

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

**Tackling the Urgent Need for More Industry Professionals in the
Apprenticeship Workforce – Creative Industries**

West Midlands Creative Alliance Collaborative Project

OCTOBER 2023

Survey, Focus Groups, Interviews with individual organisations and practitioner case studies
- Responses and Conclusions

1. The Process

1.1 The Survey

For the first part of the research, we gathered contacts from across our partnership and sent out a survey divided into 5 categories:

- Current provider trainers (or development coaches)
- Current end-point assessors
- People from both groups above who had been approached to join the apprenticeship workforce and who had declined
- Employers
- Sector strategic bodies/ education policy organisations.

We sent a generic email to all contacts to explain the background and purpose of our project and what we wanted to achieve through the Survey:

*'Thank you for agreeing to take part in our **Industry in Apprenticeships Project Survey**; your responses, as an Industry Professional, will be invaluable. First, though, here are our answers to questions you will probably have before you begin.*

Who are we and what is our Project about?

We are a group of stakeholders involved in the end- to -end process of apprenticeship delivery across the creative industries – Creative Alliance (Project Lead and Independent Training Provider), Chichester College (FE provider), London South Bank University, Innovate Awarding (End-point Assessment Organisation), Sumo Digital Academy (Employer/Provider) and NextGen Skills Academy (industry and education support organisation).

We have been awarded an Apprenticeship Workforce Development Research Grant (funded by the Education & Training Foundation) to consider ways in which more industry professionals might be encouraged to be involved in the direct delivery of apprenticeships and the end-point assessment of apprentices.

Why is industry involvement in the delivery of Apprenticeships so important?

We all know of the skills gap and the urgent need to grow our creative industries with the best and new talent. Increasingly, people are becoming aware of the role that Apprenticeships can play and little by little employers are stepping up to support the development of Apprenticeship Standards such that we can say they are designed by industry for industry but then, a gap opens up when it comes to delivering the off the job training and objectively confirming apprentice achievement. We need these tasks to be handled by industry experts in order for the apprentice training to be relevant and valid and for employers to respect the quality of the qualification that the apprentice will receive. However, experience is demonstrating that this is easier said than done.

Help us to re-frame the Discussion

In this space where industry meets education, we have been asking ourselves several questions:

If recruiting industry professionals to both teach apprentices on their learning journey and support them to demonstrate their achievements is so difficult, have we got the process and practice right?

What stops individual industry professionals actively participating?

Are there opportunities to offer industry professionals a comprehensive support package that would encourage them to play a more active role in teaching and assessing achievement? Is there common ground?

As good ‘creatives’, we are starting with what we know and what we need to know hence our Survey to which we invite your response.

Thank you so much for your help. If you would be willing to follow up with a chat, we would love to arrange that and if you are happy to be listed as a participant in our Final Report, please complete the relevant boxes at the end of the Survey.’

We phrased the questions appropriately for each group:

Respondent Group	Questions
<p>Industry professionals currently delivering on programme</p>	<p>Why did you decide to be involved with Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What support/training do you receive from the Provider to help you do the job?</p> <p>As a Development Coach/Tutor/Trainer, how much do you know about End-Point Assessment?</p> <p>What additional training/support/activities do you think would help you to do the job better/give you more confidence? What issues do you think prevent industry professionals from actively engaging in Apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p> <p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p> <p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
<p>Industry professionals who have previously/declined to deliver on programme</p>	<p>What interested you about being involved with Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What are the barriers that prevented you from being involved/continuing to be involved in Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What further information would have been useful for you to support your decision?</p> <p>What kind of activities would help to address these barriers?</p> <p>What issues do you think prevent industry professionals from actively engaging in Apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p> <p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p>

