



CEDEFOP Policy Learning Forum

*Social Dialogue in Apprenticeship
The Irish Experience*

2nd October 2024

SOLAS
learning works

What we will discuss today

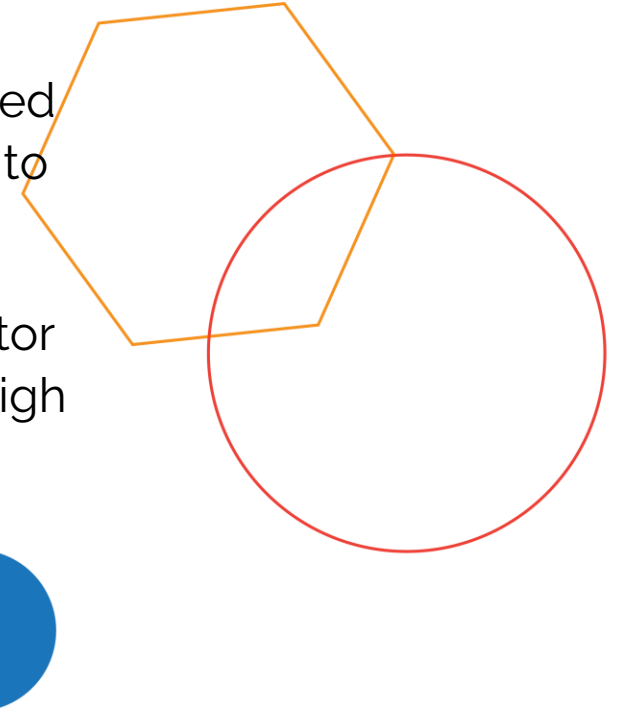
1. Brief look at the Irish apprenticeship system – legislation and policy development
 2. 2013-2024 and the path to an expanded system – a key period
 3. The role of multi-stakeholders in apprenticeship development and delivery – benefits and challenges
 4. What next – the future structure of apprenticeship in Ireland
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Apprenticeship in Ireland

There is a long proud history of apprenticeship in Ireland, one which has enabled individuals to attain lifelong skills for exciting careers, and assisted businesses to grow and thrive.

This history is a result of our education and training system, our enterprise sector and our unions working together to continue to improve, expand and deliver high quality apprenticeship programmes.

It is a story of ongoing evolution to expand the reach of apprenticeships and continue to meet the needs of enterprises in multiple sectors.



Ireland's apprenticeship system is governed by legislation and has evolved significantly in response to national policies

The national apprenticeship system in Ireland is governed by legislation, principally the **1967 Industrial Training Act**

This act, which supersedes the Apprenticeship Acts of 1931 and 1959, sets out the overall **structure of the national system and the protections for, as well as the responsibilities of, apprentices, employers, and education and training providers**

The 2012 **Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act** also underpins apprenticeship, supporting validation and quality assurance arrangements for programmes nationally.

Apprenticeships have the following key features

- Industry-led-consortia of industry and education partners
- Lead to an award at Levels 5 to 10 on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and be between 2-4 years in duration (EFQ Levels 4-8)
- Minimum 50% on-the-job training
- Flexible learning-online, blended, off-the-job learning in increments/blocks
- The State funds off-the-job learning for craft apprenticeships
- Apprentices are employed under a formal contract of employment
- The employer pays the apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship



2013 review of the apprenticeship system was a milestone report.....

The review **initiated a period of transformation and expansion** that continues today

It set out far reaching recommendations that included an **expansion of the system into new enterprise sectors**, with further and higher education providers to play a key role in supporting industry to design, develop, keep up-to-date and deliver apprenticeship training

“Employers should be firmly in the driving seat in identifying the scope for new apprenticeships, determining occupational standards, and having a greater role than at present in curriculum design and delivery, in partnership with education and training providers.

Apprenticeships should have a robust regulatory structure overseen by the State, and operate in accordance with the quality assurance arrangements of Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

The programme should be overseen by a committee representing employers, trade unions, education and training providers (further and higher level) and the QQI.”

