

# Apprenticeships

## the state of play

THE National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) provides oversight and management of the national apprenticeship system on behalf of Government and the agencies SOLAS and the Higher Education Authority.

The NAO implements national policy and strategy, currently the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025. Over the past year a major project has been underway on a plan to create an integrated system of apprenticeship.

The National Apprenticeship Office had two priority deliverables in 2024, to advance development of an integrated apprenticeship system and to eliminate training delays for craft apprentices.

Good progress has been made on each deliverable. **A plan for the integrated system was submitted to Government in April** with implementation due to get underway in 2025.

Almost **3,000 more phase 2 training places were added in 2024**, supported by Education and Training

Boards, Technological Universities and industry. This largely eliminated the training delays. Ongoing targeted responses are being implemented for 8 programmes in 2025.

The National Apprenticeship Office (NAO) hosted more than 30 consultation events in 2024 to drive improvements in national apprenticeship processes and supports.

These include the work of the Authorised Officer (AO) network, the apprenticeship IT platform and **apprenticeship funding which is due to increase to over €370m in 2025.**

Plans are in place for a review of apprenticeship funding during the first half of 2025.

### Better statistics

The NAO developed its statistics and data analysis capability in 2024, with a dedicated team now in place.

There has been new reporting on training capacity versus demand for craft apprenticeship and modelling of

This feature is based on edited extracts of the National Apprentice Office's 'PROGRESS REPORT 2024 AND PLANS 2025' available at <https://apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news>

**681 apprenticeship job vacancies have been advertised to-date this year by employers on apprenticeship.ie the free job vacancies portal**

demand for 2025 and 2026.

A performance framework for apprenticeship is in development which will include collection and analysis of data on apprentice ethnicity, socioeconomic background, retention rates and routine graduate tracking.

In partnership with the Central Statistics Office, a **first ever study of employment outcomes for apprentices has been completed** and is due to be published early in 2025.

A national survey of apprentices was carried out during October-November 2024. Over 5,580 full and partial responses were received, corresponding to a 20% response rate. **Findings from the survey will be available in 2025.**

Apprenticeship	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025F	2020 - 2021 (%)	2021 - 2022 (%)	2022 - 2023(%)	2023 - 2024(%)
ARBORICULTURE										
Arboriculture	3	31	13	12	25	16	933%	-58%	-8%	108%
Farm Manager	0	0	0	11	11	40				0%
Farm Technician	0	0	0	14	11	80				-21%
Horticulture	0	0	0	16	31	120				94%
Sportsturf Management	0	0	0	27	26	20				-4%
Total	3	31	13	80	104	276	933%	-58%	515%	30%
BIOPHARMA										
Laboratory Analyst	18	18	14	42	59	0	0%	-22%	200%	40%
Laboratory Technician	12	10	37	29	22	60	-17%	270%	-22%	-24%
Total	30	28	51	71	81	60	-7%	82%	39%	14%
CONSTRUCTION										
Advanced Quantity Surveyor					3					
Brick & Stonelaying	56	148	72	66	78	90	164%	-51%	-8%	18%
Carpentry & Joinery	563	847	713	711	771	850	50%	-16%	0%	8%
Geo Driller	18	7	8	0	0	2	-61%	14%	-100%	
Painting & Decorating	24	43	23	17	24	40	79%	-47%	-26%	41%
Plastering	20	38	31	30	31	45	90%	-18%	-3%	3%
Plumbing	560	875	792	739	832	950	56%	-9%	-7%	13%
Scaffolding	0	37	29	18	45	18		-22%	-38%	150%
Stonecutting & Stonemasonry	3	9	8	2	17	14	200%	-11%	-75%	750%
Wood Manufacturing & Finishing	75	155	144	123	127	155	107%	-7%	-15%	3%
Total	1319	2159	1820	1706	1928	2164	64%	-16%	-6%	13%

### An employer driven system

Four new national apprenticeship programmes launched in 2024:

- Advanced Manufacturing Engineering Level 8
- Digital Marketing Level 6
- Social Work Level 9
- Software Solutions Architecture Level 9

Each of these programmes is overseen by an industry-led consortium. **A further 23 programmes are in development** and are due to launch during 2025-2026.

