



**Apprentice Rep Training**  
**Introductory Level**  
**Workbook**

## Introduction

Congratulations! You are now an apprentice rep!

sparqs (**s**tudent **p**artnerships in **q**uality **s**cotland) aims to improve student engagement in quality enhancement, supporting students on many different learner journeys. One way in which it does so is through the provision of rep training across Scotland.

The training will provide you with the skills and knowledge to help ensure you are able to make positive changes to your learning experience.

In this Introductory Apprentice Rep Training session you will:

- Develop your understanding of the apprentice rep role and describe the work involved in being an apprentice rep.
- Discuss the Apprentice Learning Experience (ALE) and explore how you can use it to assist you in your work as an apprentice rep.
- Develop some of the skills you will use as an apprentice rep.
- Access support to help you as a rep.

This workbook has been designed to record the work you will be doing during the training. It is also designed to be used as a reference tool during your time as a rep.

The workbook provides some of the essential information you will need to know as a rep but for further information please visit our website [www.sparqs.ac.uk](http://www.sparqs.ac.uk) for further training resources.

## Exercise 1 – Group Introductions

In this exercise you can introduce yourself to your group. Feel free to take notes in the spaces below to help you.

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## Exercise 2 - Your Representative Role

The purpose of this exercise is to get you to start thinking about the purpose of the apprentice rep system; what you will be doing as a rep; what are the skills you will need; and finally what the benefits are.

What do you think the <b>purpose</b> of having an apprentice rep system is?
What do you think some of the <b>tasks</b> will be?
What <b>skills</b> do you think you will need and develop as a representative?
How do you think being a representative will <b>benefit</b> you?

### Exercise 3 – Your Apprenticeship

What apprenticeship are you working towards?
What do you like most about it?
What would you like to change or improve about it? (transfer this onto a post it note for a later task)

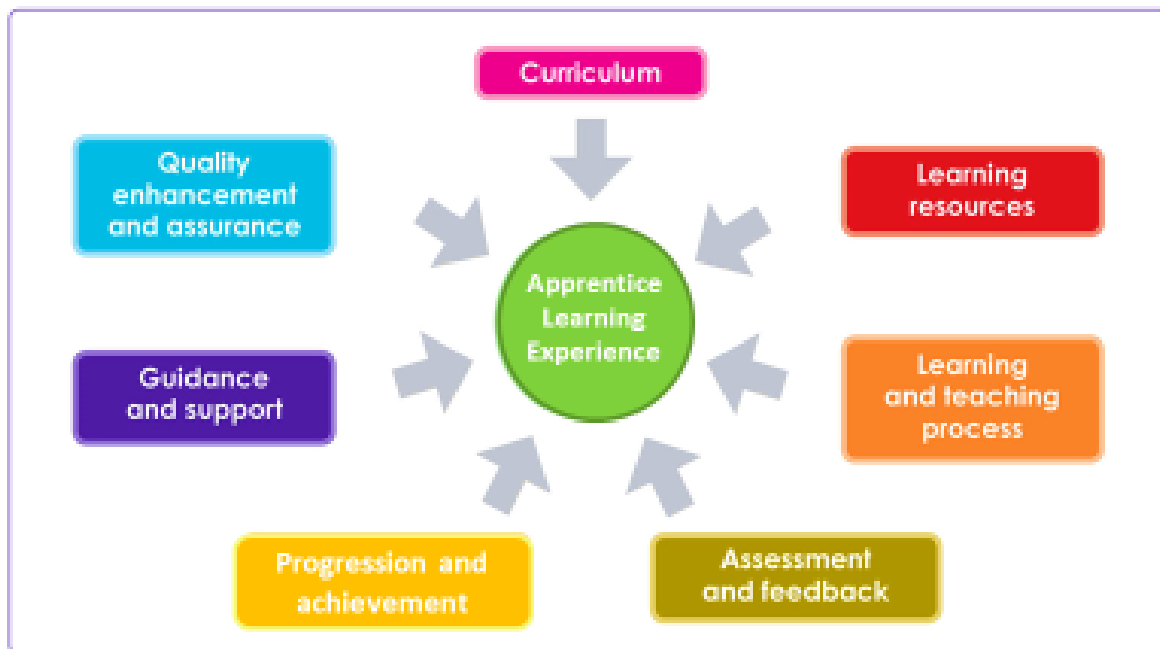
### Why is representation important?



