

## 4 GUIDELINES: OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME STAGE

### 4.1 Occupational memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding

Any successful collaboration of a consortium of employers and providers involved in the provision of an apprenticeship programme will require a binding agreement between the **consortium** partners.

The responsibilities of the Coordinating Provider are broader than day-to-day programme management and delivery as it must also ensure it is continually informed of the evolving requirements of the occupation and the employers within it, to ensure continued relevance and national coverage. This monitoring might, for example, be accomplished through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

A sample Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is included in Appendix 1. It is possible that funding and regulatory authorities might suggest a template for a Memorandum of Agreement.

The purpose of a Memorandum of Agreement is to enable the consortium partners to work together to manage, deliver and develop the apprenticeship programme. To achieve this the Memorandum of Agreement should:

- Establish the separate responsibilities of partners and the authority to carry out these responsibilities.

- Designate the membership of the managing **Programme Board**, its terms of reference, structure and reporting arrangements.
- List the rights of ongoing review of training and work experience and access to relevant apprentice records.
- Describe the processes by which new members of the consortium can be agreed.
- Outline the periodic review processes and the access necessary to carry out such processes.

Besides the formal agreement, it will be necessary to have memoranda of understanding between the Coordinating Provider and individual collaborating providers. These memoranda should include:

- Establishing normal lines of communication between co-ordinating provider, training provider and employer, including contact details.
- Establishing protocols for the exchange of information and reports.
- Establishing protocols for external oversight of the providers' operations.
- Providing a mechanism for the resolution of difficulties with the programme or between providers.

## 4.2 Programme provision

QQI's Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines apply to providers' procedures for the provision of apprenticeship programmes.

### 4.2.1 Programme development and approval

Programmes have two broad purposes. They should ensure that at the conclusion of the programme, the qualified apprentice is fully qualified to perform the full range of activities and responsibilities outlined in the Occupational Profile. Those qualified should also have the skills to continue their learning as the occupation changes throughout their career. This requires the achievement of the **intended programme learning outcomes** and includes the ability to learn effectively. Policies and procedures for programme design and approval should ensure that programmes:

- are designed with overall programme objectives and outcomes that are aligned with industry requirements and encompass the range of skills, competencies and knowledge;
- are aligned with the QQI **Professional Award-Type Descriptors** of the National Framework of Qualifications;
- are designed jointly by the Coordinating Provider and employers as a partnership;
- are designed to allow for national recruitment and for the smooth flow of apprentices between enterprises and educational institutions;
- are designed to facilitate professional and regulatory licensing, where applicable;

- are designed to facilitate transnational movement within an occupation, where feasible;
- are designed recognising the duality of the apprentice as employee and trainee;
- include well structured 'off-the-job' periods that integrate and strengthen the 'on-the-job' experience; and
- have a range of learning experiences to facilitate the further occupational development of the qualified apprentice.

#### 4.2.2 Apprentice recruitment, progression and recognition

Apprentice recruitment has a double purpose. The apprentice is employed to work for the enterprise. They are also being selected for a programme of training which may define their occupational status and career paths. Recruitment processes must ensure that the apprentice is likely to remain with the employer for the duration of the training, to fit in with the organisation and to have the capacity and temperament required for the occupation.

Where existing employees, whose prior learning is significantly less than the peer group, are being proposed for registration, any learning gaps should be identified and appropriate support offered.

In addition to the guidance provided by QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (CQAG), procedures for apprenticeship admission, progression and recognition, should also include:

- mechanisms to ensure the continued suitability of the apprentice to the training programme and the employment regime;
- mechanisms to recognise particular aptitude for the occupation that may compensate for lack of formal prior qualifications;
- provision of supportive access programmes to address specific skill or competency deficiencies where apprentices meet the eligibility requirement but lack qualifications which are normal for their group;
- socialisation procedures to establish the status of the apprentice within the enterprise and among their peers in the community of practice;
- tools to track apprentices as they progress through the programme;
- appropriate recognition procedures including any occupational certification to facilitate employment and career mobility.

#### 4.2.3 Programme monitoring and review

An apprenticeship programme is delivered within both the enterprises and occupations for which they are in preparation, and by the off-the-job training/ educational providers. Apprenticeship programme monitoring must ensure that the learning opportunities allow the apprentice to reach the objectives of the programme in both arenas.

#### 4.2.3.1 *Ongoing monitoring and reviewing of delivery*

One particular aspect of apprenticeship programmes is that multiple providers and possibly multiple sites are involved. This requires that each element (e.g. stage or phase) dovetails with the following element (stage or phase). This will require processes to ensure that each provider has full information on the ongoing learning achievements of the apprentices. The contribution of authorised officers acting on behalf of the statutory regulator is another important component in this regard.

Monitoring should also utilise the rich connections between practices and programmes to ensure continuing fitness for purpose. In addition to the general requirements of CQAG, monitoring should:

- ensure that the experience of each individual apprentice fulfils the requirements of the programme by monitoring and recording work-based activity and the corresponding achievement towards programme goals and that these are available to subsequent providers;
- ensure that the delivery of on-the-job and off-the-job elements at multiple sites are, as far as possible, equivalent—this would prevent excessive spread of activities with a consequent loss of focus and quality;
- ensure that there are no excessive delays in progression by apprentices to off-the-job elements;
- allow for changing techniques and technologies as they come into practice;
- establish clear lines of responsibility for apprentice (learner) observation and supervision; and
- provide secure and timely feedback processes for apprentices, employers and providers.

The provider of ‘on-the-job’ elements (the employer) is responsible for apprentice direction, observation and supervision. The off-the-job provider is responsible for the off-the-job educational and training elements of the programme. The Coordinating Provider is responsible for oversight of both of these. This should be specified formally in the programme management proposals and overseen by the Coordinating Provider and evaluated by the Programme Board.

#### 4.2.3.2 *Addressing deficiencies in delivery*

Deficiencies in delivery of on-the-job experiences occur when employers have different sets of regular activities that may not always cover all of the learning experiences required by a programme. This can be avoided or minimised by rigorous vetting procedures applied by the statutory regulator, in consultation with the Coordinating Provider, when employers are admitted to the programme. Where an employer’s business does not provide some elements of training:

- A formal arrangement with another employer should be made to address this deficiency in advance of the commencement of the apprenticeship.

It is also the case that some experiences may not be available at the appropriate time for individual apprentices due to changing business circumstances. In this case, employers or/and co-ordinating providers should:

- replace the experience with one that achieves the same outcome; or
- arrange for the apprentice to gain the experience with another suitable employer; or
- allow for sufficient flexibility in the taught elements to compensate for some deficiencies in the 'on-the-job' experience of particular apprentices.

#### **4.2.3.3 Addressing disruption in apprenticeship**

Disruptions to an apprentice's engagement in an apprenticeship programme can take place for a variety of reasons. These include a possible breakdown, where there is a breakdown in the relationship between the apprentice and the employer; where the apprentice has a justifiable complaint that he or she is not receiving adequate training; where, for personal reasons, an apprentice must leave an employer; or where an apprentice becomes redundant. In these circumstances, the statutory regulator, in conjunction with the Coordinating Provider, will endeavour to provide alternative accommodation for the apprentice. Solutions in this regard may include:

- placing the apprentice with another suitable employer;
- providing the apprentice with a complete record of his/her learning to date;
- facilitating and supporting the transfer of apprentices between employers where this is necessary.

#### **4.2.4 Staffing**

##### **4.2.4.1 Staffing in the employer's enterprise**

While it is recognised that apprentice training is not the primary purpose of an enterprise, it may form a key component of strategic manpower planning for the employer. However, if an enterprise wishes to train apprentices, some consideration of appropriate staffing is necessary. In particular, participating enterprises, in complying with the statutory regulator and in accordance with effective quality assurance measures, should be required to designate staff who:

- manage the recruitment and initial orientation of apprentices;
- have sufficient professional expertise and authority to allow for mentoring of apprentices;

- have mentoring training;
- act as liaison with the off-the-job providers in delivering the programme;
- have an agreed set of responsibilities with respect to apprentices;
- have, where appropriate, the skills necessary to assess apprentice progress and to confirm the achievement of learning outcomes;
- are the designated reporting contact to the Coordinating Provider;
- consider establishing benchmark trainer/apprentice ratios.

#### 4.2.4.2 *Staffing in the educational/training institution*

Within the educational institutions, the staffing arrangements should conform to the requirements of CQAG. In addition to their normal institutional activities, staff allocated to apprentice training duties should:

- have opportunities to relate to professional practice and, where appropriate, remain registered practitioners;
- be conversant with the 'on-the-job' experience of the apprentices and capable of actively integrating that experience into their teaching;
- liaise with employers and apprentices.

### 4.2.5 Teaching and learning

#### 4.2.5.1 *Teaching and learning – supporting the individual learner*

In addition to the requirements of CQAG, it should be recognised that for much of the time, many apprentices progress through an individual sequence of learning experiences without the company of a cohort of peers. Where necessary, employers should ensure that the deficiency in peer support is made up by mentoring. The Coordinating Provider and the employer should ensure that:

- detailed information is provided to the apprentice on the sequence of learning actions;
- individualised support is provided to the apprentice especially in the early stages of the programme;
- detailed instruction is given to the apprentice on how they can demonstrate learning achievement;
- systems should also be evolved to allow and require apprentice feedback on the progress of their training to the appropriate provider.

#### 4.2.5.2 *Teaching and learning - maintaining the community of practice*

The **community of practice** is an element of apprentice training that is critical to the successful formation of a professional in any arena. The generally accepted behaviour of peers will strongly influence the performance of apprentices. Besides technical know-how, the community of practice passes on the values and culture associated with an occupation. They can also act as unofficial or designated mentors for the apprentice. The community of practice not only extends within the enterprise, but also beyond it, as a recognised occupational community. Providers should be mindful that the quality of the community of practice must be maintained by:

- ensuring that the apprentice is recognised as a member of the community of practice;
- giving the apprentice access to his/her peers and other members of the community of practice in the enterprise;
- facilitating informal learning and socialisation between community members;
- ensuring access to broader community and occupational learning resources;
- providing mentoring to the apprentice by an experienced practitioner;
- valuing, in the workplace, the experience of learning.

#### 4.2.5.3 *Teaching and learning - ensuring equivalence of provision*

Apprentice programmes will have a minimum of two locations, an enterprise and a provider of off-the-job education or training (normally an educational/training institution). In most cases, it will involve many enterprises and possibly multiple educational/training institutions. Where the structures of programme provision are complex, problems of equivalence and maintenance of quality can arise. These problems can be inherent, depending on the variable capabilities of providers. They can also arise on account of changing resources or opportunities available to the apprentice. Varying levels of competence or commitment within the peer group may also affect the 'on-the-job' experience.

To counteract this, the Coordinating Provider, in conjunction with the statutory regulator, must ensure that there are procedures in place to:

- check the facilities in enterprises and educational institutions;
- monitor the progress of the apprentices;
- facilitate the transfer of apprentices for particular experiences;
- support the training of workplace mentors;

- ensure that diagnostic assessment is available before the end of a particular phase of training—where the apprentice has failed to achieve the outcomes within the workplace, they should be apprised of the fact and, as far as possible, given the opportunity to achieve the specified outcome;
- provide mechanisms by which trainers and mentors in different organisations can exchange experiences and develop and recognise best practice;
- establish MOAs or MOUs with each collaborating provider to facilitate the above.

#### 4.2.5.4 *Teaching and learning - maintaining the curriculum*

Apprenticeship programmes, by their nature, are delivered within the context of the **target occupation**. Changes within enterprises occur more rapidly and out of phase with changes within academic institutions. These changes may be driven by large-scale market changes. They may also arise owing to technological advances, changing techniques and best practices. Organisational changes can affect the envelope of occupational responsibilities and finally regulatory changes may require the acquisition of new knowledge, skill or competency. Some of these factors may be local to a particular enterprise.

The nature of an apprenticeship is that the qualified apprentice, on graduating, is immediately capable of performing all of the activities required by the occupation. This should happen without the necessity of further learning. Programme design and management must be responsive enough to allow for changes in the Occupational Profile to be included in the curriculum, where appropriate. This should be achieved without the necessity of rewriting full documentation or requiring a new validation. To achieve this, it will be necessary that:

- programme documentation (i.e. what is approved at validation) is not overly detailed and unduly prescriptive, with an emphasis on outcomes and educational and assessment strategy rather than detailed elaboration of learning materials;
- staff are empowered to consider the most appropriate way of achieving outcomes and varying content accordingly;
- assessment and examinations may change between curriculum reviews to reflect updated work practices and content;
- the Coordinating Provider or the Programme Board has the competence or the facility to monitor changes in the occupation; this might, for example, be facilitated through the formal involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2;
- mechanisms are put in place to disseminate innovations in the curriculum;

- there are regular meetings of the Programme Board to prevent too wide a disparity in experience arising.

## 4.3 Assessment of apprentice achievement

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### 4.3.1 General comments

Assessment is one of the most important elements of apprentice training. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on an apprentice's employment opportunities and career options. The right of an institution or an individual to assess an apprentice carries with it very serious responsibilities. This responsibility extends to preserving the value of previous assessments for previous cohorts of apprentices. Poor or inconsistent assessment damages the quality of all awards made by the provider. Mentors and teachers cannot function purely as trainers and advocates for their apprentices; they must also make judgements. Any assessor making a judgement on an apprentice must be competent to do so. This may involve assessment training and independent oversight of assessments. All of the guidelines of CQAG apply fully to apprenticeship programmes.

### 4.3.2 Assessment on-the-job

Assessment 'on-the-job' faces particular challenges. These include some, or all, of the following: long periods of individual learning outside the formal learning environment; the individual work experiences of particular apprentices; the measurement of real outcomes in the workplace rather than simulated ones in the academy; periodic and brief observation sessions of the apprentice; disjunction between elements and sites; and the level of expertise available in the workplace. Employers and the community of practice have a key strategic interest in the effectiveness of on-the-job assessment.

Assessment of 'on-the-job' achievement should have the following characteristics:

- A continuous record of experience and assessment should be maintained for each apprentice. This record should also contain the apprentice's reflections on their experience. It should be confirmed by the workplace mentor and accessible by the other examiners;
- Provision should be made for the external observation of the apprentice;
- The apprentice should have access to timely sources of feedback on assessment and support for dealing with deficiencies;
- The assessment schedule and regime should be flexible enough to deal with differing workplace situations and adaptive to changing circumstances.
- There should be periodic face-to-face observation of the experience and achievements of the apprentice.

### 4.3.3 Assessment off-the-job

Assessment of 'off-the-job' achievement may take place at different sites where the programme has been delivered with some variations. Assessment 'off-the-job' should have the following characteristics:

- Identical assessment regime at each site overseen by the Coordinating Provider (format of examination, length etc.);
- Consistent range and level of assessment across each site;
- Sufficient flexibility in topics to allow for delivery differences at each site and for local examiner input, where appropriate;
- Where deficiencies in the 'on-the-job' experience have been remedied by an 'off-the-job' input, the relevant outcomes should be assessed.

### 4.3.4 Final assessment of competency

The final assessment of apprentices must ensure that they are immediately capable of performing the activities and carrying out the responsibilities normal to the occupation. This assessment should be:

- holistic in that it measures the general competency of the candidate.
- final in that success should mean the entitlement to an award and to registration in the occupation where this is an intended outcome of the programme.

### 4.3.5 Assessing the assessment

Assessing the assessment is an important element of any QA system. In a distributed apprenticeship training system, it presents particular issues of relevance, equivalence and quality of judgement. These can be dealt with by peer review of assessment and by a second reading of some examination material. Periodic reviews by outside independent assessors are also necessary to ensure that:

- the overall standard is maintained.
- no systematic differences arise between locations.
- assessment material remains relevant.
- the impact of apprenticeship disruption on assessment has been evaluated.

## 4.4 Managing and maintaining quality in apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes pose particular challenges in maintaining quality. They have a strong occupational focus which may, from time to time, require recalibration of outcomes and processes. This may require occupational scans, strong feedback and input from employers and those involved in the occupation.

They are employer-led which can lead to changing demand patterns. This might require continual input to ensure that new providers can maintain the quality of the programme. Any management system must take into account the position of the various providers and awarding agencies or institutions. There may be one employer or many. There may be one 'off-the-job' provider or many. The 'off-the-job' provider may be an awarding body. In all these cases, it is necessary that the management of the programme is not compromised by the complexity of the structure.

Incidentally, an employer or an entity created by a group of employers, which may not be providing any other programmes, may become a Coordinating Provider. This may require that quality responsibilities, normally carried out by extensive institutions with experienced staff, are carried out by a smaller group with less experience or resources. For example, to become a relevant provider, an entity would, among other things, need to take on the responsibilities outlined in *Quality Assurance Guidelines and Criteria for Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards 2013*.

The responsibilities of the management and promotion of quality can be considered at three levels. These are, the broad context within which the programme is delivered, the strategic management of quality and, finally, the operational level that ensures that quality is delivered on a day-to-day basis. The management structure must be able to address all of these levels.

#### 4.4.1 Producing a quality environment

Producing a quality environment will ensure that the standards of the programme and the interests of the stakeholders, the employers, the apprentices and the broader occupational group, are maintained. This can be achieved by having an efficient and effective organisational structure that can implement quality systems, react to external inputs and is transparent in its operations. It should also be a reflective structure capable of internal reform. Such an organisation would have the following characteristics:

- Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities, lines of communication and reporting supported by agreed memoranda of understanding, where necessary.
- Induction processes for new providers and support for new mentors, lecturers and managers.
- Promotion of a collegiate approach that recognises equality of esteem between different providers.

#### 4.4.2 Strategic management of quality – ensuring continued relevance and increased quality

The strategic management of the quality assurance system involves the maintenance of that system. This, in turn, requires an ongoing evaluation as to whether the system is being implemented as established and to determine if elements need to be updated. The scope of possible changes should also be specified with clear boundaries, at establishment.

It requires active benchmarking of the programme against best practice elsewhere. It should have the ability to obtain timely reports on implementation and the ability to react to those reports.

Strategic management also requires continual assessment and re-assessment of the needs of the stakeholders and the evolution of the skills, knowledge and competences required within the occupation. This requires strong and rich connections with the community of practice and an awareness of changes elsewhere in the world. The structures necessary to carry out strategic management would have the following characteristics:

- Involvement of major stakeholders and providers meeting regularly with agreed terms of reference, agenda and minutes.
- Sufficient authority agreed by all providers to ensure compliance with QA systems.
- Sufficient internal competence and expertise to propose and if necessary implement changes to quality systems.
- Clear communication and reporting links with operational management.
- Be sufficiently embedded in the provision of the programme to act as an energising force rather than a purely controlling one.
- Should include members who have rich connections to or involvement with the occupation.
- Observe agreed processes to admit new providers to the organisation.
- Maintain open feedback processes from learners independently of the local employer.

#### 4.4.3 Programme operation – implementing quality in a dynamic environment

The fragmented nature of the delivery process within apprenticeship programmes produces issues that must be dealt with by those involved with the direct delivery or management of the programme; these include the statutory regulator and the Coordinating Provider. Those involved with 'on-the-job' elements must be required to handle the individual recruitment and orientation of apprentices, ensure that the apprentice is functioning as a learner and as a valued member of the workforce, deal with external observations of the workplace experience, maintain records and liaise with 'off-the-job' management. They should also actively promote up-to-date techniques for inclusion in the programme.

The off-the-job provider must ensure that material delivered meets the needs of apprentices coming from work experiences which may be divergent. They may work in isolation requiring formal communication with peers. They may have to liaise with other off-the-job providers to ensure that elements delivered in different sites remain aligned.

