

# **Humber, Coast and Vale**

## **Faculty of Advanced Practice**

### Advanced Clinical Practitioner

### Degree Apprenticeship

### Guidance for Employers

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## Introduction

Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACPs) play a key part in developing and sustaining the capacity and capability of the healthcare workforce of the future. In recognition of this, an apprenticeship route to the role is now available in addition to the traditional academic route; from September 2021 it is envisaged all Health Education England (HEE) funded advanced practice training positions will be recruited via the apprenticeship route.

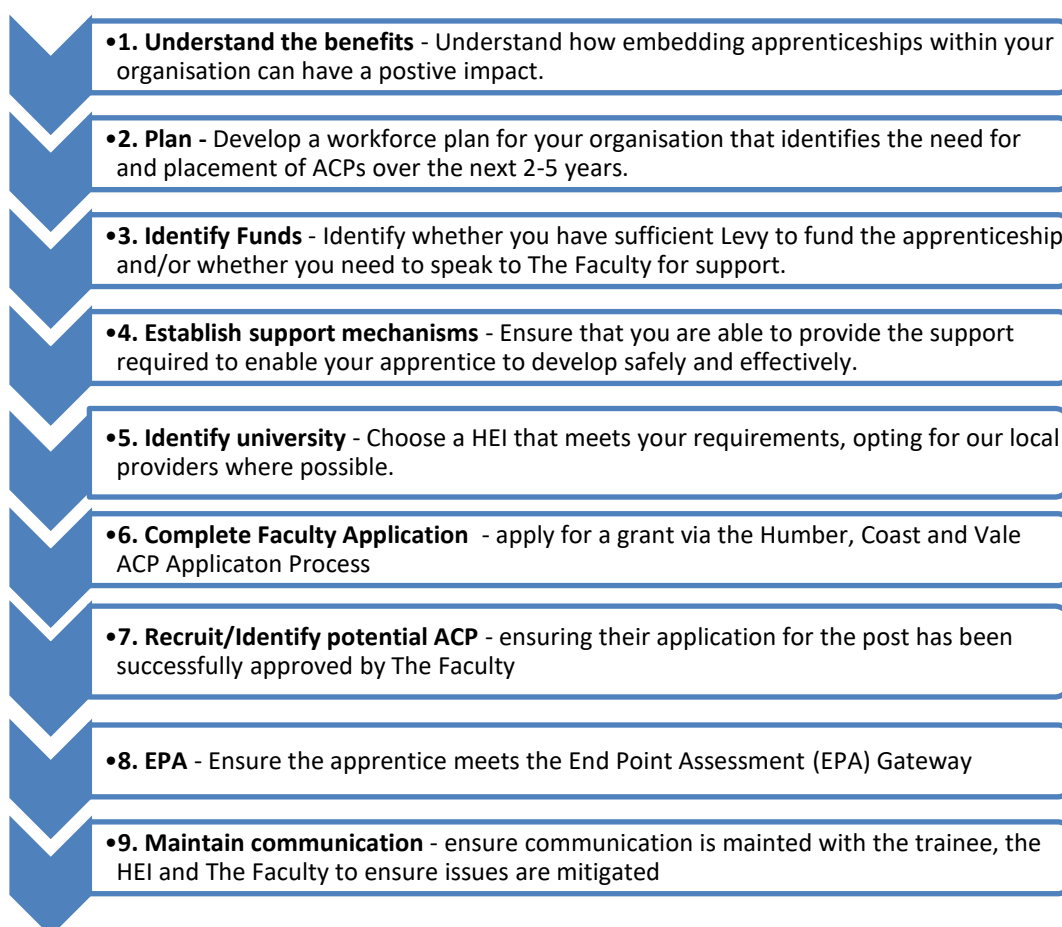
The programme ensures that the apprentice advances his/her knowledge and skills to meet the core values in the Institute of Apprentices [Apprenticeship Standard](#). This is a valuable opportunity for registered nurses, midwives and allied health professionals in our region to prepare for work in an advanced clinical role, by studying for a work-integrated master's degree in Advanced Clinical Practice whilst remaining in employment.

## Purpose of this document

However, successful implementation of the role within organisations requires careful planning and preparation. This step-by-step document supports employers in the Humber, Coast and Vale region in achieving this. It begins by describing the process that employers should follow before outlining some frequently asked questions at the end.

## Process for Employers

The table below shows 9 steps that employers should take in order to prepare for the ACP apprenticeship route of education; each section of the document corresponds to each of these elements and provides more detailed support.



## 1. Understand the benefits

Apprenticeships are increasingly being seen as a valuable element of organisations recruitment and retention strategies. There are many reasons why organisations should employ apprentices, some are listed below:

- **Greater communication and wrap-around support**  
The apprenticeship model of advanced practice education calls for greater communication and collaborative working between employer organisations and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Whilst this may be seen by some employers as a burden, a co-designed curriculum, stringent recruitment process and structured progress reviews with trainees throughout the programme allows issues (such as the trainee in difficulty or recurrent absences) to be identified early and agreed solutions negotiated in a timely manner.
- **More cost-effective**  
This point is especially pertinent to all organisations that pay the apprenticeship levy. An organisation looking to employ an apprentice can, rather than letting this money go back to the Treasury, employ an apprentice and pay for the training with the money that they have already been required to pay via the apprenticeship levy tax. This means that the organisation gets to control how their levy is spent locally, rather than having it absorbed into the Treasury pot. Staff undertaking apprenticeships are also making a contribution to the workplace whilst they are learning.
- **Increases the skills of staff and aids staff retention**  
Apprenticeship training programmes are open to both new and existing staff, meaning they can be used to up-skill the current workforce. The benefit of this is that the staff member will receive high-quality assessed training whilst working in the role, meaning that they will gain the knowledge and skills to perform the job at a high level. It is also an effective staff retention tool in that it illustrates that your organisation is willing to invest in its workforce.

## 2. Plan

The ACP workforce should be established and developed to meet population and service demand both now and in future. A structured workforce planning process is a crucial part of achieving this and will support you as an employer to identify where an ACP will be of most impact in a patient's health and care pathways.

### 2.1 Workforce plan

Many workforce planning and design tools also exist and can support you in both understanding the needs of your population and how to build a workforce that meets these needs. A workforce planning toolkit developed especially for employers and commissioners taking on ACPs can be found [here](#). Some other examples can also be found [here](#).

It may be helpful, depending on your focus, to have commissioners, HR, finance, management and clinicians around the table to contribute to these discussions. Some key points of learning and consideration as part of these discussions can be found in these presentations:

- [The HEKSS Patient and Learner Journey](#)
- [Looking Across the System Presentation](#)
- [Planning the Workforce](#)

## 2.2 Individual-level plan

Should an ACP role be identified, a job plan, job description and person specification should be created to map the role and responsibilities required. Entry criteria will vary according to the HEI (check with your chosen HEI first) but typically an applicant will require:

- A minimum of a 2:2 honours degree (or equivalent experience) in a health related discipline
- Current registration with their regulatory body (i.e NMC, HCPC or GPhC)
- Appropriate post-registration clinical experience in a professional environment (usually equivalent to a minimum of 2 years full time post-registration)
- Work in a healthcare role of a minimum 30 hours per week (check with your chosen university as each provider has differing requirements)
- Ability to attend university 1 day per week (on average), 1 day per week for off the job training and mechanisms in place to support the applicants' clinical requirements in practice

These criteria will need to be considered when creating job adverts, person specifications and throughout the shortlisting process.

## 3. Identify Funds

Apprentices do not pay their tuition fees; costs are covered by the Government and/or their organisation. Two apprenticeship models of funding are currently in place; co-funded and fully funded:

- **Co-funded:** if you are a non-levy paying organisation or you are a levy paying organisation who has exceeded their pot, the Government will financially support your apprenticeship training, contributing 95% of the costs with the organisation contributing the remaining 5%. For a Level 7, 3 year MSc this equates to £11,400 Government contribution and £600 employer contribution (per trainee).
- **Fully funded:** if the annual employer wage bill of your organisation exceeds £3 million you will pay for your apprenticeship training through your levy account (to the point you exceed your levy contribution, where you will revert to the co-funded option). For a Level 7, 3 year MSc this equates to £12,000 employer contribution (per trainee). This is done via an apprenticeship service account and will equate to 0.5% of the organisations PAYE contributions. Most higher education institute (HEI) courses commence in either September or January 2021 with some regional and national variation.

