

Inquiry into Apprenticeships

Evidence from Creative Skillset Cymru

Creative Skillset Cymru response

**CONSULTATION INQUIRY INTO APPRENTICESHIPS IN WALES  
APRIL 2012:**

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Responses to the consultation may be made public. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the author are published along with the response unless you indicate otherwise. Would you prefer that your response is kept confidential?

Yes  **No**

Are you responding as an individual or representing an organisation or group?

Individual  **Organisation**

Please tick one of the following boxes that best describes your organisation:

**Sector Skills Council**

Standard Setting Body

Employer Trade

Unions Learning

Provider

Awarding Body

Other

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## Enterprise and Business Committee APP26

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**A National Assembly for Wales committee has opened a consultation on an inquiry into apprenticeships in Wales.**

**Among the questions the Enterprise and Business Committee will address is whether the system of apprenticeships is providing effective support to the Welsh economy and whether the current and future skills needs for employers in Wales are being met.**

#### Introduction

**Creative Skillset is the Sector Skills Council for the Creative Industries - we represent the Creative Media, Publishing and Fashion and Textiles. Creative Skillset Cymru's role is to take forward Creative Skillset's work with the rich and vibrant Creative Industries in Wales. The Creative Skillset Cymru National Board guides and advises Skillset's work in Wales within the context of its UK wide remit as a Sector Skills Council. The Board is made up of key industry representatives in Wales.**

**Creative and digital media (CDM) is one of the 9 priority sectors in Wales and developing the skills of our workforce and apprenticeships are paramount to growing this sector for the future.**

**The responses to this inquiry are made following Creative Skillset Cymru's pilot project for the 'Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media (ACDM) phase 1 from January 2011-January 2012 and the continuing phase 2 supported by the Welsh Government February 2012-January 2013.**

**The information and research provided in this response is taken from the following main sources, as well as Creative Skillset's general research portfolio.**

**In 2011, Arad Consulting undertook an independent Evaluation of the Skillset Apprenticeship in Creative Media pilot project and as a result made a number of key recommendations following interviews with stakeholders including: FE providers, apprentices and media employers. This research was conducted between May and December 2011.**

**TBR & Olsberg SPI undertook independent research entitled "The current skills needs of the Creative Industries in west Wales and the Valleys" (2011). This report is part of a programme of independent research commissioned by Skillset. The document presents the results of a detailed quantitative analysis of the skills issues experienced across the Creative Media sector in west Wales and the Valleys.**

- 1) Is the current apprenticeship system providing effective support to the Welsh economy?

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- a) Creative & Digital Media as a Priority Sector: Creative and digital media (CDM) is one of the 9 priority sectors in Wales and developing the skills of our workforce and apprenticeships are paramount to growing this sector for the future.

Figures for apprenticeships in CDM in Wales have increased by 50% between 2011 and 2012. Overall, Creative Skillset Cymru have engaged 30 apprentices and created a total of 30 NEW industry roles within the space of 14 months with 13 independent production companies across Wales and 2 key broadcasters including 10 placements at BBC Cymru Wales Roath Lock Studios.

80% of apprentices employed as part of the 2011 pilot went on to gain continued employment in the sector in Wales.

- b) Understanding the specific and changing needs of growth areas: Further research is needed into specific skills needs of varying sub sectors within the industry. It is important to understand the needs of specific sectors and that they vary; this is not a 'one size fits all' approach with apprenticeships and their various sub sectors.

Interactive and Digital Media is a huge prospective area for growth in Wales and the skills needs for this area of the industry are specialised and fast-changing.

Evaluation Recommendation 2: ARAD Consulting 2011: "Skillset should coordinate discussions between employers, colleges and OCR to consider whether the interactive media and broadcast media aspects...should be delivered as separate apprenticeship course."

- 2) Is the current apprenticeship system meeting the current and future skills needs of employers in Wales? If not, what needs to be improved?

- a) Length of Delivery: More time is needed than 12 months to embed, promote and sustain a new apprenticeship initiative within a new sector. Arad Evaluation: "Some stakeholders were of the opinion that the ACDM was already contributing to the sustainable growth of the sector... promoting sustainable career paths. All stakeholders considered that the ACDM has potential to develop further and to generate sustained impact. However most agreed it needs a longer term commitment from funders to make a greater impact on the sector."
- b) Developing talent & skills for Welsh employers: Employers recognise apprenticeships in creative and digital media to be an excellent opportunity for young people to break into the industry. The vast majority of employers interviewed as part of the independent evaluation conducted by Arad Consulting in 2011, considered that the ACDM had been designed with their skills and personnel needs in mind.

ACDM EMPLOYER FEEDBACK: *"Our apprentice has proved to be mature and professional with fantastic communication skills. He has also developed technical*

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*and creative skills that are reflected in the high quality work he continues to produce".*

- c) Sector Specific knowledge & skills for providers: It is important to ensure that apprenticeships are delivered by providers who have relevant industry knowledge and experience, particularly in the creative industries. This is paramount to engaging employers in the long term. Functions need to be developed that effectively monitor and evaluate providers to ensure that they have not only the relevant skills, but also they have an understanding of the industry the apprentices are working within. There is also a recommendation from the independent 'Arad consulting' report on the Skillset Apprenticeship in Creative and Digital Media pilot (2011) that employers are engaged in skills and knowledge sharing with providers.