	<p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
<p>Industry Professionals who are current end-point assessors</p>	<p>Why did you decide to be involved with Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What support/training do you receive from the EPAO to help you do the job?</p> <p>As an assessor, how much do you know about on programme delivery?</p> <p>What additional training/support do you think would help you to do the job better/give you more confidence?</p> <p>What issues do you think prevent industry professionals from actively engaging in Apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p> <p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p> <p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
<p>Industry professionals who have previously assessed/declined to end-point assess</p>	<p>What interested you about being involved with Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What are the barriers that prevented you from being involved/continuing to be involved in Apprenticeships?</p> <p>What further information would have been useful for you to support your decision?</p> <p>What kind of activities would help to address these barriers?</p> <p>What issues do you think prevent industry professionals from actively engaging in Apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p>

	<p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p> <p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
<p>Employers</p>	<p>Why did you decide to be/not to be involved with Apprenticeships?</p> <p>Do you imagine there being any benefits to your experienced staff becoming actively involved in training and assessing apprentices?</p> <p>What do you think are the barriers to your experienced staff becoming actively involved in training and assessing apprentices?</p> <p>Do you think there are ways you can support fulltime teachers develop industry relevant skills/perspective/attitudes?</p> <p>What issues do you think prevent industry professionals from actively engaging in Apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p> <p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p> <p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
<p>National/regional organisations and industry/ sector bodies</p>	<p>In your organisation, how do you work with industry professionals?</p> <p>In your experience, what do you consider the main barriers to industry professionals committing to a practical engagement in apprenticeships, either delivering on programme or/and as an end-point assessor? For example, do education and industry professionals ‘speak a different language’?</p> <p>How do you think we can best improve the equality and diversity of the creative industries apprenticeship workforce?</p>

	<p>Do you have any suggestions for ways to encourage participation?</p> <p>As part of this AWD Research Project, we are reconsidering the content of current induction/training plans that providers and end-point assessment organisations put in place for industry professionals new to apprenticeships. Do you have any suggestions for content?</p> <p>Would you be happy for one of the AWD Project Team to contact you to talk in more detail about your responses to these questions?</p> <p>Any further comments?</p> <p>Please tick if you are willing to be listed as a contributor to this Project Survey</p>
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1.2 Focus Groups and Interviews with Individual Organisations

From the survey respondents who agreed to discuss further and from other contacts across the partnership, we established two Focus Groups to discuss the findings from the survey: again, splitting across practitioners and employers/organisations. We also conducted individual organisation interviews where staff were unavailable to attend the Focus Groups or had not been able to respond to the Survey in time. In addition to sharing findings from the Survey, we asked them to discuss one main question:

What would make the biggest difference to the way in which industry professionals could be inspired to play an active role in apprenticeships both in the teaching & learning stage and in the end-point assessment of competence?

Having already learned from the survey that one of the most significant inhibitors to industry participation is education jargon, we phrased our invitation to participate in a style and with a purpose that we felt more directly appropriate to our creative industry colleagues:

Crewing Up for Creative Industry Apprenticeship Productions – Challenges and Opportunities.

We all know that any successful production is reliant on a great crew and how difficult it can be to find just the right people; it's at the heart of the apprenticeship model as a way of home growing talent.

We also know the Hero's (and Heroine's!) Journey script – an 'innocent' steps out into unfamiliar territory on a quest. They'll meet challenges, adversaries but they will also meet guides, mentors and they'll probably find the Chalice.

So, in a scenario where our creative industries are desperate for new talent, where are those guides, those mentors, those industry professionals who are willing to step into the landscape themselves to teach and affirm the competence of Apprentices? There are some brilliant and inspiring professionals working with and supporting Apprentices in partnership with training providers and there are others who are taking on the role of assessors once Apprentices reach the Gateway to the Chalice – some amazing folks do both. But the challenge for industry is that there are simply not enough – lack of 'crew' is threatening the take-up of Apprenticeships by training providers and assessment organisations.

What's the solution? We'd love to hear what you think and share some of our recent research.