## The Apprentice Learning Experience

The Apprentice Learning Experience (ALE) is a tool developed by sparqs to help you understand the different parts that make up you and your fellow apprentices learning experience.

What do we mean by learning experience? It is everything related to how you learn and the way you are taught.



Asking a fellow apprentice to tell you about their whole learning experience may not get the response you are looking for. Breaking it down into the different elements will help you gather the positive and negative feedback so you can inform staff what they are doing well and where they can improve.

### Curriculum:

- This describes the content of the taught section of the apprenticeship and how that is structured.
- Are the learning objectives clearly stated?
- Are the learning objectives being followed?
- Does what you are being taught match your expectations from the information provided about the apprenticeship?

**Learning resources:**

- This is everything from the building that the learning takes place in, to the equipment used in order for this to happen - classes, labs or workshops – tools, protective equipment or text books.
- Library and IT facilities (including access to wi-fi or virtual learning areas).
- Are learning materials easily accessible?
- Do you have access to sufficient and up-to-date materials that you need (for example books, lab equipment and art materials)?
- Does the equipment in college adequately prepare you for work based application?

**Learning and teaching process:**

- How do apprentices learn?
- What teaching and learning methods are used?
- Are the right methods being used for each part of the apprenticeship – e.g. Is there enough practical experience built into a practical subject?
- Are teaching materials and methods up to date?
- Are you consistently/sufficiently guided to practice your skills throughout your apprenticeship?
- Are you able to learn in a way that suits you?
- Do you find your apprenticeship stimulating/engaging and informative?
- Are there any forms of learning you would like in addition to lectures, workshops and tutorials?
- Are class sizes appropriate?

**Assessment and feedback:**

- Do assessments adequately and fairly represent the content of the apprenticeship?
- Was the assessment fairly marked?
- Do assessments adequately represent the content of the learning?
- Are assessments well-spaced out?
- Are they the right kind of assessments for the type of module/unit/course?
- What kind of feedback is given? Is it of good enough quality?
- Are the assessments work-based or college based and how do they relate?
- Does the feedback you receive following assessments help you understand what you did well and what you need to do to improve?
- Are there too many exams or assessments?
- What is the frequency of course work and assessments in each module?
- Are the assessment criteria clear to you?
- Are you given enough time to prepare for assessments?

**Progression and achievement:**

- Are you able to progress easily from one module to the next?
- Are you able to evaluate and report on your own personal progress through your apprenticeship?
- If your apprenticeship has an opportunity of employment at the end of it is that route clear and transparent for all?
- Are further progression opportunities and pathways made clear to you?

**Guidance and learner support:**

- How much support are you getting with the taught part of your apprenticeship?
- Is there a place/person you can get help from if you're struggling with your work?
- How much support are you receiving with your academic part of your apprenticeship?
- If you are struggling, where do you go for advice?
- Are you given clear guidance on what is expected of you as an apprentice?
- Is it made clear to you within employer and college settings where to get support on a range of issues?
- Are you aware of the avenues of support that relate to your student experience and your employer experience?
- Is it made clear to you which policies apply to you as a student and which apply to you as an employee?
- Are you provided with sufficient employability guidance and advice?
- How has your apprenticeship made you more employable?

