
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Alison More
Head of Corporate Planning & Performance Reporting
Skills Development Scotland
(by email)

28 April 2022

Dear Alison,

Modern Apprenticeship statistics in Scotland

We recently completed our Compliance Check against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) of the [Modern Apprenticeship Statistics](#). We welcomed your team's engagement with us through the process.

Our review found a range of positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics:

- We found the statistical commentary to be clear, objective and easy to understand and contains useful contextual information for the reader. In addition, we recognise the improvements that have been made to the presentation of the statistics over the last few years, specifically to the charts and figures.
- The statistics are published in a timely fashion and the corrections and revisions process is transparent and clear to users if the situation arises.
- The impact of COVID-19 on the recruitment of Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland has been clearly set out at the start of each bulletin since 2020.
- It is encouraging that the team has a good awareness of its main users and their data requirements and plans to engage further in the future.
- We welcome the automated processes that have already been introduced for the publication and the use of innovative technologies, such as the use of PowerBI to produce the publication tables. We recommend that you consider extending these throughout the whole data handling process in line with Government Statistical Service's [Reproducible Analytical Pipelines \(RAP\)](#) guidance.

Our review also identified several ways in which we consider that you could further enhance the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics:

- We recommend that you enhance the accessibility of the statistics so that they meet the UK Government [Accessibility Regulations](#) – for example, by considering the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [Web accessibility guidance](#). Further links and commentary to aid accessibility between the bulletin, the supplementary tables, the

user guide and other useful documents may help users with navigation and encourage them to make use of the full range of products.

- As part of your planned user engagement work we recommend exploring the options for further analysis that may be of value to users and help answer key questions – for example, information on reasons for leaving apprenticeships or inequality characteristics by framework. We recommend reviewing the analysis included in the apprenticeship statistics produced by the other UK nations (for example in England [here](#)) for examples of potential additional analyses.
- We would suggest including more information at the start of both the statistical bulletin and supplementary tables on the limitations of the data, the quality assurance processes, and the impact of methodological changes. This would help support the users' understanding of the statistics and increase accurate interpretation. Further information around uncertainty could be included in the user guide.
- It would be useful to investigate ways in which the data could be made available to researchers – for example, through [Research Data Scotland](#). In addition, consider whether there are datasets that could be linked to the modern apprenticeships data to add value in answering broader questions such as whether individuals who do not complete their modern apprenticeship progress on to other positive outcomes in further or higher education.
- Whilst we understand that the ability to compare these data to the other UK nations may be limited, it may be useful to include links to their equivalent statistics and provide some brief commentary on the coherence between them.

Although this compliance check focused on the modern apprenticeship statistics publication, we would encourage Skills Development Scotland to work with the Scottish Funding Council to review the current presentation of the foundation apprenticeships and the graduate apprenticeships reports. Presenting these in a similar format to modern apprenticeship statistics may help to increase the coherence across the publications and enable direct comparisons between the outputs.

I would like to thank your team for their positive engagement on this review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead