



## Modern Apprenticeships

Many NVQs at Level 3 are achieved as part of an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA). Designed by employers through their National Training Organisations and Sector Skills Councils, Modern Apprenticeships at both Foundation and Advanced levels provide an integrated mix of occupational competence, underpinning vocational knowledge and QCA Key Skills. Advanced Modern Apprenticeship includes the achievement of an NVQ at Level 3 or above.

The frameworks continue to develop. Soon, all Modern Apprenticeships will include specified technical certificates attesting underpinning knowledge. Technical certificates are BTEC, City & Guilds or other recognised qualifications which meet an industry's knowledge requirements.

## Growing market for higher education

Advanced Modern Apprentices are set to provide a rapidly growing market for higher education. Following a review in 2001, the government is investing £180 million in the development of the Modern Apprenticeship system.

Measures include:

- an entitlement to a Modern Apprenticeship place for all 16 and 17 year-olds with five or more GCSEs, with a target of 28 per cent of 16 to 21 year-olds in apprenticeship by 2004
- technical certificates linked to higher education courses in relevant disciplines
- opportunities to permit able Modern Apprentices to enter higher education during their training.

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*"The national [Modern Apprenticeship] framework should refer to the opportunities for apprentices to progress into higher education, whether immediately after or even during an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship. The development of Foundation Degrees will open up many new opportunities to able young people who have completed an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship."*

*Modern Apprenticeships: The Way to Work.* Report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee chaired by Sir John Cassels, September 2001.

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## What holders of higher NVQs and Advanced Modern Apprenticeships can offer

These non-traditional applicants bring to their studies a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience. In particular, they are likely to possess:

- a high level of technical competence in their specialist areas
- practical experience of work and the associated maturity
- high skill levels, supported by portfolios of evidence
- an ability to assimilate knowledge and apply it in practice
- high levels of self-reliance and motivation.

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*"The medieval universities were established mainly to deliver vocational training. Today we have a so-called academic/vocational divide which creates barriers to progression to Higher Education for some learners for whom vocational qualifications provide a more appropriate learning experience. I entirely support any initiative that promotes progression from vocational provision, thus widening access to and increasing participation in HE."*

Tony Higgins, Chief Executive, UCAS

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## Progression routes via NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships

There are many possibilities, with progression fostered by the continued development of Foundation Degrees, Graduate Apprenticeships and other HE programmes incorporating National Occupational Standards and work-based learning.

Holders of NVQ Level 3 should be considered for progression to a relevant HND and Foundation Degree. Advanced Modern Apprentices may be ready, perhaps with appropriate bridging courses, to progress directly to a full degree programme or Graduate Apprenticeship. The development of technical certificates within Modern Apprenticeships is presenting new opportunities for the provision and progression of these courses of underpinning knowledge within higher education.

Holders of NVQ Level 4, including AMAs at that level, may have experience which merits direct entry to post-graduate programmes, including appropriate Graduate Apprenticeships. Post-graduate will be the normal level of entry for holders of NVQ Level 5, who will be very experienced practitioners and managers in their field.

Many NTOs/Sector Skills Councils have developed detailed progression routes for their sectors, such as this 'route map' (below) for engineering developed by the Engineering and Marine Training Authority ([www.EMTA.org.uk/enginuity](http://www.EMTA.org.uk/enginuity)). The route map approach illustrates the potential for movement across different learning pathways to meet employment and individual needs, and the pivotal role of higher education in meeting

