



Accounting  
Technicians  
Ireland



Department for the

**Economy**

An Roinn

**Geilleagair**

[www.economy-ni.gov.uk](http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Apprenticeships**

# EMPLOYER GUIDE

## SEPTEMBER 2025

HLA Accounting Technicians Level 5







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HIRING APPRENTICES VISIT:**

 [www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie](http://www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie)

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# CONTENTS

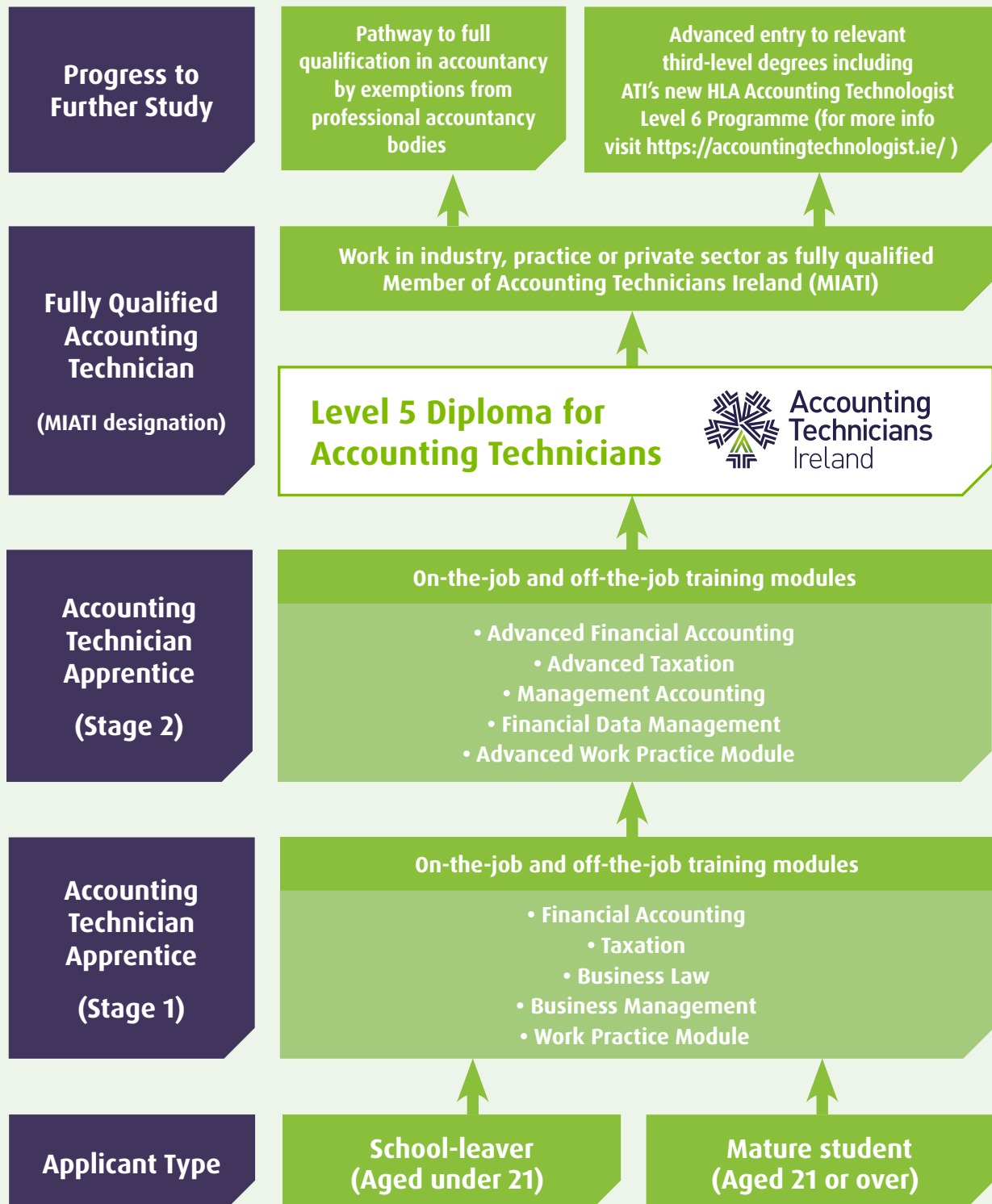
About the HLA Accounting Technicians Level 5	05
Employers: How will your company benefit?	06
Five reasons employers are joining and hiring Apprentices	08
How it works	10
Programme Overview and Role of Workplace Mentor	12
The Higher Level Apprenticeship is in partnership with the following colleges and at these locations	14

**“ We have been training Accounting Technicians since 1983 and would highly endorse the qualification. Many of those whom we have trained have gone on to qualify as Chartered Accountants. ”**

**Moore (N.I.) LLP**



# HLA ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS LEVEL 5 PROFESSIONAL CAREER PATHWAY





# ABOUT THE HLA ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS LEVEL 5

**Accounting Technicians Ireland is the leading professional body for Accounting Technicians on the island of Ireland. With offices in Dublin and Belfast, and strong links with Chartered Accountants Ireland and other professional accountancy bodies, we supply high-calibre Accounting Technician graduates to industry, practice and the public sector\*.**

Many progress to the highest levels in their field. We have 10,000 students and members across the Island of Ireland.

\*Whilst public sector employees can enrol on the off the job training, they cannot currently avail of DfE HLA funding – their employer would need to cover this cost.

## APPRENTICES GET PAID AT LEAST THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE BY THE EMPLOYER AND COLLEGE TUITION IS FULLY FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY.

This Higher Level Apprenticeship, which was launched in 2014, leads to a Level 5 Diploma for Accounting Technicians and provides school-leavers with a practical alternative to the traditional fulltime college route. The programme is also open to mature learners and 'role changers', or non-accountancy staff who would like to move into an accountancy role.

