



## BCS - The Chartered Institute for IT

Response to the IfATE's second funding consultation

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### BCS

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### Introduction

BCS is a registered charity which exists to promote and advance the education and practice of computing for the benefit of the public. As well as being the professional body for IT and digital, we are a registered end-point-assessment organisation, assessing an average of 400 digital apprentices monthly.

The following is a detailed version of the online response to the IfATE funding consultation.

#### How best can we support trailblazers to provide inputs such as mode of training and consumable costs?

IfATE can support trailblazers by obtaining appropriate and relevant input from a sample of training providers, including those that have experience of using different training and delivery models. It is important to understand the variety of ways providers deliver apprenticeships which may vary for example, based on their size, location, specialism, customer-base, etc. While it is recognised that using provider quotes is not intended moving forward, it is essential to obtain their input to genuinely understand the specific costs relating to training – modes, consumables and other costs - that will give apprentices the best opportunity to reach occupational competence in line with an employer defined standard.

#### How best can we obtain salary data for teaching staff?

By sourcing relevant and sufficient data on a regular basis for example through specialist recruitment agencies on the profile of occupationally competent trainers, including not only their average salaries but differentiating factors such as location, supply, and demand. It is critical to recognise the variances in trainer wages according to the occupational area and sector they specialise in.

### **When do you think that smaller group teaching sizes are necessary for teaching delivery?**

Smaller groups are likely to occur in the case of discreet cohorts from specific employers; rolling starts to meet employer demand; as a result of geographical location; and for training delivery of core and option standards with a lower volume of apprentices per specialist route.

### **Do you have other suggestions for how we can review information provided by trailblazers in the 'variable' element of the proposed model?**

This process should include specialists in the field who have a sound understanding of the cost of delivering and assessing apprenticeships within the occupational area.

We would like to take this opportunity to give feedback on the rates based variable model in general.

We believe the plans are moving in the right direction and particularly welcome that the second approach makes an adjustment for funding bands according to different salary levels. However, the rationale for higher salary costs does not only relate to the level and duration of the apprenticeship, it must also reflect the rate associated with the trainer's area of occupational expertise.

We remain concerned by feedback on the funding review, shared with us by leading training providers that are responsible for the large majority of digital apprenticeship starts. There is a firm view that the proposed funding model does not take into account the full range of costs associated with delivering apprenticeship training. The IfATE funding team kindly took part in a consultation exercise with BCS and a range of digital training providers. Concerns included - the exclusion of operating overheads within the funding calculation; the fact the IFF research found that 22% of a providers' delivery costs are currently ineligible for ESFA funding, and the extent to which remaining costs should be covered by a 9% margin.

### **On this basis there are two key factors we ask you to consider**

Firstly, while we recognise it is officially out of scope for this review, we urge IfATE and ESFA to hold joint discussions with employers, apprenticeship training providers and end-point assessment organisations, to take a much more holistic approach to the funding review and address the challenges of ineligible costs head on.

Secondly, the risk of insufficient investment into apprenticeship training and assessment, especially at this point in time when we are faced with a national economic crisis. To put the supply chain at risk, and potentially hamper the quality of apprenticeships, will defeat all that we have set out to achieve to raise the quality and profile of apprenticeships since they were reformed.

As an end-point assessment organisation frequently asked to complete costing templates for trailblazer development, we can empathise with the concerns raised by training providers as part of this review. We urge the same careful consideration to the funding of end-point assessment and, in terms of digital apprenticeships, recognition of the high cost associated

with occupationally competent assessors and maintaining employer and apprentice confidence through robust levels of quality assurance.

Finally, in implementing funding changes please take into account route reviews. A number of replacement digital standards are scheduled to go live from early 2021. We understand that these will not be affected by the introduction of the new funding band model (i.e. the existing model will be used prior to Spring 21), but it is imperative that once set there is a period of stability without any unexpected reviews.

### **In closing - why appropriate investment in digital skills is needed at this time**

The digitalisation of public life during the COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented opportunity to drive a more comprehensive digital agenda encompassing access, literacy, skills, and safety.

Digital technology applied to research, development and innovation are central to the short, medium, and longer-term success of the government's efforts to drive economic recovery and growth. Digital transformation presents several challenges across sectors, much of which pivot around ensuring equality of access and opportunity to acquire digital skills and training.

There is a need to invest in a bold digital skills agenda with apprenticeships at the heart of it and, in doing so, to ensure there is a reliable and robust funding mechanism in place that will underpin the infrastructure designed to deliver it.