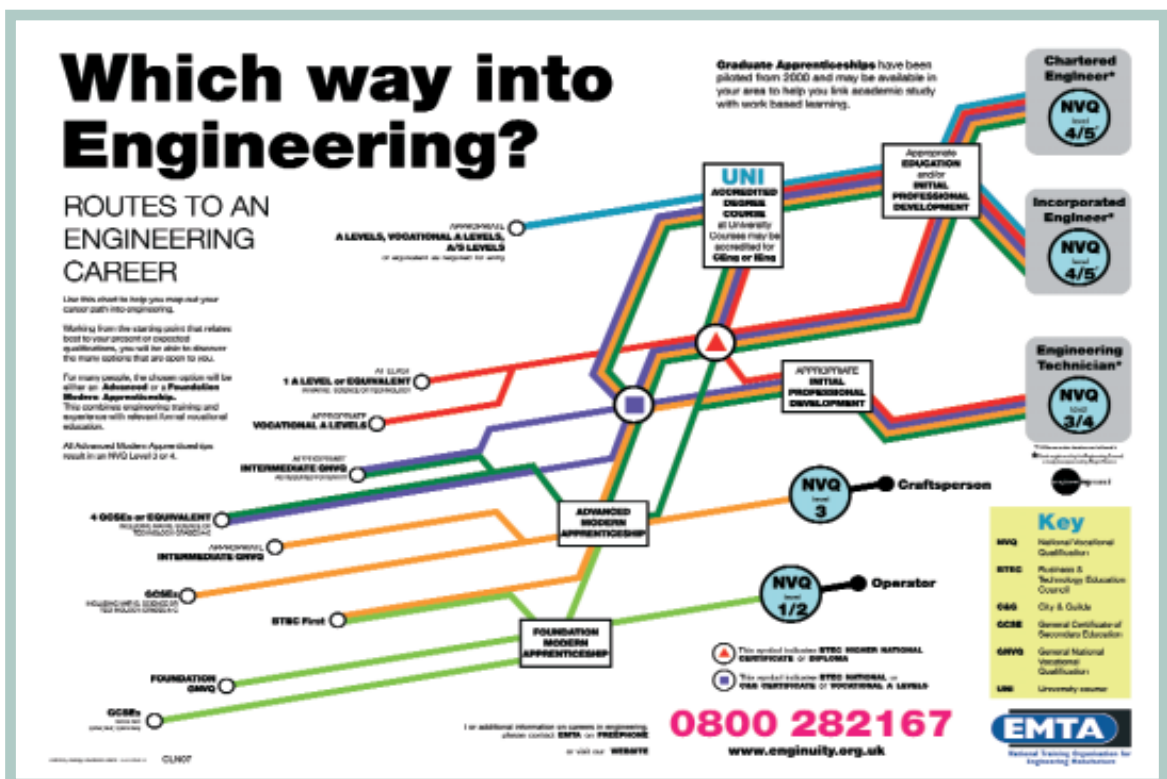
those needs. The growing culture of lifelong learning and need for continuing professional development (CPD) programmes present many opportunities for HE to progress learning at appropriate stages of an individual's career.

## Recognising NVQs and AMAs as entry qualifications

Because NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships are occupationally-specific, they cannot be regarded as general entry qualifications. They do, however, have potential for direct progression to higher education programmes in relevant disciplines. Construction NVQ 3s and AMAs, for example, are widely recognised as springboards to degree-level construction courses, including Foundation Degrees.

Applicants from the work-based route should be judged on their own merits, often through a guidance interview and, where appropriate, diagnostic tests. Progress Files, where available, will provide a useful record of an applicant's experience and potential for progression.

Some applicants may need to complete a bridging programme, such as study skills module, either before or in the early stage of their HE studies. Others, particularly at NVQ Levels 4 and 5, will have considerable experience that can be recognised through Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) systems. This may accelerate learning opportunities at a variety of levels by enabling institutions to offer suitable top-up degrees and, where appropriate, progression directly to post-graduate programmes.



## Developing progression routes for work-based learners

Recent years have seen the development of linkages between work-based learning and higher education provision. Foundation Degrees and Graduate Apprenticeships are adding clear pathways for progression for applicants with intermediate vocational skills and qualifications. HE vocational courses are increasingly incorporating the relevant National Occupational Standards and NVQs. The development of Modern Apprenticeship technical certificates delivered through off-the-job taught courses supports progression into the HE system.

Flexible delivery and a recognition of the experience of people coming through the work-based learning route are key to creating demand. These candidates often require 'bite-size chunks' of learning which can be woven into their careers, rather than continuous, full-time study.

## Building links with work-based learning

Many candidates coming through the work-based learning route will be local employees, supported by their employers. To develop this route, HEIs need to expand their existing links with local employers committed to developing the skills of their workforce, including those involved in Advanced Modern Apprenticeships. They may also wish to work closely with their Local Learning and Skills Council, which is responsible for supporting the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships and other work-based learning. Equally, HE departments should develop links with the relevant National Training Organisations and Sector Skills Councils. All these organisations are committed to developing links and progression routes to higher education.

## For more information

The following organisations can provide further information and advice:

- Department for Education and Skills (DfES) — [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) — [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)
- the relevant National Training Organisations and Sector Skills Councils, the national employer bodies responsible for developing National Occupational Standards and Modern Apprenticeships for their sector of industry — [www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk)
- University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) — [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) — [www.uvac.ac.uk](http://www.uvac.ac.uk)
- your local Learning and Skills Council, which supports the delivery of NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships in your area — [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

The University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) influences the development of higher level NVQs and provides a one-stop shop for all NVQs in the higher education sector. For more details, please contact:

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