institute.

Apprenticeships are something we all care passionately about – as a powerful driver for social mobility and the engine of a future skills workforce that is robust and returns on investment for employers and apprentices alike. We are in an age in which the economy is changing at a great pace. Technology is a very significant driver of change and there are great challenges ahead. The Institute is an ongoing project that will require sustained commitment over many years – but the benefits and opportunities for the future are tremendous.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revolutionise the apprenticeship and technical education landscape, commit to supporting fundamental, long-term social mobility and cement the reputation of an authority that will have credibility and longevity. Please consider this operational plan and feed in your views so we can make this an Institute for the ages.

1. Executive summary: Our vision for the Institute

High quality apprenticeships, alongside reformed classroom based technical education courses, are a central pillar in delivering the skills needed to forge a country that works for everyone. The benefits they bring are clear:

- **For apprentices**, apprenticeships are an important driver for social mobility, with significantly greater financial returns over a working life (up to £150,000 more) on average for someone completing a Level 4+ apprenticeship). 92% of learners say that their apprenticeship has improved their career prospects, while 97% say that their ability to do their job has improved. The lifetime benefits associated with the acquisition of apprenticeships at Level 2 and 3 are very significant, standing at between £48,000 and £74,000 for Level 2 and between £77,000 and £117,000 for Level 3 Apprenticeships.
- **For employers**, apprenticeships help to close the skills gap and deliver a skilled workforce, with 87% of employers satisfied with their apprenticeship training and 75% noting an improved product or service as a result of the training.
- **For the taxpayer**, apprenticeships generate a return of between £26 and £28 for every £1 of government investment in apprenticeships at Level 2 and 3 respectively – considerably higher than the average of £20 for every £1 of government investment in further education qualifications as a whole.¹

The opportunities presented by an apprenticeship are vast and can be life changing. But these benefits are only realised when apprenticeships are of a consistently high quality and receive appropriate levels of funding. It is also vital to align apprenticeships with wider technical education, for example so that young people and adults can move easily between apprenticeships and classroom based courses.

The Institute for Apprenticeships (the Institute) was announced in November 2015 as an employer-led regulator with responsibility for securing the high quality of apprenticeships in England. The Institute – and apprenticeships – are also part of a wider programme of technical education reform. The Institute will therefore launch as an independent Crown body in April 2017², and its remit will expand to encompass Technical Education in 2018.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf

² Note that the Institute's remit (and this document's scope) is restricted to the apprenticeships system in England only, as skills policy is a devolved matter. Each devolved administration will continue to determine how they manage their respective apprenticeship programmes.

The Government published its draft strategic guidance for the initial work of the Institute on 4 January 2017. It outlines the Institute's core functions as:

- Developing and maintaining quality criteria for the approval of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans;
- Supporting the development of standards and assessment plans by employer groups and reviewing and approving them;
- Maintaining a public database of apprenticeship standards and publishing information illustrating potential gaps;
- At regular intervals, reviewing published standards & assessment plans;
- Advising Government on the maximum amount of funding that should be assigned to each apprenticeship standard;
- Ensuring all end-point assessments are quality assured; and
- Having a role in quality assuring the delivery of apprentice end point assessments, where employer groups have been unable to propose one of the other three external quality assurance models (employer-led, Ofqual, Professional Body-led) and have named the Institute in their assessment plan.
- .

This document now sets out our plans for delivering on the Institute's remit, and includes a series of proposals for how it will operate. We are inviting comments on the proposals and will consider responses into a final operational plan for the Institute, to be published when it launches later this year.

Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships

The 2012 Richard Review into English apprenticeships was clear that the Government should be encouraging more apprenticeships, but that significant changes were needed to increase provision. Of particular note were the importance of making apprenticeships more rigorous and making them more responsive to employers' needs.

Much progress has been made since then, including a clear commitment from the Government to replace the old set of apprenticeship frameworks with employer-designed apprenticeship standards that are more aligned to the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers are looking for. We set out more detail on the existing reforms to apprenticeships in [section two](#).

To date, over 215 employer groups have stepped forward through the Trailblazer programme to develop over 490 new apprenticeship standards. 157 of these are now 'approved for delivery'. This is compared to 4,661 Ofqual regulated qualifications in 597 pathways through existing frameworks.

But we know that more needs to happen.

The Institute will become a prominent and permanent feature of the apprenticeship delivery landscape, bringing long-term stability to the sector. It will be led by an independent Chair and small Board made up primarily of employers of all sizes, people with public sector experience, business leaders, and their representatives, enshrining the ‘employer-led’ nature of the apprenticeship reforms. It will draw on the knowledge and experience of employers and industry experts to drive quality of apprenticeships in a way which will deliver the skilled workforce that businesses need to prosper.

The Institute will make decisions about apprenticeship quality independently of Government, with the Department for Education (DfE) retaining responsibility for the overall apprenticeships policy framework, including issuing the Institute with an annual remit letter.

We are setting an ambitious vision for the Institute – *to play a leading role in securing a higher quality apprenticeship experience and outcome for employers and learners*. We will achieve this by focusing on three priorities in year one:

- Becoming world class at regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and advising government on funding for training and assessment against apprenticeship standards;
- Taking a lead on collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system; and
- Preparing for the expansion of the Institute’s remit from April 2018.

Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and advising government on funding for training and assessment against apprenticeship standards

The Institute’s core business will be to become the guardian of quality for apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. Its initial focus will be on becoming world class at regulating their content and advising on the amount of funding that each is allocated.

The Institute will set the principles for employers to follow when developing standards, including the criteria that they will have to meet for a standard to be approved. It aims to speed up the development process, build in more transparency, and make it more predictable, so that employers know what to expect at each stage of the process. It will achieve this while retaining an overriding commitment to rigour and consistency, and establishing an effective quality assurance regime.

The Institute will advise Government on the allocation of new standards to funding bands. Over time it will also evaluate the success of standards across a sector, for example looking at destination data and wage returns for learners, satisfaction levels and impact on skills gaps for employers, and alignment to productivity challenges in the wider economy. It will recommend changes to funding band allocations based on its analysis of this outcome data.

The Government has emphasised the importance of a new, holistic industrial strategy to support and promote UK productivity. Ensuring the workforce and skills are in place to deliver against the strategy will be essential to its success. Apprenticeships will be an important part of this and we would expect the Institute to support employers to develop ambitious plans for good quality standards, not least in sectors where we have evidence of skills gaps and that are priorities for the industrial strategy. Supporting greater social mobility and tackling disadvantage is also a clear Government priority. Apprenticeships can play a key role in helping to deliver this, through ensuring that people from all backgrounds are able to progress.

We provide more detail on the Institute's regulatory role in [section three](#).

Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system

The Institute is committed to playing a strong leadership role to champion apprenticeship quality, something that will require close collaboration with the other agencies who are involved in the apprenticeships sector.

The apprenticeships market is comprised of multiple bodies responsible for improving quality at different points of the system. This fragmentation has often come across as confusing and disjointed for those involved in making apprenticeships work on the ground. The Institute will take a lead role in coordinating more strategic, collaborative ways of working between these bodies. It will report to the DfE Permanent Secretary to provide additional assurance that the apprenticeships system is offering good value for money.

The Institute will take responsibility for certain elements of the registers of training providers and assessment organisations – for example the quality criteria which applicants must meet. More detail on this is set out later in the document. Responsibility for monitoring the quality of apprenticeship training will remain with Ofsted (or HEFCE/QAA for degree level apprenticeships) and responsibility for monitoring the quality of qualifications within apprenticeship training (where applicable) will remain with Ofqual. The Institute will be able to advise the SFA to take action where it has concerns about the quality of provider or assessment organisation delivery.

We say more about roles and responsibilities in [section four](#).

Leading the reforms to technical education

This document is largely focused on the Institute's remit of driving quality in the apprenticeships system during its first year. From 2018, we expect that the Institute's remit will expand to include a similar role for classroom-based technical education which will play an equally important part in helping young people and adults move to skilled employment.

