

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



WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM

- 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, 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