



Summary Report

Review of the Food and
Drink Apprenticeship
Framework in Wales

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of FDQ's "Light Touch Review" of the Food and Drink Apprenticeship Framework [Food and Drink | Apprenticeships](#)

FDQ are a charitable Awarding Organisation (AO), established in 2001 and specialising in providing qualifications for the UK food and drink industry.

We are approved and regulated in Wales to design, develop, certificate and quality assure the qualifications in the Welsh Food and Drink apprenticeship programme. We are proud to be the only AO offering this suite of qualifications in Wales. We are committed to supporting learners and employers in Wales, and work closely with an approved network of training providers and colleges, Regulators and Food and Drink sector stakeholders .

The review was commissioned by Medr in June 2026. FDQ were invited to carry out a brief review as the only Awarding Organisation offering the qualifications that underpin the framework pathways.

Whilst Medr can commission full, intermediate or light framework reviews, the light review was selected at this time as the framework

- is just 2 years old and not yet had time to be fully embedded by providers in Wales.
- some amendments have been made already, as new pathways were added for Level 3 Food and Drink Engineering Maintenance (2005) and Level 4 Brewing and Brewery Operations (2026). Medr and FDQ meet regularly to identify any further amendments to support the sector framework.
- will be subject to a fuller review, in part arising from policy changes (some driven by recent elections), due in 2026/7. Changes to policies by Medr and Welsh Government under review are likely to impact the framework eg new legislation for apprenticeships, review of credit values per pathway, Essential Skills Wales review, potential changes to funding policy and contracts for providers.

Activity commissioned

Medr and FDQ agreed that FDQ would provide a secretariat for a short and light review, chair the review group and draft a report and if necessary a revised framework document for Medr.

Steering Review Group

FDQ set up a Steering Review Group which met online on 16 June 2026.

The Group was Chaired by Terry Fennell (CEO FDQ) who was joined by co-presenters Helen King (FDQ's Quality and Compliance Manager) and Vivienne Wilfred (Medr) Senior Frameworks Development Manager.

Purpose and Agenda for meeting

FDQ agreed with Medr that the agenda should cover

1. Seeking feedback on the framework (focussed on Entry requirements, Essential Skills requirements and currency of the qualifications)
2. Discussions on the size of the food and drink sector in Wales and identifying reasons for the lower than expected take up and numbers of apprentices on programme in Wales.

See Appendix 1 for a list of stakeholders invited to the meeting and attendees.

A range of providers and stakeholders attended including the NSAFD and FDF Wales. FDQ provided opportunities for other stakeholders and those who could not join on 16 June to provide feedback.

Feedback on the Framework

The light touch review looked at three key issues as requested by Medr.

1 Entry requirements

Level 2, 3 and 4 Entry requirements – all pathways

Examples include:

- Academic routes (e.g. GCSEs, Welsh Baccalaureate)
- By completing vocational qualifications
- Participation on employer placement
- Work experience
- Training

Learners who have completed the Welsh Baccalaureate may have completed units or short courses which will provide underpinning knowledge towards the Apprenticeship. This will be assessed during an initial assessment allowing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) where appropriate.

- Are the entry requirements valid?
- Should there be differences per level /subject?
- Should anything be added, amended or deleted?
- Any other comments on entry requirements?

The entry requirements for all pathways are currently the same. Comments from the discussion at the meeting included:

- Reference to GCSE and academic and Welsh Baccalaureate content could be removed as they don't align with purposes of a vocational apprenticeship framework. At best this confusing and at worst the statement could discourage learners from applying for an apprenticeship if they think they need GCSEs or Welsh Baccalaureate qualifications.
- Statement is so generic it is almost meaningless and could be revised to be relevant to each pathway.
- Doesn't encourage progression from Level two pathways to higher levels or team leading pathway which many learners do.

- FDQ noted funding determines how/if learners can complete a second programme (eg progression from a Level 2 subject to Team Leading Level 2 or to 3). Clarification for future would be welcomed.

2 Essential skills (ES) requirements

Essential Skills (ES) Wales requirements

Level 2

- Communication Level 1
- Application of Number Level 1

Level 3

- Communication Level 2
- Application of Number Level 2

Level 4

- Communication Level 2
- Application of Number Level 2

- Are the ES requirements valid?
- Should there be differences per level/ subject?
- Should anything be added, amended or deleted?
- Any other comments on requirements?

Again, it was noted that ES requirements are generic rather than per pathway. The group also discussed

- Whether Level 2 Digital Literacy ES is required for the Level 4 Brewing pathway. (NB It is not listed on the Medr website.)
- Removing ES from the framework entirely as some delegates felt the current ES assessments are a barrier to access and success rates for apprentices. Instead, they suggested integrating the ES into pathway specific subject assessments eg Bakery or FDEM.
- Access for ESOL Learners who struggle to complete the ES yet have good food sector skills.
- Medr staff noted that they are conducting a pilot (in the Construction sector) to determine the future approach for ES in frameworks. The outcome of the pilot will be considered and may inform policy for future framework requirements. Until the pilot is reviewed, Medr will retain ES in the Food and Drink framework.

3. Currency of qualifications

The Review group looked at summary slides (see Butchery example) for all of the pathways and were referred to detailed qualification specifications.