The Government recently published its Post-16 Skills Plan, and the report of the Sainsbury panel, setting out an ambitious set of reforms for technical education. Legislation is being

discussed in Parliament to implement the changes. As part of its expanded remit, the Institute will determine the content of all publicly funded college-based technical education courses at levels 2 to 5, using occupational maps as the basis for identifying and clustering occupations with similar knowledge and skills requirements. The occupational maps will set out the relationship between standards and routes and will ensure that reformed content is in line with employer need. It will also commission the development of standards for occupations where none exist, award exclusive licences to organisations to develop new qualifications for technical education courses and own a register of approved technical qualifications.

This document takes account of the likely structure of the Institute in the longer term and proposals are designed to ensure that the transition to this will be as seamless as possible. [Section five](#) provides more detail on how the Institute will prepare for its expanded role leading the technical education reforms.

Implementing the new system

A timeline for setting up the Institute is included in [section six](#). We also include our views on what success would look like for the Institute – both our long term ambitions and year one priorities.

In the long term we aim to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and classroom-based courses. We recognise that this is a hugely challenging ambition, and one that previous reforms have tried, and failed, to achieve. We also recognise the need to engage – and consult with – employers, parents and technical education experts. We are confident the Institute’s focus on quality and rigour, the central role of employers in the new system, and the additional levy resource to support provision all mean that we are now better placed than ever to achieve this ambition.

Inviting views from employers and other interested stakeholders

A key part of our work to inform this plan has been a review of the existing standards development process. The proposals in the document are largely based on what employers, particularly those involved in the Trailblazer programme, have told us would improve the system.

We have engaged with over 350 stakeholders so far, but the design of the Institute is far from set in stone and we are inviting wider feedback from employers, and other interested parties in response to this publication.

The apprenticeships market is undergoing huge change. We are under no illusion of the scale of the challenges facing the sector, and the Institute as a new regulator within it. The Institute will not be able to solve every problem that employers and learners face. But it can become world class at its core business – regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards

and assessments and advising on how available funding should be allocated to individual standards – and have a catalysing effect on quality and collaboration across the sector. We are looking forward to working closely with employers from all sectors and of all sizes to make this ambition a reality.

The remainder of this plan

The remainder of this document provides further details on the areas set out above, under the following headings:

- Section 2: Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships
- Section 3: Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments
- Section 4: Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system
- Section 5: Leading the reforms to technical education
- Section 6: Implementing the new system

2. Reforms to improve the quality of apprenticeships

This section provides further detail on the Institute's governance structure, and its role as part of the ongoing reforms to apprenticeships, including the introduction of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, end point assessments, and external quality assurance.

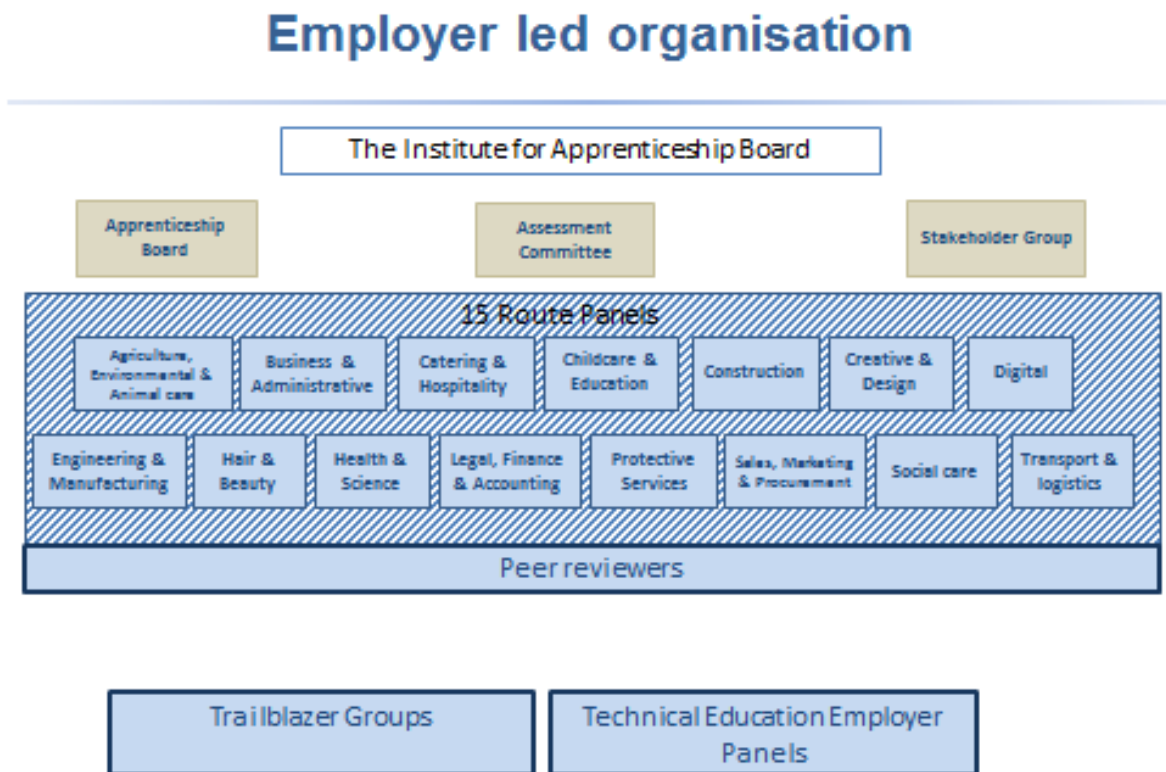
2.1 The Institute's role as an employer-led regulator

The Institute is being established to drive the quality of apprenticeships in England, primarily through its role as the regulator of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. It will be a permanent feature of the apprenticeships landscape, providing a sustained focus on quality in a sector that is undergoing huge amounts of change.

The Institute will embed the central role that employers must play in the apprenticeships system if it is to operate effectively. Employers have a better understanding than Government of what their skills needs are and the Institute will continue to put them in the driving seat of developing the high quality standards they need.

The Institute will launch in April 2017 as a Crown Non-Departmental Government Body. Figure 1 below sets out our proposed governance structure for the Institute:

Figure 1: Institute governance structure



Key features of the structure include:

- **An Institute for Apprenticeships employer-led Board** comprised of eight members, plus a Chair and Chief Executive. The Board was announced on 27 January 2016. It will be chaired by a senior business leader, with Antony Jenkins already appointed as the Shadow Chair. The Secretary of State will appoint a Chief Executive to act as Accountable Officer for the body, with Peter Lauener appointed as the Shadow Chief Executive to lead the set-up of the Institute, and a permanent Chief Executive to be appointed later in 2017.
- **A Stakeholder Group**, to help the Board to access the wider expertise that the apprenticeships sector has to offer. A consistent message from our engagement with employers and other stakeholders over the summer has been an appetite to get involved in making the Institute a success. Recognising that the Board itself is relatively small, the Stakeholder Group will give a much wider group of sector leaders the opportunity to inform the Institute’s work.
- **An Assessment Committee** comprised of senior Institute officials and led by a designated Board member. It will review any significant concerns that are reported from the external quality assurance of end point assessments.
- **15 sector-based Route Panels** of industry experts who will review and approve apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and provide a strategic perspective

across each route. The concept of 15 occupational routes is felt to be the right organising framework to bring together related occupations with shared training requirements, and is an adoption of the model used in leading international systems. It was introduced in July's *Post-16 Skills Plan*³ (see Annex 1 for details of these) following the recommendations of the Sainsbury panel reviewing technical education.

- **An apprentice panel**, which will report directly to the Board. The panel will be made up of apprentices from different occupations and experiences. The panel will decide for itself which issues to focus on, and it will challenge, and make recommendations to, the Board. This will ensure vital input from apprentices up and down the country. The Institute will ensure the panel is in place for launch, and will further consider how best to engage with apprentices on an ongoing basis, and how best to represent technical education students ahead of taking on technical education responsibility in April 2018.
- **Peer reviewers** who will review new apprenticeship standards and assessment plans provide comments and recommendations to the relevant Route Panel to inform the approval process.
- **Trailblazer groups of employers** that come together to propose a new standard for their occupation, develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours for that standard, and design an assessment plan to support it.

