



# TOP TIPS – FOR APPRENTICES

### Starting your Apprenticeship

Your apprenticeship is a job with training, meaning that you can earn and learn whilst starting out in your chosen career. It will help to improve your career prospects moving forwards. It is essential that you take responsibility for your own development with the support of your Training Provider and/or employer.

1. **Take pride in your work** – do the best that you are able, ask for help and look for opportunities to improve.
2. **Record your progress** – create a 'story' around related work projects – **what** have you done? **how** have you done it? and **who** have you done it with/for? Explaining **why** you did these things is as important to evidencing and the **what, how** and **with whom**. The STAR technique has been identified as a good method for presenting this. See below for more details.
3. It is important to **recognise your achievements** and what you have learned, see where you can develop further, look for opportunities to do more, reflect on how far you have come.
4. **Work with your employer** - discuss new opportunities to learn; ask for clarification, support or guidance.

Depending on the apprenticeship you choose, the duration will vary but the process is similar for all.

### Requirements of the Apprenticeship

Every apprenticeship has a set of criteria that you are required to show competence in – this is called the Standard.

The Standard is supported by an Assessment Plan which explains how you will be assessed and graded what needs to be submitted for assessment at the end of the Apprenticeship programme or End Point Assessment (EPA). For additional clarity an extra document exists called the Occupational Brief - this provides details of what things mean, what you need to evidence and how you can achieve higher grades.

You need to read and understand these documents because they will help you to achieve higher grades. Store a copy and review your own progress to see where you are meeting the requirements and where you may need support.

These documents are listed for all the Digital Standards on the following website

<https://www.nsar.co.uk/digital-ega/digital-apprenticeship-standards/>

Please note these documents are developed and owned by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and BCS are required to assess to these standards.

## Knowledge Modules

Most of the digital apprenticeship standards contain Knowledge Modules, these are exams, tests or vendor certifications that evidence your knowledge and understanding of the criteria and confirm your learning. Your learning will be completed away from your day to day workplace and you then sit either a BCS Test or an industry certification as appropriate to the requirements of your apprenticeship standard and listed in the Assessment Plan. The Assessment Plan also identifies the learning, the number of knowledge modules and options.

## Maths and English

You need to evidence your achievement of Maths and English at the required level. You can use certificates you have received in the past or if you do not have these you can work with your Training Provider to achieve them.

## Summative Portfolio

This is the largest piece of evidence that you will submit for your final assessment. It should consist of work-based projects that you have worked on and should show the **what, how** and **with whom** for what you have done. Consider how you will present your evidence ensuring you provide a clear picture of what you have done throughout your apprenticeship and how you have done it to meet the criteria of the standard you are on.

### STAR technique

**SITUATION** – Set the scene, what were you being asked to do.

**TASK** – What tasks were needed - describe the purpose and order they would need to be completed.

**ACTION** – Explain exactly what you did, was it as part of a team? make sure you identify your role.

**RESULT** – What was the outcome, did it go well, did it go badly, what did you learn from it?

The best way to evidence this and show how you worked is to create a 'story' or narrative of the activities. A popular technique that is used as mentioned earlier and which helps to focus the 'story' is the STAR technique.

When you have compiled your evidence, get someone to read it through. They don't need to be technical they just need to follow what you are saying and understand what you did. Can they answer the questions **what, how** and **with whom** and **why** from your detail? If they need clarification, so does your evidence – add the detail. Make sure you identify what you did; how you approached the tasks; if you worked as part of a team who did you work with, what was your role?

If you follow this approach for every work-based project from the start of your apprenticeship, by the end of the programme you will have exceptional evidence for submission and have a choice to select your best pieces.

Your training provider or skills coach will help you map your projects to the standards for the Gateway process but if you are familiar with the standard and the occupational brief you can be proactive in this mapping.

Review and revise your work to provide solid evidence of your activities – the achievement and grade are down to you.