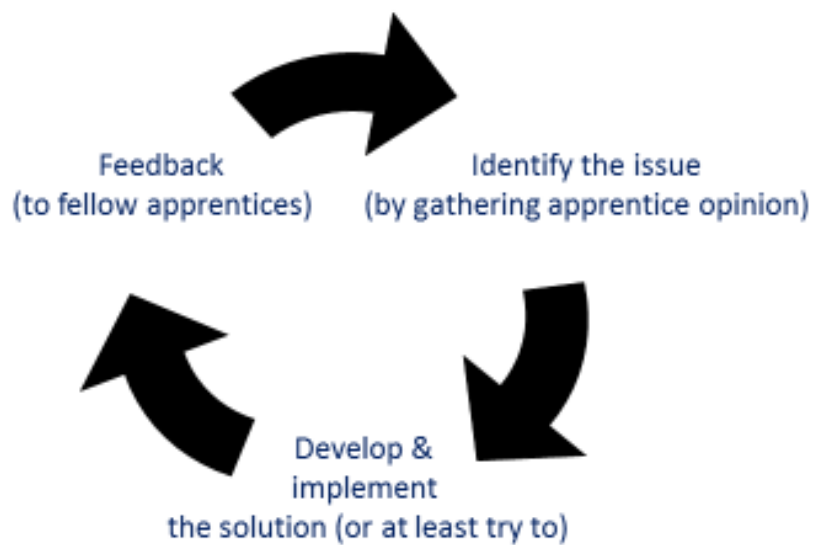
**Quality enhancement & assurance:**

- Do you feel that staff, training providers and employers are receptive to apprentice concerns and suggestions?
- Do you feel that you and your fellow apprentices' opinions are listened to?
- What improvements have been made to your apprenticeship throughout its duration?
- Do you consider that there is a strong apprentice voice culture embedded in your apprenticeship?

## Exercise 4 – Using the Apprentice Learning Experience

Use the space below to make notes on the ALE card exercise.

### The Apprentice Rep Cycle

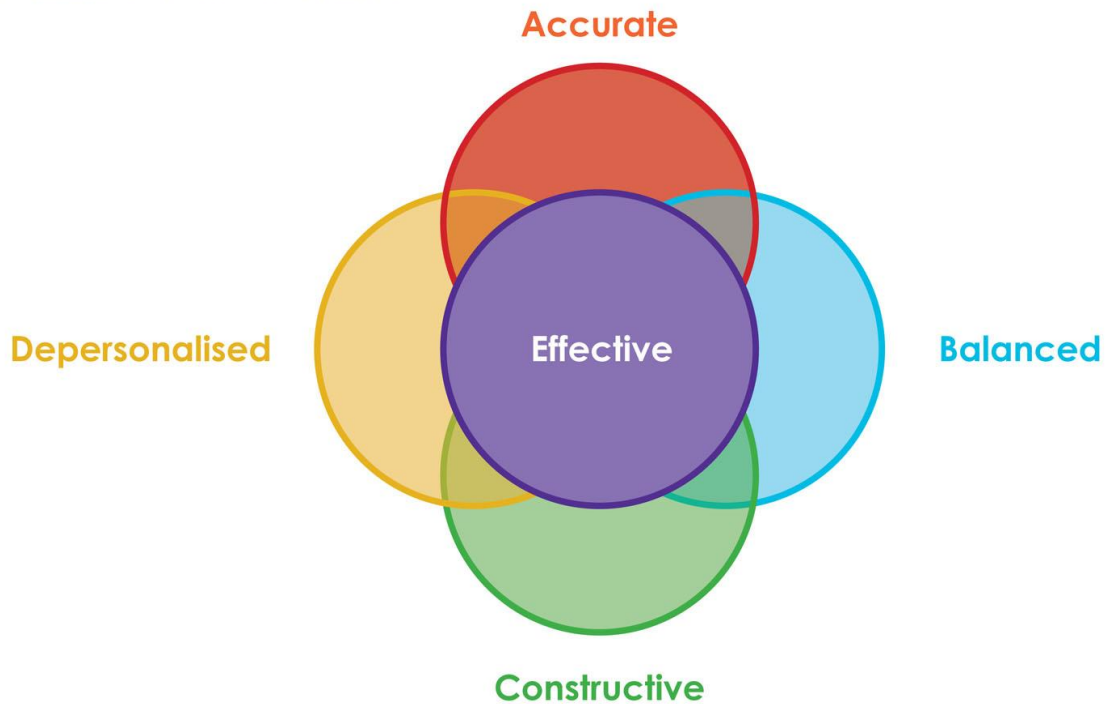


### Exercise 5 - Gathering Apprentice Opinion

Look back to Exercise 3 and, in groups, pick one of the elements you like most about your course and one you would like to change. Now think about how you would find out whether or not your fellow apprentices agree. There is space below for notes.



### The A,B,C,D of effective feedback



Providing feedback is an essential part of being a course rep but how do you provide it effectively? sparqs has developed the A,B,C,D of effective feedback to help you do so. Below we explain each element and how they contribute to providing effective feedback.

**Accurate:** when we comment on the learning experience we should be specific, and provide evidence for what we're saying. Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language. This also includes researching the point we wish to get over – sometimes we get a hunch that there's a problem somewhere and it turns out not to be the case, or it's less common – that doesn't make it less of a problem, but exaggerating it will make sure it isn't taken seriously. Where possible include information about the scale of the issue – percentage of apprentices affected, or sheer number – to add weight to your argument.