2.2 Designing an improved apprenticeships system

The Institute will take the lead on a number of ongoing reforms to improve the apprenticeships system. Many of these reforms were initially driven by the 2012 Richard Review findings on the old apprenticeships system⁴, including that:

- The system was overly complex – with a huge number of qualifications and possible combinations, and overly detailed specifications;
- Continuous assessment only tested the incremental progress of the apprentice, rather than whether they had reached the desired level of competency; and
- Providers didn't respond first and foremost to employer needs.

The Richard Review argued that the Government should be encouraging more apprenticeships, but that significant changes were needed to increase provision. Of particular note, was the importance of making apprenticeships more rigorous and more responsive to employers' needs.

The Government Trailblazer programme was launched as a result of these findings, with the creation of the Institute the latest step on this journey.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf

There are three defining features of the emerging system that the Institute will regulate:

- Employer-designed apprenticeship standards and assessment plans;
- Graded end point apprenticeship assessments; and
- External quality assurance of end point assessments.

The section below provides more details on each of these features.

2.3.1 Employer-designed apprenticeship standards and assessment plans

Trailblazer groups

Since the Richard Review, successive Governments have been implementing reforms to replace apprenticeship frameworks with new standards that are aligned to single occupations and set out what learners should know and be able to do at the end of their apprenticeship.

The move away from frameworks has been led by groups of employers – ‘Trailblazers’ – approved by Government to design an apprenticeship standard, or set of standards, for occupations in their sector. Since 2013, Trailblazers have been developing apprenticeship standards which set out the skills, knowledge and behaviours they expect to see in an occupationally competent and capable individual. Standards are developed with employers at the heart of the design process, so that they are closely aligned to business need. Trailblazer groups are supported by a team of Relationship Managers from DfE and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), who guide the group through the development process.

Each standard is underpinned by an assessment plan, also designed by the Trailblazer group. The assessment plan helps to reassure employers that apprentices completing a standard will have a comparable set of skills, and that those skills will be transferable between employers. The plan should clarify what will be assessed and how, who will carry out the assessment and who makes the final decision on grading. It must set out quality assurance arrangements to ensure reliability and consistency across the country and between different employers.

Transitioning from frameworks to standards

In parallel to helping employers design new standards, the Government is turning off apprenticeship frameworks, with the ambition that all apprenticeship starts will be on new standards by 2020. Frameworks will be withdrawn in batches. Nearly 40% of frameworks have already been withdrawn (i.e. 84 frameworks have been withdrawn, leaving 130 that are still live).

We recognise that there will be a gap between the Institute launching, alongside the apprenticeship levy, in April 2017, and a complete suite of standards being in place to provide full occupational coverage across England. The creation of the Institute will provide

a sharper focus on progressing standards through the development process as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a rigorous and consistent commitment to quality.

2.3.2 End point apprenticeship assessments

One of the principles of the Richard Review was that we should move away from ‘extraordinarily detailed’ occupational standards and bureaucratic box-ticking qualifications. Instead, Government was encouraged to free up its process requirements and focus more on the outcome of an apprenticeship: the skills, knowledge and behaviour that an apprentice can demonstrate at the end of their apprenticeship.

End point assessments (EPAs) are a synoptic assessment taken at the end of a learner’s apprenticeship to assess whether the individual has achieved the required level of knowledge, skills and behaviours to be deemed competent in the employer’s occupation. They are an attempt to address employers’ concerns that under the old system they could hire someone who had successfully completed an apprenticeship but they would not always be capable of actually doing the job they were meant to be trained in.

Assessments will be carried out by organisations that have met a number of quality criteria to be allowed onto the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). These organisations, and the assessors directly conducting the end point assessment, will be independent from those delivering training.

2.3.3 External quality assurance of end point assessments

Multiple organisations can be approved to deliver an end point assessment against a given standard and employers, apprentices and Government will expect the outcomes to be reliable and consistent between each of these organisations, regardless of when and where an assessment is carried out. External quality assurance (EQA) provides an additional check on the consistency with which end point assessments are conducted by different assessment organisations.

Employer groups are given a choice between four options for delivering EQA when they submit their assessment plan:

- An employer group-designed approach;
- EQA delivered by a Professional Body;
- EQA delivered by Ofqual; and
- EQA delivered by the Institute (as a last resort, once it becomes operational in April 2017).

Relationship managers will support employers in choosing the right option for them.

Section three provides more information on the external quality assurance options available to employer groups, including more detail on the Institute's offer.

2.3 Emerging challenges for the Institute to address

The Institute will not be starting from scratch with most of its functions. The transition from frameworks to standards is well underway and much progress has been made. However, feedback from employers and others in the sector have highlighted a number of challenges that the Institute will have to address as it picks up the mantle from April 2017. This section provides a summary of some of these challenges, along with our proposals for how the Institute should tackle them.

2.4.1 Emerging challenges

Time taken to complete the development process

Employers have frequently told us that the end-to-end process of designing a new standard and assessment plan has taken longer than they expected when they embarked on the Trailblazer journey. On average, it takes just over a year for a standard to progress from proposal stage through to 'approved for delivery'. However, this masks a wide range of experiences for Trailblazer groups, with some achieving this in around three months, and others well over two years.

There are multiple reasons why a standard can take time to design, and a number of employers told us that they need the time and flexibility to move at their own pace, seeking sector buy-in as they go. However, others highlighted that a lack of understanding of the process, coupled with delays at the approvals stage had resulted in a loss of momentum from their group. Employers participate in the standard development process on top of their day job, and often because they have a passion for improving apprenticeships in their occupation – it's vital that the Institute supports this with a clear, efficient and speedy end-to-end process. This document outlines the ways in which we will do this see [The Institute's proposals to address these challenges](#) (page 16).

Overlap between different standards

The current approach to developing apprenticeships is employer-led throughout, from employers submitting proposals for new standards to address their skills needs, to employers designing standards and assessment plans to meet these needs.

With over 490 standards now in development, there is the challenge of how to deal with overlap between new proposals, and those already in development. There is a risk of duplication and proliferation of standards which are too narrow to develop apprentices'

transferable skills. The narrower a standard, the harder it is likely to be for a vibrant provider market to emerge in that area.

Regular policy changes and guidance updates

Perhaps the most common issue raised by Trailblazer employers has been the frequency of changes to the policies and guidance that sit behind the process. The initial Trailblazer groups piloted the new approach and offered an opportunity for open policy making. This resulted in lessons learnt and employer feedback being incorporated into a refined approach, but with the downside of regular changes to the guidance.

Limited use of outcome metrics to influence provision

A recent NAO report challenged the DfE to draw on its evidence of benefits from apprenticeships to actively influence the sectors and levels where apprenticeships take place.⁵ The report felt that research on wage returns, destination data and wider economic impact were examples of outcome measures that could be used more within the apprenticeships system.

2.4.2 The Institute’s proposals to address these challenges

Challenges for the Institute	The Institute’s proposals to tackle this
1. The end-to-end process of developing a new standard takes too long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer expectation-setting at the outset, including the Institute and Trailblazer signing up to an ‘Expectations of the role’ document • Flexibility for Trailblazers to submit their assessment plan alongside, rather than after their standard, if this is what would work best for them. This will halve process time. • An offer for the Trailblazer chair to participate in the approvals meeting to answer questions in the moment • Tailored support for Trailblazers, including access to assessment specialists when needed • Digital notification of progress and next steps
2. Overlap between different standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signposting for Trailblazers to find out about standards that are in-development • Development of an occupational map – if a proposal aligns to an occupation on the map then it might be fast-tracked through to the next phase. If it doesn’t align, the Trailblazer will be asked to present further evidence on why it should be approved • Short term activity with partner bodies to kick-start the provider and assessment markets for particularly narrow standards

⁵ <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/delivery-value-through-the-apprenticeships-programme/>

<p>3. Guidance material changes too regularly and is hard to navigate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While policy could still change over time, the Institute will make every effort to limit these changes and communicate them clearly to employers when they are needed • Guidance will be made available digitally to all employers (and other stakeholders), and tailored to the stage of the process that the employer has reached
<p>4. Professional expertise needed to review and approve standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry-led Route Panels to replace the Government minister as approver of new standards • Relationship Managers to be aligned to routes and increasingly become specialists in a limited number of sectors • Offer to employers of their Relationship Manager spending half a day shadowing their workplace to build understanding • Enhanced peer review added to the approval process
<p>5. Limited use of outcome metrics to influence provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Institute’s route-based evaluations of standards will enable it to build a holistic picture of the impact that different standards have on outcomes for learners, employers and the wider economy • The Institute will draw on a wide range of data for this, including wage returns, destination data and economic impact where available. The outcome of these evaluations could lead to recommended changes to funding allocations

We provide more detail on the Institute’s proposals for addressing these challenges in the next two sections.

3. Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments

The Institute's core business in its first year will be to:

- Support the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans;
- Provide advice on apprenticeship funding to Government; and
- Quality assure apprenticeship end point assessments and certificates.

This section provides further detail on how it will deliver each of these roles.

3.1 Supporting the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans

Summary of proposals in this section:

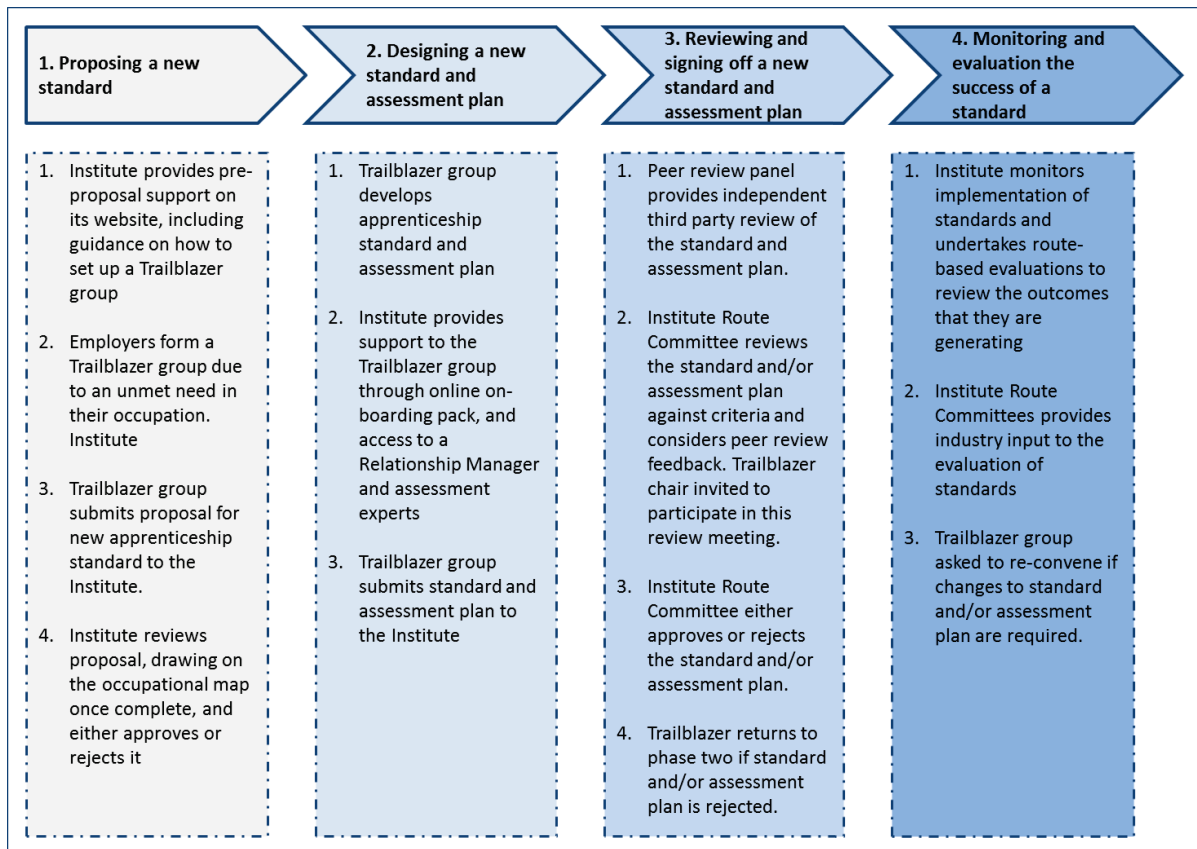
- **The Institute will develop a 'getting started' support package for employers at the pre-proposal stage**, including up-front clarity on expectations of the role, improved signposting to existing standards, digital guidance on the end-to-end process and a forum for connecting new employer groups with experienced Trailblazer Chairs.
- **The Institute will introduce greater industry expertise into the review and approval of standards**, including aligning standards to one of 15 occupational routes, reinforcing peer review of the standard, and publishing an occupational map across each of the routes.
- **The Institute will tailor support for Trailblazers based on an early assessment of their needs**, including a baseline of core support for all and access to a Relationship Manager with the appropriate assessment knowledge where needed.
- **The Institute will combine flexibility and rigour in the approvals process**, including creating Route Panels to lead on the review and approvals process, with an option for the Trailblazer Chair to participate in the review meeting, and piloting digital ways of keeping employers notified of progress with their standard.
- **The Institute will publish the list of 'in-development' and 'approved for delivery' standards and assessment plans**, so that they are easier to find than at present.
- **The Institute will make more use of learner, employer and wider economy outcome data when reviewing the success of standards**, including introducing a strategic route-based evaluation of all standards under a route where we will review the allocation of funding against the relevant standards.

There are four key stages involved in developing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan:

- 1. Proposing a new apprenticeship standard**
- 2. Designing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan**
- 3. Reviewing and signing off a new standard and assessment plan**
- 4. Monitoring and evaluating the success of an apprenticeship standard**

Figure 2 below provides a high level summary of roles and responsibilities included at each stage. The section following the diagram provides further detail on the Institute’s proposed approach to regulating the quality of apprenticeships at each of the four stages.

Figure 2: The Institute’s role supporting the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans



3.1.1 Proposing a new apprenticeship standard

Advice on 'getting started' for employers looking to develop a new apprenticeship standard

Proposals for new apprenticeship standards need to meet a set of criteria to ensure that the occupation is suitable for an apprenticeship, and that the Trailblazer is representative of the relevant sector(s), including SME membership alongside larger organisations. If Trailblazers are able to meet each of the criteria, we will invite them to formally submit their proposal through an online portal system.⁶

Currently Government officials provide ad hoc advice to Trailblazers as they are developing a new proposal. The Institute will put in place a more consistent support package at the pre-proposal stage, including:

- **An up-front 'expectations of the role' agreement between Trailblazers and the Institute**, setting out respective roles and responsibilities, including the service levels that the employer group can expect from the Institute and what will be expected of them in return.
- **A clear and easily-located list of approved and in-development apprenticeship standards**. These are currently all published on gov.uk but can be difficult to locate on the site. All approved standards that are ready for delivery are already available in searchable format on the digital apprenticeship service. The Institute will also explore options for making it easier for employers to find standards that are in development but not yet approved for delivery.
- **A user-friendly, digital guide to the standard development process**. The Institute will provide guidance digitally, through an interactive guide that tailors information to the stage that the employer has reached in the development process, but also allows them to view the end-to-end guidance if they want to find out more. Examples of the digital support, available whenever employers want to access it, could include:
 - An introductory webinar for employer groups to give them an overview of the process and support available;
 - An easier to use online portal for developing and submitting proposals;
 - Automatic notifications if guidance material or policies change; and
 - Open access to an employer group's progress through the standard development process so that anyone can see where it is up to in the process.
- **A forum for connecting new employer group Chairs with existing groups** to minimise the risk of competing standards between groups and share learning with newcomers to the process.

⁶ The current online portal can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-guidance-for-trailblazers>

Reviewing proposals for new apprenticeship standards

Employers have raised concerns that approval decisions are being taken by policy officials rather than industry experts. To introduce greater industry expertise, we propose that the Institute will:

- **Establish 15 Route Panels aligned to occupational groupings and comprised of industry experts** to review and approve proposals, standards and assessment plans. Panel members will replace DfE and SFA officials as the panel that review and approve proposals. The panels will be made up of a range of experts with a broad knowledge of occupations and training across a particular route and could include academics, employers, professional bodies, sector/trade organisations, and National Colleges or other training providers. A Chair will be appointed to each of the Route Panels by April 2017, with further members being recruited during the Institute’s first year, with a maximum of 15 per panel by April 2018.
- **Publish an occupational map** that will act as a master list of mutually exclusive occupations. The map will be a live document, with amendments owned by the respective Route Panel. Where the occupation contained in a proposal is recognised on the map, approval to develop a new standard should be relatively straightforward. Where it is not recognised on the map, the Institute will invite the employer group to provide further evidence to support its argument that it is a distinct occupation. The draft occupational maps will be published for consultation before they are finalised.

