Apprenticeships & AI

Funding clarity and skills strategies for 2026

City&Guilds

SPEAKER INTRODUCTIONS

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BALTIC
APPRENTICESHIPS

Navigating Change: The future of apprenticeships and the role of A.I

AGENDA

1. **AI Readiness**

2. **AI Opportunity Landscape**

3. **The Ofsted Lens**

4. **The Baltic Approach**

   1. AI Taskforce

   2. AI Accelerator

   3. AI Programmes

5. **Open Discussion**

6. **Q&A**

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AI READINESS

88%

...of UK CIOs say AI is now essential to achieving their organisation's business priorities

Expereo / IDC

66%

...of UK enterprises report measurable productivity improvements from the use of AI technologies

IBM UK

32%

...of UK organisations say they struggle to keep pace with the rapid development of AI technologies.

Expereo / IDC

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AI OPPORTUNITY LANDSCAPE

Employer Insights
- Growing demand for confident AI adoption (not just tools, but capability)
- Increasing focus on productivity, automation, and better decision making
- Need for safe, ethical and compliant usage (risk, governance, data protection)
- Employers want fast, flexible skills solutions (not always full programmes)

Market & Trends
- AI skills are becoming core within digital roles
- Rapid growth in AI upskilling and applied practical learning

Government Agenda
- Government priorities are placing increased emphasis on AI skills development to:
    - Address national skills gaps
    - Improve workforce readiness for future roles
    - Support productivity and economic growth
- Shorter, fundable skills development – including the introduction of 'apprenticeship units' delivered through the Growth and Skills Levy
- We know that in the first wave, AI for Leaders is a priority area for levy-funded short courses

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THE OFSTED LENS

In the new Ofsted framework, safeguarding has not seen any changes, other than the way it is graded (MET or NOT MET), however there are some areas currently coming through as current 'hot topics' for OFSTED:

AI is increasingly seen by OFSTED as both an *opportunity* and a *risk*. Their current focus is on how providers ensure AI use is **safe, ethical, age/ability-appropriate**, and does not expose learners to harm. They are focusing on topics such as:

- Exposure to Harmful, Inappropriate or Extremist Content
- Predatory or Manipulative AI Interactions
- Learner Privacy, Data Protection and Digital Footprint
- Bias, Discrimination and Inequality
- Over Reliance and Reduced Critical Thinking
- Authenticity Risks and Assessment Integrity
- Deepfakes, Identify Manipulation and Online Abuse
- Accessibility Misuse

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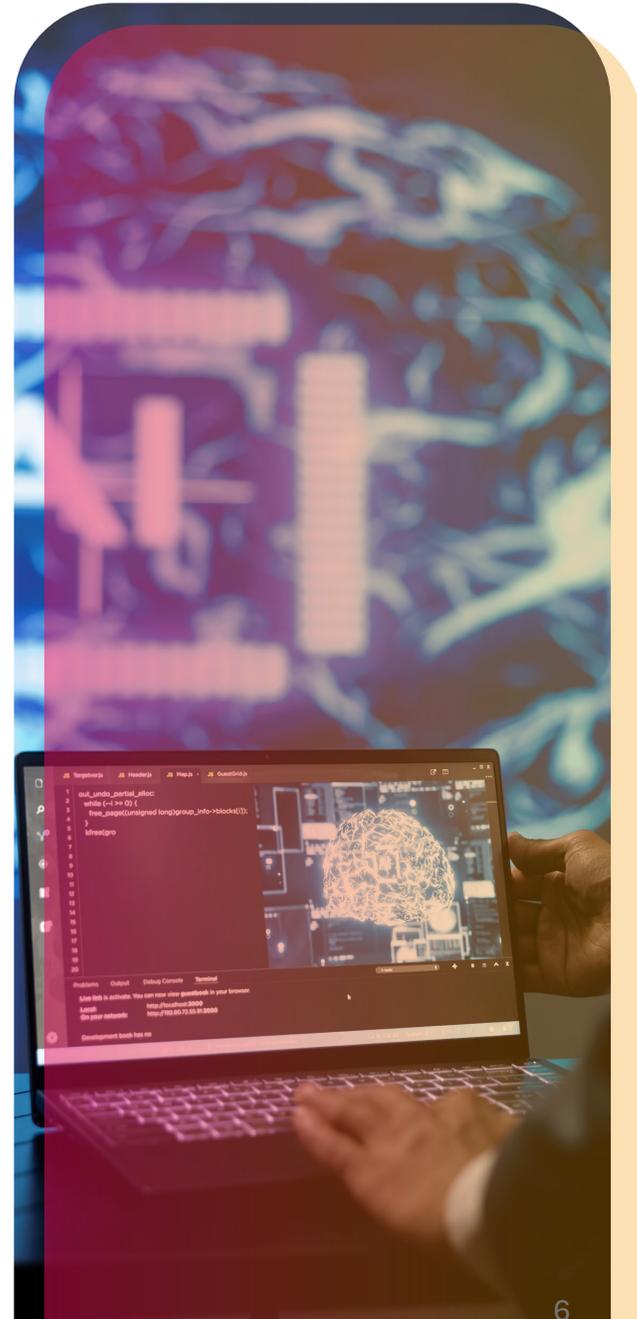
IN SUMMARY, EDUCATION PROVIDERS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY.