Some smaller organisations (who do not pay in to a levy account or do not reach the £3 million threshold) may access levy budgets of larger organisations via an agreement; up to 25% of an organisations levy budget can be transferred to other employers. If you are unable to access a levy or do not pay into a levy and require funding support, please email [hyp-tr.hcv.workforceconsortium@nhs.net](mailto:hyp-tr.hcv.workforceconsortium@nhs.net)

It is worth noting that any levy contributions unused after 24 months will be returned to the Government. Making effective use of levy contributions therefore requires knowledge of your workforce plan over the next 2-5 years (see section 2).

### 3.1 Extra financial support for developing the role

Organisations will also need to establish their workforce priorities to ensure the levy is utilised to its maximum effect. In order to support organisations in developing their ACP workforce, HEE are currently offering financial support in the form of a training grant/clinical salary support of £10,000 per year per trainee for the 3 year pathway. This can be accessed via the Faculty application route (see section 6).

### 3.2 Salary

Once the ACP role has been identified to address a gap in service provision and access to levy funding clarified, discussions with finance teams should take place to ensure funding is available to cover costs incurred during training (namely salary at approximately Band 7 or equivalent, but to also consider specialist training requirements outside of the MSc apprenticeship) and to cover full salary on completion of the course (current HEE guidance is Band 8a or equivalent). Financial support should be agreed per trainee and this assurance should be given, in writing, to the individual leading the application process.

## 4. Establish support mechanisms

Employers and organisations should seek to ensure their advanced level practitioners are able to practice to their full potential in order to optimise their contribution to multi-professional working.

### 4.1 Governance

Currently, the ACP role is not recognised by any regulatory body, therefore, competence remains rooted within the relevant regulatory body's code of conduct. It is, therefore, essential that ACP's are embedded within local clinical governance structures with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

A governance and/or training process/policy for ACPs should be in place prior to or during implementation of the role that encompasses quality assurance, quality improvement and risk and incident management and is aligned to the [Multi-professional Framework for Advanced Practice \(2017\)](#). It should also incorporate principles outlined within the HCV Governance and Quality Assurance Framework (available from February 2021); the aim of which is to create consistency for employing organisations across the region and ensure unity and continuous quality improvement in the approach to advance level practice roles.

### 4.2 Supervision

Employing organisations are responsible for providing the apprentice with a named educational supervisor in practice. The apprentice and the supervisor are responsible for signing an apprenticeship agreement and submitting this to the HEI at the start of academic programme. The educational supervisor must agree to review the apprentice with the HEI every 12 weeks; initially this will be a face to face review but the use of media platforms are encouraged to be used throughout the course to reduce the burden such reviews can generate e.g. traveling time

and costs. The employer organisation also has to commit to releasing the apprentice from clinical practice for 20% of their total time (equivalent to 1 day per week pro rata). This allows the apprentice to attend university but also allows time for specific learning needs identified during the triangulation meetings or during appraisal.

If and when a supervisor changes, a handover should be conducted between the old and new supervisor in order to ensure consistency in supervision.

### 4.3 Induction

Where possible, trainee ACP's should begin their new role a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the start of the apprenticeship course to enable them to participate in both organisational and departmental inductions; to become familiar with their working area, new team and meet with their educational supervisor. Trainees should also meet with their line manager if this is not their educational supervisor. Local induction, where applicable, should therefore be designed in advance of appointment and arranged with time afforded to complete mandatory training. Enhanced local induction may be required for those who have not worked in a similar organisation/department in terms of policies, procedures and key contacts (i.e. those employed from an external source). The trainee should be provided with competency document(s) to allow them to facilitate a structured discussion with their educational supervisor to produce a training and education plan to meet their needs (See HCV Governance & Quality Assurance Framework).

## 5. Identify University

There are two universities that offer the ACP apprenticeship in the Humber, Coast and Vale region, they are:

- [University of Hull](#)
- [University of York](#)

Other universities outside of the region are available. It is important as an employer that you liaise with your chosen HEI prior to application to the Faculty to ensure that you understand the requirements of the programme. It is important that the chosen HEI is OFSTED compliant.

### 5.1 Tendering rules

The Apprenticeship Levy is public money and there is therefore a legal requirement for organisations to achieve value for money through fair, open and transparent competition. According to the Standard NHS Procurement Rules, any spend over £25,000 should be advertised on the government's Contracts Finder service, available at [www.gov.uk/contracts-finder](http://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder). Each employer has different requirements under their Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs); guidance should therefore be sought from internal procurement teams if further information is needed about individual SFIs. All spend over £118,000 (non-Foundation Trusts)/£181,000 (Foundation Trusts) must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). The document is [here](#).

## 6. Complete Faculty Application

Access to on-going employer support and HEE training grants is only available through application to The Faculty. The application round is conducted annually around Spring by the ACP lead for each organisation (contact us [here](#) for further information and deadline dates).

The lead applicant should clearly identify their HEI of choice and have a named educational supervisor for each trainee apprenticeship position requested; this supervisor should agree to 3-monthly reviews with the trainee as per the [Apprenticeship Standard](#).

## 7. Recruit/Identify potential ACP

All recruitment documents (i.e. job description, advert and person spec) should be in place and ready to 'go live' for advert upon receiving confirmation from the Faculty on the number of funded places that have been granted. Interview dates should be considered to allow key stakeholders to attend. Room consideration will also be required if OSCE or simulation is to be used. Links with organisational human resources and recruitment teams at this stage will be beneficial to ensure a smooth process during the recruitment phase.

### 7.1 Apprenticeship funding rules

Potential apprentices should meet the apprenticeship funding rules and satisfy eligibility criteria; for instance they should not be undertaking another apprenticeship and they should have eligible residency status. The full rules can be found [here](#).

### 7.2 Interview

Trainee ACP interviews should take place to include an assessment centre (OSCE and values based recruitment are suggested methods to assess different aspects of a candidates skill set). Successful applicants should proceed to submit at the earliest opportunity a university application to the HEI of choice. A swift recruitment process should ensue, especially for external applicants, to ensure successful applicants receive written confirmation of their job offer in order to resign from their current position in a timely manner (noting times needed for updating DBS checks and arrangement of occupational health screening). Staff already in more senior positions may require an 8-12 week notice period. Key people from the interview panel should be identified to provide structured feedback to unsuccessful candidates should they request it.

The apprenticeship course will begin following a positive recruitment experience. The trainee will be released 1 day per week (determined by HEI) to undertake academic content and the formal learning component of the apprenticeship.

It is important for organisations to acknowledge that support is required throughout the training period and beyond, with continued professional development, role development and progression pathways being key to retaining ACP's. Please see [HCV preceptorship document \(2019\)](#) for further guidance.

### 7.3 Shortlisting

Shortlisting should occur in conjunction with the course lead (or nominated person) from your chosen HEI to ensure all interviewed candidates are suitable for acceptance to the apprenticeship course. Feedback should be offered to those not shortlisted should they enquire. This

demonstrates a partnership approach to the role, ensures applicants meet all stakeholder needs and ensures consistency in selection.

## 8. EPA

The ACP apprenticeship degree will combine academic and work based learning and assessment which prepares the trainee to undertake an End Point Assessment (EPA). This provides synoptic assessment (which enables students to show their ability to integrate and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth in the subject) of the achievement of knowledge, skills and behaviours mapped against the ACP apprenticeship standards. The EPA is the final 20 credits of an integrated degree programme and is a key part to the apprenticeship training, differentiating it from a standard MSc degree pathway. The EPA result dictates the apprenticeship mark awarded (pass, merit or distinction) and is separate to the academic class awarded by the HEI (First, Second or Third class).

The integrated degree apprenticeship (integrated means EPA is undertaken by training provider) (Level 7) will comprise 180 credits with a minimum of 140 credits gained at Level 7 and 20 credits from the EPA. Depending on experience and prior academic learning, advanced practice apprenticeships will take 12 to 36 months to complete, leading to an award of MSc Advance Clinical Practice.

Before the EPA can be undertaken by the trainee, a Gateway review must be undertaken. The trainee must ensure the HEI and employer organisation agree they meet the Gateway criteria:

- Current valid registration with a regulatory body with proof of registration (e.g. NMC, HCPC, GhCP)
- Achievement of English and Mathematics qualification (minimum level 2) and proof of achievement
- Achievement of 160 credits of an integrated Master's degree in Advanced Clinical Practice from the on-programme apprenticeship formally confirmed
- Confirmation from the employing organisation that the requirements of the apprentice agreement of knowledge, skills and behaviours from the apprenticeship standard has been met by the apprentice in the workplace
- Confirmation by the employing organisation of the apprentice's readiness to progress to the EPA

Apprentices can only progress when they have completed these and are considered ready to undertake EPA. A system of remedial support will need to be agreed between the employer and university when apprentices are unable to meet the gateway criteria. In the circumstance that apprentices do not meet the academic requirements of the apprenticeship programme it is recommended that apprentices may gain agreed exit awards at either Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma.

Should an apprentice be deemed not ready to undertake the EPA, remedial support from both HEI and employer organisation will be required. Where the apprentice is unable to academically fulfil the EPA a discussion should be held as to whether the apprentice can exit the programme with the award or post graduate certificate or post graduate diploma. The employing organisation will need to deal with this shortfall in qualification through internal HR procedures. For these reasons, the EPA must be completed at the end of the programme.



## 9. Maintain Communication

It is important that employers maintain communication with the learner, The Faculty and HEI throughout the apprenticeship period as follows:

- Faculty  
The Faculty will also request updates from employers and students as part of monitoring quality across the region; this will take the form of surveys as described in the Governance and Quality Assurance Framework 2020/21. Employers can contact the Faculty of Advanced Practice at any time for further discussion/support.
- HEI  
The ACP Degree Apprenticeship curriculum should be co-designed between HEIs and employers. The aim of the curriculum is to prepare the apprentice to meet the knowledge, skills and behaviours articulated in the occupational standard and to succeed in the end assessment. The design of the curriculum is decided by the university as the apprenticeship is focused on assuring the outcomes, not the inputs.

As part of this partnership, it is recommended that the employer and university formally agree the requirements of the learning environment and identify the named supervisor(s) and assessor(s) who will support the apprentice in applying, reinforcing and demonstrating the required knowledge, skills and behaviours within the workplace.

- Learner  
The apprentice's academic and work-based progress is monitored termly (minimum three times per year) through a contracted tripartite review arrangement between the employer, university and apprentice before finally achieving the gateway criteria (confirmed by the employer and university) and allowing the End Point Assessment.

## FAQs

### What is the difference between being an ACP Apprentice and an ACP Student?

	ACP Apprentice	ACP Student
<b>Entry Requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An undergraduate degree in nursing, midwifery or other relevant discipline, plus appropriate experience in a professional environment of a minimum 2 years</li> <li>• Will hold current registration with one of the statutory regulators of health and care professions</li> <li>• Maths and English at Level 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An undergraduate degree in nursing, midwifery or other relevant discipline, plus appropriate experience in a professional environment of a minimum 2 years</li> <li>• Will hold current registration with one of the statutory regulators of health and care professions</li> </ul>
<b>Working hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An apprenticeship is a full-time job where an employee undertakes off-the-job training paid for by the employer, it is not dissimilar to studying part-time as a postgraduate MSc ACP student, but</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student will be employed full time but take time away once a week to attend university</li> </ul>