1.3 Practitioner Case Studies

We wanted to look in more depth at the experience of relatively new end-point assessors and industry professionals working in on-programme delivery. We asked 5 colleagues from Creative Alliance (provider) and Innovate Awarding (EPAO) to provide us with their reflections on their own learning as practitioners during our research period. We provided them all with the same information explaining what the project was about and how we were asking them to contribute:

'Thank you for agreeing to take part in our Industry in Apprenticeships Project Case Study; your responses, as an Industry Professional already involved in the direct delivery and/or assessment of apprentice achievement will be invaluable. First, though, here are our answers to questions you will probably have before you begin.

Who are we and what is our Project about?

We are a group of stakeholders involved in the end- to -end process of apprenticeship delivery across the creative industries – Creative Alliance (Project Lead and Independent Training Provider), Chichester College (FE provider), London South Bank University, Innovate Awarding (End-point Assessment Organisation), Sumo Digital Academy (Employer/Provider) and NextGen Skills Academy (industry and education support organisation).

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What is the case study all about?

In this space where industry meets education, we have been asking ourselves several questions:

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What stops individual industry professionals actively participating?

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This is where you come in – we think the best place to start to develop any sort of resource is to see whether what we, as a group of organisations already offer in terms of training and support, is sufficient; what else could we put in place, do we need to think about resources in a different format? What would work best for you? We also think it is so important that you are supported to do the best job so that, in turn, you can best support apprentices on their learning journeys including a positive experience of the end-point assessment.

What we don't want to do is to make this case study an onerous additional task for you; we are asking that over three occasions on your teaching or assessor journey, you make some reflective notes. We've created a template but please don't feel constrained by it – if it's easier for you to make an oral recording, that would be fine too. This is quite a short project, so we are asking for your responses this month (May) and then again at the end of June and then mid -August.

As part of the Project funding, we are required to produce a final report on our research findings, of course. Could you let us know if you are happy for us to insert any of your comments that are relevant? They need not be personally attributed to you, of course and we will seek your permission for anything we include and before listing you as a contributor to the Project.

Thank you so much – your participation is genuinely appreciated and will be extremely valuable as we strive to improve practice in the delivery of Apprenticeships.'

2. The Findings

2.1 Key Messages from the Survey

From the Survey responses we identified the key messages to share with the subsequent focus groups, summarising the questions we had asked and sharing quotes:

Employers are mostly keen for their staff to be involved in the delivery and assessment of apprenticeships in principle and see the benefits but there are practical inhibitors relating to financial implications and also the perceived academic nature of what is being asked of industry professionals

We asked the questions:

Do you imagine there being any benefits to your experienced staff becoming actively involved in training and assessing apprentices?

What are the barriers that prevented you from being involved/continuing to be involved in Apprenticeships? For example, but not limited to: workload, responsibility, time, pay, understanding, complexity?

‘It would invest them in the process and be able to dynamically assess apprentices in the workplace’

‘I have seen first- hand how myself and our experienced staff have benefited from training and helping an apprentice’

‘Staff would be more invested in apprenticeship roles and in the young people undertaking them if they were more actively involved in their training and assessment.’

‘This could be highly beneficial for our team members as it will allow them to gain further experience and training and working with young people. It will also allow us to bring some young people onto our team.’

Yes. Although I don't believe there would be many of my staff who would be interested in this and the 'academic' side of the apprenticeship scheme. I would also struggle to allow them to take time off to do this and would need to bring people in to cover this, so it would have a financial impact.