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THE BALTIC APPROACH: INTERNAL AI TASKFORCE

Navigating change is difficult, but every organisation must start somewhere. For us, we decided to appoint an internal AI committee to innovate, collaborate and lead the AI conversation.

WHAT IT IS

The AI Product Taskforce exists to shape Baltic's AI stance by:

- Defining what Baltic's AI products should include
- Translating employer and learner demand into clear, deliverable product opportunities
- To understand where in the apprenticeship journey AI can be embedded and understood
- How we teach safe, responsible and ethical AI use to all learners
- Producing recommendations and priorities that can be taken forward with SLT

WHAT IT ISNT

To set expectations, this Taskforce was not:

- A 'Dragon's Den' for unrelated internal ideas
- A decision-making group for resourcing, budget, or operational changes
- A one-off brainstorm – meetings will result in actions, owners, and progress

THE BALTIC APPROACH: THE AI ACCELERATOR

Rather than attempting to restrict the growing use of generative AI, we made a deliberate decision to lead from the front.

We introduced mandatory AI literacy training for every apprentice, ensuring all learners, across every programme, role, and level, are equipped to use AI responsibly and effectively.

MODULE 1: INTRO TO AI

This course provides an introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI), combining essential foundations with the latest developments shaping technology and the workplace. Learners will explore how AI works, where it's headed, and how to use it responsibly and effectively.

WHAT'S COVERED:

- Foundations of AI
- History & Timeline
- Future of Work
- Practical Application
- Agentic AI
- Responsible AI

MODULE 2: PROMPT ENGINEERING

This course offers a practical framework for mastering prompt engineering, giving learners the tools to design strategic prompts that maximise the potential of Generative AI. By applying advanced techniques, participants will create more accurate, relevant, and valuable outputs.

WHAT'S COVERED:

- Prompt Engineering Foundations
- Strategic Prompt Design
- Structuring Interactions
- Using Personas
- Refining Prompts
- Evaluating Outputs

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MODULE 3: PROGRAMME SPECFIC AI MODULE

Launching in May, **Phase 2** of the AI Accelerator Academy takes our approach to the next level. Building on the strong foundations of Intro to AI and Prompt to Perform, apprentices will now benefit from a third, programme-specific module designed to make their AI learning directly relevant to their role.

This new phase ensures that apprentices are not just AI-literate but are able to apply AI as a practical tool within their profession. Phase 2 marks a shift from general AI awareness to embedded, industry-focused skills that deliver measurable impact for both apprentices and their employers.