3.1.2 Designing a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan

Support for employer groups (“Trailblazer”)

We are proposing that the Institute moves towards a tailored package of support based on an early assessment of the Trailblazer’s needs once their proposal has been accepted.

A core package of support for all

We will direct all Trailblazers towards an on-boarding pack that will include:

- A step-by-step ‘how-to’ guide;
- Suggested templates for standards and assessment plans;
- Advice on how employer groups can run effective standard development sessions;
- Examples of best-in-class standards and assessment plans from the relevant route;
- An offer of connecting the group to selected Trailblazer Chairs who have experience of leading a standard through the approvals process; and
- Contact details for Institute support in case they have any questions that are not answered in the guidance.

For some Trailblazers this might be the appropriate level of support to guide them through the process, for example if the group's Chair and other employers have extensive prior experience of developing standards.

A Relationship Manager for groups that need one

Relationship Managers are a core feature of the current support offer for Trailblazers, providing advice on all aspects of the development process. We are proposing that Relationship Managers, who will become employees of the Institute, and are included in the Institute's staffing model, will focus their support on the employer groups that are most in need of it, for example those that are new to the standards development process.

Trailblazer feedback on Relationship Managers has generally been very positive, with suggestions that this support could be even better if they were equipped with additional sector expertise. In response to this, we are proposing that:

- Relationship Managers will be **aligned to specific Routes** which will help them to develop greater sector knowledge and identify potential overlaps between standards;
- They will **draw on industry expertise from the Route Panels** to help resolve sector-related issues that arise; and
- We offer Trailblazers the option of their Relationship Managers spending **half a day shadowing on site** with them at the outset to help understand their occupation.

In addition to greater sector knowledge, Relationship Managers will retain their position as, first and foremost, the Institute's experts on the process and criteria for developing standards and assessment plans.

Access to assessment specialists

While employers are best placed to set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for their occupation, feedback from Trailblazers indicates that they do not always have the expertise to design a robust assessment plan to sit alongside it.

To reinforce this part of the process, we are proposing to offer in-house assessment support for Trailblazers, with those that are developing their first assessment plan being prioritised for this support.

3.1.3 Reviewing and signing off a new apprenticeship standard and assessment plan

Submissions and approval meetings

We are proposing that under the Institute:

- **Relationship Managers use their professional judgement to advise Trailblazers on the best point at which to move onto their assessment plan.** This might be after they have

received Institute approval of their standard (as at present), but it might also be before that if the Relationship Manager feels that they are ready to do so. This point will also trigger the allocation of an indicative funding band against the draft standard so that this can be factored in as the assessment plan is developed. A separation of powers will be built into the Institute's design so that a Relationship Manager's role is purely one of support for the Trailblazer group – they will not have any role in approving their group's standard or assessment plan.

- **A number of independent, third party reviewers will comment on the standard and assessment plan.** The peer review will focus on key quality criteria set by the Institute and should reach a judgement on whether the learner would reach full occupationally competence by following the apprenticeship standard. Areas for review are likely to include:
 - The clarity of the submission;
 - How applicable it is to employers who are not part of the Trailblazer group;
 - Whether it is deliverable; and
 - Whether it includes up-to-date occupational requirements, including use of the latest relevant technology.
- **Industry-led Route Panels lead the review and approvals process,** supported by Institute officials. Trailblazers will respond to initial Route Panel questions in advance, so that the review meeting itself is focused on the few really critical areas of the submission, with more minor queries cleared up in advance.
- **The Trailblazer Chair will be invited, where necessary, to participate in the review meeting,** either via video conference or conference call. While this will add some logistical complexity to organising the Route Panel approvals meetings, we anticipate that it will save time overall, with issues being resolved within the meeting rather than being relayed to the Trailblazer outside of the meeting and the submission then having to be looked at a second time. It should also increase transparency and ensure that key points are clearly relayed to the wider Trailblazer group and avoid messages being lost in translation.
- **Emerging digital platforms are piloted,** to keep employers informed of where their standard and assessment plan is in the development process and when they can expect it to reach the next stage.

3.1.4 Monitoring and evaluating the success of an apprenticeship standard

One of the Institute's core roles will be to regularly monitor the mix of available apprenticeship standards to ensure that employer demand is being met and advising government on how available funding should be allocated to individual standards. It is

important to stress that responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the Apprenticeship programme *as a whole* will continue to rest with DfE (which remains accountable for the overall objectives and affordability).

We are proposing two approaches to reviewing standards:

1) Ongoing monitoring of individual standards

The Institute will draw on a range of data sets to monitor the implementation of apprenticeship standards. The Institute will analyse emerging trends and outlying data and escalate concerns to its Board. Where issues are highlighted, the Institute will consider commissioning a deep dive into the standard to better understand the cause and impact.

Much of the data for ongoing monitoring already exists and is currently reported to the SFA, for example learner starts, completions and withdrawals. Where data is not currently captured, the Institute will put steps in place to do so. Of particular importance will be user feedback – from employers, apprentices, training providers, end point assessors, and external quality assurers. We will work closely with the SFA to source feedback in a way that works for users as well as the Institute itself.

2) Route-based evaluations of multiple standards

We are also proposing a cyclical strategic evaluation of all standards under a route. This evaluation will take a holistic look at the different standards under that route to help the Institute to build a picture of the impact that they are having for learners, employers and the wider economy.

We anticipate that the Institute will evaluate each route roughly once every three years, with around five routes reviewed per year, on a rolling basis.

Key questions to consider as part of the evaluation could include:

- What does demand look like for the standard?
- What does outcome data such as learner wage returns and post-apprenticeship destination data indicate about the benefits that these standards are delivering for learners, employers and the wider economy?
- Are there occupations not covered by a standard where a skills gap exists, which could be covered by apprenticeships? Should the Institute encourage the market to come forward to form an employer group, and how should it do so?
- Are there areas of overlap between standards that are causing problems for employers and apprentices?
- Do the funding band allocations reflect the economic and social priorities within the route? If not, what would represent a more appropriate allocation?

- Are end point assessments sufficiently high quality and consistent within and across standards?
- What information is there about progress made with regard to people from disadvantaged backgrounds

The Institute might decide to re-convene a Trailblazer group if the evaluation indicates that changes are needed to a standard and/or assessment plan. Where data is clearly showing that a standard is not attracting any learner or employer demand, the Institute could decide to withdraw it from the list of approved apprenticeships.

3.2 Providing advice on apprenticeship funding to Government

Summary of proposals in this section:

- **The Institute will provide apprenticeship funding advice to Government. Its role will be to** advise on allocating new standards to agreed funding bands and changes to existing funding band allocations as part of its cyclical evaluation of standards within selected routes.
- Government will also be able to take advice from the Institute on the nature and level of additional payments for different segments of learners or employers.
- **The Institute will explore options for building a better understanding of the social and economic impact of individual standards** so that it can include a greater recognition of the strategic return from the apprenticeship in its funding advice to Government.

The introduction of an apprenticeship levy from April 2017 represents the biggest set of changes to apprenticeship funding since the re-introduction of modern apprenticeships in the mid-1990s.

Summary of apprenticeship funding reforms in England from April 2017

In the recently published details on apprenticeship funding in England from May 2017 the Government has confirmed that all existing and new apprenticeship frameworks and standards will be placed within one of 15 funding bands, depending on what is deemed to be the cost of the level and type of apprenticeship.

The upper limit of each funding band will cap the maximum amount of digital funds an employer who pays the levy can use towards an individual apprenticeship. The upper limit of the funding band will also cap the maximum price that Government will 'co-invest' towards, where an employer does not pay the levy or has insufficient digital funds and is eligible for extra support.