ARAD's independent report (2011) outlines:

Employer Feedback: The director of an independent production company which was interviewed outlined that *"they haven't found the college very dynamic in linking with them to support the apprenticeship and that they appear to have little experience of working in the sector"*. Ongoing for CDM: Creative Skillset's 'Pick the Tick' initiative to accredit apprenticeship providers is currently being funded as a pilot in England in 2012. This ensures that providers are at the appropriate industry standard and have the right skills, experience and equipment to deliver effectively. It will be beneficial if there was capacity to develop this pilot for Wales.

It was also highlighted in the Creative Skillset commissioned research: TBR & Olsberg SPI "Future Skills needs of creative media employers in Wales" (2011) that greater dialogue with employers could bridge the gaps between industry and education. In general employers "felt that a closer and continued dialogue between industry and education would be beneficial to all. This would allow industry to inform training providers of their most up to date needs and issues".

In terms of best practice and capacity building: Creative & Digital Media industry professionals are now going through OCR accreditation so they are more adept at transferring their skills, and acting as educators.

- d) Understanding atypical sector work patterns: It is important to determine ways to work with small independent companies who work on the basis of commissions from broadcasters, often with limited time to plan their future resource and not a lot of Human Resources support. Further work required to determine if shared apprenticeships in the CDM sector would be effective - particularly if shared in partnership between broadcasters and independent sector - a central talent pool. This would need significant co-ordination. Employer Evaluation Feedback: *"In terms of sustainability, the employer had offered the apprentice a six month contract but noted that it was difficult to predict whether they would recruit more apprentices or retain their existing apprentice for longer period due to the unpredictable nature of the commissioning process"*

Further Comment:

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The TBR & Olsberg SPI Research to explore "Future Skills needs of creative media employers in Wales" (2011) concluded that creative apprenticeships address a number of the employer requirements for new entrants being 'work ready'. This is met through delivery of pre-training that includes modules such as 'Preparing to work in the creative industries' for all apprentices, which manages new entrant expectations prior to employment commencing.

- 3) With increased priority on apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds, are apprenticeships an attractive option for young people?
  - a) Creative Media apprenticeship employment placements are limited in Wales with a high level of interest from prospective applicants due to the nature of the sector/business. The main purpose for all apprentices interviewed in 2011 to undertake an apprenticeship was to improve future employment opportunities and gain valuable experience. Arad 2011: "Almost all apprentices in 2011 either agreed / strongly agreed that being on the ACDM has made them more employable, provided them with job specific and interpersonal skills making them more employable in the industry".

Apprentice "I think I am on the right path to becoming an editor, thanks to my work experience and the college work which has further developed my skills".

Apprentice: In terms of industry experience my expectations have been exceeded "

Apprentice: "We can give ideas in meetings and we are not treated like kids"

- 4) Do the systems for establishing Apprenticeship Standards and Frameworks and recruiting apprentices work effectively?
  - a) ACDM Recruitment: Arad Evaluation (2011): "Employers and stakeholders agreed that Creative Skillset Cymru's overall approach for marketing the ACDM was extremely effective and encouraged the involvement of partners from across the sector". The marketing, recruitment and workshop process needs to be sustainable for employers in future years. Development of effective process for the future and monitoring of this is key to the successful expansion of apprenticeships. Creative Skillset Cymru's apprenticeship recruitment process ensured that employers were able to pre-determine prospective employee's demonstrable passion, skills and abilities prior to engaging them as an apprentice.
  - b) Apprenticeship matching Service (AMS): This service is currently in pilot phase and requires further promotion and development to enable it to be utilised as a tool by creative industries and providers to recruit apprentices. The cost of recruitment within SME's in creative industries is significant and often the recruitment process is largely unstructured. Further recruitment and HR support for creative media businesses is required to enable sustainable growth. It will be beneficial if there was a recruitment toolkit for businesses and a

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framework to accompany AMS activities, including access to HR & recruitment advice from specialists in specific industries. A series of face to face advice surgeries and events to support businesses who wish to recruit.

- c) Understanding the creative industry in Wales is very important: Ensuring that Careers Wales staff and AMS employees have training and understanding of key activities relating to apprenticeships within varying creative media sectors is very important for the successful recruitment of apprentices. Sector specific training for Careers Wales and AMS staff would enable them to deliver advice & support to prospective apprentices and employers. Creative Skillset Cymru has already started to initiate this with AMS and Careers Wales as part of their continuing engagement in 2012 with apprenticeships in Wales with an aim to grow sector knowledge.
- d) Employer Support: Further promotion of Welsh Government's Young Recruits funding and it's benefits to employers is required, as well as increased training and mentoring support for new employers and mentors in conjunction with SSC's and awarding bodies, to manage expectations of apprenticeships for all stakeholders
- e) Industry & Online Promotion of apprenticeships it is vital to link with SSC's and sector networks. Arad Evaluation: "The majority of ACDM apprentices became aware or gained initial information from online sources. 1/3 of all apprentices learned about the vacancy from Skillset Cymru's newsletter emphasising the importance of Creative Skillset Cymru's on-going publicity tools". Apprentice " If you want to work in the (media)industry you will be on these mailing lists and you would have heard about the apprenticeship" ACDM Apprentice 2011
- f) Developing Frameworks

Developing a Welsh framework on the Apprenticeship Frameworks Online (AFO) is straightforward and the specification of apprenticeship standards for Wales (SASW) processes is easy to follow.

Dialogue and support from Welsh Government is continuous

An issue could be that: dependant on time of the year, Providers may have missed the opportunity to access funding for Apprenticeship delivery as contracts have already been agreed with Welsh Government. This leads interested Providers contacting existing contract holders for WBL to ascertain whether there is scope to 'buddy up'. However if there is no scope for collaboration, these Providers will not be able to deliver.