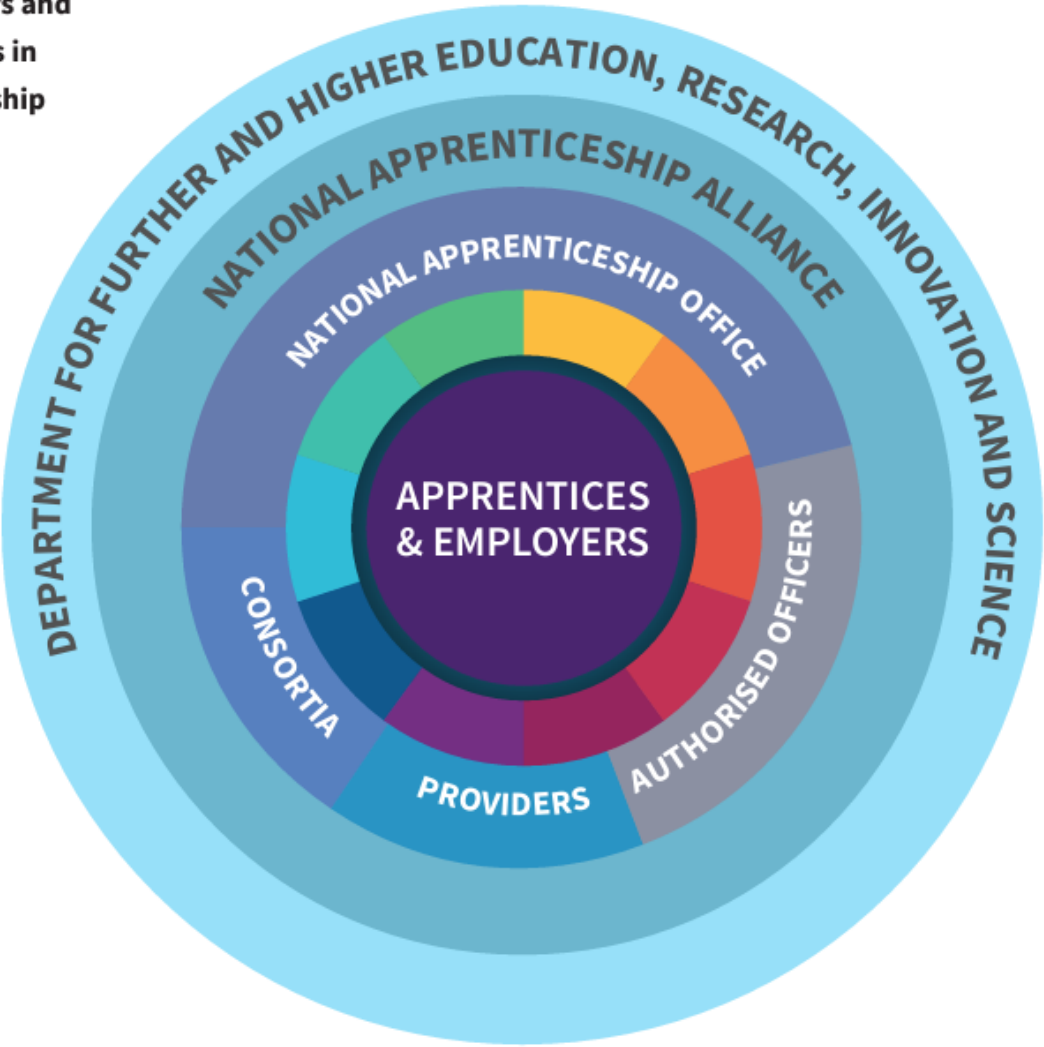
A new Apprenticeship Council was set up in 2014 to drive implementation of the report and oversee the introduction of new apprenticeships. This evolved into a new **National Apprenticeship Alliance**, and the development of a dedicated office to oversee the apprenticeship system, the **National Apprenticeship Office**.

The **expansion into new sectors of the economy began in 2016** and continues today. This means there are now apprenticeships in a much broader range of economic sectors including **tech, bio-pharma, insurance, hospitality, engineering, advanced manufacturing, logistics finance and more**.

Each of the new (Post-2016) apprenticeships are **overseen by an industry-led consortium** of stakeholders, which includes an education and training provider.

The new apprenticeships are available at Levels 6-10 of our National Framework of Qualifications, meaning **many are now Degree or Masters level qualifications** (with one PhD apprenticeship!).

