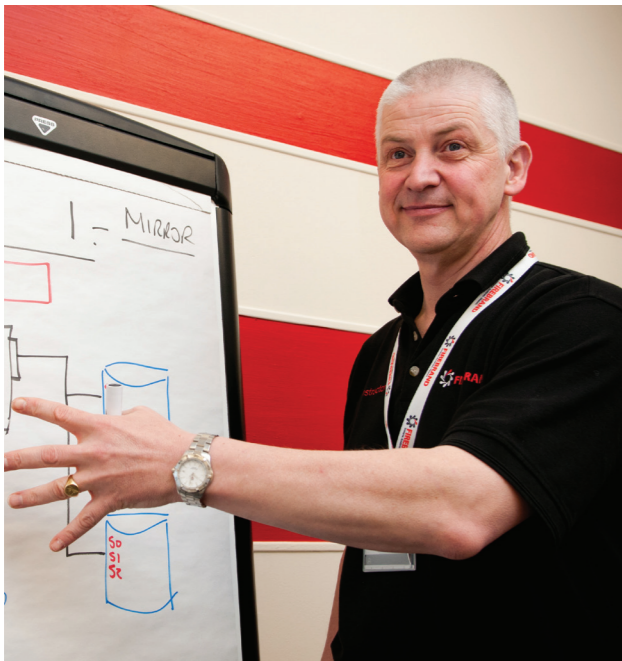




# Apprentice handbook

- How to take your first steps towards a career in IT
- Earn while you learn
- The fast track to industry-standard qualifications



## Contents

- 3** **What is a Firebrand Apprenticeship?** How a Firebrand Apprenticeship can help you fast-track your career
- 4** **Why start an apprenticeship?** Earn as you learn in a real job with a mapped-out career
- 6** **Your training courses** What IT skills you'll learn and which IT qualifications you'll earn during your training

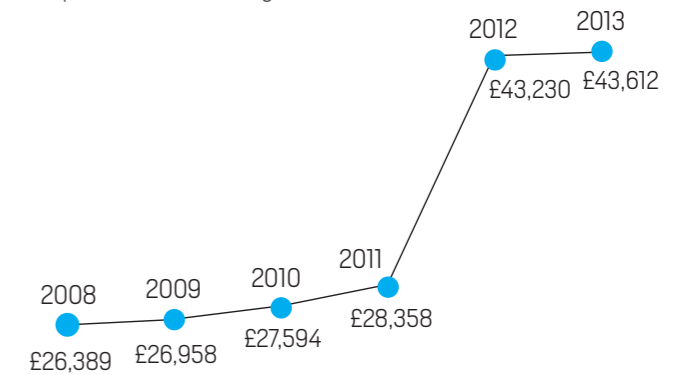
- 8** **Preparing for an apprenticeship** We help you get on the first rung of the employment ladder
- 10** **Success stories** Hear from some current Firebrand apprentices
- 11** **Your questions answered** Everything you need to know about starting a Firebrand Apprenticeship
- 12** **Contact Us** Where to apply and how you could receive up to £150 if you recommend a friend

# What is a Firebrand Apprenticeship?

Do you want a job in a fast-paced, fast-growing, exciting industry with excellent salary and career prospects? Then an apprenticeship is for you.

## Average student debt over three years

<http://www.ed.ac.uk> + Govt figures



### What is a Firebrand Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a real paid job, in an IT-related business where you learn on the job and all your training is provided through Firebrands' Accelerated Learning technique.

- We find you the job
- You get valuable work experience
- You earn while you learn
- You get real industry-standard qualifications
- You work in a fast-paced fast-growing industry

The Firebrand Apprenticeship course lasts for a year, and during that time Firebrand will give you five weeks of intensive training backed up with continual assessment while you're in work.