THE BALTIC APPROACH: OUR AI APPRENTICESHIPS

🚀 **LEVEL 4 AI & DIGITAL CHAMPION**

leads digital transformation and change initiatives

INDUCTIONS FROM MARCH 2026

🤖 **LEVEL 4 AI & AUTOMATION PRACTITIONER**
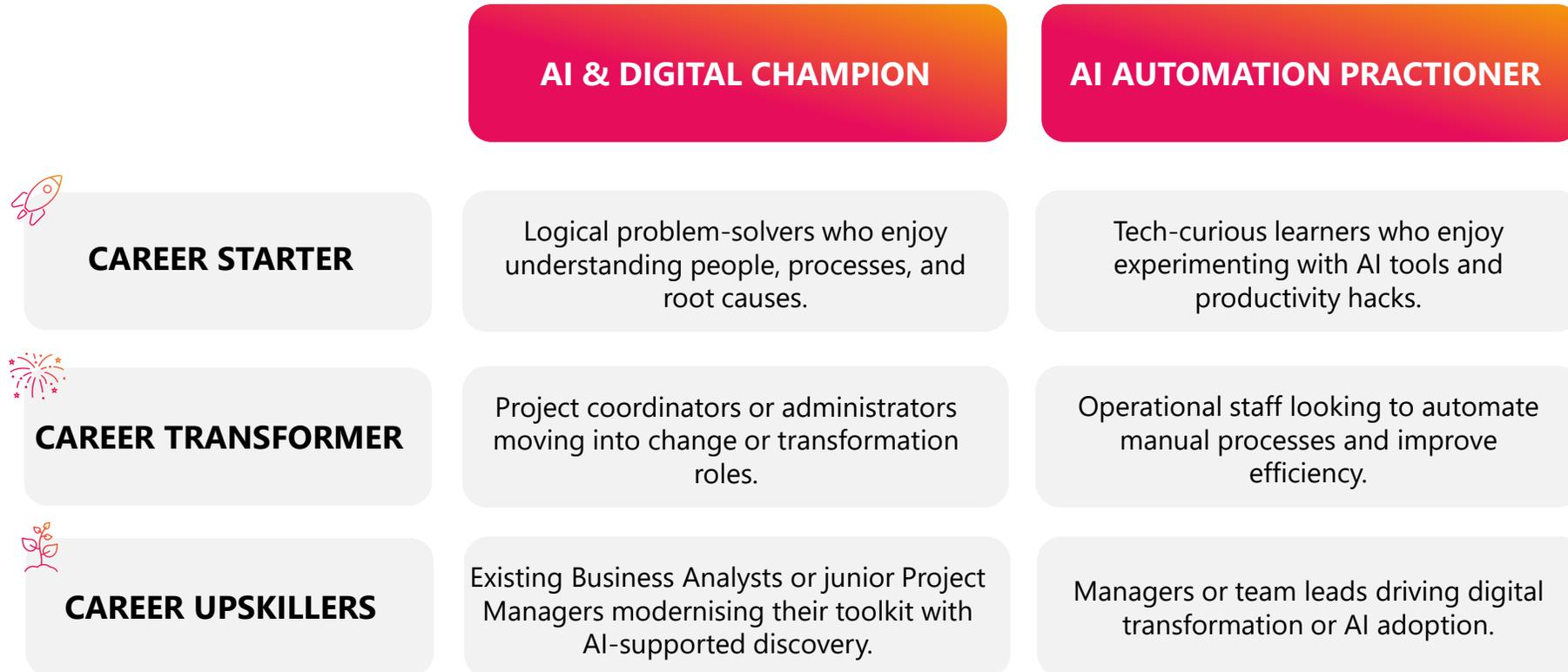
builds and deploys AI and automated solutions

INDUCTIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 2026

THE BALTIC APPROACH: OUR AI APPRENTICESHIPS

	AI & DIGITAL CHAMPION *leads adoption and change*	**AI AUTOMATION PRACTIONER** *builds and deploys solutions*
FOCUS	Understanding business problems and shaping effective change	Applying AI and automation to improve productivity
ROLE	Defines problems and ensures solutions meet business needs	Builds and governs automated and AI-driven solutions
QUESTION	Are we solving the right problem?	How can we automate this with AI?
OUTPUT	AI-supported discovery, analysis, and process design	Direct deployment of AI tools and automation
TECHNICAL DEPTH	Low-Medium	Medium
CHANGE FOCUS	High	High
FOR COMPANIES LOOKING TO:	Deliver effective transformation and reduce failed change	Increase efficiency through responsible AI adoption

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THE BALTIC APPROACH: OUR AI APPRENTICESHIPS

	AI & DIGITAL CHAMPION	AI AUTOMATION PRACTIONER
CAREER STARTER	Logical problem-solvers who enjoy understanding people, processes, and root causes.	Tech-curious learners who enjoy experimenting with AI tools and productivity hacks.
CAREER TRANSFORMER	Project coordinators or administrators moving into change or transformation roles.	Operational staff looking to automate manual processes and improve efficiency.
CAREER UPSKILLERS	Existing Business Analysts or junior Project Managers modernising their toolkit with AI-supported discovery.	Managers or team leads driving digital transformation or AI adoption.

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DISCUSSION:

HOW IS YOUR ORGANISATION CURRENTLY RESPONDING TO THE GROWING NEED FOR AI LITERACY?

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SESSION CLOSING

ANY QUESTIONS?

