

Consultation launched to create new flexible apprenticeships

Sectors including the creative, agriculture and construction industries will soon be able to offer more flexible apprenticeship opportunities.

A consultation has launched today (Tuesday 20 April), seeking views on how new flexi-job apprenticeship schemes could be run. Apprenticeships are at least 12 months long, so some sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as agriculture, construction and creative sectors including TV, film and theatre production, have found it challenging to create enough opportunities.

Announced by the Chancellor at Budget, the new flexi-job apprenticeship schemes would enable an apprentice to work across a range of projects and with different employers to gain the full skills and experience they need to complete their programme. This could include film, TV and theatre production, with one apprentice now being able to work on different productions during their apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships are a vital part of the further education offer, ensuring people have the skills they need to get the jobs they want. Today's consultation will extend this offer further, opening up even more careers to apprentices as we build back better from the pandemic.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

No matter where in the country you are from, we want everyone to be able to get the experience and knowledge they need to get the job they want, while making sure employers have the talented workforce they need.

Our flexi-job apprenticeships will boost opportunities in sectors like the creative industries where employment is often flexible or short term – creating even more chances for people to experience the life changing opportunity an apprenticeship can bring as we build back better from the pandemic.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

We know apprenticeships work – which is why they're a central plank of our Plan for Jobs.

The new flexi-job scheme will create more opportunities for apprentices across England, giving them the hope, skills and experience to progress their career and drive our recovery from the pandemic.

Tim Davie CBE, Director-General of the BBC, said:

I believe flexible apprenticeship schemes are critical for the future of our industry. Apprenticeships not only grow our skills base and expertise, but open up the industry to people from a wide range of backgrounds. That's great for our industry and great for mobility. Everybody wins.

Stephen Page, Executive Chair at Faber & Faber, said:

The Creative Industries Council is pleased with the ongoing discussions with DfE over finding and implementing flexibilities to the Apprenticeship Levy, to enable our dynamic sector to engage with the vital Apprenticeship programme. This consultation on portable and flexi-apprenticeships is a welcome part of that process, and we would urge interested parties across the Creative Industries Sector to respond and help guide this next step in the process.

In July employers will be invited to bid for a share of a £7 million fund to create and test new flexi-apprenticeships schemes, with the first approved flexi-job apprenticeships expected to start in January 2022.

The consultation builds on the reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, which will put employers at the heart of plans to make sure people have the skills they need to get the jobs they want.

This will be further supported through a new Skills Accelerator programme. Launched by the Education Secretary, the programme will help build stronger partnerships between local employer groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, colleges and other providers to make sure communities are getting the training needed to meet local skills gaps. Those interested will have access to a £65 million fund to develop and deliver plans in pilot areas in 2021-22.

Alongside today's flexi-job apprenticeship consultation and new Skills Accelerator, work is ongoing with businesses of all sizes to support them to offer more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities, so employers and individuals can access the skills they need to succeed and help the country to build back better from the pandemic. To help with this, the government is already offering cash incentives for employers of £3,000 for each new apprentice they take on until the end of September.

Notes to editors:

- The flexi-job apprenticeship consultation will run for six weeks, closing on 1 June, and is seeking views from employers, apprentices, sector bodies and existing apprenticeship training agencies.
- The flexi-job apprenticeship schemes will build on the Apprenticeship Training Agency model, allowing employers to join forces and access

funding to create new or expand existing schemes to boost the use of apprenticeships in sectors with non-traditional employment patterns.

- DfE will launch the flexi-job apprenticeships fund in July 2021. At that time, we will set out further details (informed by today's consultation) and invite organisations and employers to submit bids for the £7m fund. The fund will make £7m available across 2021-22 and 2022-23, which was first announced by the Chancellor in the Budget.