At the end of the course, after passing your exams (and we have every confidence in you passing them all because we only take on the best), you will be ready to work in an industry where starting salaries for apprentices are around £15-20,000 and you will be able to work in any of the following jobs:

- Support Technician
- Website Administrator
- Helpdesk Professional
- Software/ Web Developer
- Desktop Support Engineer
- Network Planner
- Database Administrator
- Network Engineer
- Software Tester
- Mobile and Windows app Developer

42%

of apprentices have had some form of promotion since their apprenticeship

LSC 2009 "benefits of completing an apprenticeship"

# Why start an apprenticeship?

## So why choose an apprenticeship?

According to Government figures almost one million 16-24 year olds are currently unemployed, and of those that continue into further education most will end up leaving with nearly £44,000 of debt. But there is an alternative, and that's an apprenticeship.

An apprenticeship shouldn't be thought of as something you do because you're not going to university; it's not a glorified internship. It's a real job where you get access to training and experience that will give you a great advantage in the job market. Plus you'll get paid a guaranteed wage while you are learning.

## Why university is not the answer

According to Government figures the average student debt in England after three years at University is set to surpass an eye-watering £44,000 – it's even more if you go to university in London – and it's a debt you'll be paying off for years to come. That's if you can get a job at the end of your studies. In a survey of recent computer science students\* fewer than two thirds were in full-time employment six months after their courses finished, and of those in work only 50% were in IT – 12% were working in shops, restaurants and bars.

## Compare that to an apprenticeship

In 2012 more than 520,000 apprenticeship courses were taken up in the UK and this number has risen every year for the last five years. Compare that to 2012's university admissions of 120,194 (down from 133,357 in 2011). Unlike



a university course, as an apprentice you will receive a wage throughout your training.

The average national wage for an apprentice is around £170 a week and we recommend that your employer increases this as you pass your exams. In addition, you get paid holidays – around 20 days plus bank holidays – and sick pay.

While you're not guaranteed a job at the end of your 12 months apprenticeship, a recent survey\*\* shows more than four out of five

(81%) of apprentices are still working for their employer a year after the course finishes and nearly half (42%) had received a promotion after completing their apprenticeship.

The benefits of a Firebrand Apprenticeship are:

- higher rates of employment
- higher levels of job satisfaction
- higher than average starting salaries
- a regular wage

## So apply now and don't delay.

But don't just listen to us. Here's what *Dragon's Den* investor Peter Jones says about apprentices:

**“Throughout my career, some of my best hires have been people who have bypassed the traditional route of university and learned their skills through apprenticeship schemes or alternative education courses. They have come to the workplace with a solid understanding of the real world and a steely determination to succeed. Those are the characteristics we need in order to build an entrepreneurial Britain.”**

And here's what one apprentice said about their ICT course and how it prepared them for their current career:

**“Doing the apprenticeship definitely made it possible for me to get my job. It has helped me to get into jobs that are better paid and a bit more exciting. If I hadn't done it, I would probably just be working in a pub or**

**something, but now I am a Regional Account Executive with a company car, phone and laptop, and seriously thinking about taking my present boss's post when he leaves.”** Anonymous

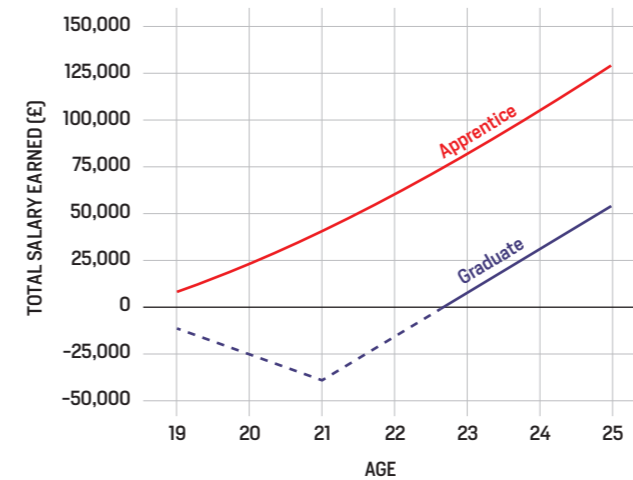
## What you need to apply

If you're aged between 16 and 18 and have 5 GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English Language, Maths and ICT, or equivalent qualifications, and you have an interest in IT then you can apply to be a Firebrand Apprenticeship.