Beyond being part of the mechanics of the overall apprenticeship funding system

experienced by employers, funding bands are designed to achieve four key aims;

- Ensure employers can purchase apprenticeships of sufficient quality;
- Ensure that employers can purchase apprenticeships in sufficient quantity, to drive the growth in apprenticeships Government has committed to;
- Ensuring that the funding system is simple and easy for employers to engage with;
- Ensure value for money for the employer and taxpayer

At present, the allocation of apprenticeship standards to funding bands follows a two-step process. The first comes at the point that a standard is approved by government. This has been an indicative allocation designed to help Trailblazer groups design an affordable assessment plan. The second comes at the point that the assessment plan is approved by government. This is the final allocation decision and is rarely different from the indicative one, unless the employer group has provided new evidence to warrant a change.

This model of allocating standards to funding bands is largely cost driven (how much the SFA thinks the required learning will cost to deliver), informed by:

- A comparison with any framework pathway it is replacing;
- A judgement of the likely delivery cost, based on overall content of the standard and assessment plan and taking account of likely Guided Learning Hours, learning inputs and duration, and evidence from Trailblazer groups; and
- An economic uplift formula.

The model largely assumes that the higher the cost of the training provision, the higher the quality and value of the apprenticeship. However, we know that some types of apprenticeship might cost a lot to provide, but offer relatively poor labour market returns. From April 2017, the Institute will provide advice to Government on:

- Allocating new standards to agreed funding bands;
- Changes to existing funding band allocations as part of its cyclical evaluation of standards within selected routes;
- The nature and level of additional payments for certain types of learner or employer.

The parameters of the funding advice will be established through the annual remit letter from the DfE to the Institute, with final decisions remaining with the Secretary of State. The operational interaction between the DfE, Skills Funding Agency and the Institute relating to funding advice will be set out in the framework agreement and supporting service level agreements where appropriate.

Advice will need to be given in the context of overall affordability and the Government's manifesto commitment of delivering 3m new apprenticeship starts by 2020. The Institute

will need to consider difficult trade-offs between employer and provider expectations and recognise other factors such as the availability of funding, and will build a strong analytical function to inform this.

3.3 Quality assuring apprenticeship end point assessments and certificates

Summary of proposals in this section:

- **It is intended that the Institute will be responsible for the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations, including setting key quality criteria. The SFA will continue to run the Register process, including assessing applications against the criteria that the Institute sets.**
- **The Institute will offer an external quality assurance model as a last resort and will charge for this service**
- **The Institute will establish an Assessment Committee that will operate as an escalation route if concerns arise through the external quality assurance process. The Institute will retain the option of directing the SFA to remove an organisation from the register if necessary**
- **The Institute will be responsible for apprenticeship certification, with the SFA delivering the operational administration of certificates**

The introduction of end point assessments should enhance the market value of a learner's apprenticeship. Knowing that the apprentice has had to pass a robust, employer-designed assessment at the end of their training should give employers confidence that the individual is competent in their occupation, in turn de-risking a decision about whether to recruit them into their business.

For this to work, employers must be able to look across their occupation and see that successful apprentices are of roughly comparable ability. Consistency across the standard is key, and the Institute intends for an apprenticeship certificate to become a trusted mark of quality in the labour market, held in the same high regard as a university degree.

3.3.1 Consistent end point assessments

There will be two main controls in place to maintain consistently high quality end point assessments (EPAs).

1. The Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations

Employers have the flexibility to select an organisation of their choice to deliver the EPA from a nationally approved Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). The RoAAO provides the first layer of quality assurance, with assessment organisations having to satisfy a number of entry criteria to be allowed onto it. The register can contain multiple organisations that have been approved to deliver EPAs against a given standard and employers will expect the outcomes to be reliable and consistent between each organisation to ensure that the apprenticeship brand is maintained.

2. External quality assurance

We are building an additional layer of external quality assurance into the system to mitigate against the risk of inconsistencies emerging. Employer groups can choose between four approaches to delivering this additional assurance:

- **An employer-led model**, where the employer group proposes its own approach with employers checking for consistency between assessments;
- **A professional body-led model**, where an industry association delivers the role on behalf of employers;
- **An Ofqual-led model**, where Ofqual will regulate the EPA as a qualification; and
- **An Institute-led model**, where the Institute will provide the external quality assurance itself on behalf of employers, as a last resort.

How this operates will be set out in more detail in the upcoming updated Trailblazer Guidance due to be published in April 2017.

The Institute will create a simple comparisons table to highlight the main differences between the options, as well as promoting the importance of external quality assurance to the overall success of the system.

3.3.2 The Institute's quality assurance model

We are proposing that the Institute's approach to quality assuring EPAs will consist of checks on four areas:

- **Readiness for EPA:** Assessment organisations must conduct checks on the completion of on-programme qualifications and English and Maths requirements before a learner can take their EPA. The Institute will test whether these checks are being carried out consistently within and between assessment organisations.
- **Assessment Materials:** Trailblazers are asked to set out how EPAs will be graded, and the parameters for determining a pass/merit/distinction grade overall. Each assessment

organisation will develop methods and materials to conduct the EPA and the Institute will test how comparable these are between different assessment organisations.

- **Internal Quality Assurance:** Trailblazers set out their minimum expectations for internal quality assurance (IQA) which each assessment organisation must then follow. When carrying out EQA checks, the Institute will test whether these requirements are being upheld.
- **Data and Compliance:** The Institute will conduct sample checks to test whether assessment organisations have the necessary back office functions and audit processes in place to provide timely and accurate data to those who require it.

The Institute is proposing to charge assessment organisations to cover the costs of its external quality assurance service.

3.3.3 Responding to concerns

The Institute will establish an Assessment Committee that will operate as an escalation route if concerns arise from the external quality assurance. The committee will be comprised of senior Institute officials and led by a designated Board member. It will review concerns that are reported and have the power to launch a full investigation into the issue if appropriate.

If the investigation concludes that the concerns are valid and significant, it will formally write to the assessment organisation requiring them to immediately address the identified issues and demonstrate improvement within a defined time period. If performance remains unsatisfactory, or if the issue is sufficiently serious, the Institute retains the right to recommend the removal of the organisation from the register.

3.3.4 Apprenticeship certificates

Certification of apprenticeships has historically been a time and resource intensive process, with around 1.5 million pieces of evidence being checked annually to issue certificates under apprenticeship frameworks. The certification process under apprenticeship standards is significantly simpler because the assessment organisation is responsible for checking that all requirements have been met, i.e. that:

- All mandatory qualifications on programme have been achieved;
- The apprentice has successfully passed the end point assessment; and
- The apprentice has returned a completed version of the apprenticeship declaration form giving their permission for the assessment organisation to apply for the certificate on their behalf.

From April 2017, the Institute will take overall responsibility for certification. The SFA will administer the certificates, i.e. physically issuing them to learners, with the Institute setting

the parameters for the SFA to operate within and ensuring the overall integrity of the certification system.

The Institute will work with the SFA to design a high quality apprenticeship certificate that will be awarded to learners who successfully complete their training. Every apprentice will receive the same design, and in time, learners who pass an approved classroom-based course will also receive a similar Institute-designed certificate.

