

Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:

Next steps for degree apprenticeships in England

Timing: Morning, Friday, 15th May 2026

Taking Place Online

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Degree apprenticeships in England - considerations for purpose, reach and sustainability in the context of funding and levy reform**
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Early impact of the Growth and Skills Levy and Level 7 funding changes**
employer investment and commissioning decisions | future funding models and incentives | provider financial resilience | sustainability of provision across subject areas | implications for the scale, subject mix, regional distribution and long-term viability of Level 6 and 7 degree apprenticeship programmes | maintaining access to higher-level technical skills | sector-specific skills gaps | impact on smaller businesses and regional economies | implications for public service and health sector training | impact of changes on participation and access for mature learners | collaboration between universities, colleges and employers | employer engagement | alignment with regional skills needs | use of funds for modular or short-unit delivery
James Walker, Director, Apprenticeships, Manchester Metropolitan University
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, training provider
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Assessing the role of degree apprenticeships in the wider vocational qualification landscape**
Dr Mandy Crawford-Lee, Chief Executive, University Vocational Awards Council
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.05 **Approaches to improving partnerships between universities and employers**
Professor Lisa Roberts, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Exeter
- 11.15 **Developing business-provider partnerships and priorities for improving course delivery**
maintaining high-level progression routes | role of self-funded and co-funded advanced training routes in sustaining Level 7 and leadership pathways | effective employer engagement models | developing business-provider partnerships | alignment of course content with sector-specific skill needs | integration of modular and flexible delivery | Skills England's role in assessment reform and quality assurance expectations | embedding quality assurance across providers | assessing student experiences
Stephen Bartle, Pro Vice Chancellor, Commercial, University of the Built Environment
Alison Morris, Director of Policy, Skills Federation
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, training provider
Senior representative, students
- 11.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.40 **Recruitment, admissions and progression pathways for degree apprenticeships**
Pete Milsom, Partnerships Manager, Apprenticeships, UCAS
- 11.50 **Widening participation and improving access to degree apprenticeships**
improving access and engaging underrepresented groups | support for learners without prior higher education | priorities for supporting under-25s and disadvantaged learners | outreach initiatives and boosting awareness among learners | implementing inclusive recruitment and learner support practices | alignment with A levels, T Levels and V Levels | progression from foundation and lower-level provision | employer participation including SMEs | integrating digital and blended learning to improve accessibility | benchmarking and measurement of progress and outcomes
Jo Burgess, Director, Apprenticeships, Teesside University
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, student union
Senior commentator
- 12.10 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 **Policy priorities for degree apprenticeships moving forward**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum



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