

IBMS Statement on Apprenticeship Degrees

September 2022

The Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) recognises that employers are keen to use their apprenticeship levy to work in partnership with local colleges and universities to train biomedical scientists and support staff.

Apprenticeship routes for laboratory staff and for those wishing to gain Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registration increase access and participation to further and higher education, providing value for money training and affordable qualifications at level 4 and level 6 (degree level).

Apprenticeships provide the means to enhance our healthcare provision by training colleagues already in employment, or providing opportunities for recruiting new staff, by developing their skills through education and training to become biomedical scientists. Importantly, apprentices work and study at the same time (i.e. earn while they learn). This supports workforce planning and can help to resolve recruitment and retention issues identified in some regions in the UK. Further, apprenticeships provide a way to upskill the workforce and provide opportunities for career progression.

Available Apprenticeships

There are currently three apprenticeships that may be of interest to colleagues in Pathology Services. These are described briefly below, with links to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education website for more information:

The level 2 Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship standard was approved in 2016, with the Academy of Healthcare Science as the External Quality Assurance agency and is currently undergoing review: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/healthcare-support-worker-v1-0>

The level 4 Healthcare Science Associate apprenticeship standard was approved in 2016 with the Academy of Healthcare Science as the External Quality Assurance agency and is currently undergoing review: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/healthcare-science-associate-v1-0>

The Level 6 Healthcare Science Practitioner apprenticeship standard was approved in 2017 with the Office for Students as the External Quality Assurance agency: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/healthcare-science-practitioner-integrated-degree-v1-0>

Approved providers for each of these apprenticeships are listed in the tabs on the right-hand side of each apprenticeship standard pages above.

In development

A new L6 Biomedical Scientist standard is expected to be launched towards the end of 2022 which will replace the current L6 Healthcare Science Practitioner Standard. This new standard will follow the IBMS registration portfolio more closely in terminology and structure. The main difference however, will be the removal of the End Point Assessment. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education are “simplifying and strengthening” apprenticeships that have a “statutory

regulator” and an “established professional competency test”. Therefore, for this new standard, the IBMS Registration Training Portfolio ‘verification’ will replace the end point assessment in terms of competency assessment and the independent assessment that will take place via the exam board at the education provider.

Professional Recognition

All healthcare science practitioners are eligible for registration on the Academy for Healthcare Science (HCS) accredited register (which is the HCS register recognised and supported by Health Education England (HEE)). Completion of the current Healthcare Science Practitioner apprenticeship in the Life Sciences disciplines and subsequently the new biomedical scientist apprenticeship also confers eligibility to apply for statutory regulation with the HCPC as a biomedical scientist. The apprenticeship programme must have IBMS accreditation, an integrated placement and successful completion of the Registration Training Portfolio as part of the degree programme. Once awarded, the apprentices will be eligible to register with the HCPC, therefore increasing the number of colleagues qualified for registration.

Routes to Registration

The IBMS has four programmes that are approved by the HCPC as routes to registration as a biomedical scientist. Whilst we acknowledge this can sometimes cause confusion, the increased flexibility provided by these IBMS routes enables employers to have a greater choice in the graduates they employ as trainees or registered biomedical scientists.

HCPC approved programmes provided by the IBMS:

1. Certificate of Competence (IBMS accredited BSc Biomedical Science degree containing the Registration Training Portfolio) - approved March 2010.

This route includes Level 6 Healthcare Science Practitioner (Life Sciences) degree apprenticeships

2. Certificate of Competence (IBMS accredited BSc Biomedical Science degree followed by the Registration Training Portfolio) - approved March 2010

3. Certificate of Competence (Non -accredited BSc degree followed by the Registration Training Portfolio) - approved March 2010

4. Certificate of Competence by Equivalence (Biomedical Scientist) (Non -accredited BSc degree followed by several years of laboratory experience where the applicant can demonstrate they are performing at the level of a biomedical scientist. The applicant maps their evidence to the equivalence portfolio) - approved August 2015.

Apprenticeship Delivery in Universities

The IBMS is committed to working with higher education institutions and employers who are considering the future provision of apprenticeship degrees. We advocate early engagement in the process in order to guide higher education institutes on how best to meet our requirements for degree accreditation.

IBMS accreditation is based on the content of BSc biomedical science degree programme that the apprenticeship is based on, conforming to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 2019 subject benchmark statement for biomedical sciences. Specifically, in combination with the IBMS Registration Training Portfolio, these degree apprenticeship programmes enable graduates to demonstrate they have met all the HCPC standards of proficiency for registration as a biomedical scientist working in clinical pathology laboratories.

It is important to note that, in the context of Level 6 Healthcare Science Practitioner and the new biomedical scientist apprenticeship degrees, ONLY programmes accredited by the IBMS with integral placements that include the completion of the IBMS Registration Training Portfolio (i.e. Applied Biomedical Science or Healthcare Science degrees in Life Sciences) are suitable for adaptation to an apprenticeship degree.

As IBMS accreditation is against specific criteria approved by the HCPC, any changes or adaptations of existing IBMS accredited degrees must be formally submitted to the IBMS Education Department (by email education@ibms.org) for assessment against our accreditation criteria. If a university that offers only a 3 year BSc Biomedical Science programme wishes to develop an apprenticeship route, they must complete documentation for a full accreditation of the apprenticeship as this is a degree programme containing an integrated placement.

If you are planning to develop an apprenticeship route, please contact Dr Sue Jones, Executive Head of Education in order to initiate a dialogue on this matter as failure to inform the IBMS of changes to your programme could lead to withdrawal of accreditation, including the use of the IBMS Registration Training Portfolio.