<p>‘Capacity and financial constraints. Existing staff recruitment challenges meaning there are fewer experienced staff to support apprenticeships’</p>
<p>‘I'd say workload, level of understanding of the roles/support needs of young people, as well as no in-house incentives being offered to staff who take a more invested role in apprenticeship-delivery.’</p>
<p>‘I have consistently found that there is a disconnect between the education establishment and work place. There is also a lack of information about assessment and learning requirements that can be passed on to those managing an apprentice that is digestible by those outside of academic professions.’</p>
<p>‘Staff on the 'workshop floor' who are doing the day-to-day teaching and support, don't have this flexibility and have to put the show work first. This means they don't have the time and headspace to learn and fully understand the academic side of the apprenticeship scheme or engage in elements like the end point assessment etc.’</p>
<p>‘Not understanding all of the ways that they could contribute/be involved. Thinking that it would be too much work if they were to be involved. Not having access to the bigger picture as to the potential benefits. Not being connected in with sector colleagues doing it well.’</p>
<p>‘Not thinking their experience is suitable; that they are academic enough; that they are not worthy to be assessors; not having enough time in their working day to do the role’.</p>
<p>‘Information about doing it. Lots of red tape in engaging in delivery’</p>
<p>‘No joined up discussion with large employers about releasing staff for training & then for teaching/assessing. Lack of information about these kinds of opportunities to theatre workforce’</p>
<p>We asked similar questions of national organisations who are linked with apprenticeship development:</p> <p>In your experience, what do you consider the main barriers to industry professionals committing to a practical engagement in apprenticeships, either delivering on programme or/and as an end-point assessor? For example, do education and industry professionals ‘speak a different language’?</p> <p>Do you have any suggestions for ways to encourage participation?</p>

Unsurprisingly, the same messages about the barriers came through.

'Pay rates for the sector are far higher than those that are offered by EPAO and training providers for specialist roles, so giving up higher paid work is a barrier. Also, the industry is freelance by nature, so it is harder for freelancers to give up a day's work to assess or deliver training.'

'Anecdotally, I hear that professionals are often only needed sporadically so it is difficult to keep them engaged.'

'I don't think that industry professionals believe they have the skills to deliver on programme or be an independent assessor.'

'I don't think that Industry Professionals realise they may not need assessor qualifications as their performance management skills will help them and EPAOs will train them.

If industry professionals are employed full time, their employer may not release them to deliver or undertake IA duties. There is also confusion around conflict of interest - "if I teach some aspects/meet apprentices, can I also assess?"

'Smaller organisations may not be able to support employees becoming IAs'

'More engagement with employers wanting to develop or revise an apprenticeship. Ask them for contacts who would be willing to commit to assisting providers or EPAOs (highlighting that difficulties with delivery could impact their apprenticeship).'

'Try to make the gaining of the skill of assessment attractive to industry specialists and increased funding for EPA plans that require technical specialists to deliver'.

'Make Industry Professionals aware of the delivery/IA opportunities'

<p>'Support Industry Professionals to relate delivery/IA role to their current skills and experience and how easily transferable they are'</p>
<p>'Start with those in organisations who have mentored "apprentices" they will have confidence they can do what's required'</p>
<p>'Allow Industry Professionals to identify their current skills and experience and how they match what is required. Break the delivery/assessment process down so that it doesn't appear daunting. Make the documentation clear, user friendly and not over-complicated If the Industry Professional wasn't part of the TB group, have a session with one of the groups where new deliverers/IAs could ask questions'</p>
<p>We asked industry professionals who are engaged in on programme delivery and end point assessment for their views on their challenges. They had all taken on the roles because of a belief of the value of apprenticeships to industry and to individuals but generally from a starting point of knowing/understanding very little about the process of apprenticeships and end-point assessment in particular. We asked them what they would like to see in terms of materials and training to help them do the job. We also asked this group the same question about the issues they think prevent more industry professionals from actively engaging in apprenticeship delivery and end-point assessment:</p>
<p>[I know] 'What is published on the IfATE website and also materials from EPAO - however, there were many anomalies which have taken a long time to iron out'</p>
<p>'Not enough. The more I understand the more I can lean teaching towards a positive result.'</p>
<p>'I know a lot but that is only because I started in apprenticeships as an EPA assessor.'</p>
<p>'A good amount but am currently working on new qualifications so only a few students have gone through. Parameters are changing too and can make it hard to prep students because not enough is a) known about the new process b) hard to keep track of changes from IFATE and still waiting on these to be translated into support documentation from EPAO'</p>