## Employer Reference

This will be developed by your line manager or mentor at work, it is important that you spend time with them to review the work that you have done, how they feel you have progressed and who you worked with i.e. colleagues, customers and suppliers.

The employer reference is an important part of the programme and their observations and comments will set out their views of the quality of your work. It provides supporting evidence around the projects that you have submitted within your portfolio.

## Gateway

Once all your evidence is collected and your employer reference completed, you are ready to pass through the Gateway to final assessment. This will be done on your behalf by your training provider. You will also identify the project that you intend to complete.

## Preparing for the Project



Depending on the apprenticeship standard you are working on, there may be a choice of up to 3 projects to select from. BCS provide your training provider with a short summary of all the available projects each of which identify the selected set of knowledge, competencies and behaviours and must be undertaken in a controlled environment. This project and the conditions you complete it under are key to ensure consistency and comparability, increasing the accuracy of the final assessment decision.

Prepare for your project and if it requires the use of specialist software then familiarise yourself with it first.

Things to note:

- the project is **not** Pass or Fail, it is your opportunity to show your competence, your planning, your approach to carrying out tasks and to show your justifications for decisions you have made.
- a project that doesn't go to plan can also provide the assessor with an understanding of your ability to recognise and learn from your mistakes.
- you can use the internet to research, for clarification or support but this must be your own work.

- acknowledge any sources of information you may include in your project.
- there is no right or wrong answer as long as you justify your decisions.
- sometimes the project is designed to challenge your thinking or for you to challenge the 'client' requirements.
- read all the instructions carefully and submit all the required files.

## Preparing for your interview

Ask your skills coach or employer to give you some practice interviews, think of them as professional discussions. They will help build your confidence and explain different ways to answer questions and encourage you to give the required level of detail to their questions that the assessor will expect. If you know the standard you will be comfortable discussing how you met the criteria.



Make notes to prompt you about the different criteria to take to the interview with you and review your portfolio evidence to refresh your understanding, a recommendation is that you take it with you to the interview. If you have carried out different or new tasks since Gateway take evidence with you as you will be asked if there is anything else you want to discuss. This can support the evidence of your competence.

## Interview format

1. When you log on to the call, the assessor will welcome you and thank you for your time.
2. The assessor will confirm with you that the interview will be recorded, this is a regulatory requirement and mandatory and allows for quality control and review. They will remind you that it is a professional discussion and not an interrogation!
3. You will be asked to turn on your camera so that you can show your approved government photo ID – another mandatory requirement and this will be verified verbally on the recording by the assessor. NB – No original government photo ID – No interview
4. They will ask you if you are comfortable to continue and whether there is any reason why you are not at your best to continue. Once you are ready the interview and discussions about your evidence and apprenticeship will start.
5. You need to be aware that there may be other people on the call, this is for quality assurance processes and also a requirement to ensure that the assessor is meeting the required compliance and professional standards.
6. You will also be given the choice to turn your webcam off again or leave it on – it is your choice as the interview is about you.
7. Explain with as much relevant detail as you can when responding to questions, refer to your notes or portfolio evidence and ask for clarification from the assessor if you are not sure of the question they are asking. Remember to identify what you personally did using “I” not “we”.

8. The assessor will not reveal your grade or give an opinion on your responses. They are required to be neutral. Your final grade from the holistic assessment of all your work will be established and issued to your training provider within 5 working days, please allow time for them to process this internally – they will contact you with your grade.

## Process for grading

The end point assessor will review your summative portfolio, the employer reference and your synoptic project against the criteria within the standard prior to interview, this will enable them to develop a plan for your interview/discussion to gain clarification on evidence submitted, how you work and what you have done during your apprenticeship.

Based on what they have seen and discussed, they will then identify the grade achieved, complete a report for your training provider within the identified 5 working days.

## Key Points

- Your grade is in your hands – it is down to you.
- The more you understand about the standard and your role the better placed you are to discuss it.
- Be proactive when collecting your evidence and producing your portfolio.

# **Top Tips – Apprentices**

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