### Your next steps

- Step 1** Fill in our website application form ([www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentice](http://www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentice))
- Step 2** Talk to our team and choose an IT course that's relevant to you
- Step 3** Take the job interview
- Step 4** Agree an individual learning plan with the business and your Firebrand assessor
- Step 5** Start your new career in IT

## Wage comparison ages 19-25



## Five great reasons to consider a Firebrand Apprenticeship

### You earn while you learn

Apprentices have to be paid a minimum of £2.60 an hour, but typically you earn a lot more than this, and starting salaries after you qualify are around £15,000-£20,000, with salary rises of around £3,477 a year after that.

for trained professionals.

Over the next two years there will be a shortfall of 700,000 trained IT staff in Europe and that shortfall is pushing wages higher.

### Great prospects

IT is a growing industry; where other industries have shrunk during the recession the IT industry has continued to grow\* and it's hungry

### It's a real job with all the benefits

You are not just on a training course, nor are you an intern, this is a real job, with a real business, giving a year's worth of valuable work experience. Because it's a real job you also qualify for all the standard benefits, such as holiday – 20+ days

plus bank holidays – and sick pay.

### We find you the job

No more searching through job websites, the job centre and local papers. Just provide us with your details and we'll match you to an IT job near you.

### Industry-standard qualifications

The courses and exams you take on the Firebrand Apprenticeship are industry-recognised and are in demand throughout Europe.

\* The ONS estimates that over the next five years employment of IT staff is forecast to grow by an average of 2.5% per year, a rate more than three times higher than predicted UK employment growth.

\* "What do Graduates do?" HECSU Oct 2012 \*\* "The Benefits of Completing an Apprenticeship" April 2009 LSC

# Your training courses



the late summer and early autumn period for us to find an available job.

### Recognised qualifications

Firebrand is a Microsoft Gold training partner and all of our apprenticeship courses have been developed in conjunction with Microsoft and are monitored and tested by the Government, Microsoft and City & Guilds.

The course you take will lead to an official Microsoft qualification. There is currently three courses to choose from: ■ Support ■ Developer ■ IT sales

These will qualify you for any of the following job roles:

- Support Technician
- Website Administrator
- Helpdesk Professional
- Software/ Web Developer
- Desktop Support Engineer
- Network Planner
- Database Administrator
- Network Engineer
- Software Tester
- Mobile and Windows app Developer

### The qualifications

During your year-long course you will receive training leading to industry-recognised qualifications including:

- City & Guilds – Level 3 Diploma – IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals
- City & Guilds – Level 3 Diploma – ICT Systems & Principles
- Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) – Operating Systems Fundamentals
- MTA Networking Fundamentals
- MTA Security Fundamentals
- MTA Windows Server Administration Fundamentals
- MTA Server Administration Fundamentals
- CompTIA Strata Fundamentals of IT Technology