**Key Partners and
Stakeholders in
Apprenticeship**



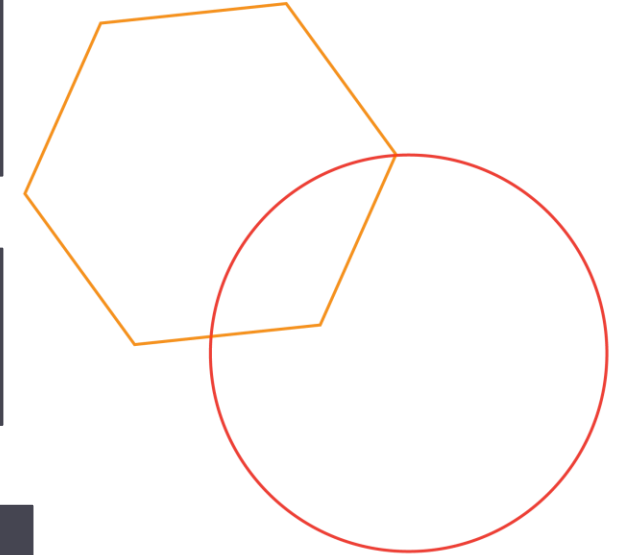
The impact over the past decade has been transformational

Apprenticeship programmes *27 in 2014 to 75 in 2024*

Registered Employers *3,300 in 2014 to 9000+ in 2024*

Female Representation *<1% in 2014 to +8% in 2024*

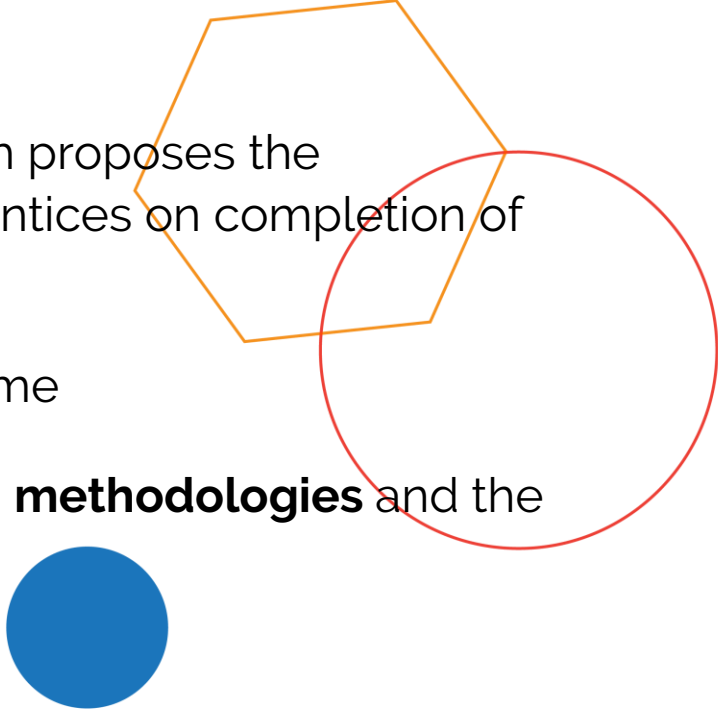
Apprentice Population *6,913 in 2014 to 27,000+ in 2024*

