

### Background to this brief

**The National Skills Academy for IT is a vendor neutral, not-for-profit organisation, dedicated to making the UK home to the most valuable technologists in the world. The National Skills Academy for IT has been designed by employers for the benefit of everyone working with IT.**

In order to better understand the IT training needs and related development practices of UK businesses, the National Skills Academy for IT commissioned a major survey of UK employers over the summer/autumn of 2011. In the course of this work some 4,700 telephone interviews were carried out in total, including 3,768 amongst the IT & Telecoms community and 932 with firms operating in other business sectors. On completion of the survey work the survey data was checked, cleaned and weighted in accordance with estimates of the UK business population provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The resulting data set was then utilised to produce a series of short papers for the use of the Academy, our partners and all those with an interest in the IT and Telecoms labour market. This is the first report and looks at the take up and levels of satisfaction with IT&T apprenticeships voiced by UK employers.

### Summary of findings

IT&T (IT & Telecoms) apprenticeships offer UK companies a cost effective means of attracting and developing new recruits for specific IT&T roles. Latest estimates from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggest that approximately 80,000 IT&T professionals had ever undertaken or were undertaking an apprenticeship (of any type) during the third quarter of 2011, whilst figures from 'The Data Service' show that during the 2010/2011 period 7,500 people completed an IT/Telecoms apprenticeship and 12,000 started on the programme.

Results from the National Skills Academy for IT survey in 2011 reveal that less than one in ten employers of IT&T specialists have ever taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice, though of these more than a quarter did so during the previous year. Where IT/Telecoms apprentices had not been taken on it was most often as staff were not needed or that recruits were not taken on at this level.

Levels of satisfaction with the IT&T Apprenticeship programme appear near universally positive and over half of participating organisations thought their initial expectations had been exceeded with respect to: associated costs, value for money, loyalty of apprentices and the time required for them to become productive. More than nine out of ten participating organisations stated that they would recommend the programme as a means of filling IT&T positions.

Organisations that had taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice during the previous 12 months are also likely to do so over the coming year and, on balance will either maintain or increase the number of IT/Telecoms apprentices sought. However, the vast majority of companies that had not participated with the scheme considered it unlikely that this would change over the coming 12 months.

## 1) About the IT/telecoms apprenticeship programme

IT&T Apprenticeships offer UK companies a cost effective means of attracting and developing new recruits for specific IT&T roles. By following a comprehensive programme of on-the-job training and off-the job study, new entrants are able to develop the specific skills needed for a role in IT/Telecoms whilst securing recognised industry certifications and enjoying a regular income. At the same time, employers can benefit from a supply of new entrants that can be developed to meet their exact skills requirements utilising financial support from the government.

*The core IT/Telecoms Apprenticeship frameworks are designed by employers and can be adapted to suit any IT&T role*

Generic apprenticeship frameworks have been developed to encompass the breadth of skills needed for entry level jobs in IT/telecoms. The frameworks also cover related skills needed for employment, such as employee rights and responsibilities and personal skills. These frameworks are flexible, and through the careful selection of appropriate qualifications, enable the creation of a specific course of development tailored towards any entry level IT&T role<sup>i</sup>. The apprenticeship frameworks are regulated by law and are designed through consultation with employers by e-skills UK and a range of IT training organisations to ensure relevance, currency and efficacy.

## 2) Individual participation with the IT&T apprenticeship programme

*Around 80,000 IT&T specialists are undertaking or have completed an apprenticeship*

Latest estimates from the ONS Labour Force Survey suggest that approximately 80,000 IT & Telecoms specialists had either undertaken/were undertaking an apprenticeship during the third quarter of 2011 representing 7% of all IT&T professionals working in the UK at that time. Current/previous participants with the scheme can be found working in a variety of IT&T roles though IT&T Engineers are most likely to have been involved with the programme (as illustrated within table 1 below<sup>ii</sup>).