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What's *happening now*

- 700+ standards reviewed by August 2026:

    - 300+ EPAOs now AOs (155 Ofqual recognised)

- Skills England published the general requirements and 93 standards listed as prioritised:

    - Current standards have been out for consultation over the last few months, inc; ICT, Network Engineering, Digital Support Technician, Content Creator and Data Technician

- Ofqual consultation closed for regulatory reform:

    - Due to be published Spring 2026

What *we know*
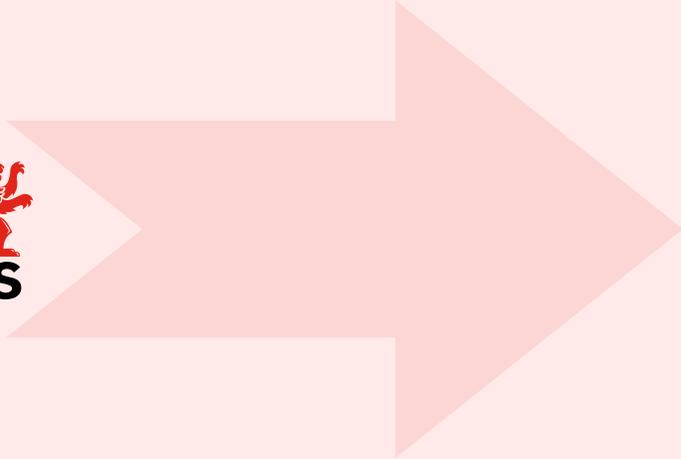
1	Assessment will be more proportionate to the competency being tested and removes any duplication.
2	Assessment plans can be designed to allow assessment to take place on-programme.
3	Training providers can deliver and mark elements of some assessment plans, AOs will still shape the assessment and ensure the validity of outcomes.
4	Verification that behaviours have been demonstrated will be provided by employers.
5	Alignment with IS-8: Focus will be on sectors noted in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025, to support skills growth.
6	Assessment plans will be short, high level and contain the minimum number of assessment methods for validity.

What *we know*

Requirements and guidance for apprenticeship assessment

Assessments

No minimum number of assessments

Each apprenticeship assessment plan will set out one required assessment method which must be used in each version of the apprenticeship's assessment that is made available..

Assessment organisations will select from appropriate methods to assess the remaining content where required, balancing validity and reliability with delivering proportionate assessments that reduce assessment burden.

An apprenticeship assessment plan will have as a minimum:

- Introduction,
- Assessment outcomes,
- Assessment requirements,
- Performance descriptors.

Additional qualifications mandated within occupational standards

Additional qualifications can be mandated as a completion requirement for an apprenticeship.

They are determined on a case-by-case basis for individual standards for one of the following reasons:

- The qualification is a regulatory or legal requirement to operate in that occupation

- The qualification is required for professional body membership

- The qualification has such currency in the labour market that an apprentice would be at a significant disadvantage without it

Where the mandated qualification fully covers the required knowledge and skills statements no additional assessment is needed.

City & Guilds have done their first round of consultations around the new assessment plans for AI and Automation Practitioner, Information Communication Technician, Network Engineer, Data Analyst and Content Creator – please reach out if you would like to feed back.

What *we know*

Requirements and guidance for apprenticeship assessment

Gateway to completion

The achievement of any additional qualifications mandated within the occupational standard.

The achievement of English and maths qualifications, as per the latest version of the apprenticeship funding rules.

Verification of behaviours

It is the responsibility of the employer to review behaviours throughout the apprentice's programme and confirm sufficient demonstration of these behaviours before a certificate can be requested.

City & Guilds will be providing a tool kit to support our customers sign off behaviours.

