

## **The Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM) response to the Department for Education consultation on the draft strategic guidance to the Institute of Apprenticeships**

- IPEM is a professional association and Learned Society with 4,300 members who are physicists, engineers and technologists working with applications of physics and engineering applied to medicine and biology. Our members work in hospitals, academia and industry, and IPEM has a unique role in linking the three areas.
- As a charity, IPEM's aim is to advance the application of physics and engineering to medicine for the public benefit and to advance public education in this field. We do so by supporting and publishing research, and supporting the dissemination of knowledge and innovation through project funding and scientific meetings; and by setting standards for education, training and continuing professional development for healthcare scientists and clinical engineers.
- We also produce information for the public about the role of physicists and engineers in their healthcare services, and hold a series of public lectures each year. Our members are also involved in outreach events for young people and university students, to promote healthcare science careers.
- In preparing this response, we have consulted with the members of our Apprenticeship Panel and the Director of our Professional and Standards Council.

An underlying principle of the apprenticeship reforms is to ensure employers have much greater influence at all levels. IPEM is concerned that the NHS representation will focus on the larger part of the NHS workforce (nursing and Allied Health Professionals) at the expense of the more specialised elements of the workforce, such as medical physics and clinical engineering. Professional bodies such as IPEM are much better placed to represent the needs of these specialised workforces and should be engaged as such.

Given that both the Practitioner Training Programme and the Scientist Training Programme can fulfil the apprenticeship core principles and potentially access the levy at academic level 5, level 6 or level 7, this could impact clinical scientist, clinical technologist and assistant/associate level training.

This proposal acknowledges the role of professional bodies both in the preparation of standards and assessment plans; and in external quality assurance of apprenticeships. The Department of Health's approach, using generic "healthcare science" standards, appears to be at odds with the Department for Education's approach, resulting in professional bodies having little influence in any of this activity. For example, the role of a clinical engineering associate practitioner differs enormously from the role of a pathology laboratory associate practitioner and yet the Department of Health have established a common "healthcare science associate" apprenticeship standard at academic level 4 for both roles. If standards at academic level 5, level 6 and level 7 are developed in a similar fashion, professional bodies such as IPEM may continue to be side-lined during their preparation and quality assurance of such standards.

With specific reference to the section entitled 'Working with key partners', IPEM would suggest that professional bodies and Royal Colleges should be included in paragraph 30.

**ENDS**