

# AIR CADETS AND JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS – could an Apprenticeship be the right option for you?

One of the most exciting projects arising from the ATC's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary was the establishment of the RAF Air Cadets Development Trust ([trifold](#)) ([brochure](#)). The Trust does three things for Air Cadets and young CFAVs: it supports them through education and development courses by offering [bursaries](#) to successful candidates; it identifies universities or colleges that may be prepared to offer financial support to former air cadets who join their undergraduate courses; and it acts as a conduit to bring members of our organisation to the notice of potential employers through the Government's new [Apprenticeship Scheme](#). This leaflet focuses on the apprenticeship aspects of the Trust.

The Trust is working in partnership with the University of Northampton to provide Air Cadets throughout the UK with high-quality apprenticeship opportunities. The Trust and the University have developed a scheme to:

- Explain the opportunities that apprenticeships offer to Air Cadets and their families;
- Assist employers with developing apprenticeship schemes that are attractive to Air Cadets, linking them to appropriate education and training providers<sup>1</sup>;
- Promote Air Cadets as high-quality potential apprentices to employers, and;
- Match Air Cadets interested in apprenticeships with employers seeking to improve the skills of their workforce.

## Bursaries

The Trust has already awarded its first bursaries: applicants have received awards for a wide range of educational and developmental courses, helping them with the costs of those courses or the cost of living while they undertake them.

The purpose of the Trust is to raise funds directly from internal members which it will then use to support Air Cadets and young CFAVs into training and education, or to identify sources of external funding to achieve the same effect.

## Apprenticeships

Air Cadets aged 16-18, and young CFAVs, too, are of significant interest to employers looking for young people whom they can train for bespoke employment via a wide range of Apprenticeships<sup>2</sup>. Whether or not you want to go to University, it is well worth considering an Apprenticeship where you gain a recognised qualification and get paid at the same time. There are two kinds of Apprenticeship - for vocational training, and 'Degree Apprenticeships' for graduate-level training. You can opt for either.

Air Cadets and junior adult staff like you have the sorts of skills, qualifications and competences that are highly valued by employers. Make no mistake – your Cadet CV distinguishes you in the jobs market from most other young people.

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<sup>1</sup> The scheme links employers to educational and training providers throughout the UK, not just the University of Northampton.

<sup>2</sup> 'Modern Apprenticeship' in Scotland

From businesses' point of view, the Trust offers a continuing source of access to the CVs of the large numbers of talented young people in our Squadrons and CCF Sections. It benefits businesses by identifying cadets with the best potential who are interested in Apprenticeships. From your point of view, access to an Apprenticeship could secure a future for you in a great career – there are Apprenticeships in almost every line of employment you can think of, including, of course, the Royal Air Force and other parts of the military, so whatever career interests you, there is likely to be a matching Apprenticeship route.

### **The Trust can help match you with the right local employer and with an Apprenticeship that is right for you**

An Apprenticeship will provide you with qualifications that can underpin your career, all the way up to a university degree. If you choose a degree apprenticeship, you graduate with your cap and gown in the same way as every other undergraduate, but - crucially - also with several years of work experience under your belt and the likelihood of secure employment.

First and foremost, though, an apprenticeship is a work placement that brings substantial training and the development of transferable skills. It's a way to earn and learn, gaining a real qualification, establishing a long-term career path and creating the possibility of higher earnings. And, best of all, no university debts: you'll have been earning for the length of your apprenticeship and there are no tuition fees.

### **What is an apprenticeship?**

An apprenticeship is a combined package of work and study. As an apprentice, you'll be employed by a company and paid a wage for the work that you do. Apprenticeships are available across the UK.

### **How does it work?**

You'll spend most of the week at work (a minimum of 30 hours) watching, learning and getting stuck in. You will be learning from work colleagues across all levels of the business, typically working closely with someone more senior who will review your progress and coach you. You'll also spend time attending college, a university or training provider, training at work or online. Some apprenticeships use a combination of options; your employer will decide which method works best.

### **What could you earn?**

If you're aged 16–18, you'll earn at least the minimum wage for apprentices (£3.50 per hour\*) but many companies pay more than this, particularly for higher level apprenticeships:

- An aerospace engineering apprentice at BAE Systems UK can earn £21,971 per year.
- A higher accountancy apprentice can earn over £13,000 per year.
- A software engineer apprentice can earn £14,500 per year.

In fact, you could potentially earn upwards of £300 per week – plus, your employer and the government pay your tuition fees, meaning no university loans for you!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The costs of access to university education varies across the UK but students in England and Wales taking a full-time university degree typically pay around £9,000 per year in tuition fees, as well as day to-day living, rent and travel costs, causing about £40,000 of debt to be incurred. This then has to be repaid as soon as the graduate is earning enough income to start paying off the debt.

## What grades do you need?

Academic requirements vary from programme to programme (Apprenticeships are graded according to the degree of difficulty). Most require English and Maths at Level 2 (GCSE Grade C, from summer 2017 typically Grade 4 or above) although some employers will help you obtain those in order to help you into the Apprenticeship. And some apprenticeships are awarded purely based on how you perform at interview. We will help you with interviewing skills and identify employers that will offer you that interview based on your cadet experience. Your Cadet CV is a valuable tool in helping secure an Apprenticeship, mirroring and adding substantially to your school achievements.