'I'm learning as I go along - there isn't any specific training in order to understand the apprenticeships schemes as a whole.'
'The problem does not lie so much with the job of delivering but with the standard for this particular apprenticeship, which is poorly written, over-determined, and unrealistic.'
'More understanding of assessment. Access to training materials.'
'Assessor briefings from EPAO including regular catch ups, especially if for example criteria for KSBs have changed or fundamental changes to the parameters for EPA have changed.'
'Networking with other trainers/assessors - input from the IAs (not the EPAO reps)'
'Formal OneFile training tailored to industry professionals delivering on the apprenticeship schemes for the first time - not pre-recorded online training but a chance to practice and ask questions.'
'Understanding of how the apprenticeship schemes work from beginning to end. Examples from the end point assessors of "good practice" so as a trainer/assessor I know what excellent looks like in their opinion'
'Perhaps a really good flow chart of the process'
'If you haven't taught before then it's a lot to worry about.'
'Convincing an employer of the benefits is crucial...no boss is going to let you have significant time off.'
'Understanding delivery including language/terminology. Confidence in taking part. Evidence of successful case studies. Being clear on the added value of the whole apprenticeship offer.'
'A thinking that academia is required'
'Lack of confidence in ability/skill levels daunted by 'processes' involved huge responsibility for apprentice success hefty admin tasks with assessment processes'

‘Industry professionals aren't trained to train and can feel under-confident about lesson planning and delivering training against specific criteria’

‘Time-consuming and lots of admin.’

‘There is still quite a lack of understanding around apprenticeships within the greater creative industries. University and college training is understood but not apprenticeships which is a big barrier to recruiting talent. I would also suggest the understanding of flexibility, I believe there are flexible options to support apprenticeship training by industry professionals, but these again are not promoted or understood within the greater industry.’

‘If ATE and other government stakeholders to research methods of promoting and normalising dual industry – education practitioners. We need a greater scope and depth of industry practitioners taking part in training and assessment. If flexibility in how the apprenticeship levy is up for discussion, the flexibility should not be restricted to delivery models. Flexibility of levy spend should include enabling industry experts to be true dual-practitioners and not a binary choice between working in industry or education. We need to balance reward and risk across working for industry and education.’

We asked industry professionals in the games industry who had been approached to consider the role of an end-point assessor but who had declined, what had prevented them from doing so. Whilst both remain fully supportive of apprenticeships, for one, the time commitment on specific dates would always be a challenge with their business and for the other, in addition to a concern with the specific Standard with an overwhelmingly complex assessment, the fee was simply not enough. However, one has been able to give some consultancy time to the development of the assessment materials. In addition to more formal roles of on programme delivery and endpoint assessing, this industry specialist engagement is equally essential to ensure that assessments are effective and fit for purpose.

‘I was interested in helping out mentoring apprentices and / or being involved with their educational journeys - i.e., offering advice, support, and the benefit of my experience. End-point assessment seems to almost be the polar opposite of this.’

‘The fees on offer for the work are less than 50% of my minimum freelance day-rate’

‘Mostly workload as the company has ramped up in size and projects. Not having enough time to put in the ground work to prepare for the assessment and presentation. Being responsible for grading and passing an apprentice appears daunting too, given the small window of time with them and the strictness the role requires.’

‘Summary 1. I disagreed with the apprenticeship spec 2. I disagreed with the mode(s) of assessment 3. it didn't sound like it would be fulfilling 4. the fees on offer for the work are less than 50% of my minimum freelance day-rate 5. I was told how long each part of the assessment was allowed take when - in fact - it would almost certainly take longer 6. ...so, in fact I was being offered a fixed fee based on an idealised timescale for the work which amounted to more like 25-40% of my minimum day rate.’