**Table 1: Current/future participation with the apprenticeship scheme amongst IT&T specialists<sup>ii</sup>**

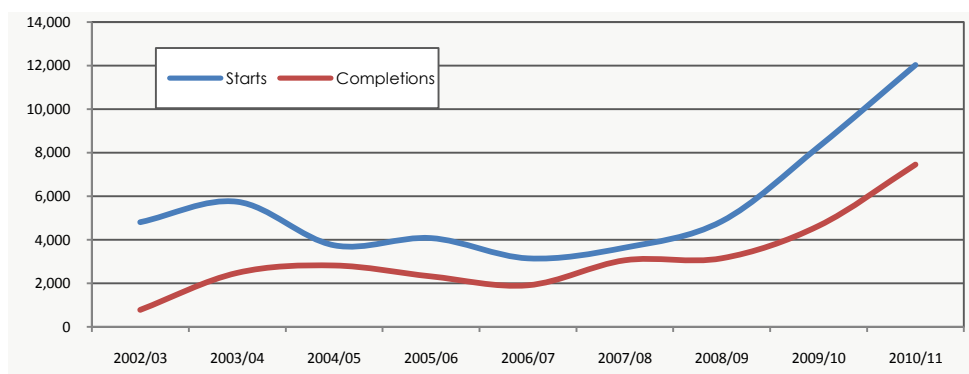
	Total employment for occupational group	Number undertaking/completed an apprenticeship	Percentage undertaking/completed an apprenticeship
IT&T Managers/Directors	272,000	18,000	7%
IT&T Professionals (excluding managers)	538,000	29,000	5%
IT&T Technicians	189,000	12,000	6%
IT&T Engineers	90,000	21,000	23%
<b>IT&amp;T specialists</b>	<b>1,089,000</b>	<b>80,000</b>	<b>7%</b>

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Q3.2011

Unfortunately, it is not possible to say how many of these IT&T specialists in total are undertaking or have completed an IT&T related apprenticeship due to the way in which data is collected by ONS (i.e. the total 'stock' of IT&T apprenticeships). 'The Data Service' does, however, provide a detailed breakdown of IT&T apprenticeship

starts/completions each year, and during 2010/11 there were reported to be 12,000 new starts and 7,500 completions in total.

Figure 1: IT&T apprenticeships started/completed, 2002-2011



Source: The Data Service, 2012

### 3) Employer participation with the IT&T apprenticeship programme

*Less than one in ten employers have taken people on under an IT/Telecoms apprenticeship*

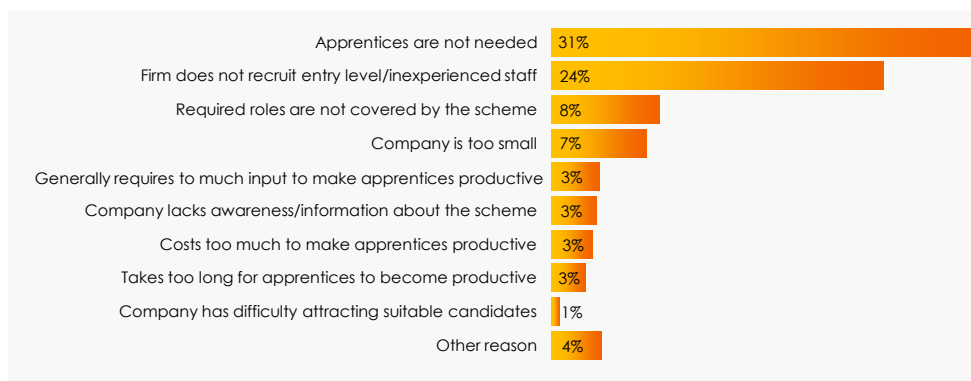
Results from the National Skills Academy Employer survey show that overall, around 6% of companies in the UK<sup>iii</sup> have, at some time, taken on at least one person under an IT/Telecoms apprenticeship and that just over one quarter (27%) of these have done so during the previous year. The percentage 'taking apprentices'/'taking them in the last year' was much higher amongst large firms (19% and 44%) and those operating in the IT&T sector (21% and 36%) however.