**Balanced:** we shouldn't only pass on negative comments to staff, even if that's mostly what we're hearing from other apprentices. We might see that staff have been trying hard but it hasn't helped, or isn't helping in the right ways – make sure not to be one-sided. Having a balanced perspective will be hugely beneficial to your work and it's critical for working with everyone connected to learning.

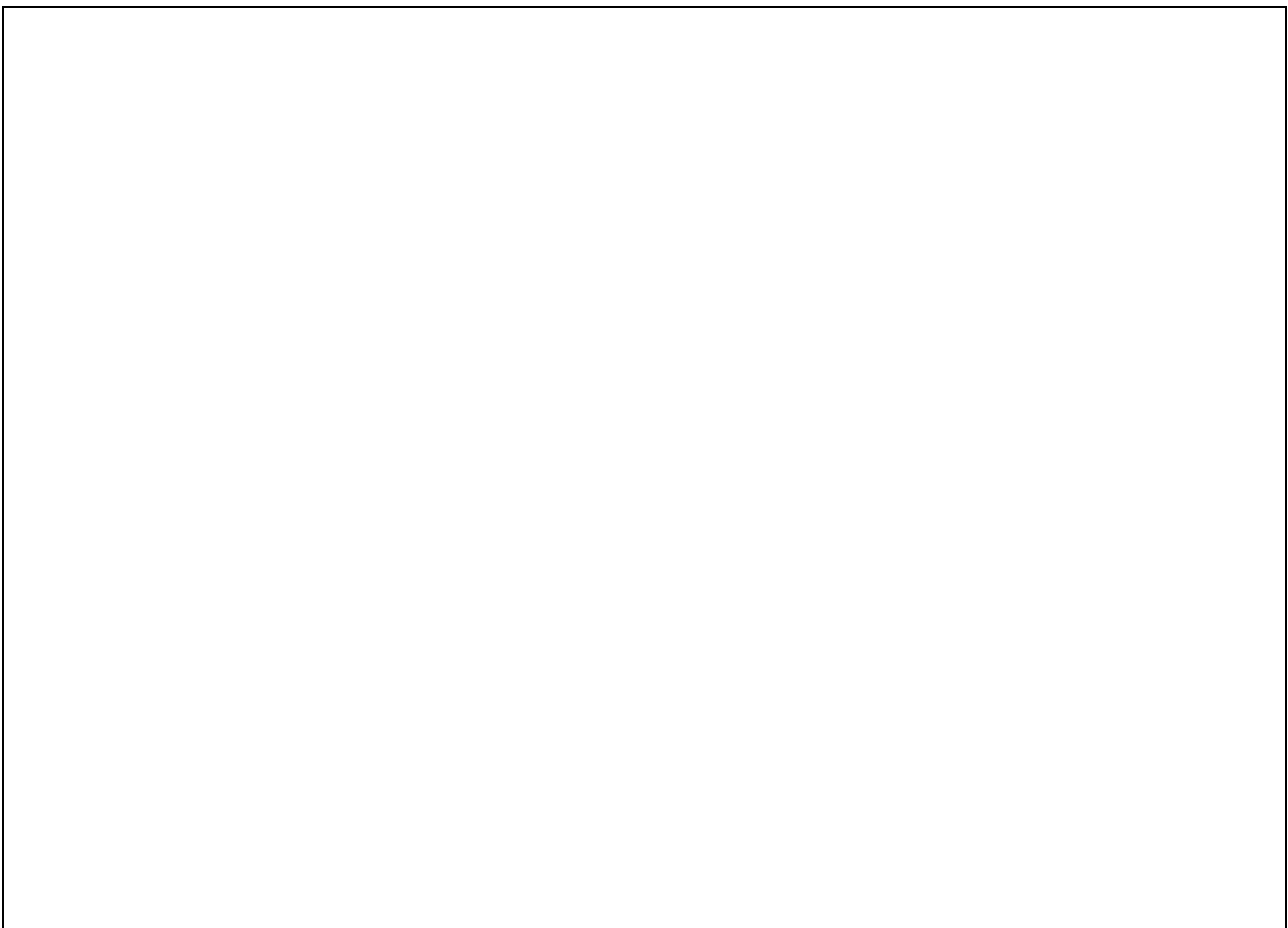
**Constructive:** we're not just here to identify the problems, we're also here to help find a solution. If we raise an issue, we should make a suggestion at the same time or ask for help in putting one together. As reps our job is to help facilitate solutions – not just to criticise. Being negative, or unbalanced, or inaccurate only makes it easier for people to ignore what we're saying, even if it's valid.

