



Quality framework model

The quality framework apprenticeship model, published by The City & Guilds Group and the Industry Skills Board (ISB), was put together following a series of interviews with businesses and training providers about what constitutes a quality apprenticeship and how they ensure the best experience for apprentices and employers.

Planning



Recruitment and induction



Putting learning at the heart of apprenticeships: Real experience, practice and problem solving to achieve productivity and autonomy



Validation of learning outcomes and mastery



Independent end-point assessment



Career progression

To read the full report click here

Making Apprenticeships Work: A reflection on practice

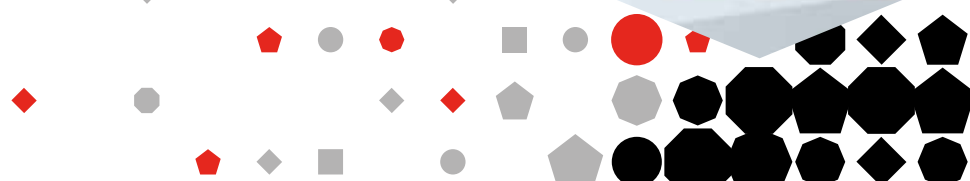
Royal Bank of Scotland, one of the largest business and commercial banks in the UK, set up its apprenticeship programme in 2015 to create opportunities for young people with little or no work experience to join the organisation with a view to a long-term career. Since the programme's inception, RBS has recruited more than 1,200 apprentices. It currently has over 600 individuals on the programme and 520 that have completed their programme are in permanent jobs. RBS has also broadened the age demographic to meet the increasing interest in apprenticeships and from those individuals wanting to re-train. Each apprentice is offered a job on successful completion of the apprenticeship and are paid the same salary level as other staff doing the job.

Planning

The programme is directly linked to the current and future needs of the business, with senior leaders involved in determining which areas of the organisation are suitable for apprenticeships. RBS identified how apprenticeships could help to address challenges such as employee retention, succession planning and the need for new ideas and innovation to meet their future customer needs. It initially focused on building a talent pipeline for relationship managers in commercial banking for which it recruits apprentices for the Level 3 Financial Services framework (this includes chartered banking exams). It also wanted to use the programme to find new talent and build in-house knowledge in the digital space, recruiting apprentices for the Level 3 Software Developer and Systems programme frameworks.

The programme has grown rapidly. As well as the two initial focus areas, it has more than 160 apprentices undertaking the Financial Services Customer Advisor Level 2 standard who work in branches and telephony centres, areas of the business that traditionally have a high churn rate. The organisation is also introducing some Level 6 degree programmes.

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Recruitment and induction

RBS manages its own recruitment process internally and advertises on its external recruitment website and through social media. The application process focuses on the individual's potential, motivation, attitude and desire to learn, which marked a change in mindset for hiring staff who were used to recruiting based on work experience. Applicants complete an online situation judgement test with questions designed to gauge the person's attitude, motivation, resilience, integrity and other personality traits that RBS considers important. If they meet this criteria they go forward to an online video interview with the final stage a face-to-face interview which includes role play to assess how they would behave in a particular situation.



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RBS runs a two-day induction programme for all apprentices when they join the business. Day one focuses on the bank and its values while day two's activities are based on the respective apprenticeship programme. As many recruits are school leavers, the programme also covers key skills needed to transition to the world of work but it is reshaping this to cater for the wider demographic which includes existing employees. In future, the second day will be held three months into the programme to allow the individual time to return for further insight and ask questions about the programme. Apprentices are assigned a buddy, who is an existing apprentice that has been on the programme for at least three months. Buddies will contact the individual ahead of their start date.

Training and learning programmes

RBS ensures standards and frameworks are closely mapped to the specific role so the apprenticeship outcomes are aligned with the job the apprentice will do in the workplace.

Where appropriate, mandatory and non-mandatory qualifications are embedded into programmes. When RBS first embarked on the programme, Maths and English qualifications were required to apply for the programme, but this was removed for one of the cohorts, trusting its own processes to find the best individuals. Half of successful applicants didn't have the maths/English qualifications so would have been discounted. RBS now works with its learning provider to deliver these necessary functional skills as part of the programme rather than them being mandatory at the application stage. Programmes are RBS-branded and incorporate the company values.

The line manager is responsible for the apprentice during the programme and meets with them regularly to discuss work priorities and performance. The onus is on the manager to ensure the apprentice gains full exposure to their real job to prepare them for moving into the role. Apprentices are expected to meet role specific objectives like any other employees.

Line managers ensure apprentices allocate enough time for the 20% off-the-job element and the skills coach at the learning provider monitors this aspect. The off-the-job learning is a combination of internal RBS training and learning through the learning provider. Most of the off-the-job learning is delivered online via a mixture of webinars, virtual learning and mock exams. For some technology frameworks, there are face-to-face classroom lessons.

In addition to regularly meeting with the apprentice, managers also monitor individuals through meetings and regular communication with the learning provider who will update them on work submissions and assessment. The line manager, learning provider and apprentice will also have a call every six weeks to update on progress. Apprentices can interact and network with each other via a Facebook group.





Learning outcomes and mastery

Performance expectations are communicated by the line manager when objectives are set.

This varies depending on the programme but across all of its apprentices RBS wants to see business-like attitudes displayed and expects individuals to be customer-centric, proactive problem-solvers and team players who are also motivated to drive their own development. The above average performance ratings of apprentices (see business benefits) is also seen as a measure of successful learning outcomes.



End-point assessment

Apprentices are yet to go through an end-point assessment (EPA) at RBS. The company was advised on choice of EPA organisation (EPAO) by its learning provider. RBS values external certification but, because it is early days, it has some concerns about the risk of apprentices failing because of different interpretations of what the EPA organisation expects so it will monitor the EPA process carefully.

Career progression

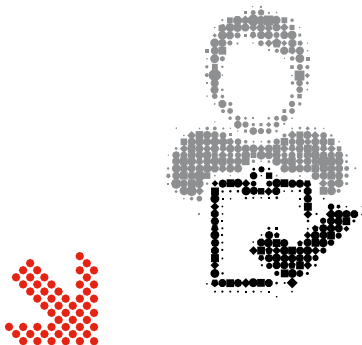
Well over half (58%) of apprentices that have joined since 2015 have been promoted above their original destination role. Once the apprentice has moved into their permanent role, they are responsible for managing their own career and professional

development but will, of course, be supported by their line manager. RBS provides a wide range of career opportunities which includes higher level apprenticeships through its Professional Career Development Programme.

Business benefits

- **improved retention: more than 80% of apprentices still work at RBS and more than half (58%) have been promoted. This also brings major savings as it reduces the need to re-recruit and re-train personnel**
- **increased and above average performance rating: 80% of current or past apprentices score 'acceptable' or 'above acceptable', compared to the business average of 80%**
- **higher levels of engagement: in employee surveys, apprentices have an engagement score of 90%, compared with the business average of 85%**

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