

Association of Apprentices Apprentice Council

The Association of Apprentices is a new user-led community that will help apprentices across the UK maximise their potential. Our new platform (www.associationofapprentices.org.uk) launched on 1 March and we are continuing to develop new facilities and functions over the coming months. We will offer some of the social elements that are often missing from apprenticeship programmes as well as offering additional professional development opportunities and career advice. But we want our work to be guided by apprentices, and so we've created an Apprentice Council. We've recruited 17 members so far and are now looking for up to another 13 apprentices (or recent apprentices) to join the Council and help the Association develop and grow.

The Council meets twice a month (once formally and once informally) to discuss the things that they think the Association should focus on, the content of our website and the future direction we should take. It doesn't matter what level or type of apprenticeship you're doing – we just want to hear your ideas and get your feedback. We're still really new so this is a great opportunity to put your mark on what we create and ensure it benefits apprentices across the UK. In return you'll gain experience of working on a major project, the chance to meet and collaborate with other apprentices and opportunities to develop your skills and enhance your CV.

You'll need to agree the time with your employer but we're only asking for a few hours a month of your time to join a Zoom call where the Council discusses things like: what information, advice and guidance should we offer apprentices? What are the biggest challenges that apprentices face? Where do you think the gaps are for young people studying an apprenticeship? Should we allow people to upload their own content or chat in forums? What sort of events should we offer? As for the rest – you decide what you want to talk about.

Who can apply to be a Council Member?

If you'd like to join the Council, you need to:

1. Be doing an apprenticeship at the moment (it doesn't matter what level you're at or what you're doing), or have finished your apprenticeship within the last 24 months
2. Want to share your thoughts and ideas on how to improve things for apprentices in the UK
3. Have the time to commit to joining the Council meetings
4. Have your employer's agreement that you can take part (some meetings may take place during working hours)

Why are you adding more members to the Council?

The intention was always to have up to 30 members of the Council. Because we are brand new, we decided to recruit the Council in two phases so that we could develop the Council well and ensure our plans and structures work. Now the first group of Council members have settled into their role and are ready to welcome the second group to join them.

Who runs the Council?

The initial 17 members of the Council recently elected their own Chair (Joel Roach) and Vice Chair (Jasmine King). They are supported by a Secretariat of three other apprentices (Katie Fiddaman, Dexter Hutchings and Niamh Mulhall). The Secretariat organises all the logistics and helps the Chair and Vice Chair to manage the meetings. In terms of what is discussed at the meetings, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council set the agenda and meet regularly with the Association's Board and staff to discuss the latest developments.

What are the meetings like?

The Council meets twice a month. One is a formal meeting where the Council receives an update from the Chair and then discusses one or two specific questions. The other meeting is an informal give-back session (which members don't have to attend) where we give something back to the Council members as a thank you for all your help and support. These sessions may include opportunities to hear from senior business leaders, develop specific skills or take part in social activities.

At the moment all the meetings take place on Zoom, but we hope that we might be able to hold physical meetings in the future.

How much time will I have to commit each month?

The meetings (one formal meeting and one give-back session per month) each last around one hour.

Do I have to attend all the meetings?

Don't worry if you don't think you'll be able to make all the meetings. We know that life's busy and you will sometimes have other priorities. As long as you think that you'll be able to make most of the meetings then that's fine. You can always provide any thoughts you have to the Chair, Vice Chair and/or Secretariat outside the meeting itself if you can't make it.

How long is membership of the Council?

We're asking apprentices to join the Council for a year. If you'd like to stay on after that, then there may be the chance to re-apply.

Will Council members get to do anything else besides attending meetings?

Council Members may be invited to join webinars or other events to represent the Association, but it won't be compulsory.

What if I'm worried about sharing my thoughts in front of everyone?

Don't be! The great thing is that there are no right or wrong answers to many of the things we'll be discussing. And if you have anything that you'd rather not say in a meeting, you can always email the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretariat or one of the other Council members, and tell them privately.

Will I get paid?

We aren't offering payment for being a Council Member, but we will reimburse you for any travel expenses if you have to attend an event in person. If an apprentice needs to pay for anything else to be able to participate in the Council, then those costs can be discussed with the Operations Director.

What's in it for me? What would I get out of being on the Council?

As well as the chance to help shape a really important part of the UK's apprenticeship landscape, you'll benefit from working alongside other apprentices and forming new professional networks. You'll have opportunities for additional training, mentoring or coaching from the businesses involved with the Association. You'll develop and gain experience in all sorts of useful skills including communication, teamwork and problem-solving. You'll have something extra-curricular to add to your personal statement or CV and you'll have access to senior business leaders throughout your time on the Council. Council members will also be named on the Association's website and possibly other materials.

What are you looking for?

We want people who have ideas and thoughts on how the Association of Apprentices can serve the UK's apprentice community. We are committed to the principles of fairness, consistency, meritocracy and equality of opportunity. We don't mind what level of apprenticeship you're doing, whereabouts in the UK you live, what industry you work in or what your plans for the future are. If you want to help us shape this really exciting organisation then we want to hear from you.

Who decides the membership of the Council?

All applications will be reviewed by the Association's Operations Director. A shortlist will then be circulated to some members of the Advisory Panel for a final decision.

I'm interested! How do I apply?

It's simple!

1. Fill in the attached application form and email it to Fiona Burford, the Association's Operations Director, on director@associationofapprentices.org.uk.
2. Ask your employer to email Fiona (at the same email address) saying that they've agreed you can join the Council.
3. The deadline for applications is Wednesday 31 March.