4. Collaborating with partners to drive quality across the apprenticeships system

Summary of proposals in this section:

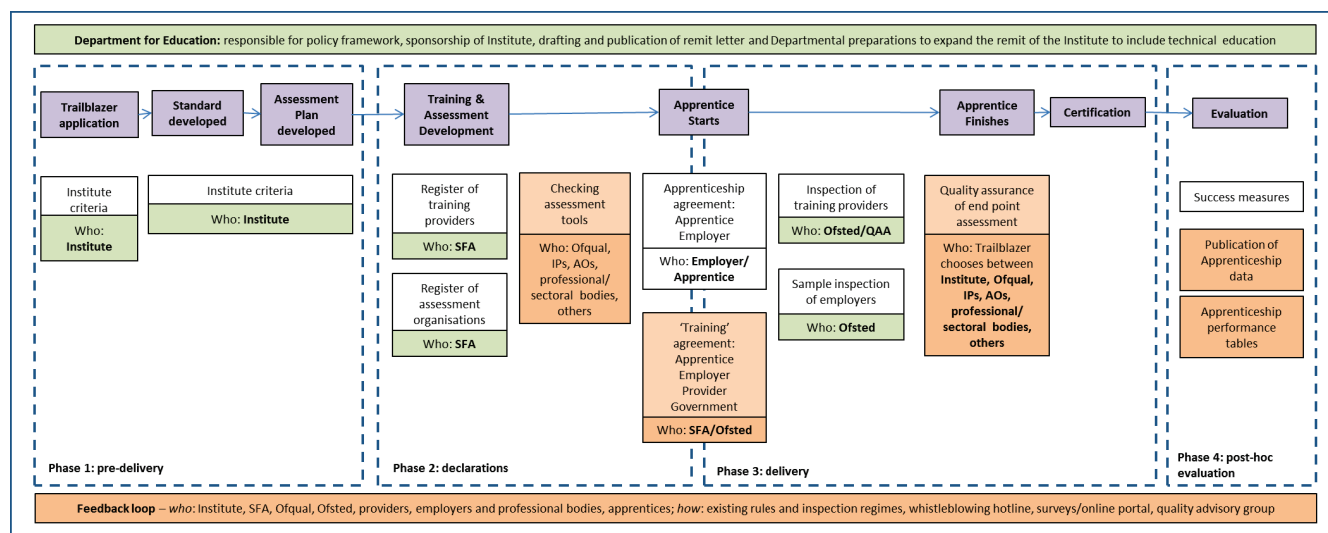
- **The Institute will chair an Apprenticeships Quality Improvement Group to monitor quality across the apprenticeships sector and provide assurance that investment in apprenticeships is generating value for employers' and taxpayers' money**
- **It is intended that the Institute will set the key quality criteria for the Register of Apprenticeships Training Organisations. The SFA will maintain overall responsibility and responsibility for administration.**

Improving quality in the apprenticeships system is embedded in the Institute's remit. However we are very clear that the Institute cannot operate in isolation if we are to succeed in our aim of securing a higher quality apprenticeship experience and outcome for employers and learners.

4.1 Creating an Apprenticeships Quality Improvement Group

Figure three below provides a view of the different organisations involved in the apprenticeships system.

Figure three: Who will do what within the apprenticeships system, 2017-18



Roles and responsibilities:

- **Department for Education** will have responsibility for the policy framework, overseeing how the system functions, developing and publishing the annual remit letter from

Government and preparing for the expansion of the Institute's remit to include technical education from 2018 onwards.

- **The Institute** will regulate the quality of apprenticeship standards and assessments, and advising government on the funding of training and assessment against apprenticeship standards. It will also work closely with the DfE in 2017-18 on preparations for expansion of its remit, including close co-operation with the shadow technical education functions that will operate from the Department.
- **The Skills Funding Agency** will continue to be responsible for the register of apprenticeship training providers and maintaining the register of assessment organisations, as well as running the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The SFA will continue to fund the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships throughout England and provides a dedicated, responsive service for both employers and apprentices.
- **Ofsted** will continue to inspect training providers and sample inspection of employers.
- **Ofqual** will continue to regulate any qualifications included as part of an apprenticeship standard and for quality assuring some end point assessments.

Driving real and tangible improvements to quality through the system will require these organisations (and others) to work together in a more joined-up way than in the past. We are proposing that the Institute plays a leading role in this, bringing together the SFA, NAS, Ofsted, Ofqual, The Office for Students, and the Quality Assurance Agency to form an Apprenticeships Quality Improvement Group which the Institute will chair. The group will meet on a quarterly basis to begin with, to monitor quality across the sector, intervene where necessary, and provide assurance to the DfE Permanent Secretary that investment in the sector is generating good value for money.

4.2 Apprenticeship training and assessment organisations

Future access to the apprenticeship training and assessment markets will be governed by two new apprenticeship-specific registers – the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). The Institute will have a role in maintaining the quality on each of these, including:

- **Setting the quality criteria for the registers** which training and assessment organisations would have to meet. Provider feedback indicates that the current process for accessing the registers can lack transparency and sometimes hinder smaller providers' chances of becoming an approved provider. The Institute will follow up on these concerns as a priority during its first year of operation.
- **Recommending the SFA to take action where the Institute has concerns over the quality of particular organisations**, including removing an organisation from the relevant register if needed. We anticipate that the primary route of discovering any such examples of poor quality delivery will be through employer or learner feedback, monitoring data and outcomes or the external quality assurance function that the Institute will oversee.

Overall responsibility for the RoATP will remain with the SFA's Accounting Officer, but the Institute will be transferred full ownership of the RoAAO from April 2017, with the SFA continuing to operate it on a day-to-day basis.

5. Leading the reforms to technical education

5.1 Implementing the Post-16 Skills Plan

The Post-16 Skills Plan was published in July alongside a report from an expert panel chaired by Lord Sainsbury. It set out an ambitious framework for a reformed technical education system – one that supports young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

Its ambition was that every young person, after an excellent grounding in the core academic subjects and a broad and balanced curriculum to age 16, would be presented with two choices: the academic or the technical option. The academic option is already well regarded, but the technical option must also be world-class. Adults who want to change careers or advance their technical knowledge should also have access to high-quality technical qualifications, suited to their specific needs.

The technical option will prepare individuals for skilled employment which requires technical knowledge and practical skills valued by employers. It will cover college-based and employment-based (apprenticeship) education, building on our apprenticeship reforms. Employers will sit at the heart of the system and take the lead in setting the standards. Crucially, standards will be designed by considering what is needed to move into skilled employment and then working backwards to develop the qualifications which lead to this point.

5.2 The Institute's role in leading these reforms

The plan proposed an expansion to the Institute to lead on this framework from April 2018. This will create a single body responsible for technical education with the remit to develop a coherent strategy and bring together employers and education experts to design the standards across all technical education – college-based as well as apprenticeships.

We believe that having one autonomous body with the right set of powers, a clear remit and clear accountability is the best way to deliver these reforms and put employers in the driving seat.

The Institute's expanded role will include:

- **Establishing a common framework of 15 routes across all technical education**, encompassing both college-based and employment-based learning. These routes will focus on skilled occupations where there is a substantial requirement for technical knowledge and practical skills; the routes will group occupations together to reflect where there are shared requirements, and use this occupational mapping to commission new standards where needed.

- **Convening employer panels of professionals for each route** to advise on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that individuals will need to meet the standards in each route, and on suitable assessment strategies for college-based learning. It will be for the Institute to decide on the specifics of the process for developing apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, and how best to ensure alignment with college-based learning, but we anticipate that employer groups will continue to lead on the design of standards and assessment plans.
- **Managing nationally recognised certificates for each technical education route at levels 2 and 3.** Each certificate achieved through college-based study is likely to include achievement of a qualification alongside other elements, e.g. successful completion of a substantial work placement. We will put in place only one approved qualification for each occupation or cluster of occupations within a route. These could play a role within the relevant apprenticeships, but only if employers decide that should be the case and the Institute will need to consider the implications of this single tech level approach. We intend to grant exclusive licences for the development of these tech levels following a competitive bidding process.
- **Maintaining a register of technical qualifications at levels 4 and 5, whether existing or new,** which are eligible for public subsidy through Government-backed student loans. Where an existing technical qualification is considered by employers to do the best job of meeting national standards, it would be placed on the register. Otherwise, where there is a need but no existing suitable qualification, the Institute would commission its development.

The standards used will be set by the panels of professionals based on the relevant technical knowledge, skills and behaviours at the higher levels, and will align with the standards for apprenticeship programmes in the same route. These will result in standards brigaded under the 15 routes. In populating the register, the Institute will normally wish to recognise only a single qualification in a particular area.

5.3 Preparing for the Institute's expanded remit

The Institute's remit will expand to include wider technical education from April 2018. We will say more about how an expanded Institute will operate when the Government publishes an implementation plan following on from the Skills Plan and Sainsbury report published in July 2016. We can though highlight some critical work now to prepare for the wider remit of the Institute:

- [Legislation](#)

Securing the legislative changes to expand the Institute to cover wider technical education beyond its current apprenticeship functions. The Technical Education and Further Education Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament, will extend the Institute's role so that it can implement key recommendations within the Skills Plan and Sainsbury report.

