National Apprenticeship Awards 2020 open for entries

- Open for entries between 1 and 25 September 2020
- New for 2020, national and regional ceremonies broadcast online
- Apprentice employers, apprentices and apprenticeship champions from all sectors and levels are encouraged to enter

Back for their 17th year, the National Apprenticeship Awards are a fantastic opportunity to showcase the apprentices and employers who have gone above and beyond, in spite of the challenges faced during this pandemic.

Entries to the awards are open until 25 September 2020 and this year's winners will be recognised via virtual ceremonies. These ceremonies will also champion employers, apprentices and apprenticeship champions from all sectors – from engineering, digital, healthcare and science, to beauty, manufacturing and education are invited to enter the awards.

Peter Mucklow, Director of Apprenticeships, Education and Skills Funding Agency said:

> We are pleased to announce that entries to the National Apprenticeship Awards 2020 are open. It is important that we continue to recognise the employers of all sizes, apprentices and those who champion apprentices during this unprecedented time.
>
> I have been delighted by the on-going commitment from employers, recognising the many benefits apprentices bring and ensuring they can continue their studies.
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> We are excited to announce that for the first time, the winners and highly commended will be announced at regional and national virtual ceremonies. This will allow an even wider audience to celebrate the success, commitment and investment in apprenticeships, and the impact they have. I am personally very much looking forward to being part of these exciting new online ceremonies.

Employer of the Year categories

- SME Employer of the Year (for organisations with 1 to 249 employees)
- Large Employer of the Year (for organisations with 250 to 4,999 employees)
- Macro Employer of the Year (for organisations with 5,000+ employees)
- Recruitment Excellence (the winner is selected from Employer of the Year award entries, and will be awarded to an organisation that has recruited a diverse and high quality apprenticeship workforce).

Apprentice of the Year categories

- Intermediate Level (level 2)
- Advanced Level (level 3)
- Higher or Degree Level (level 4 or higher)
- Rising Star (nominated by their employer, this award recognises apprentices that have made impressive progress in their career to date, and have the potential to go even further).
- Apprentice Champion (recognises individuals who go 'above and beyond' to champion apprenticeships. The nomination is made by a colleague or contact who recognises an individual's 'champion' credentials).

In 2019, Invotra was crowned the BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT Award for National SME Employer of the Year at the National Apprenticeship Awards.

HR Director, Alison Galvin, explained at the time:

> Invotra are overjoyed to have won the national award. When you invest your time in people and support them as they grow, you end up with loyal, hardworking individuals who are a huge asset within your business. It's truly wonderful to be recognised for our hard work to champion apprenticeships and our dedication to investing time into mentoring and developing these valued team members.

Entries to the awards close on 25 September. Regional ceremonies will take place between 2 and 6 November, with the national ceremony taking place on Wednesday 25 November.

To enter the National Apprenticeship Awards 2020, or to sign up to our mailing list, please visit: appawards.co.uk

[Watch the National Apprenticeship Awards 2019 national ceremony highlights,](#) follow [@Apprenticeships](#) on Twitter and the National Apprenticeship Service page on LinkedIn to keep up to date with all the latest awards information.

[Companies House bank details have changed](#)

News story

All customers who make payments by bank transfer (BACS) will need to use our new bank account details from 1 September 2020.

Our change in status from a trading fund to a central government organisation means we're changing to a different type of bank account. We must now use bank accounts which come under the Government Banking scheme.

For customers who need to make a BACS payment, any letters we send to you from 1 September 2020 will include our new bank account details and instructions on how to pay Companies House. We've also updated our bank details in any online guidance and emails.

Our old bank account will stay open for 6 months to make sure that all customers transition successfully to the new account. The old account will close at the end of February 2021.

Published 1 September 2020

[Student Loans Company calls on students to get ready for payment](#)

Press release

SLC is urging students to get ready for the first Maintenance Loan payment of the new academic year

In the coming weeks the Student Loans Company will distribute approximately £2 billion in maintenance funding to around 1 million students across the UK — supporting them to access opportunities in higher and further education.

With the new academic year set to start, SLC is urging students to get ready for the first payment by following our top tips.

1. Register at your college or university — with some universities or colleges, students can register beforehand to receive payments on the first official day of their course. However, students should follow the registration guidance provided by their education provider. Until students register, they won't receive payment and it can take three to five days for payments to reach a student's account once they are registered. Students should make sure they have money to cover any initial costs.

2. Don't worry if, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you're studying online initially — some students will be studying at home instead of in classes. They will still be paid as normal provided they have registered for their course. See tip number 1.

3. Tell us if your term time living arrangements have changed — If students have changed their plans about where they will live during term time — for example will be living with parents instead of moving away — they must update their application in their [online account](). This also applies to students who were planning to be studying abroad but will now be learning online. Failing to do this could result in overpayments. Students will have to repay any funding that is overpaid, and it could affect funding in future years.

4. Check with your provider to make sure your course start date hasn't changed — Your Maintenance Loan payment is based on your course start date so if that changes your first payment date will change too. If in doubt check with your university or college.