The NAO provided developmental and project support throughout the year for new and pending programmes, on approval of occupational profiles, creation of Industrial Training Orders, funding arrangements, briefing and support for approval of employers to employ apprentices and registration of apprentices.

**A further 36 potential apprenticeship proposals are at consultation stage**, the NAO provides advice and support to the groups involved.

Drawing on feedback from the 2023 survey of employers, a further stage

of the One More Job initiative with micro and small employers was implemented, via strategic promotion and onboarding supports. **As of the end of December, 1,107 micro and small employers have begun apprenticeship training, employing 1.592 apprentices.**

681 apprenticeship job vacancies have been advertised to-date this year by employers on apprenticeship.ie, the free job vacancies portal, complemented by a new database of apprenticeship employers by county and apprenticeship on the website.

The Generation Apprenticeship strategic promotion campaign continued to drive growth in employer participation. Three advertising campaigns with a combined spend of €442,000 were run. The sixth Champion in the Workplace awards took place, with 80 companies from all regions of the country nominated for an award.

The **Apprenticeship Employer Grant of €2,000 per apprentice per year was allocated to over 1,658 employers** this year, €6.1m from the National Training Fund.

Apprenticeship	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025F	2020 - 2021 (%)	2021 - 2022 (%)	2022 - 2023(%)	2023 - 2024(%)
ELECTRICAL										
Aircraft Mechanics	50	55	62	69	79	72	10%	13%	11%	14%
Electrical	1740	2748	2648	2837	3074	2650	58%	-4%	7%	8%
Electrical Instrumentation	62	103	120	143	140	125	66%	17%	19%	-2%
Electronic Security Systems	45	61	86	63	60	90	36%	41%	-27%	-5%
Industrial Electrical Engineer	30	20	42	32	39	24	-33%	110%	-24%	22%
Instrumentation	11	12	13	20	10	20	9%	8%	54%	-50%
Refrigeration & Air Conditioning	73	142	152	174	147	150	95%	7%	14%	-16%
Total	2011	3141	3123	3338	3549	3131	56%	-1%	7%	6%
ENGINEERING										
Advanced Manufacturing Engineering					34					
Civil Engineer			0	35	70	24				100%
Civil Engineering Technician			0	9	24	24				167%
Engineering Services Management	17	34	22	17	35	30	100%	-35%	-23%	106%
Equipment Systems Engineer	0	6	5	0	8	0		-17%	-100%	
Farriery	0	6	8	3	12	6		33%	-63%	300%
Industrial Insulation	23	22	16	12	9	25	-4%	-27%	-25%	-25%
Lean Sigma Manager	39	52	43	48	61	30	33%	-17%	12%	27%
M.A.M.F	142	221	203	202	207	215	56%	-8%	0%	2%
Manufacturing Engineer (Level 7)	20	53	48	48	56	50	165%	-9%	0%	17%
Manufacturing Technology (Level 6)	30	42	90	79	60	80	40%	114%	-12%	-24%
Metal Fabrication	198	340	252	259	256	250	72%	-26%	3%	-1%
OEM Engineer	16	14	20	30	39	48	-13%	43%	50%	30%
Pipefitting	52	98	114	108	134	120	88%	16%	-5%	24%
Polymer Processing Technology	11	14	17	15	17	16	27%	21%	-12%	13%
Principal Engineer	5	8	4	15	16	12	60%	-50%	275%	7%
Sheet Metalworking	41	63	42	32	30	50	54%	-33%	-24%	-6%
Toolmaking	48	52	48	58	63	50	8%	-8%	21%	9%
Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician	0	0	14	14	4	30			0%	-71%
Total	642	1025	946	984	1135	1060	60%	-8%	4%	15%
FINANCE										
Accounting Technician	96	163	170	188	195	225	70%	4%	11%	4%
International Financial Services Associate	17	16	34	32	22	30	-6%	113%	-6%	-31%
International Financial Services Specialist	18	23	21	14	9	20	28%	-9%	-33%	-36%
Total	131	202	225	234	226	275	54%	11%	4%	-3%