	apprenticeship training must be delivered within the working week	
<b>Study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprentices are working towards an MSc in Advanced Practice</li> <li>• The length of the programme is 3 years (this does not include the EPA period)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are working towards an MSc in Advanced Practice</li> <li>• The length of the programme is 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme fees/tuition fees are paid by the employer using the apprenticeship levy and the apprentice receives a salary. Maximum levy funding is £12,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers are paid £10,000 per student per year for 3 years by HEE. University tuition fees are paid by HEE</li> <li>• The length of the programme is 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>Assessments Undertaken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X3 reviews annually with supervisor, employer and HEI annually</li> <li>• End point assessment at the end of apprenticeship</li> </ul>	Learning determined by outcomes
<b>Standards</b>	<a href="#">Advanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship Standard</a>	<a href="#">Advanced Practice Standards</a>
<b>Credits</b>	<p>The integrated degree apprenticeship is made up of 180 credits which is the same as the postgraduate MSc ACP programme. A minimum of 140 credits needs to be completed at level 7. This can allow you 40 credits of level 6 accreditation of prior learning e.g. non-medical prescribing (if you didn't complete it at level 7). Completion of the End Point Assessment (EPA) contributes the final 20 level 7 credits to the Master's degree so essentially 160 credits are achieved either through Accreditation of Prior Learning and/or programme assessment.</p> <p>It is outlined in the EPA that they typically expect an apprentice to complete 60 credits in a 12 month period with the overall ACP apprenticeship taking 36 months to complete. The minimum apprenticeship completion period is 12 months and this includes apprentices starting in years 2 or 3.</p>	Minimum 180 credits
<b>Model of training</b>	<p>The main difference with the apprenticeship model is the employers select the university to deliver the programme, rather than the apprentice. The primary relationship is between the employer and the university. That isn't to say you don't have a voice as an apprentice within the university, it's just the admissions and financial processes are different.</p>	Student selects university to deliver the programme and the primary relationship is between the student and the HEI.
<b>Course Delivery</b>	<p>A university can choose how to deliver the ACP apprenticeship: some may offer it on a day-a-week release, others in block study days. It is the employer that chooses the university rather than the apprentice and</p>	Most universities deliver the course on a one day a week release from their employer.

	they may choose a university based on how they deliver the ACP programme. Employers agree to minimum of 20% off the job training for releasing the apprentice from their job to attend university and will provide supernumerary clinical development time.	
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## What will a potential ACP Apprentice need to do prior to being accepted on to the course?

They will be asked to complete an Initial Needs Assessment form to assess any knowledge, skills and qualifications that they already have. The purpose of this is to check for any overlap and provide the opportunity for any accreditation of prior learning. Once they have had their eligibility approved and any accreditation of prior learning recognised, they sign an Apprenticeship Commitment Statement.

The Apprenticeship Commitment Statement summarises the schedule, roles, responsibilities and funding that supports the successful completion of the apprenticeship. The information set out in the commitment statement forms part of the evidence pack required and must be signed by the apprentice, employer and university. Everyone needs to keep a copy of this statement. It demonstrates the tripartite relationships between all three parties.

The content of the Apprenticeship Commitment Statement is intended to form the basis of regular reviews between the apprentice, employer and university in order to track progress and review the ongoing support and commitment needed during the lifetime of the apprenticeship. Any changes to the apprenticeship must be agreed and recorded in an updated commitment statement with signed copies distributed to all involved.

If there are any concerns about the apprenticeship, the process for the employer and apprentice to use for resolving any queries or complaints must include details of the escalation route within the lead provider's own organisation and the escalation process to the Education and Skills Funding Agency through the apprenticeship helpline.

## What support does an ACP Apprentice need?

Apprentice ACP's are different from ACP students/trainees in that as a university, the primary relationship is with the employer rather than the apprentice. Support for ACP apprentices will be different from normal arrangements for students as they require termly progress checks to discuss development, issues or concerns, any stretch required and to monitor PREVENT and Safeguarding training compliance. These visits are tripartite in nature and should involve the employer (this can be the clinical supervisor), the apprentice and the university. These meetings can be conducted personally by practice visits or via teleconference/Skype. These meetings should be included in the costings for the ACP apprenticeship.

## What if an ACP apprentice fails academically or clinically to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship?

As above, the apprentice should be receiving regular support through the 12-weekly tripartite reviews in order to mitigate any issues. However, it is also important to consider the type of contract that the apprentice is employed on as to how any performance or conduct issues are managed; this will differ by employer and so local HR policy will dictate how a failing ACP apprentice should be supported.

## Are there any case studies available?

See below HEE Case Studies on ACP Apprentices

- [Apprenticeships in ACP](#)