Level 2 Intermediate Butcher / Meat Processor

Level 2 Intermediate Butchers and Meat Processors in Wales will

- Be employed and working in a retail butchery, abattoir or meat processing environment
- Be signed up and enrolled/registered by a Welsh Government/AO approved training provider
- Undertake regulated qualifications:
 - **FDQ Level 2 Diploma for Proficiency in Butchery and Meat Processing (Wales) - C00/4561/6**
 - **FDQ Level 2 Award in Knife Skills for Food Processing -C00/2303/6**
 - **FDQ Level 2 Award in HACCP Based Food Safety Systems C00/7454/5**
- The **proficiency** qualification assesses and recognises achievement within the workplace and includes skills and knowledge associated with
 - safe operating practices
 - maintenance of food safety and the principles of HACCP based food safety systems.
- In addition, **Level 2 apprentices** as part of their training programme (agreed by the employer) choose a wide range of units to match their job roles, learning and development needs, such as
 - abattoir and lairage operations
 - retail operations, customer service and adding value to products
 - primal cutting and butchery of joints

Level 2 qualified Butchers/Meat Processors often progress to complete a Level 3 qualifications in Butchery and Meat Processing or Food Technical Management

FDQ requested feedback at the meeting and advised how to provide further comments afterwards. Generally the Group agreed that

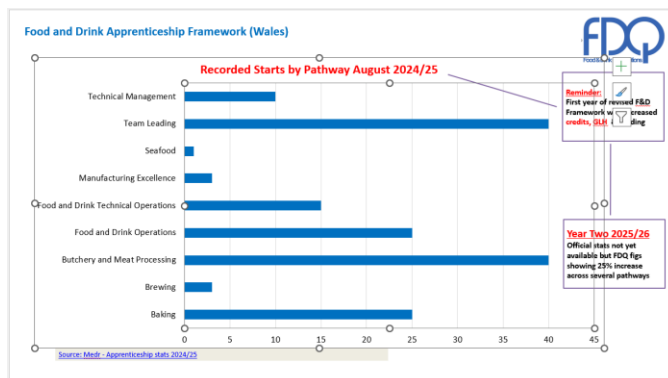
- the qualification titles are clear and align to the pathways

- the pathway qualifications are current as introduced within the past 4 years (or less).
- the range of pathways and qualifications offered options for most roles in the sector
- the Proficiency qualification model is well suited to assess competence required for the workplace

Further feedback recorded at the meeting:

- **Level 2 Bakery and Level 3 Butchery and Meat Processing** one provider noted concerns that the Rules of Combination (RoC) for these two qualifications are proving difficult to deliver as their credit values are very high. FDQ said the RoC were set by the Sector development groups working with Welsh Government when the framework was created. FDQ agreed to check options for changing this to make the RoC more flexible and whether this could be in scope for this light or a future review.
- **Level 3 FDME-** a provider using this pathway said it was a very strong, fit for purpose product, relevant and current for sector needs. The first year of delivery had been a success and it needed more time to embed further – without change.

Discussions on Future Potential for the framework



FDQ and Medr also agreed to discuss take up for this framework at the meeting. The diagram above was used to illustrate the lower than expected take-up across pathways.

Medr and FDQ are concerned that despite initial interest from providers and employers the number of actual registered and completing apprentices remains low, despite recent uplifts in funding and Food and Drink being a Priority Sector in Wales.

The number of funded apprenticeship centres in Wales is relatively small compared with other sectors. One stakeholder suggested that a wider choice of providers across different locations could encourage more employers and learners to use the framework. The stakeholder also noted that multiple skills-related initiatives may cause confusion or detract from apprenticeships if their purpose is unclear.

NB Medr advised that the apprenticeships funding model will be reviewed later in 2026.

Conclusion and recommendations

1. The short “light touch” review has not identified any major issues or problems with the Food and Drink Framework that justify change before the wider review in 2026/7. Instead, feedback suggested the framework needs further time of stability to be embedded into the sector.
2. Given recent elections and changes in Welsh Government, further reviews with potential to affect apprenticeships, qualifications and funding in Wales are underway. FDQ recommends that changes to pathway qualifications are made at the next review opportunity.

Next steps

1. FDQ and Medr will review feedback received from stakeholders and publish a report in July 2026.
2. FDQ and Medr to continue to work with stakeholders and across the sector to increase awareness of the framework and encourage greater take up and progression opportunities.
3. Medr to set out a timeline for future framework and relevant policy reviews.
4. FDQ invite delegates to contact us with any further post-review feedback on how we can support the sector to increase opportunities for its apprentices. Helen.king@fdq.org.uk

End

Please email Helen.king@fdq.org.uk with any feedback related to this report.

Appendix 1

Delegates invited to the 16 June Meeting.

Note those who did not attend were contacted again by email, provided with the PowerPoint from the event and asked to provide feedback to FDQ.

Name	Organisation	Attended 16/6/26
Terry Fennell	FDQ	Yes
Helen King	FDQ	Yes
Vivienne Wilfred	Medr	Yes
Gayle Powell	Medr	Yes
Amy Crooks	NSAFD	Yes
Angela Bradford	Wholebake	Yes
David Harries	FDF Cymru	Yes
Arwyn Williams	Pembrokeshire College	Yes
Kate Rees	Mentera	Yes
Kate Muddiman	Coleg Cambria	Yes
Yvonne Evans	Coleg Cambria	Yes
Lou Hall	Grwp Llandrillo Menai	Yes
Edgar Evans	Grwp Llandrillo Menai	Yes
Cath Skipp	Grwp Llandrillo Menai	Yes
Huw Rees	Business Wales	No
Mark Grant	Levercliffe	No
Gary Rowland	Dunbia	No
Ciam Short	Kepak	No
Jane Sadler	Puffin Produce	No
Betina Skovbro	Danish Bakery	No
Mark Hughes	Cambrian Training	No
Becky Dickinson	Morrisons	No
Katherine Salisbury	What's Cooking Group	No
Gregory Gouri Shankar	2 Sisters Food Group	No