The NAO report on progress in 2024 and plans for 2025 is available at [apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news](https://apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news)



Ensuring access and inclusion

The access and inclusion subcommittee of the National Apprenticeship Alliance met four times in 2024 and provided expert advice to the NAO on a workplan which included expansion of the bursary for learners completing access to apprenticeship courses, enhanced data collection on under-represented groups in higher education, and initiatives to promote access for learners of diverse backgrounds.

**58 learners were allocated the €3,000 per learner access bursary in 2024**, in the midlands and midwest regions via Technological University of the Shannon.

An approach was developed to allocate the bursary to a wider pool of learners, including in further education. It is planned to implement this in 2025.

Records provided by Education and Training Boards indicate that **the gender bursary has been allocated to 117 employers to-date this year**. The gender bursary, which is paid in two allocations and amounts to €2,666 per apprentice, is available to businesses who employ apprentices from the minority gender on programmes which have greater than 80% representation of either women or men.

A new database of apprenticeship employers by county and apprentice-

ship was added to apprenticeship.ie and has been warmly received by guidance counsellors.

A publication ‘Tips for apprenticeship employers on being disability inclusive’ has been prepared and will be published in early 2025.

A video promoting the **Traveller Apprenticeship Incentivisation Programme** with ‘the Traveller Apprenticeship Incentivisation Programme was developed in partnership with the Irish Traveller Movement and promoted via the national apprenticeship social media platforms.

The Facts, Faces, Futures campaign promoting women in apprenticeships included a targeted drive to increase the number of women in craft apprenticeships. **The number of women craft apprentices in the population passed the 500 mark** this year.

Apprenticeship as a valued career option

The 2024 strategic promotion plan for Generation Apprenticeship included four advertising and PR campaigns. The third national **Apprentice of the Year awards took place in October, celebrating 400 apprentice nominees**.

The R U OK? mental health campaign continued to expand, with more employers and apprenticeship provid-

ers getting involved.

Both WorldSkills Ireland and WorldSkills International events featured in 2024. **A 17-strong team represented Ireland at the 2024 international competition in Lyon**, France in September, followed by the 3-day interactive WorldSkills Ireland event in the RDS, Dublin, at which 30,000 students, teachers, parents and other stakeholder attended.

Generation Apprenticeship was promoted at 30+ national and regional events throughout the year, which included the BT Young Scientist exhibition, Higher Options, the National Ploughing Championships, regional Expos in Kilkenny, Waterford, Limerick, Meath and multiple apprentice graduations.

The sixth national Generation Apprenticeship Champions in the Workplace awards took place in December, with **80 company nominees demonstrating excellence in mentoring, advocacy, diversity and inclusion**, and team-wide support for apprentices in the workplace.

Collaboration with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) advanced in 2024 via workshops at the national IGC conference in Tralee, with useful feedback gathered on information and materials to support IGC members.

The new database of apprentice-



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ship employers by county, something that was requested by guidance counsellors in 2023, has been warmly welcomed.

Creating an integrated apprenticeship system

There was intensive work on development of an integrated apprenticeship system in 2024. A plan for the new system was completed with the support of the National Apprenticeship Alliance and submitted to Government. Planning for implementation is well advanced for 2025. **Additional funding of €78 million was announced** for the national apprenticeship system in 2025, which will bring investment from the National Training Fund to over €370m.

Next steps

2025 is the final year of the current Action Plan for Apprenticeship which covered the years 2020-225. The NAO will support the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in development of a successor plan.