- DfE operating routes in shadow form

In the interim period until April 2018, it will be important to take forward the Sainsbury reforms so that we can maximise their impact, and ensure that the Institute can hit the ground running when it formally takes on the relevant functions. Therefore, we will operate key functions in shadow form in advance of April 2018, but we will make these as aligned as possible with Institute functions from April 2017 onwards, in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

- Learning from the initial rollout of routes and occupational maps in the Institute's first year

The first year of the Institute provides a great opportunity to make sure we manage the Institute's wider remit in the right way. For instance, we can learn from how the routes are operating and take on board the lessons from the occupational maps, and shape the way in which the wider remit is carried out accordingly. The first occupational maps are now nearing completion, and we are very grateful for all the engagement so far from a wide range of employers, professional bodies and other stakeholders.

6. Implementing the new system

Summary of proposals in this section:

- **The Institute’s long term ambition is to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and classroom-based courses.**
- **The Institute’s priorities for year one include providing continuity to the sector while kicking off initial activities to make progress against each of the proposals in this document.**
- **The Chair and Board will publish an updated plan for the Institute, along with its key performance indicators after its launch in April 2017.**
- **Our priority until April 2017 is to set up the Institute in the way that gives it the best chance of success once it is launched**

Stakeholders have been clear that the sector is looking for the Institute to play a leading role in improving quality within the apprenticeships system. The need for continuity and stability has come through loud and clear from our engagement so far, as has the request for a clear plan for the future.

The creation of the independent Institute as a permanent feature of the apprenticeships and technical education landscape is designed to provide long term stability and certainty to the sector. It will allow us to talk confidently about our long term plans for apprenticeships and technical education.

In this section, we set out some ambitions for the Institute and our thoughts on priorities for year one – we would welcome comments on these. The Institute’s Board will publish an updated plan for the Institute, along with its key performance indicators after its launch. Your feedback on our proposals in this document will heavily inform these publications. Finally, we provide a high level implementation plan for establishing the Institute by April 2017.

6.1 Our ambitions by 2020

In the long term, the Institute’s ambition is to establish a thriving technical education landscape consisting of high quality apprenticeships and classroom-based courses. We recognise that this is a hugely challenging ambition, and one that previous reforms have tried, and failed, to achieve. We are confident that the Institute’s focus on quality and rigour, the central role of employers in the new system, and the additional levy resource to

support provision all mean that we are now better placed than ever to achieve this ambition.

By 2020, we would expect to see:

- A simplified system that is easier for users to navigate than at present, with clear information and guidance available whenever it is wanted by any stakeholder.
- A suite of mutually exclusive, employer-designed standards that better meet employer's skills needs and deliver improved outcomes for learners.
- Funding allocated to standards in a way that provides the greatest strategic return (either to the learner, employer or wider economy).
- A coordinated approach to quality assurance across the system, with organisations collaborating proactively and effectively to identify issues, respond to concerns, and intervene to address them in a timely manner.
- The Institute playing a leading role alongside others to do more to celebrate learners' successes. Establishing apprenticeship certificates as a hallmark of high quality will be one of multiple contributions to this.
- Apprenticeships and technical education recognised as a highly prestigious alternative to the established academic route, whilst recognising that achieving real parity of esteem will take longer to achieve.
- The Institute recognised as an organisation of excellence across the apprenticeship landscape - by government, employers, learning organisations, colleges and schools and parents.

We would welcome your comments on both the proposed content of these aims, and also suggested approaches to measuring their success.

6.2 Year one objectives

Our priority until April 2017 is to set up the Institute in the way that gives it the best chance of success once it is launched. We have set out below some proposed priorities for the Institute for the 12 months from April 2017, aligned to its core functions and its wider role in the apprenticeships system. The Institute will report to the Secretary of State on these and other objectives through its annual report.

Regulating the quality of apprenticeship standards – in its first year, the Institute will:

- Improve access to information and guidance on the development process, including making it easier to navigate the system and locate 'in development' and 'approved for delivery' standards.
- Develop a clear support package for Trailblazers to help them develop standards, including access to assessment specialists to help with drafting the assessment plans.
- Explore opportunities to speed up the end-to-end process for developing an apprenticeship standard, whilst retaining appropriate scrutiny and rigour of review.

- Introduce greater industry expertise into the review and approval of apprenticeship standards, including setting up Route Panels and Peer Review Panels.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation function within the Institute, including initiating the first route based evaluations of standards.

Providing advice on funding of apprenticeship standards to Government – in its first year, the Institute will:

- Establish a robust process for providing advice to DfE on the appropriate funding band allocation for new apprenticeship standards, in line with the Secretary of State’s remit letter to the Institute.
- Research and test an improved approach to allocating standards to funding bands, in order to move further towards an allocation model that incentivises the standards that provide the greatest strategic return on investment.

Quality assuring apprenticeship end point assessments – in its first year, the Institute will:

- Establish an approach to Institute-led external quality assurance, including the legislation, processes and systems required to support this service.
- Set up an Assessment Committee to review concerns reported through the external quality assurance of end point assessments, including where the Institute is not selected as lead quality assurer.
- Create a consistent apprenticeship certificate design and work with the SFA to issue the certificate to successful learners.

Collaborating with partners to drive quality – in its first year, the Institute will:

- Establish and chair quarterly Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Group meetings comprised of key organisations responsible for quality within the apprenticeships system.
- Agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the SFA, including provisions to support Institute-led interventions where low quality is observed from apprenticeship training or assessment organisations.

Preparing for the expansion of the Institute’s remit – in its first year, the Institute will:

- Publish an occupational map that aligns standards to 15 industry routes.
- Expand Route Panels during the year so that they are ready to operate at scale from April 2018.

6.3 An implementation plan

The table below sets out the high level milestones through to the Institute’s launch in April 2017. The Institute will publish a five year plan after its launch which will provide more details on its delivery timetable.

Milestone	Date
Institute operating model	
Publication of draft Government operational plan/remit letter for the Institute	4 January 2017
Deadline for responses to draft Government Strategic Guidance/remit letter for the Institute	30 January 2016
Deadline for responses to draft Institute operational plan	27 February 2017
Start of procurement for external quality assurance service	February 2017
Shadow Institute commences review of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans as an input to the DfE's decision making process	February 2017
Shadow Institute commences funding advice as an input to the DfE's decision making process	February 2017
Close of procurement for external quality assurance service	March 2017
Launch of Institute	April 2017
Governance	
Board members appointed	January 2017
Permanent Chair appointed	Feb/March 2017
First Board meeting	March 2017
Stakeholder Group appointed	March 2017
Recruitment	
Route Panel Chairs recruited	March 2017
Additional Route Panel members recruited	March 2017 – March 2018

Annex 1: The proposed Route Panels

Route name	Typical job roles
Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care	Conservationist, park ranger, farmer, horticulturalist, agricultural manager, agricultural technician
Business and Administrative	Human resources officer, office manager, administrative officer, housing officer
Catering and Hospitality	Chef, butcher, baker, catering manager, events manager
Childcare and Education	Nursery assistant, early years officer, teaching assistant, youth worker
Construction	Bricklayer/mason, electrician, building/civil engineering technician, carpenter/joiner, construction supervisor
Creative and Design	Arts producer, graphic designer, audio-visual technician, journalist, product/clothing designer, upholsterer, tailor, furniture maker
Digital	IT business analyst/systems designer, programmer, software developer, IT technician, web designer, network administrator
Engineering and Manufacturing	Engineering technician, vehicle mechanic, aircraft fitter, printer, process technician, energy plant operative
Hair and Beauty	Hairdresser, barber, beauty therapist
Health and Science	Nursing assistant, pharmaceutical technician, sports therapist, laboratory technician, dental nurse, food technician
Legal, Finance and Accounting	Accounting technician, paralegal, financial account manager, payroll manager, finance officer, legal secretary
Protective Services	Police officer, fire service officer, non-commissioned officer (NCO), maritime operations officer (coastguard)
Sales, Marketing and Procurement	Buyer, procurement officer, sales account manager, market research analyst, estate agent
Social Care	Care worker, residential warden, home carer, probation officer, welfare counsellor
Transport and Logistics	Ship's officer, railway signalling technician, HGV driver