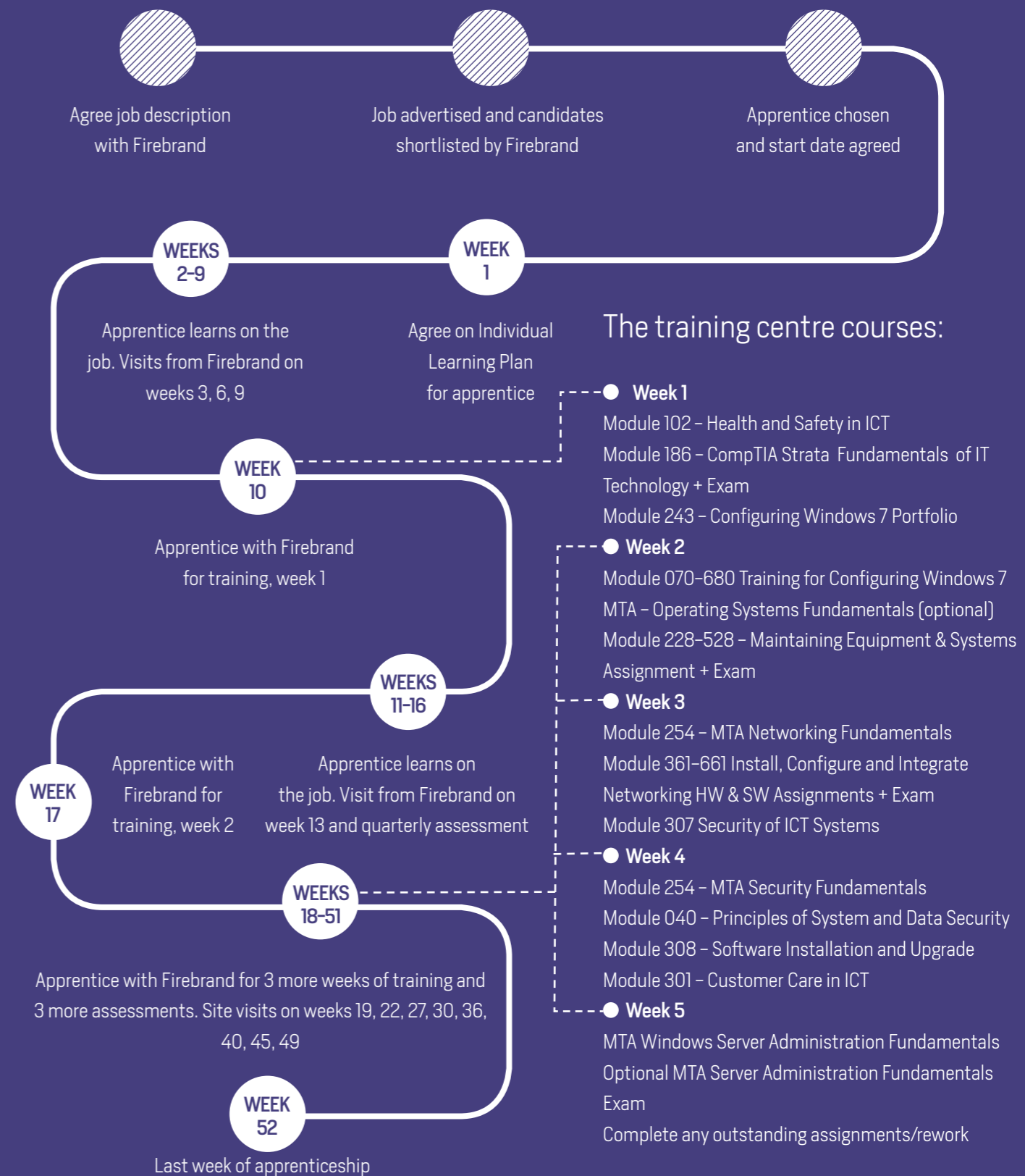
Firebrand Apprenticeship courses run throughout the year but they fill up fast, so it's better to apply sooner rather than later.

Entry to the course is dependent on a job offer and unfortunately we can't predict the supply of jobs. However, we work with more than 30,000 Microsoft Partner businesses, and between them they employ over 500,000 people in the UK. The good news is that they are always on the lookout for new recruits who have the 'right stuff', so you won't have to wait too long.

All courses run for 52 weeks. So we should be able to accommodate you no matter when you apply. However, while we're busy all year round, our busiest times are obviously in August and September after school and college courses have finished and potential apprentices have got their head together after 10 years of education. So you may have to wait a little longer if you apply during

## A year in your life

All courses run for 52 weeks and during that time you'll spend 5 weeks at a Firebrand residential training centre. The rest of the time you will be learning on the job.