Quality implementation will require providers to:

- have clear instructions as to their responsibilities and competence, and authority to carry them out.
- have an awareness of the whole programme and their position within it.
- have sufficient expertise to direct apprentices and to propose variations in the delivery process.

- have access to their peers and the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation and development of the programme.

#### 4.4.4 Day-to-day management of the programme

##### 4.4.4.1 *Programme director/administrator*

A programme director/administrator should be appointed by the Coordinating Provider to manage the programme, to administer or oversee the administration of the programme and to ensure communications with partners. The programme director is the point of contact for all providers for the programme. They organise the programme and examination boards. They report to the awarding body and to the Programme Board. They deal with individual apprentice issues. They assist employers in the registration of apprentices. They organise the registration of the apprentices with the awarding body. They assist in the admission of new members into the consortium. They are the contact point for apprentices with individual or group concerns.

##### 4.4.4.2 *The Programme Board functions*

The Programme Board is the entity responsible for the ongoing oversight of the programme. It should have access to data on the delivery of the programmes, the current assessment results and the flow of apprentices between elements of the programme. It should receive all process reports from collaborating providers and from independent examiners. It should also be aware of changes in the circumstances of the collaborating providers and in the occupation. Its functions include:

- The general oversight of the delivery of the programme and of the assessments.
- Responding to inputs from external examiners.
- Responding to inputs from the providers and from the occupation.
- Sanctioning changes to delivery and minor changes to the programme within the bounds set by the validation.
- Organising surveys of apprentices and responding to these.
- Providing secure feedback mechanisms for apprentices.
- Reporting to the Coordinating Provider's academic council or equivalent on its activities, as required by the awarding body.
- Reporting on its activities to the partners as required.
- Taking the lead in the programmatic review in preparation for revalidation.
- In an expanded form it functions as an examination board.

#### 4.4.4.3 *Membership of the Programme Board*

The size of Programme Boards may vary depending on the range of providers involved in the consortium and the distribution of sites at which the programme is delivered. It should consist of a minimum of four elements: the Programme Director, and representatives of employers of the educational/training providers and of apprentices. Representatives of other stakeholders such as occupational associations could be included where appropriate. The chair could be one of the employers and the organisation of the Programme Board should be the responsibility of the Programme Director.

- The Programme Director, besides organising the board, should act as a contact point for the Programme Board and the providers and should report to the consortium and the awarding body, if not a member.
- The members from the training/educational providers should function as experts rather than as representatives of their providers. At the same time, they should inform themselves of issues arising in their areas and be capable of arguing for changes in the programme.
- The members from the employers should be occupational experts and/or active mentors. They should be capable of representing the broad interests of the occupation. They should also have the capacity to bring provider concerns to the board.

#### 4.4.4.4 *The examination board*

The size and membership of the examination board depends on the range of providers involved in the consortium and the distribution of sites at which the programme is delivered. It must be capable of dealing authoritatively with the assessment results presented to it. It should operate according to the rules of the awarding body. It should have available to it sufficient expertise to allow it to operate within those rules.

- It should have members drawn from the examiners, at least one from each educational/training provider and sufficient to deal with all modules and sites.
- Employers could be represented by their Programme Board members, with additional persons representing significant examining expertise, if necessary.
- External examiners, where they confirm results, should be members.
- The chairman of the Programme Board and the programme director should be members, ex-officio.

## 4.5 Periodic reviews of occupation, the consortium and the programme

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### 4.5.1 Purposes of periodic reviews

Periodic reviews are a standard form of long term quality assurance and quality enhancement processes. Periodic reviews are general reviews of the whole project and can be the precursor for major changes in the programme.

Apprenticeship programmes have three elements which require this thorough overhaul. These are the agreed **occupational profile**, the functioning of the **consortium**, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the **programme** itself.

The timing of the reviews can depend on a number of factors. Awarding bodies normally require five year reviews of programmes. Funding bodies may require reviews at the end of funding periods. The pace of changes in the occupation may also determine the need for changes. The maximum review period should be set when the programme is initially validated.

Characteristics of periodic reviews:

- They are thorough reviews that can justify major changes in the programme.
- They consist of a self-evaluation process and an external independent review.
- All three elements can affect each other and therefore reviews are best carried out at the same time.