**Depersonalised:** even if an apprentice thinks that a member of staff has done something wrong, reps shouldn't make personal comments. Don't comment on a specific member of staff directly, talk instead about the impact on the learning experience. Remember as well that people are always working within larger systems – sometimes a person's professional failing is seen elsewhere and is a systemic problem.

## **Exercise 6 – Developing Solutions**

Identify a problem, plan how to solve it using your knowledge and the support available mentioned here in training.

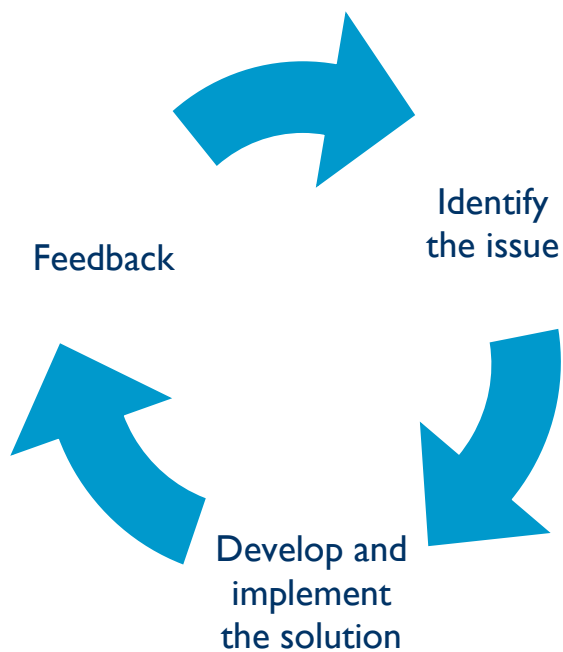
Feel free to use this space for any notes.



## Exercise 7 – Attending Meetings

Feel free to use this space for notes.

### Closing the loop



**Don't forget to  
FEED BACK  
what you have  
achieved!!**

## **Support available to you**

- National Society of Apprentices Scotland via [www.nsofascotland.co.uk](http://www.nsofascotland.co.uk)
- Trade Unions/Employer Engagement Schemes.
- Students' Associations.
- Online training resources are available via [www.sparqs.ac.uk](http://www.sparqs.ac.uk)
- NUS Scotland, the national student representative body, can support you. Visit [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk) for more information.

## **Your future representative career**

- You may be interested in other opportunities, speak to your students' association/institution/sparqs for more information.
- If you're interested in becoming a sparqs Associate Trainer, more information will be released on the sparqs website in February/March.
- For further information contact the sparqs team at [admin@sparqs.ac.uk](mailto:admin@sparqs.ac.uk) or phone 0131 622 6599.

## **Jargon buster!**

There are a lot of different terms and words that are used by institutional staff, students' associations and other reps. We have provided a jargon buster here to explain some of these terms.

**Agenda:** A list of issues that are going to be discussed at a meeting.

**Assurance:** How your institution ensures the quality of the learning experience is maintained.

**Chair:** The person who is in charge at meetings. They will decide who speaks, what is on the agenda and generally co-ordinate the meeting.

**Enhancement:** How your institution is improving your learning experience.

**Institution:** Another name for college, university, higher education institution or academy.

**Minutes:** A record of what has been said at a meeting, any decisions taken, etc.

**Quality:** When people talk about quality they are talking about the teaching and services that you receive as well as how you learn.

**Secretary:** The person who is responsible for the logistics for the meeting such as venue, time etc. They may also pull the agenda together. They are also responsible for the minutes.

**Students' Association:** Can also be called a union or guild. Its purpose is to represent students, and their views, to senior members of staff at your institution.

**Student Engagement:** A term used to describe the various ways institutions get students involved in their learning experience such as course reps, surveys, focus groups, students on committees etc.

**VLE:** Stands for Virtual Learning Environment. It is the catch-all term for online spaces used for learning.



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