2.2 Key messages from the Focus Groups and Individual Organisation Interviews.

We wanted to ensure that people felt able to share their thoughts with us openly and honestly and agreed not to record the session. There was no dissent from anything that our survey had highlighted as a contributory factor in the lack of take up by industry professionals to be directly involved in the off the job training and end-point assessment of apprentices. The groups particularly agreed with a disconnect in language between industry and education, leading to misconceptions including the perception of apprenticeships per se as ‘academic’ and questioned the usefulness of some assessment methodologies in an industry where recruitment is based on portfolios. For those industry professionals who had been involved in Trailblazer groups, they felt that additional assessments were an academic requirement rather than a demand by industry. In terms of suggestions as to how providers and EPAOs might better recruit, they advised that in some sectors of the creative industries, people are not even aware that such roles are even available. Currently, as a result of the writers’ strike, there is a slow down on productions so, in fact, these roles could be quite attractive to freelance staff.

2.3 Key messages from the practitioner case studies.

Five industry specialists taken on as either on programme development coaches or end point assessors, reflected on their journeys as they joined the apprenticeship workforce. We provided them with some prompting questions but asked for some honest feedback with the proviso that we would not attribute any quotes.

Month	Development Stage	Reflective Questions
May 2023	Where are you now?	<p>What drew you to engaging in apprenticeships?</p> <p>How does your work with apprenticeships fit in with your work in industry?</p> <p>How easy are you finding it to understand the concept, process and practice involved in your apprenticeship activity?</p> <p>What training are you receiving?</p> <p>What are you enjoying?</p> <p>What are you finding most challenging?</p>
End June 2023	How’s it going?	<p>How comfortable are you with the process and practice of your apprenticeship work?</p> <p>How useful has your training been?</p> <p>How well supported are you?</p> <p>What do you still need in terms of training and support?</p> <p>What are you enjoying?</p> <p>What are you finding most challenging?</p>
Mid-August 2023	Where are you now?	<p>Has working in apprenticeships met your expectations?</p>

		<p>Do you have any suggestions for how to engage more industry professionals in the direct delivery and assessment of apprenticeships?</p> <p>Do you have suggestions for the providers and EPAOs regarding the support and training for industry professionals?</p>
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In terms of the end-point assessors it is perhaps important to note here that for Innovate Awarding as the EPAO, the creative industries is also a new sector and this element of the research also involves two different standards – L3 Content Creator, a formally reviewed and updated version of L3 Junior Content Creator and the brand new L7 Game Programmer with its first cohort of apprentices at Sumo Digital (employer/provider) the first provider to deliver the Standard. It should also be noted that amendments to the Standard meant a delay in publication of an updated version for first delivery. Industry specialists involved in on-programme delivery for Creative Alliance work across several creative digital and stage standards. Regardless, all case study participants were entering the apprenticeship workforce for the first time; some had previous teaching experience, others had none but had been involved in mentoring at work. Where they had no teaching or assessment experience they had been or are working towards CAVA qualifications.

There is no doubt that, at the beginning of their journey, the assessors and development coaches were enthusiastic for their roles and to contribute to the development of skills for their industry. They could also see advantages for their career.

<p>‘.....when it comes to tackling a lack of diversity and representation in the industry, it’s easy to blame “the pipeline” but not actually do anything about it – so here I am, helping out with the pipeline! Though in the case of being an EPA, I suppose I’m not helping shape who’s in the pipeline, as I might be when doing workshops in schools.</p>
<p>‘.... I’m still a practicing artist/designer, but I’m very picky about the jobs I take on and favour doing self-initiated art projects rather than continuously chasing freelance work. My role as a development coach is symbiotic with my professional practice, they both inform and influence each other. ‘</p>
<p>‘..... I quickly realised the knowledge, skills and behaviours approach and could see how this would easily fit in with the work in which I am actively involved with now.’</p>

Generally, at the beginning, assessors and development coaches were feeling well supported by training provider and EPAO. Development coaches were finding the formal training beneficial.