5. Make sure you have provided up-to-date bank details — often when a student goes to university or college they open a new bank account. It's important that they update their [online student finance account]() with the new details to ensure their money goes to the right place.

6. Provide any evidence you have been asked for as soon as possible — parents and partners may also be asked to provide financial information and evidence. They should do this through their own [online student finance account]() which they can set up at [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](). Most evidence can be uploaded online via SLC's new digital upload service which can also be accessed via their [online student finance account]().

7. Check the status of your payments. Students can view their payment schedule and check the status of their payments via their [online accounts](). Student Finance England has produced a [handy film]() explaining what each of the payment statuses mean.

8. Tell us if your parent, carer or partner's income has changed. If a student applied for a Maintenance Loan based on their household income, they would have been asked to provide details for the 2018-19 tax year. If their annual household income has dropped by more than 15% they can apply to have their estimated income for the current tax year used instead. [Find out more about supporting your child or partner's application]().

9. Let us know as soon as possible if you plan to suspend or withdraw from your studies. If a student is planning to leave or suspend their course it's important that they consider the impact on their funding needs. They should talk to their university or college and let SLC know of any changes as soon as possible. [Find out more about withdrawing from or suspending your studies]().

We can help with queries via social media so follow Student Finance England's [Facebook page]() and [Twitter]() channels – look out for details of our Facebook Live sessions which give students the opportunity to put their questions to our team of student finance experts.

SLC's Executive Director of Operations, Derek Ross, said: "This is a busy time for students as they prepare to start or return to their university or college. We are doing everything we can to ensure the payment process is as smooth as possible for students, and they can do their part by following our advice. We appreciate some students may still have changes to make to their course, university or college and it's vital that they update their information online as soon as possible to ensure their finance is in place at the start of term.

"Our contact centres are open daily and there is also lots of information available on [our dedicated payment page]() and on our social media channels to help students, and their parents and partners, to get prepared for payment this autumn."

Published 1 September 2020

[Next steps outlined for UK's use of digital identity](#)

- Consumer rights around digital identity to be strengthened to enable wider use across the country
- Reports show the digital identity market could add 3 per cent to UK GDP by 2030.

Leaders in the tech, business and civil society sectors have welcomed the government's plans to enable the use of digital identity across the UK, with plans to update existing laws and a new set of guiding principles for policy development.

The proposals come after it was revealed 2.6 million people made a claim for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme online since its launch on 13 May 2020, with 1.4 million having no prior digital identity credentials and needing to pass through HMRC's identity verification service.

Increasingly people are required to prove their identity to access services, whether it is to buy age-restricted items on and offline or make it easier to register at a new GP surgery.

Now, following a call for evidence published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport alongside the Cabinet Office, the government plans to update existing laws on identity checking to enable digital identity to be used as widely as possible.

It will consult on developing legislation for consumer protection relating to digital identity, specific rights for individuals, an ability to seek redress if something goes wrong, and set out where the responsibility for oversight should lie. It will also consult on the appropriate privacy and technical standards for administering and processing secure digital identities.

[Figures](#) from 2019 show a 32 per cent rise in identity fraud over five years, with 223,163 cases recorded in that year alone – up 18 per cent on the previous year.

A new government Digital Identity Strategy Board has also developed six principles to strengthen digital identity delivery and policy in the UK.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

> Digital technology is helping us through the pandemic and continues to improve the way we live, work and access vital services.
>
> We want to make it easier for people to prove their identity securely online so transactions can become even quicker – it has the potential to add billions to our economy.

Today I've set out further detail on our proposals and I look forward to working with partners in the private sector to unlock the UK's digital identity economy.

Cabinet Office Minister, Julia Lopez, said:

It is clear that there is a need and an expectation for the government to make it easier for people to use digital identities quickly, safely and securely and we are committed to enabling this.

We want to ensure there is transparency for people when they create and use digital identities so that they are always in control of who has access to their data and for what purpose.

We have already started to explore how we can work across government to achieve our ambitions and through the Document Checking Service pilot, how we can also work with the private sector to harness the value to our users across the UK's digital economy, and I am committed to continuing this drive going forward.

Hannah Gurga, Managing Director of Digital Technology & Cyber at UK Finance, said:

Removing the barriers to creating secure digital identities, combined with the necessary safeguards, will make it easier for people to use online services while at the same time helping to prevent criminal activity such as money laundering and terrorism. Developing a legal framework for digital identity is therefore an important next step and we look forward to working with the Government as it develops its proposals.

Felicity Burch, Director of Innovation, CBI, said:

This publication is an important step towards creating a robust digital identity system in the UK. A framework based on privacy, transparency and interoperability will bring many benefits to individuals and firms, providing greater access to online services and increasing productivity.

The CBI supports the government's ambitions to create a digital ID framework that can help protect consumers and unlock economic growth, and looks forward to collaborating with DCMS and the Cabinet Office to make this a reality.