The three reviews can be carried out separately, but it should be recognised that each report can influence the outcomes of the others.

The programme review report for revalidation by QQI (where applicable) should incorporate the relevant outcomes of the other reports. To avoid unnecessary duplication, the three reports could be presented as one report with three distinct elements.

### 4.5.2 Reviewing the occupational profile

The purpose of any apprenticeship is to prepare apprentices for the occupation. Ultimately, the quality of the apprenticeship depends on how the qualified apprentice performs in the occupation. As occupations change, the knowledge, skills and competences required, also change. A thorough review of the requirements of the occupational profile is necessary before any review of the programme is carried out. Revised occupational profiles will be subject to approval by the relevant national apprenticeship body or bodies, prior to the revision and revalidation of a programme. A review of an occupation would have the following characteristics:

- Involvement of employers' associations or of significant employers;
- Engagement with human resource personnel from across the industry to assess functioning of qualified apprentices;

- A survey of any literature, conference proceedings, or regulatory material pertaining to the occupation, including economic and labour market forecasts and analyses;
- Involvement of significant occupational professionals;
- A review of technological changes that might impact on the occupation;
- A survey of past graduates to identify strengths and weakness of the programme and level of preparation for career advancement.

This review might, for example, be accomplished through the involvement of a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

The outcome of the occupational profile review should indicate necessary and desirable changes to the programme. It is the process through which employers and occupational members can have influential input into the apprenticeship. It is a vital input into the review of the programme. It should be circulated to stakeholders and form the context for a programmatic review.

#### 4.5.3 Reviewing the partnerships

The Programme Board and agreements with collaborating providers and employers (the consortium) are among the mechanisms by which the Coordinating Provider ensures the delivery of the programmes.

The Coordinating Provider may also be the conduit by which funds are dispersed. Alternatively, this conduit might, for example, be a Consortium Steering Group with the functions set out in Appendix 2.

The review of the consortium should deal with the following issues:

- The responsibilities of individual providers including the Coordinating Provider.
- The relationships between providers, employers, the statutory regulator and its authorised officers.
- The effectiveness of the reporting procedures.
- The communication links between the partners.
- Corporate governance arrangements (this would include a Consortium Steering Group (Appendix 2) should there be one).
- Operation of safeguards against academic/financial impropriety, recklessness or negligence.
- Any necessary changes to the consortium agreement.

#### 4.5.4 Reviewing the programme

Programmatic reviews are a normal part of academic quality assurance. The format of programmatic reviews should comply with the requirements of the awarding body.

Reviews of apprenticeship programmes will have necessary input from the review of the Occupational Profile and partnership reviews. In reviewing the effectiveness of the programme the review should:

- take into account the input from the Occupational Profile review to ensure continued relevance of all aspects of the programme;
- use input from mentors, trainers, graduates and current apprentices to modify the curriculum, modules and assessment processes;
- review reports from external assessors to ensure suggested changes are implemented;
- establish the levels of mentoring, training and assessment skills available to the programme and the currency of physical facilities;
- assess whether or not the entry requirements remain appropriate.

The efficiency of the programme can be assessed by:

- taking into account the input from the partnership review to modify delivery arrangements;
- looking at retention, withdrawal and graduation rates and causes across the full period of the review;
- ensuring that there are no persistent anomalies at particular sites or with particular modules or other elements of the programme;
- using input from mentors, trainers, graduates and current apprentices, to modify the delivery process and the operational management procedures.

The output from this review should be a programme proposal with updated intended programme learning outcomes suitable for the changing occupational profile, changed partnerships, changed module outcomes and changed content, to reflect updated occupational concerns and a more efficient delivery of the programme. The review should be carried out in a way that affirms the positive roles of participants and re-energises the consortium.

#### 4.5.5 Other reviews

A Coordinating Provider delivering apprenticeship programmes may be required to report, periodically, to the statutory regulator, the Apprenticeship Council, occupational bodies and/or funding bodies. The partnership agreements should facilitate any such reports.