For those that had never taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice, it appears that in general, this was not due to negative perceptions of the quality of apprentices (mentioned by less than 0.5% of respondents), related productivity issues (less than 10%), or the employer requirements associated with the programme (6%). Instead, the most commonly cited 'reason' for not taking an IT/telecoms apprentice was simply that apprentices were not needed (31%) or that the company did not recruit entry level/inexperienced staff (25%).

The next most common reason was that the scheme does not cover the roles for which employers were seeking to recruit (8%). However, given that the scheme is inherently flexible in this respect it would seem that this particular concern was more related to the level of company awareness about the scheme (cited separately by 3% of respondents).

Employers rarely cite productivity, costs or employer responsibilities as a barrier to taking on an IT/Telecoms apprentice

Figure 2: Reasons why companies do not take on IT/Telecoms apprentices



Source: National Academy for IT, Employer survey 2011  
Based on responses from 2,481 businesses

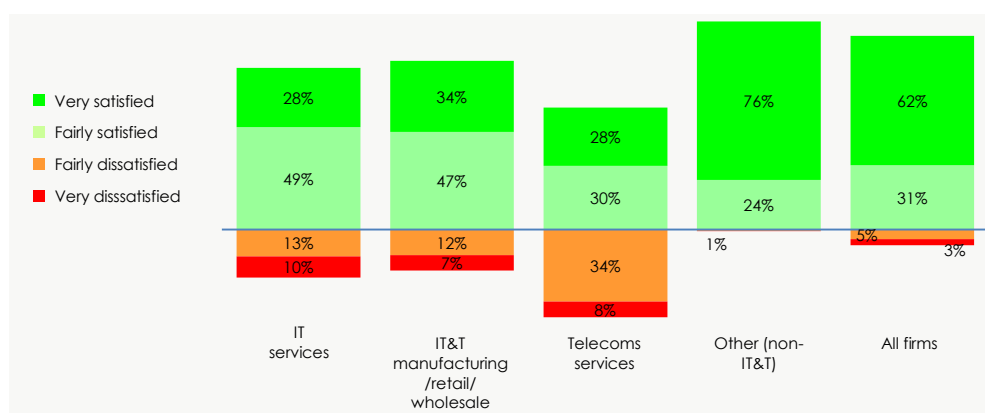
#### 4) Views of participating companies on the IT&T apprenticeship programme

Levels of satisfaction with apprenticeships as a means of filling IT/telecoms positions are universally high

More than nine out of ten employers (92%) that had taken on an IT/telecoms apprentice stated that they were either 'very' (62%) or 'fairly' (31%) satisfied with the use of apprenticeships as a means of filling IT&T positions<sup>iv</sup>.

Levels of satisfaction with the scheme were generally found to be similar irrespective of firm size and location (i.e. around nine out of ten employers being satisfied in most cases) though by sector, IT&T firms appeared to be less satisfied on average than other businesses (just 76% stating that they were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied). Moreover, the levels of satisfaction voiced by firms providing Telecoms services were still lower as illustrated in figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Level of satisfaction with the IT&T apprenticeship programme by business focus



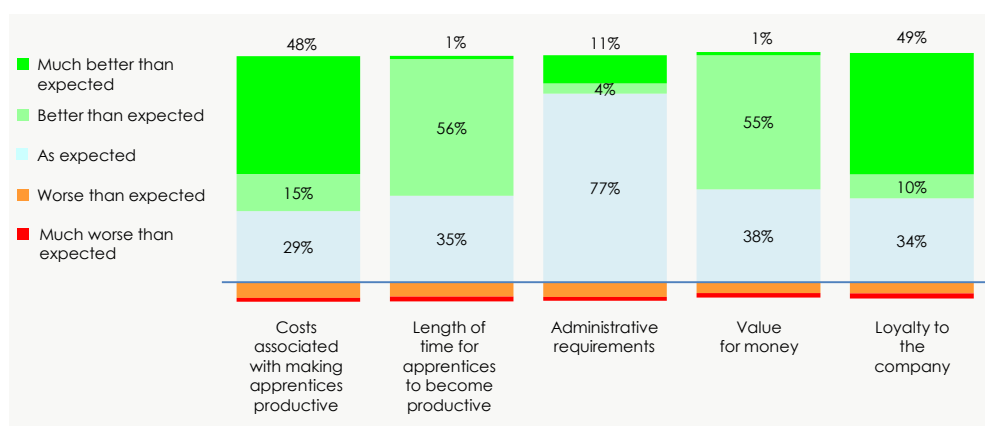
Source: National Academy for IT, Employer survey 2011  
Based on responses from 697 businesses

