

Introduce Apprenticeship grades, the IAC tells BIS

Grading should be introduced for Apprenticeships, the Industry Apprentice Council (IAC) has told government's Apprenticeships team.

The IAC, launched and funded by EAL, the specialist awarding organisation for industry qualifications, met with representatives from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) following an invitation from Skills Minister Matthew Hancock MP.

At the meeting, to discuss the future of Apprenticeships and proposals in the Richard Review, the IAC put forward their views on how the vocational pathway should be altered to better compete with the academic pathway but still meet employer and learner needs.

The IAC outlined their vision for continuous assessment throughout an Apprenticeship, as opposed to an "end of point" assessment, a grading scale similar to that used in Higher Education, and the need to retain individual qualifications (Technical Certificates, NVQs, etc) that make up the vocational pathway.

The apprentices, who spoke as representatives of the IAC, also called for the voice of the apprentice community to be heard at the highest level, so that learners could have input on the future of their education pathway.

IAC member Hal Willis, 20, said: "We would prefer continual assessment throughout an Apprenticeship and those assessments

should be used to form a final grade, so you can differentiate between someone that has worked really hard and someone that has just plodded along."

IAC member Ashley Amatt, 20, the latest member to join the group, added: "If we're trying to promote Apprenticeships on the same level as a degree then we should introduce grading similar to that used in Higher Education."

IAC member Sam Ball, 20, echoed the views of the entire council when she said an end of point test was not the right way to determine an apprentice's competence or a final grade for their Apprenticeship. She said: "Giving apprentices a test at the end of their Apprenticeship; does that not take away from what an Apprenticeship is? Apprenticeships are about work."

However, despite calling for grading, the IAC was staunchly opposed to Apprenticeships being reduced to a single qualification.

Ashley added: "The different qualifications that make up an Apprenticeship – Technical Certificates, NVQs, degrees, etc – help us to specialise. It also gives us something at the end of an Apprenticeship that is transferable. We definitely would not like to see that disappear."

The group consists of 14 apprentices aged 18 to 24 years old, from companies including: Airbus, BAE Systems, Caunton Engineering, DAF Trucks, Ford Dealerships, Ford GB, KMF, MBDA, National Grid, Nestlé, Rolls-Royce and Vauxhall.