External Quality Assurance

Ofqual and The Office for Students and other bodies on specific standards.
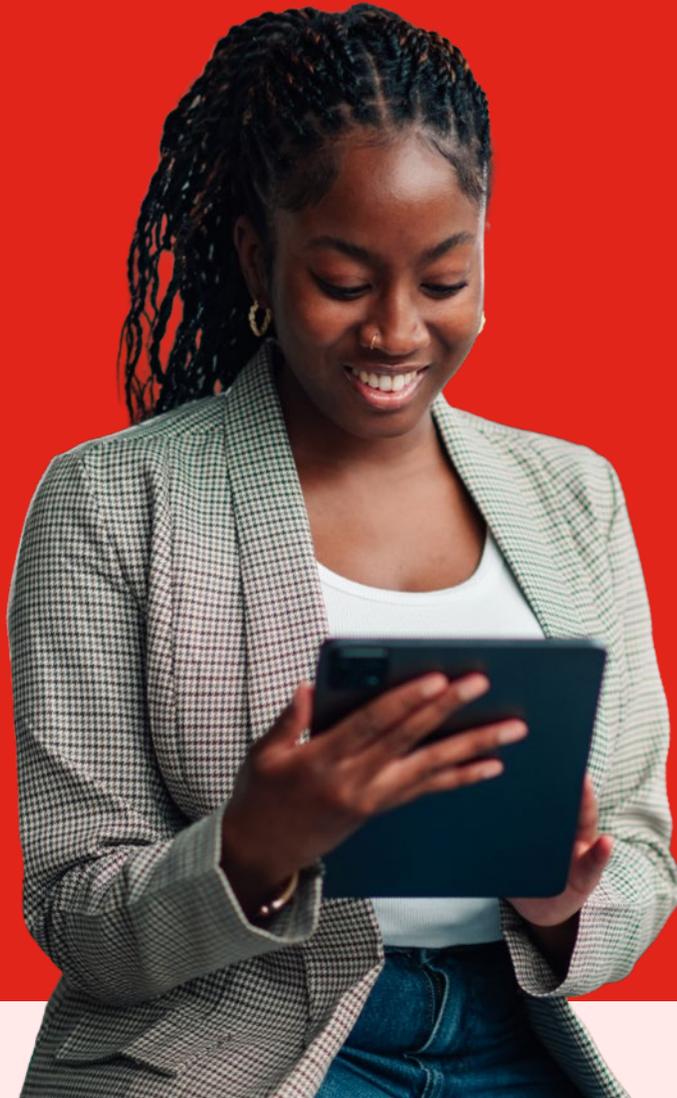
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Discussion *session*

Purpose

We're shaping our approach to apprenticeship assessment through sector engagement and design thinking - your input will help validate our insights to create practical, effective solutions for providers, employers, and learners.

- **Delivering internal assessment** – capacity, quality, consistency, employer confidence, support

- **Managing the transition** – staff upskilling, guidance, clarity, employer engagement

Time

10 minutes for discussion and feedback.

What *City & Guilds service* will look like

A new assessment service is being explored to support the transition to internal assessment for several of our standards.

We continue to offer a **comprehensive range of mandatory qualifications and non-mandatory qualifications** to complement and enhance your on-programme offer.

- Underpinned with technical expertise and support resources to help you plan and deliver successfully.

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What *City & Guilds service* will look like

Two approval pathways to deliver apprentice assessment:

1. Fast-track approval
to ensure a smooth transition for customers wanting to continue or expand provision in a sector you already work in

- You can add an apprenticeship assessment using our express approval route if you already offer an aligned technical qualification

2. Full approval
if delivering a new sector, or are new to City & Guilds

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Working *together*

Future face-to-face and online networks, webinars and events

Keep up to date on announcements and developments

- Visit our apprenticeship reform webpage

Your Voice – Our customer community research platform

- Give feedback on areas that interest you, take part in activities and earn rewards.

Customer councils

- Sector voice, shape the product offering and approach for your sector

Digital Events

[City & Guilds Level 4 Cyber Security Technologist v1.1 Webinar](#) - 19th February 2026

[City & Guilds Level 3 Multi-channel Marketer v1.1 Webinar](#) - 5th March 2026

[City & Guilds - General EPA Update - Digital Sector Webinar](#) - 21st April 2026

[City & Guilds - General EPA Update - Digital Sector Webinar](#) - 3rd June 2026

[City & Guilds - General EPA Update - Digital Sector Webinar](#) - 9th July 2026

We would like to say…

Thank you

About City & Guilds

City & Guilds is the global skills partner, empowering people, organisations and economies to develop the skills they need for growth. With almost 150 years of trusted expertise, we support people into work, help them develop on the job and move into the next job.

We work with Governments, employers, training providers, colleges and industry stakeholders to design and deliver high-quality training, qualifications, assessments and credentials that lead to meaningful career progression. We understand the life changing link between skills development, social mobility and success. Our solutions span critical sectors including construction, engineering, transport, energy and electrical, serving over 1 million learners annually.

Through our comprehensive portfolio of brands and trusted global network, we set industry-wide standards for technical, behavioural and commercial skills to improve performance and productivity. We believe you can achieve your potential - and we're here to help make it happen.

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