## Insight on IT&T Apprenticeships

*More than half of employers that had taken an IT apprentice last year thought associated costs were lower and value for money higher than they had anticipated*

When questioned in more detail about how the apprenticeship programme had matched up with their prior perceptions of the scheme, participating employers once again projected a very favourable view. More specifically, over half of respondents stated that the programme had outperformed their initial expectations as regard: associated costs, value for money, loyalty of apprentices and the time required for them to become productive.

**Figure 4: Employer views on the IT&T apprenticeship programme**



Source: National Academy for IT, Employer survey 2011  
Based on responses from 697 businesses

Once again, firms operating within the IT&T sector tended to be slightly less positive as a rule than other businesses who had taken on IT/Telecoms apprentices, though differences were minimal in most cases bar company inputs/requirements (where 24% of IT&T firms thought them higher than initially expected compared with 20% of other firms) and loyalty (where 33% of IT&T firms thought loyalty was less than anticipated compared with 30% of other firms).

*IT apprentices even more likely to have exceeded the expectations of SME employers than was the case for larger businesses*

Opinion also diverges significantly with size of firm and SMEs that had taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice were much more likely to consider associated costs, lead time to productive working, value for money and loyalty in particular to have been better than originally anticipated than was the case amongst large employers.

**Table 2: Employer views on the IT&T apprenticeship programme, by firm size**

Firm size	Costs associated with making apprentices productive		Length of time for apprentices to become productive		Administrative requirements		Value for money		Loyalty to the company	
	SME	Large	SME	Large	SME	Large	SME	Large	SME	Large
Better	66%	13%	60%	11%	16%	10%	58%	23%	61%	37%
Same	26%	79%	33%	73%	77%	81%	36%	68%	33%	53%
Worse	8%	8%	7%	16%	7%	8%	6%	9%	6%	10%

Source: National Academy for IT, Employer survey 2011  
Based on responses from 697 businesses

Considering that expectations concerning the IT/telecoms apprenticeship programme had been exceeded in such a large proportion of cases, and with regards to such important measures (i.e. costs, value for money etc), it is perhaps unsurprising to find that more than nine out of ten (94%) firms that had taken on an IT&T apprentice stated that they would recommend the programme as a way of filling IT&T positions to other employers. This finding was true for both SMEs and large firms and willingness to recommend the programme was only slightly lower amongst those operating in the IT&T sector (80% in this case).

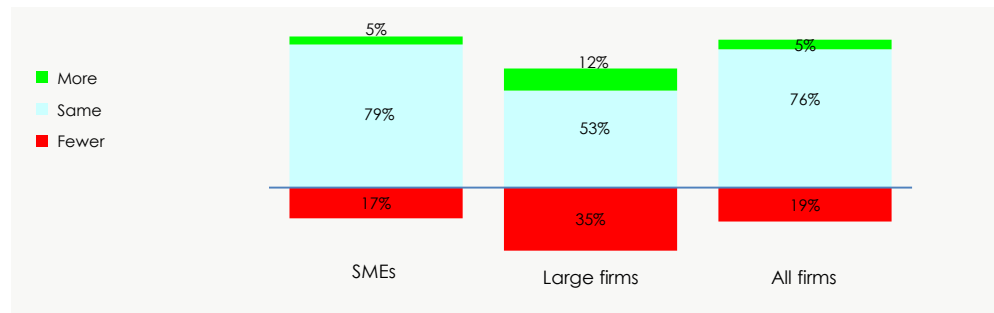
## 5) Future participation with the IT&T apprenticeship programme

*More than eight out of ten employers that had taken an IT/Telecoms apprentice last year are likely to do the same over the coming 12 months*

A high proportion (83%) of firms that had taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice over the past 12 months stated that they would also be 'very' or 'fairly' likely to do so during the coming year. Moreover, a similar proportion (81%) thought that the number taken on would be either the same or higher than during the previous year.

