

CALL FOR PAPERS

APPRENTICESHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

6th and 7th October 2026

Queen's University Belfast



Source: St Eligius in his Workshop, circa 1450-1460, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Background

Degree and higher apprenticeships (or higher level apprenticeships as they are called in Northern Ireland) are thought to be a good way of encouraging social mobility. It allows the student to study, while earning a wage. Apprentices typically earn a relatively low salary, but will benefit from those earnings and later earnings, which are at a higher rate, once the study has been completed. They usually gain a degree level qualification, while earning. Apprenticeships are thought to encourage those who would not be able to study, without a wage, to study. There has been much said in politics, but also among those in the professions, business and industry about the importance of them.

This is also now an opportune moment for academics to rethink apprenticeship. With the loss of level 7 (ie master's level) apprenticeship funding in England, the route to education/work needs reimagining. There is now an opportunity to reflect upon what has worked well and not so well, sharing best practices. In doing so, it is also a tipping point, where educators might potentially redevelop apprenticeship programmes that continue. Equally, there is a moment where the academic community can come together to speak with one voice to articulate the benefits of such a programme clearly. Apprenticeships allow vocational education and skills based



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learning to be integrated into higher education. A university education, as opposed to on the job training, may bring unique benefits to employers and industry, more generally.

Papers may include topics, such as:

- Stories of apprenticeships and their successes;
- Programme design and scheduling;
- Work based learning and assessment;
- Employee-employer-university relationship dynamics;
- History of apprenticeships;
- Gender and apprenticeships;
- Apprenticeships, firms and professions

This is a non-exhaustive list and other topics related to apprenticeships are welcomed.

This conference is built around discussion. It is conceived as a forum for academics to think aloud together and built around round-table debate rather than the podium. The aim is not only to present, but to debate, to problem-solve and to leave with shared thinking the academic community can take forward.

Organisation

This conference will be held on the 6th and 7th October (in person and hybrid).

It is organised by [Lisa Bradley](#), [Victoria Barnes](#), [Caroline Hood](#) and [Lucy Newton](#).

Submissions

Please send a 250 word abstract and 1 page CV to [Ruth Bright](#) by 31st July 2026.