## Got what it takes to be the next apprentice?

You've heard what an Apprenticeship is, but how do you know if it's right for you?

An Apprenticeship is not an easy option. You'll be starting a challenging job and trying to prove yourself in the workplace, while getting to grips with studying. For Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeships, your study will be largely practical in nature. For Degree and Higher<sup>4</sup> Apprenticeships you will be expected to achieve academically and at work, managing your time and adjusting to longer hours with fewer holidays than at school or university.

## What are employers looking for?

An Apprenticeship is actually designed by employers, meaning you'll be developing the right skills and knowledge to be a success in your chosen industry. Employers are looking for personal aptitude and enthusiasm rather than just your academic ability alone; in fact, some employers don't ask for specific grades at all. It helps if you have a particular interest in the area you want to work in and can demonstrate this from previous experience.

The Trust will help you funnel your cadet experience towards an employer whom you may be interested in working for by alerting employers to the skillsets you have to offer and advocating to employers your readiness for work, helping you stand out from the crowd. It will negotiate with employers to help you get an interview, although we cannot guarantee your success once you get there – that bit is up to you!

## Which level is the right level?

There are various levels of apprenticeship you could apply for depending on your qualifications and skills. The table below shows apprenticeships and their equivalent educational levels:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Equivalent educational level</b>
Intermediate 2		GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

In addition, some apprenticeships may also give you an additional qualification, such as a diploma.

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<sup>4</sup> A Higher Apprenticeship reflects university study to Master's Degree level.

Some courses could be up to four, five or six years, but most last between one and two years. A lot of expected of apprentices. For example even if you only have A Levels you may still be expected to start at an intermediate or advanced level in job areas such as engineering, while you build up your occupational skills.

### **Why do employers want you?**

Every workplace requires the skills and qualities that you will recognise from your cadet experience. Add to that your BTEC and ILM qualifications you may have gained through your Air Cadet service, and you will inevitably stand out from other applicants. Employers have said they want the following attributes, all of which your Air Cadet experience will have given you:

- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Interpersonal skills
- Enthusiasm
- Motivation
- Communication
- Analysis
- Creative solutions
- Attention to detail
- Logical thinking
- Initiative

As well as being flexible and adaptable to suit changing business needs at work, you'll also need to be self-motivated during independent study, and be prepared to put what you learn into practice.

### **What kind of difference could an Apprenticeship make to your life in the long-run?**

Although no-one knows exactly what the future holds, the prospects for apprentices are bright. One of the main reasons businesses take on Apprentices is that they need a highly-skilled workforce. This is a good thing for the company but also for you. Exactly what happens after an Apprenticeship will depend on your employer and your contract. Many degree and higher Apprenticeship schemes are designed to develop the leaders and managers of the future.

The experiences you gain as an Apprentice can provide a springboard towards promotions and promoted-level opportunities. After several years working with managers and peers, experiencing various aspects of the business and developing the essential skills and knowledge, you will have become a very valuable employee: it's not unusual for an ex-apprentice to work their way up to the Boardroom. Former apprentices are particularly well represented in senior management teams in construction, engineering and energy; 30% of the senior UK managers at Rolls Royce, for example, started out at the company as apprentices.

### **Maximising your CV**

The Cadet CV helps you to demonstrate the key skills and experience you've gained as an Air Cadet or young CFAV. Make sure you download it and use it when applying for an Apprenticeship.

## How the RAF Air Cadets Development Trust can help you

The Trust and the University are actively identifying employers and training-providers to help you into an Apprenticeship, and identifying sources of funding. If you are interested in registering your interest in the 'Air Cadets into Apprentices' scheme, please complete the short questionnaire by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZXBXQPJ>

If you want to go ahead and apply for an Apprenticeship in a particular trade or profession, you can let the Trust know by completing the questionnaire and those working behind the scenes will then get back to you to discuss options with you and arrange for local employers to meet you and help take things forward. If necessary we will also provide you with help with interview skills and writing to employers.

Unlike university applications, there is no fixed deadline when it comes to applying for Apprenticeships.

As a general rule, vacancies with larger companies start appearing in the autumn, but the majority pop up from January or February onwards. Smaller businesses might start recruiting a month or two before the job starts, so if you hope to start work in September, the Trust will help you move swiftly through the process.

## Our promise to you

Deciding what to do after leaving school or college can be confusing and daunting but the Trust-University team is here to help you every step of the way and guide you towards an exciting career.

We are working mainly with employers who have signed the Military Covenant and as part of that process we want them to promise to give a cadet an interview for an apprenticeship but you will realise this is a competitive process and we cannot promise that you will always be successful.

## What we need from you

The Trust needs continuing sources of funds in order to allow it to make bursary awards year on year and to help it undertake its Apprenticeship Scheme work. Every one of our Squadrons and CCF Sections should consider what it can do to support that funding and whether local employers and charitable bodies might be prepared to contribute to the funds the Trust needs.