The potential for continued future participation appears higher amongst firms operating outside of the IT&T sector (as opposed to IT&T firms) together with those that are large in size (i.e. compared with SMEs). This said, in the case of large employers, though they are more likely to continue participating, a large proportion were of the view that the number of IT&T apprentices recruited would actually decline in the coming year (i.e. fewer apprentices per firm as a whole) as shown below:

**Figure 5: Planned intake of IT&T apprentices over the next 12 months, by firm size**



Source: National Academy for IT, Employer survey 2011  
Based on responses from 697 businesses

Those that had not taken on an IT/Telecoms apprentice during the previous year appeared unlikely to change their approach to the scheme as less than one in ten (9%) thought that they would be 'very' or 'fairly' likely to take an IT&T apprentice over the coming 12 months. Indeed, this stance appeared fairly intractable as 45% stated that nothing could be done to increase the likelihood of their taking on an IT&T apprentice over the following year.

### 6) About the National Skills Academy for IT

The National Skills Academy for IT is an employer-led partnership set up to promote excellence in IT learning and development. By providing IT&T Professionals with easily accessible, high quality learning and resources, we aim to ensure the UK has the technology skills needed to support innovation, increase competitiveness and promote economic growth.

To achieve this aim we offer a range of products and services for organisations and individuals alike. These include:

- Subscription services** - on-demand access to cost effective, world class e-learning, e-books, test preparations, mentoring and related resources
- Consultancy services** - helping employers improve skill levels and related management process by embedding the use of IT Professional Standards
- The IT Professional Profile** - a simple, free to use online tool for benchmarking skills against the IT Professional Standards
- Approved Training Partners** - access a comprehensive network of quality assured training providers
- Learning Pathways** - enabling the identification of skills, learning and qualifications required for successful progression within IT or Telecoms careers
- e-skills Apprenticeships** - a range of Apprenticeships at different levels developed in association with employers and providers of IT training

### 7) Further developments in IT Apprenticeships

We are working with training providers and employers to further develop our suite of IT Apprenticeships to meet the current and future skills needs of UK businesses. In particular we are:

- creating a '**sector managed apprenticeship**' to be managed in partnership with BT and delivered by SMEs, large employers and training providers. This will allow employers and apprentices to benefit from the experience of an organisation that has taken thousands of people through an apprenticeship programme, helping everything to run as smoothly as possible and to ensure that the maximum benefits of the programme are realised.
- developing our **higher level apprenticeship programme** as an alternative to traditional graduate recruitment. This programme will allow employers to attract and develop talent from an early age and will seek to develop both the technical and business skills needed by future IT leaders. The programme is already supported by major employers such as: Accenture, Barclays, Capgemini, HP, John Lewis, Logica, Microsoft, O2 and Visa Europe but we are still interested in hearing from other organisations who would like to help us design and develop this national programme of excellence.

To have your say, or for more information, please call us on: 0207 963 8920, mail: apprenticeships@e-skills.com or visit us at [www.itskillsacademy.ac.uk](http://www.itskillsacademy.ac.uk)

# 2011 Employer Survey

## Insight on IT&T Apprenticeships

### Notes on data sources and presentation of figures:

- 1) Figures displayed in section 2 taken from the ONS Labour Force Survey, Q3.11.
- 2) Numerical data rounded to nearest 1,000.
- 3) IT&T professionals are defined by a range of SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) codes, IT&T industry by SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) – details of which are available on request.
- 4) Survey data relates to companies that employ IT&T specialists only.
- 5) Figures presented in charts/tables may not always add up due to rounding.

### Endnotes:

- i) Ranging from QCF level 2 to QCF Level 4.
- ii) Note that participation could be with an IT&T related/other apprenticeship programme.
- iii) Apprenticeships may be/have been IT&T related or of another discipline.
- iv) That is companies employing two or more staff.