The six principles are:

1) Privacy – When personal data is accessed people will have confidence that there are measures in place to ensure their confidentiality and privacy; for instance, a supermarket checking a shopper's age, a lawyer overseeing the sale of a house or someone applying to take out a loan.

2) Transparency – When an individual's identity data is accessed when using digital identity products they must be able to understand by who, why and when; for example, being able to see how your bank uses your data through digital identity solutions.

3) Inclusivity – People who want or need a digital identity should be able to obtain one; for example, not having documentation such as a passport or driving licence should not be a barrier to not having a digital identity.

4) Interoperability – Setting technical and operating standards for use across the UK's economy to enable international and domestic interoperability.

5) Proportionality – User needs and other considerations such as privacy and security will be balanced so digital identity can be used with confidence across the economy.

6) Good governance – Digital identity standards will be linked to government policy and law. Any future regulation will be clear, coherent and align with the government's wider strategic approach to digital regulation. For example, firms verifying your identity will need to comply with laws around how they access and store data.

The government is also exploring how secure checks could be made against government data. This month the Document Checking Service Pilot scheme launched by the Government to give people easier and safer access to digital services which require identity checks, such as online mortgage applications, financial services and recruitment onboarding.

The new service will also help organisations tackle fraud and test if there is a market for this type of digital identity checking service.

The pilot, which will run for approximately a year, will deliver significant time savings for people who previously went through in-person processes to verify their identities. It will also provide financial savings for organisations who can move their identity proofing processes online.

Notes to editors

The Government response can be found [here](#)

Document Checking Service Pilot

- The Government Digital Service built the Document Checking Service to allow Identity Providers for GOV.UK Verify to check that passport and driving licence records are valid when verifying a user's identity.

- In this pilot, up to eleven private sector organisations will be allowed to verify the validity of passport data only.

- No organisation will be given access to government-held data — participating organisations will simply receive a yes, no or error message as to whether the document was validly issued, and no personal data not already provided by the individual would be used or shared.

- The Government Digital Service are in discussion with the selected organisations and finalising agreements before the onboarding process can commence.

- Sedicii Innovations and Agenda Resource Management are confirmed pilot participants who will use the checks as part of financial services onboarding .

- The full list of pilot participants will be available in due course.

[Pupils start returning to schools in England](#)

Hundreds of thousands of children and young people across England will reunite with their teachers and friends as schools and colleges start to open their gates from today (Tuesday 1 September).

After months of hard work and dedication from school staff across the country to implement protective measures first set out in July, pupils will begin to be welcomed back into classrooms for the autumn term.

Pupils will return to school environments with a 'system of controls' in place to keep all pupils, teachers and staff safe by minimising direct contacts and maintaining social distancing wherever possible.

The new school term follows the unanimous backing for a full return from the Chief Medical Officers across the four nations of the UK in their recent consensus statement, highlighting that the health risk posed by Covid-19 to children is extremely low and noting the significant risk to young people's wellbeing if they are not back in school. A British Medical Journal study also said that the risk of severe illness due to Covid for children was 'vanishingly small'.

Last week the National Association of Head Teachers published survey findings

that highlighted 97 per cent of schools plan to welcome all pupils full-time from the start of the autumn term and will have the range of recommended safety measures in place. The remaining 3 per cent have outlined that they will phase students back or using transition periods to reopen more widely.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

> For many, today marks the first day of a new school year, with thousands of children set to walk through their school gates again as schools across the country begin to reopen for full-time education for all pupils.
>
> I do not underestimate how challenging the last few months have been but I do know how important it is for children to be back in school, not only for their education but for their development and wellbeing too.
>
> But it is down to the sheer hard work of so many teachers and school staff that from today pupils will be able to learn in their classrooms together again. It has not been easy for parents nor schools, but we could not have got to this point without your support and I cannot say thank you enough for this.

Today's return for pupils follows the reopening of schools in Leicestershire last week, with the Prime Minister visiting to see first-hand the practical steps being taken to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced.

The Education Secretary and Schools Minister have both been visiting schools ahead of the new term and have praised some of the innovative ways schools will be looking after children including the use of cleaning stations, and staggered breaks, keeping pupils in 'bubbles', social distancing and safety on transport.

School term start dates will vary across the country, with approximately 40 per cent schools expected to start term today, and bringing teachers and pupils back to school over the coming days.

It remains the Government's priority to continue to support schools, nurseries and colleges through the next few months, continually guided by the best possible science and medical advice.

Consistent with the latest Public Health England advice, strict hygiene and cleaning protocols will be in place along with a one-off PPE supply boost being distributed to schools for use in the small number of instances where it is necessary.

All children will stay in groups or bubbles to reduce the risk of spreading infection, and older children in particular will be expected to follow social distancing guidelines. Face coverings should also be worn in communal areas in secondary schools in any areas with local lockdowns in place.

As the shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August, even the small number of pupils who remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who were shielding.

Pupils are encouraged to walk, cycle or scoot to school but the Government is also to providing an additional £40 million to local authorities to increase home to school transport and ease pressure on public transport.