

## Call for submissions

### Hackathon special issue: innovative support mechanisms in apprenticeships

#### Introduction

One of the benefits of apprenticeships, in comparison with traditional education pathways, is the combination of theoretical education (off-the-job training), with practical on-the-job training (Chadwick et al., 2024). Chankseliani and Mohamed Anuar (2019) describe how this on-the-job training provides '*occupational socialisation*' – the opportunity to engage with a supportive network of formal and informal relationships which provide training, supervision, and other intervention (Evans and Cloutier, 2025). We know that, if supported effectively, apprentices can contribute to the success of not only their organisation, but the broader economic system as a whole (Garnett and Reynier, 2025; Gambin et al., 2016). Subsequently, via this hackathon special issue, we wish to explore, in depth, the innovative support mechanisms (human and other) which are deployed to enhance apprentice retention, achievement, and wellbeing.

#### What do we know at the moment?

Through existing research, we know that support mechanisms can be embedded into apprenticeship programme design. However, much of this research into support mechanisms focuses on the role of facilitators and mentors who compliment the teaching by providing ongoing guidance and support (McAdam and Perrin, 2025; Minton and Lowe, 2019), the tripartite relationship (Quew-Jones and Rowe, 2022), and the progress reviews which keep employers in the loop about how the apprentice is getting on (Taylor-Smith et al., 2023). There is, at present, little research on *other* support mechanisms, which may be informal, i.e., not integrated into programme design, and thus people may not even know about them – they are 'tacit.' We believe these other mechanisms do exist in employer providers, independent providers, Further Education (FE) colleges, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), but they are simply not being shared (Harrington, 2019). If we can tease these out via this hackathon special issue, we have an opportunity to contribute to quality of support for apprentices (Filliettaz, 2011).

#### Scope and topics

In relation to this topic, we invite submissions from any of the below stakeholders about support mechanisms that have aided the apprenticeship journey, or creative new (theoretical) ideas / solutions you have:

- **Apprentices:** you may be an apprentice on any level, on any standard; we want to capture your 'lived experiences' in particular (Quew-Jones, 2024a).

- **Educators:** you may be a leader, lecturer, trainer, assessor, coach, mentor, reviewer, or any other role operating within the apprenticeship space.
- **Employers:** you may work in a Human Resources (HR), Learning and Development (L&D) or other function which recruits and supports apprentices. Similarly, you may be a supervisor or line manager who has played the role of 'workplace mentor' to an apprentice during their learning journey.
- **Other parties:** for example, End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs), Awarding Organisations (AOs), Ofsted, Ofqual, other government departments and agencies, apprentice / employer representative bodies, trade unions, local and combined authorities, parents and carers, or careers advisors and schools.

We would like to hear about support strategies, approaches, and mechanisms which could be used in face-to-face, remote, or blended settings, to achieve impact such as the examples below:

- Support apprentice mental health and wellbeing (Vinson et al., 2024; Priestley, 2022).
- Create a sense of belonging amongst a community of apprentices (Forster-Heinzer et al., 2020).
- Enable apprentices 'voice' (Thomas et al., 2012).
- Facilitate knowledge exchange within and beyond the organisation for apprentice(s) (Quew-Jones, 2024b).
- Encourage apprentice agency or autonomy, i.e., facilitating responsibility (Kelly et al., 2022).

### Submission guidelines

We invite submissions in two formats, both of which should be accompanied by an [author declaration form](#) and can be submitted [here](#). Both are subject to editorial review and an initial editorial decision of 'accept,' 'accept with revisions,' or 'reject' will be made:

- **Account of practice / reflection:** please use this [template](#), providing a 150-word abstract, 1,000 – 2,500 words in the main body, and a reference list.
- **Poster presentation:** please use this [template](#), collating your information into the single slide. Please provide a separate mp3 audio file of up to 10 minutes of narration.

### Important dates

- **Call for papers announced:** 02 June 2025
- **Submission deadline:** 30 September 2025
- **Editorial decisions made and authors informed:** 28 October 2025

- **Revised manuscripts resubmitted:** 25 November 2025
- **Final decision:** 16 December 2025
- **Hackathon special issue published:** 19 December 2025

## Reference List

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