# Preparing for an apprenticeship

There are many stressful things in life and starting a job – particularly your very first job – is one of the major stresses. Which is where we can help. We don't just train you, we prepare you for your career ahead, and we do that from the very first moment through to long after your apprenticeship course is completed.

### Before and during

Once you're accepted on to the Firebrand Apprenticeship scheme and before you start your course we will work with you to make sure you have every chance of getting a job. We'll analyse your current skills and experience and help you to choose the right sort of career path, be it Network Support, IT support, Network Technician, Mobile app Developer, or IT security. We can help you with producing your CV and covering letters, and provide hints and tips to help you prepare for your interview.

### We are not just there to provide your training

Before you start your induction week at your new job we will sit down with you and your employer and create a structure that sets out what you will be learning and what's expected of you on a monthly basis for the twelvemonths ahead. Additionally, we'll use a special VARK (visual, aural read/write kinesthetic) Learning Styles Questionnaire to find out more about how you learn best, so we can tailor your learning and you'll get the maximum out of your training.

We will come to see you at the business every three weeks to see how you are progressing with your training, and we'll conduct quarterly assessments so you can see how you are progressing. We'll also be available via email if you need help with your training or you feel you are struggling with something at work.

We'll create an Individual Learning Plan, which lays out

your achievements and sets targets for learning in and out of the workplace. We will also create an Individual Learning Record, so you know which courses you've completed and which you're scheduled to take next.



### And afterwards?

Firebrand has trained more than 30,000 people over the last 10 years for jobs in every field of IT, from security through to technical support. We currently run over 165 courses, including courses on Agile, Lean Six Sigma, and PRINCE2 methodologies, ethical hacking, network security, Windows and Windows Server and IT support, through to courses using Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle, Linux, SAP, Autodesk, Google, VMware and Sun systems and software. So, if you need a course to take you further up the job ladder we can do it and we do it faster. Our intensive courses typically last 3-5 days – including the exam – and we're so confident you'll pass your exams first time, we promise that if you fail you can take the course again for free.

## Preparing yourself for an apprenticeship

The Firebrand Apprenticeship course requires you to have passed a minimum of five GCSEs at A\*-C but our training needs you to get to a slightly higher level grade to be able to get the most out of the training provided.

If you want to build your numeracy and literacy skills, why not watch some of the videos and try the tests on the following websites.

- BBC Skillswise Maths and English for IT: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic/it-and-office>
  - BBC Skillswise Maths: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/maths>
  - BBC Skillswise English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/english>
  - Brain Games: <http://www.braingames.org.uk/>
  - Move On Test your skills: <http://www.move-on.org.uk/testyourskills.asp>
- Additionally, to prepare yourself for the IT course you should familiarise yourself with the CompTIA A+ and Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) courses. For more information take a look at our apprentice webpages: [www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentices](http://www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentices)

### Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to enhance your CV and develop essential personal skills and competencies in areas such as time management, negotiation and planning, along with developing communication and scheduling skills and goal-setting abilities. Look at: vInspired: <http://vinspired.com/> Do-It: <http://www.do-it.org.uk/wanttovolunteer>

**£3,477**

The expected difference in average annual wage increase by 2020 for an apprentice completing a Level 3 apprenticeship vs someone who does no training

City & Guilds (2012)  
The economic value of apprenticeships

# Success stories

Working as an apprentice is fun and very rewarding. Here are just a few comments from work diaries of our current apprentices.

