

# Expression of interest

# Title: A qualitative investigation of Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeships

**Project reference: 2018/066**

**Deadline for expressions of interest:** 12 noon Tuesday 18th December 2018

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to conduct qualitative research with employers, providers, employer and FE sector bodies and apprentices to improve understanding of the causes and effects of changes to the number of apprenticeship starts at Level 2. The Department is particularly interested to explore how changes at Level 2 interplays with starts at Level 3; identify and explore whether anything can be learnt from exceptions to the overall trend i.e. instances where employers are increasing Level 2 starts; and, identify potential policy responses.[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Background

New apprenticeships across all levels are being designed and driven by employers, creating higher quality training.

Recommendations from the [Richard Review (2012)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf) informed the quality reforms to apprenticeships, which stated that “a shift towards an apprenticeship programme that clearly delivers substantial training for skilled work will strengthen the reputation of the programme and lead to proportionately more Level 3 and fewer Level 2 apprenticeships though some Level 2 apprenticeships will continue to have a valuable role to play” (p.34).

The latest data suggests that the number of people starting apprenticeships has fallen in the 2017/18 academic year compared to the previous year. However, this has not been the case across all levels, with increases seen at Level 4+. Thus far in the 2017/18 academic year, the fall in apprenticeship starts as compared to the previous year, has been greatest at Level 2.

Analysis of data from the [Individualised Learner Record](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr) (ILR) shows the decrease in Level 2 apprenticeship starts is most pronounced in four Sector Subject Areas (SSAs):

1. Business, Administration and Law;
2. Health, Public Services and Care;
3. Retail and Commercial Enterprise; and,
4. Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies[[2]](#footnote-2).

New research is required to inform the Department’s understanding of the factors affecting changes to apprenticeship starts at Level 2 and the interplay with starts at Level 3, and to inform the policy response to this change.

## Research aims

**The aims of the project are to:**

* Test, nuance and expand upon the Department’s current understanding of the factors affecting changes in the numbers of Level 2 apprenticeship starts.
* Identify and explore the effect(s) of the change in numbers of Level 2 starts and its inter-play with other programmes, for example traineeships or Level 3 apprenticeships.
* We would also like to explore whether lessons can be learned from exceptions to the overall trend, for example where employers within the four SSAs of interest are in fact increasing Level 2 starts or taking action to and/or increasing Level 3 starts.
* Identify possible policy responses to the overall change in numbers of Level 2 starts.

## Methodology

A qualitative methodology, involving a combination of interviews and focus groups is required to explore these issues from the perspectives of:

* Apprentice employers who offer and/or currently employ Level 2 in at least one of the four SSAs where the drop in Level 2 starts is most pronounced; across employers we would like coverage of all four SSA’s including some employers that also offer apprenticeships at Level 3 in these SSA’s.
* Providers of Level 2 and 3 apprentice training within the four SSAs listed above;
* Sector/Employer/Trade bodies for relevant sectors;
* Provider sector bodies representing the different types of providers offering Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships, for example, general and sector specific further education colleges and independent training providers i.e. AoC and AELP[[3]](#footnote-3);
* Apprentices, covering a mix of age groups from Levels 2 and 3, and the four SSAs of interest.

**We welcome creative suggestions from potential contractors, who are asked to consider and propose methodologies, and approaches to sampling and data collection they believe would be suitable for this project; delivering rich data within the timescales and budget.**

**Timing**

* Deadline for EOIs - 12 noon Tuesday 18th December 2018
* Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued - Friday 21st December 2018
* Deadline for ITT submission - 3pm Friday 25th January 2019
* Potential Clarification Interviews, if required (to be held in London) - Week Commencing Monday 4th February 2019
* Inception Meeting (to be held in London) - Week Commencing Monday 11th February 2019
* Headline Findings - Week Commencing 20th May 2019
* Final Report - Friday 5th July 2019

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Demonstrates relevant methodological knowledge and experience ideally gained through previous research into apprenticeships.
* Demonstrates a clear knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives of the project and of why and how these aims and objectives respond to the current policy context.
* Project management skills and ability to deliver to timescales and within budget.

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| Scoring: |
| 1.    No evidence/very poor |
| 2.    Poor evidence |
| 3.    Some evidence |
| 4.    Good evidence |
| 5.    Excellent evidence |

**Each one of these criteria has equal weighting at this stage.**

Expressions of interests submitted must be **no more than 1000 words** - anything longer will be disregarded.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 12 noon Tuesday 18th December 2018**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**earl.kehoe@education.gov.uk**](mailto:earl.kehoe@education.gov.uk) |
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## How to submit an expression of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the [Department’s Terms and Conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. We are interested in level 3 as a comparison to level 2, for example where there has been a change in starts at level 2, what has happened to level 3 (increase, decrease, stayed the same) and why? [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Source: ILR 2016/17 R08, 2017/18 R08, 16/17 R14 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and Association of Colleges (AoC). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)