<p>‘I am enjoying the process so far. I have a lot of questions to ensure I am clear with all aspects of the qualification, but most notably, the assessment expectations. However, I feel very supported and can contact the EPAO at any time.’</p>
<p>‘I am currently 2 modules into a CAVA course, which Creative Alliance has put in place to improve my teaching and assessment skills and knowledge, which has had a big impact on my understanding of the role.’</p>

<p>‘I’ve had some standard onboarding training, some of which feels like a bit of a box-ticking exercise (having to do a module on driving safely at work for a 100% remote role, for example), but the initial two days of induction were at least helpful in getting grounded.’</p>
<p>‘The thing I am finding most challenging is providing formal feedback, I have been training technicians throughout my career to I find the ability to teach very easy, but I’ve been used to just providing them with ongoing support and quarterly performance reviews. Though like the feedback given in reviews, I must now ensure that the feedback is relevant to the criteria that the apprentice is working on. To ensure that I am confident in producing this feedback Creative Alliance is providing CAVA training, which I am part way through the second of three units, this has helped a long way in helping me structure my feedback.’</p>

As development coaches and assessors began work, issues, sometimes unexpected, occurred and feelings of pressure began to build. Some of these were due to confidence and self-belief, lack of experience, overload of work and also the challenges of a new standard for which recruiting an apprenticeship workforce was proving challenging.

<p>‘The most challenging aspect of my role is managing my workload. There are points throughout the year that tend to be a lot busier than others, where cohort’s crossover, new content needs to be written, and several learners need to get to gateway on time.’</p>
<p>‘My top fear is finishing an assessment and realizing I haven’t asked a question about one of the KSBs and it’s my fault an apprentice can’t pass.’</p>
<p>‘.....things have felt a little bit seat-of-the-pants because it’s a brand-new standard – that’s just the nature of things, though [the provider] being keen to get their apprentices through the gateway almost as soon as the standard was finalized does seem to have made things a bit of a rush.’</p>
<p>‘Thinking back to my initial expectations of teaching apprenticeships, the quality of support and attention to detail regarding data connected to the learner’s progress is far more detailed and thorough than I first imagined.’</p>
<p>‘I expected to be assessing two or three candidates, but it turned out to be 9, all bunched together, which meant a few weeks of unsustainable work in July.’</p>

‘On paper the £325 rate from Innovate isn’t hopeless, but it’s not great, and the problem is compounded by the fact that I find I generally can’t actually charge for all the time I work – with the professional discussions, for example, I find I’m generally putting in about 4.5 hours’ work in total for each assessment, but I can only charge for 3.4. It’s about 1hr50 for the actual assessment, there’s time assembling the question bank (which means going through the portfolio, especially for things like the Graphics section), doing a quick high-speed pass through the video to collect all the follow-up questions I asked on the fly but didn’t have time to write down, filling in the record (which might mean reviewing parts of the recording) and writing the grading report, and uploading everything. If someone is very close to a distinction I’ll probably spend another chunk of time looking at the evidence for that criterion very closely.’

‘Early September attended a 2-day induction online. The information was very useful though there is so much covered in these 2 days, that most of course is forgotten because as an EPA, you are not using the systems etc. everyday. Whilst this sort of induction is important for permanent members of staff, I think for associates this is overload. I understand the nature of the associate status but and I certainly hadn’t appreciated the full meaning of the undertaking and for very busy freelance professionals who have other commitments, I’m not convinced that this is productive.....For me it has questioned whether I want to continue, and I haven’t even had any role experience yet.’

‘There’s also a bit of pressure in that the QA assessor who’ll be checking my work is experienced with QA for level 7 qualifications but has no game development experience (that’s nobody’s fault, there might not be anybody in the world who’s got both skillsets yet), so it really does all hang on me’.