Even if I don't get offered a job by the organisation I'm working for at the moment. I'll have loads and loads of different opportunities.  
*Louise Holness*

Support is provided at every step, I couldn't ask for more.  
*Dylan Moss*

With an apprenticeship the training is free, and not only is it free but when you're learning you're also earning money. And then there's the experience, which I think is invaluable.  
*Sami Rahman*

Loved it! Don't want to leave. Enjoyed all of it, learned some great things.  
*Timothy Rabson*

The instructor makes lessons interesting, treats us like adults and respects us.  
*Elizabeth MacKenzie*



I feel that this has started to become the most rewarding educational experience I have had.  
*Elizabeth MacKenzie*

I like the learning part of an apprenticeship; I'd hate to go into a job and not learn anything new or learn things repetitively. An apprenticeship eases you into full-time work.  
*Dylan Moss*

Our surveys/statistics show that having a recognised industry-standard Microsoft Certification can help IT apprentices jump-ahead of the competition when it comes to applying for a job in the IT industry.  
*Dominic Gill, Apprenticeship Manager, Business Consultant to Microsoft UK*

To read more about what it's like on a Firebrand Apprentice course read Tom Davis' Tech Apprentice blog: [www.techapprentice.co.uk](http://www.techapprentice.co.uk)

# Your questions answered

## What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a real job with training where you learn real marketable skills and gain industry-recognised qualifications. Generally, apprenticeships are open to anyone over 16 and under 24 and not in full time education; they typically last 12 months or more.

## When do I get paid?

Your pay will go into your bank account each month – usually towards the end, e.g. if you start on March 4th your first pay will be on or near the last day of March.

## What happens at the end of 52 weeks?

Your employer has a contract with you for 52 weeks. When your training is complete they can choose to take you on, or not. However, in a survey carried out by the TUC in 2011\* the success rate for IT apprentices was excellent, with more than four out of five (83%) apprentices working at the same firm a year later. The proportion in work a year later may be even higher than 83%, as the survey only asked the employer rather than the apprentice.

## What does a Firebrand Apprenticeship involve?

This is a real job and requires commitment, hard work and good time-keeping. During your course you will be learning on the job and spend five weeks in total at the Firebrand residential training centre. You will also be expected to do additional preparation for coursework and exams in the evening and at weekends.

## Will there be homework?

Yes, while you are learning on the job you will need to prepare for exams and will be required to do some additional reading and writing outside your work hours. But you will still have plenty of time to go out and enjoy yourself spending your hard-earned wages.

## How long does it take?

Apprenticeship courses last 12 months and can be started at any time during the year, although most start during August to October.

## Where is the training centre?

The training is held at our residential training centre at Wyboston Lakes in Bedfordshire. You will be at the training centre for six consecutive days, and are expected to arrive on Sunday for a course start on Monday morning. There is free parking. The nearest railway station is St Neots and there is a free shuttle bus service.

## How much do I get paid?

We recommend a starting salary of £150-£200 per week, and any expenses such as travel, etc. We also recommend that your salary be reviewed as you pass exams or complete courses and take on extra responsibility.

## How many hours a week will I work?

A 35-hour week (typically 9-5 with an hour for lunch) is normal.

## I've seen *The Apprentice*, will I be fired if I'm not right?

An apprenticeship is nothing like the TV programme. You are trained all through your course and we constantly assess your progress with your employer. We will work with your employer to sort out any problems. However, in the unlikely event that you and your employer aren't able to resolve any problems, they do have the right to terminate your employment.

## Do I get a holiday?

Yes, you will be entitled to the same holiday schemes as the rest of the employees in the business. Typically this is at least 20 days' paid holiday plus statutory days.

## Do I pay tax and National Insurance?

Yes, you will be on your employer's pay roll and treated in the same way as the rest of the staff.

\* Apprentice Pay and Conditions – TUC/Unionlearn 2011

# Contact us

To talk to us about the Firebrand Apprenticeship scheme and how it can set you off on a career in IT, or to get more information, please

call: 0800 081 6022

email: [apprentice@firebrandtraining.co.uk](mailto:apprentice@firebrandtraining.co.uk)

visit: [www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentice](http://www.firebrandtraining.co.uk/apprentice)

## Recommend a friend

Do you have a friend who might want to be an apprentice? Get them to sign up for an apprenticeship course and get a chance to win a £20 iTunes voucher. If they start a Firebrand Apprentice course you could receive up to £150 in iTunes vouchers. To apply, visit our apprentice website and click on 'Recommend a friend'.