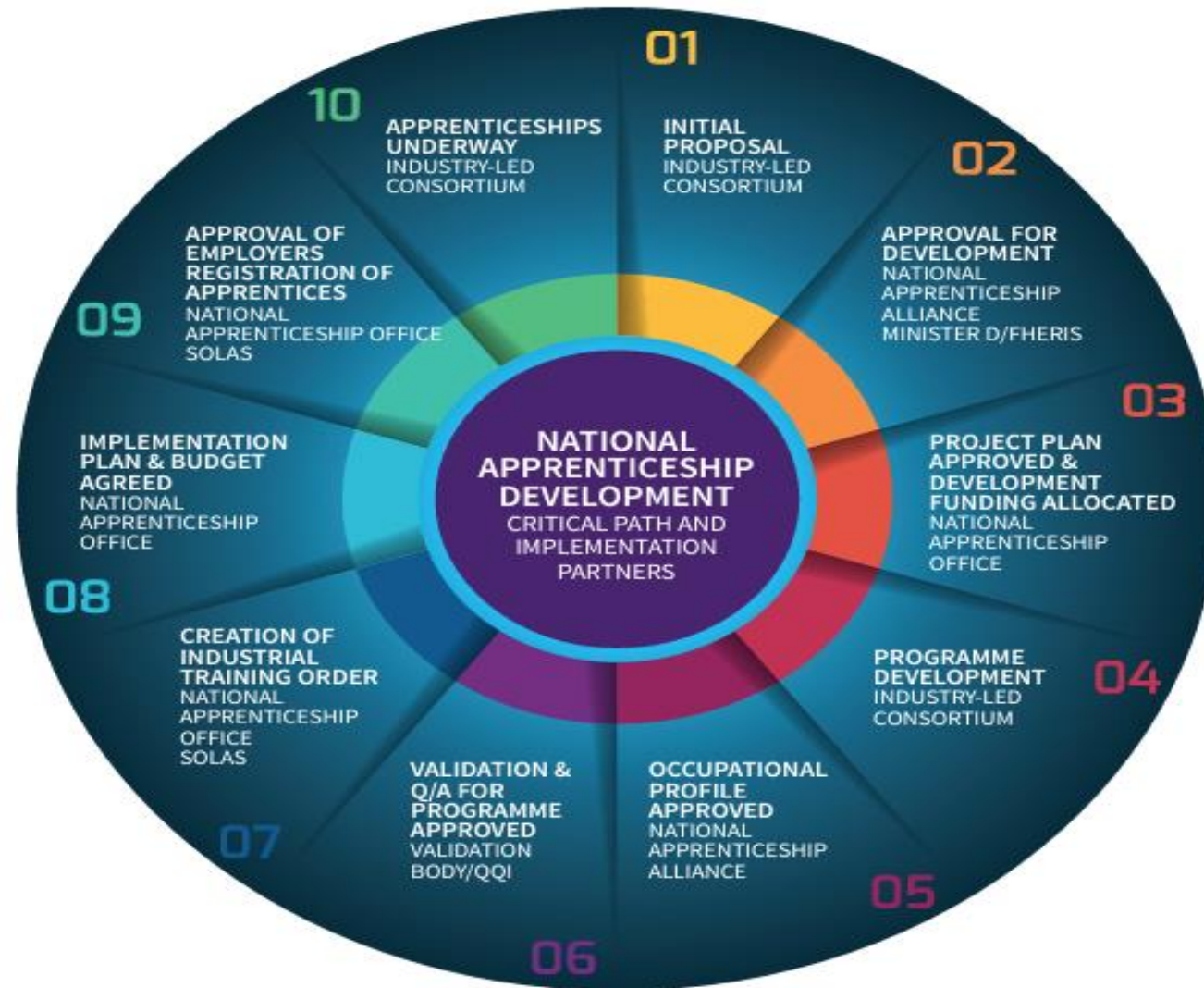


So, how are Apprenticeships developed in Ireland?

Proposals in new occupational areas via an initial proposal form and can be submitted at any time. Each new apprenticeship proposal **must contain the following components:**

1. Evidence of a **substantial skills need** within an industry sector(s) that will be met via a national apprenticeship
2. Consider other education and training provision in the occupational area in advance of making the apprenticeship proposal and provide evidence that the proposed apprenticeship **does not duplicate an existing apprenticeship** programme in its content.
3. Provide practical **evidence of support from employers** for the apprenticeship; in general, 15-20 employers should be on board

4. Provide an outline occupational profile for the apprenticeship which proposes the **knowledge, skill and competencies** that will be developed by apprentices on completion of their apprenticeship
 5. Propose an initial **duration and qualification level** for the programme
 6. Include some initial details on the proposed **teaching and learning methodologies** and the proposed access, transfer and progression arrangements.
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The role of the Consortium Steering Group is fundamental

An active and committed CSG and apprenticeship coordinator/coordination team are central to successful consortia-led apprenticeships

- CSG represents the apprenticeship programme's **key stakeholders** including employers, any occupational regulators and the coordinating provider. Unions are represented on some CSG but not all so far – work ongoing on that
- ensure that the apprenticeship programme is **enterprise-led**, meets the requirements of an occupation and continues to evolve with the occupation over time, thereby fulfilling labour market needs
- Strategic oversight of and arrangements for assurance of the **ongoing quality of the programme**, working closely with the education provider
- is **chaired by someone from the relevant industry** or community of practice involved in the occupation and has a majority of members from relevant industry areas
- Work according to the CSG's agreed **terms of reference** and meets regularly

Benefits and challenges of a multi-stakeholder process

Benefits

- Assurance that the CSG has determined the need for an apprenticeship
- Discussions between employers, unions, education and training providers on the development of the occupational profile
- Alignment with current and future skills needs – employment for apprentices
- Engagement on qualification level

Challenges

- Managing different viewpoints of the stakeholders
- Ensuring all stakeholders feel equally heard
- Ensuring ongoing engagement with the CSG and future work on the apprenticeship
- Making programmes national as well as local/regional



What is next for apprenticeships in Ireland?

- We now have a centralised craft apprenticeship model and a decentralised enterprise led consortia model working in parallel
- The next stage of evolution, and a current priority, is to develop a 'single integrated apprenticeship system' – an exciting evolution for the system
- This will combine the best features of both models and prepare apprenticeship for the future; an agile responsive system with innovative and high-quality apprenticeships.
- A national project on this is being led by the National Apprenticeship Office and overseen by the National Apprenticeship Alliance

Thank you