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Apprenticeship	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025F	2020 - 2021 (%)	2021 - 2022 (%)	2022 - 2023(%)	2023 - 2024(%)
HAIR										
Hairdressing	84	182	213	237	260	344	117%	17%	11%	10%
Total	84	182	213	237	260	344	117%	17%	11%	10%
HEALTHCARE										
Advanced Healthcare Assistant	0	68	7	3	21	44		-90%	-57%	600%
Social Work					42					
Total	0	68	7	3	63	44		-90%	-57%	2000%
HOSPITALITY & FOOD										
Bar Manager	0	0	115	56	24	72			-51%	-57%
Butcher	10	51	27	27	32	60	410%	-47%	0%	19%
Chef de Partie	5	35	9	16	18	64	600%	-74%	78%	13%
Commis Chef	16	75	102	73	109	85	369%	36%	-28%	49%
Sous Chef	3	11	1	0	0	48	267%	-91%	-100%	
Total	34	172	254	172	183	329	406%	48%	-32%	6%
ICT										
CGI Technical Artist	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Cybersecurity	30	6	53	35	27	98	-80%	783%	-34%	-23%
Cybersecurity Practitioner	0	0	2	0	0	3			-100%	
Computer Network Assocaite				9	11					22%
Digial Marketing					10					
Network Engineer Associate	22	11	33	46	0		-50%	200%	39%	-100%
Software Developer Associate	42	53	148	90	41	195	26%	179%	-39%	-54%
Telecommunications & Data Network	31	37	29	83	43	140	19%	-22%	186%	-48%
Total	125	107	265	263	132	436	-14%	148%	-1%	-50%
INSURANCE										
Insurance Practitioner	49	75	105	141	97	130	53%	40%	34%	-31%
Total	49	75	105	141	97	130	53%	40%	34%	-31%

Apprenticeship	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025F	2020 - 2021 (%)	2021 - 2022 (%)	2022 - 2023(%)	2023 - 2024(%)
LOGISTICS										
Logistics Associate	53	74	79	74	66	97	40%	7%	-6%	-11%
Supply Chain Associate	0	13	15	29	36	20		15%	93%	24%
Supply Chain Manager	11	36	6	30	13	20	227%	-83%	400%	-57%
Supply Chain Specialist	10	22	15	21	32	20	120%	-32%	40%	52%
Transport Operations and	0	0	21	18	10	30			-14%	-44%
Total	74	145	136	172	157	187	96%	-6%	26%	-9%
MOTOR										
Agricultural Mechanics	52	90	58	65	51	65	73%	-36%	12%	-22%
Construction Plant Fitting	63	81	73	97	98	85	29%	-10%	33%	1%
Heavy Vehicle Mechanics	135	194	162	232	226	170	44%	-16%	43%	-3%
Motor Mechanics	310	502	431	482	577	430	62%	-14%	12%	20%
Vehicle Body Repairs	31	50	28	44	60	30	61%	-44%	57%	36%
Total	591	917	752	920	1012	780	55%	-18%	22%	10%
PROPERTY SERVICES										
Auctioneering & Property Services	75	138	140	148	157	143	84%	1%	6%	6%
Total	75	138	140	148	157	143	84%	1%	6%	6%
RECRUITMENT										
Recruitment Executive	27	24	37	18	21	30	-11%	54%	-51%	17%
Total	27	24	37	18	21	30	-11%	54%	-51%	17%
SALES										
Retail Supervision	101	142	161	125	160	180	41%	13%	-22%	28%
Sales	30	51	38	100	87	90	70%	-25%	163%	-13%
Total	131	193	199	225	247	270	0	3%	13%	10%
Overall Total										
5326 8607 8286 8712 9352 9659 62% -4% 5% 7%										

Note: Data are sourced from the National Apprenticeship Database (ACSS) and are based on end of year figures for 2024.