



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau

Gradd Brentisiaethau
EIS(5)DA15
Ymateb gan BT

National Assembly for Wales
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee
Degree Apprenticeships

Evidence from BT

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Inquiry into Degree Apprenticeships - response from BT

Apprenticeships at BT

At BT Group, we believe we are now hiring more apprentices than any other private sector business in the UK. In 2018/2019, BT hired almost 4,000 apprentices across the four nations, supporting the UK Government's aim to fund apprenticeships.

In 2019/2020, we are on track to have supported a similar number of learners on apprenticeship programmes across the UK. More than two thirds of those will be employed by Openreach.

Our first four Welsh Digital Degree apprentices joined us in September 2019.

Have any issues become apparent during the rollout of degree apprenticeships and what lessons can be learnt from their introduction?

We have experienced similar issues to those we first experienced in England with degree apprenticeships. When we approached providers to find out about their offer, we found some that were well prepared to outline what they could provide, and how. However we also felt that other providers were not able to outline how they would work with employers; what the commercial model was; or were even able to understand the employer's needs to then explain the benefits of the programme. We understand that this is early days, but do want to emphasise that, in our experience, one of the keys to success is a good relationship between employer and provider. This starts with the initial contact and making sure both parties understand each other's needs.

Was the process and criteria used for approving proposals from providers to deliver degree apprenticeships satisfactory?

We cannot comment on this as we do not deliver programmes.

What are your views on the demand for degree apprenticeships and how that demand should be managed, both in terms of the range of frameworks and demand from employers and learners?

BT currently offer five degree (level 6 and 7) apprenticeship programmes across the UK. Firstly, demand for these programmes will come from how well employers can envisage a need for them – for BT this is where we can see a real benefit in growing our own graduate level talent by having employees study for a degree while gaining business experience. And, secondly, how attractive these



programmes appear to young people and their parents. Digital is BT's most popular degree apprenticeship in England so we would expect to see demand for this in Wales. Employers will need to promote these opportunities to drive demand with learners. Once you have some traction, you may want to look at other frameworks. We imagine there may well be interest for degree apprenticeships in Cyber Security, Finance and Project Management.

To what extent should activity aimed at widening access feature in degree apprenticeship recruitment, and how can this be used to measure what cohorts are representative?

A stated aim of the reforms in England was to widen participation. BT supports this aim and is committed to using apprenticeships to build a diverse workforce representative of the society in which it operates. Our experience to date is that you have to proactively target groups and areas to attract a wide pool of people to apprenticeships and this will help you widen participation. Degree apprenticeships have the potential to offer an alternative, and more financially viable way of achieving degree-level education. To make people aware of this opportunity, you would not only need to build this into apprentice recruitment, but also make young people and their parents aware of these much earlier in the school system.

Do you have any comments on the cost of degree apprenticeships, how degree apprenticeships are funded and the level of funding committed to them?

In order to take up these programmes, we believe employers would expect the funding cap to cover all the provider's costs. We would not expect to pay any additional fees for these programmes. Therefore the programmes should be costed and funded appropriately.

How has the degree apprenticeships pilot impacted on other level apprenticeships, if at all?

It hasn't. These gave us the opportunity to offer new and different programmes so have not had a negative impact on the numbers on our other apprenticeship programmes.

Should any aspect of the approach to delivering degree apprenticeships change and if so, what should be the future direction?

We would recommend including remote learning where possible and leveraging the use of technology. Larger employers may have small number of learners in different locations. The more flexible the delivery model, the more opportunity it offers employers to recruit. We would also recommend establishing a network of providers so they can share best practice and hopefully learn more quickly how to deliver these programmes and also how to work with employers to benefit all stakeholders.