‘I would say that working with apprentices has met my expectations, but the scale of additional paperwork was undersold to me. Progress reviews every 8 weeks; learner reviews every 8 weeks - this frequency makes it hard to focus on one learner and not the additional paperwork.’

Despite the challenges, it seems that everyone is still keen to be involved and to conclude the case study reflective piece, we asked the same question we posed to survey respondents and focus groups about they thought more industry specialists could be encouraged to join the apprenticeship workforce. Across all case studies, there was a notable comment about the need to rationalise the ‘academic’ element of the work and to fit recruitment practice to the nature of the creative industries.

<p>‘My recommendations would be to employ EPAs as freelance agents, and not regard them as permanent members of staff. Provide induction and training that is specifically aimed at their role and cut to the chase.’</p>
<p>‘Changing careers from working in the creative sector to teaching learners about it is quite a dramatic shift. I imagine most professionals would have a desire to keep their foot in the door, which makes their advice and guidance even more valuable and relevant, the way I could see this becoming more appealing is to offer rolling freelance contracts. A specific networking event for EPAOs, industry professionals, and providers could be a good space to start these conversations.’</p>
<p>‘I would highly recommend this job role to other industry professionals, but it is a huge commitment and something that can’t be approached half-heartedly. I believe the best way to engage other industry professionals would be to have a specific module during the year where all learners respond to an open brief set by said person, this can be then openly assessed with the industry professional and development coach as a kind of panel discussion.’</p>
<p>‘I feel the only way to encourage more professionals into the sector would be to lessen the OFSTED focus. And slim down the paperwork to have more observed sessions. These courses are vocational and should focus on the work tasks, but more and more criteria are being added that it's becoming very academic.’</p>
<p>‘I think this is going to be difficult. The nature of the work means it’s going to be difficult to get devs in full-time employment involved – they’d need time off to assess, and possibly their employers would be cautious about them signing NDAs with a variety of other companies.</p> <p>The best fits will be those working as gamedev contractors/freelancers, and indie developers like me. Targeting them is probably the way forward.’</p>

3. Conclusions – from survey responses, focus groups, individual interviews, and case studies

Using 3 different research methods across apprenticeship workforce stakeholders, we have noted very similar responses. In summary, as a project team, we felt able to draw some key conclusions in answer to our research question of why it is so difficult to establish a sustainable industry specialist apprenticeship workforce in our creative industries sector beyond the fact that, as yet apprenticeships are a relatively new concept.

1. There is a fundamental disconnect between creative industries and education.
2. The administrative and pedagogical processes in the case of both on programme delivery and end-point assessment are overwhelmingly and often seen as unnecessarily complicated.

- 3. Training for industry professionals as end-point assessors could be more focused for an associate role rather than that provided for a full-time employee; comprehensive but concise avoiding what is unnecessary.**
- 4. Industry professionals quite often feel that they do not have the required skills to teach or assess but confidence is improved once they receive training.**
- 5. The extent of commitment and requirements of the job(s) is not always transparent.**
- 6. Remuneration is insufficient and unrealistic for the level of industry experience required.**
- 7. The perception of apprenticeship delivery and assessment is that it is 'academic' and therefore not particularly exciting or dynamic.**
- 8. A fair percentage of the creative sector does not even realise that these roles exist.**
- 9. The nature of employment in the creative industries, particularly around production, is fluid and often unpredictable meaning that regularly accepted education workforce recruitment practice simply won't work.**
- 10. There is an important synergy between this research and the work being carried out by IfATE on Low/No starts.**
- 11. There are fundamental problematic issues with the Standards and Assessment Plans that directly and indirectly have an impact on the potential to recruit industry professionals.**
- 12. Current discussions around the use of Levy spend could open up the potential to discuss relationship with the supply of industry professionals to be involved with the direct delivery and assessment of apprenticeship.**

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