“ Students gain valuable knowledge, practical skills and work experience, as well as a professional qualification: the ATI Level 5 Diploma for Accounting Technicians. This winning combination will increase their employability, boost their CV and open up new career opportunities. ”

Anne McCallum,  
HLA Co-Ordinator,  
Northern Regional College.

**NORTHERN**  
Regional College

# EMPLOYERS: HOW WILL YOUR COMPANY BENEFIT?

The skills, knowledge and competencies obtained by Accounting Technician Apprentices means graduates are capable of filling all kinds of accounting and finance roles across all sectors of the economy.

Our talented graduates provide cost-effective staffing solutions for industry, practice and the public sector in a tight recruitment market.

**The Higher Level Apprenticeship is tailor-made for organisations that need well-skilled, committed and loyal accounting and finance staff with the capacity to develop their career to a senior level.**

Employers can recruit from a high calibre of talent including school-leavers, graduates and mature learners.

There may also be an option for existing employees looking to change to a career in Accounting that employers would like to upskill to apply. Furthermore if an employer has someone specifically in mind to complete the programme they can apply as well.

Candidates will bring significant value to your organisation as they progress through the programme from beginner to fully qualified Accounting Technician.

## **Other benefits of the HLA Accounting Technicians Level 5:**

- Increased employee retention resulting in a productive and positive workplace
- College learning is applied to specific job requirements of the role
- Learning from the bottom up, employees develop an excellent understanding of the business and can bring this into future management roles
- The programme prepares apprentices to meet the challenge of future developments in their occupation and workplace by providing them with relevant skills, knowledge and competencies





“ SERC was the perfect choice for me. The best part about completing this HLA was the combination of work experience alongside the theory behind it in the classroom. I believe this helps shape you for future employment much better than just study alone. ”

Amber Scott,  
Higher Level Apprenticeship in  
Accountancy Participant



# FIVE REASONS EMPLOYERS ARE JOINING AND HIRING APPRENTICES...

**1**

The HLA Accounting Technicians Level 5 is a modern, practical route to a career in accountancy where employers recruit apprentices who may be School Leavers, Career Changes, Mature Students or indeed existing employees who are moving to a new role.

**2**

Employers have a high calibre pool of applicants to choose from as a result of stringent programme entry criteria developed and approved in conjunction with accountancy employers.

**3**

Employers can save on recruitment costs as the Further Education Colleges actively promote and recruit for the HLA in Accountancy. Employers then become involved at interview stage whereby they choose to interview whichever candidates they feel would suit their organisation needs best from the application forms sent across to them from their local Further Education college.

**4**

Employers can grow and nurture talented participants with the potential to become versatile accountants with wide-ranging skills, and boost employee retention.

**5**

The Higher Level Apprenticeship leads to a Level 5 Diploma for Accounting Technicians. The off-the-job element of the HLA programme is fully funded by Department for the Economy.





“ We have been recruiting under the SRC HLA programme for the last 4 years. We have recruited 4 apprentices to date. Two have qualified as AT’s and are now studying with Chartered Accountants Ireland with two still currently on the HLA. We have found the HLA programme compliments our inhouse training and the calibre of apprentices has been excellent. The HLA route to Chartered Accountancy qualification seems to be gaining momentum and will remain an important aspect of our recruitment process ”

**Martin Grimley,**  
**MG Accountants**



## HOW IT WORKS

You register as a participating employer with your local Further Education College. Your FE College source, screen and process applications on your behalf, based on the minimum programme entry criteria\*

You select candidates for interview and offer successful applicants permanent paid employment as an apprentice for the programme commencing annually every September\*\*

During term time your apprentice will work at your office four days a week and study at their local college one day a week

A qualified workplace mentor and college mentor provides the apprentice with training time and support covering all aspects of the programme

Workplace learning is assessed throughout the programme and Online exams are held in May each year with a repeat Exams session in August

Once the apprentice fully completes the HLA, Employers can then offer them the chance to continue their studies with a professional accountancy body with the apprentice availing of exemptions gained from their ATI Qualification; or progress onto Degree Level Programmes such as ATI's HLA Accounting Technologist Level 6 (for more info visit <https://accountingtechnologist.ie/>)

### You should be in a position to:

- Offer the apprentice permanent paid employment paying at least the National Minimum Wage
- Meet all of the requirements of the Department for the Economy Tripartite Agreement and agree to comply with DfE's Rules and Regulations
- Ensure that the role offers participant exposure to all elements of Accounting Technicians Ireland's two-year programme
- Be in a position to offer apprentices a minimum of 2 weeks study leave. ATI recommends 3 weeks study leave, including the exams
- Appoint a suitably qualified workplace mentor

\* Eligibility and screening processes are detailed on the College website or <http://www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie>. Employers have the discretion to enhance the entry requirements beyond the minimum academic standards.

\*\* The apprentice may start their employment up to a maximum of 6 months prior to the commencement of their off-the-job training.





“ This scheme has quickly become an integral part of our talent pipeline for the future. Our first apprentice was named the winner of the Public People Managers Association’s ‘Apprentice of the Year’ award in 2020, out of a pool of outstanding finalists from across the UK and we are so proud of the progress made by all our HLA’s and the valuable contribution they make to NIAO. We are delighted that this same Apprentice has also been successfully promoted onto our Trainee Accountants scheme and is now on his way to becoming a fully qualified chartered accountant.

The NIAO believes in home-grown talent and is committed to unlocking the potential of its staff. It is our hope that our Apprentices will continue to develop their careers within NIAO and we are committed to providing young people in Northern Ireland meaningful and well paid career paths and plan to continue to work with ATI and FE colleges in NI to grow and develop our Apprenticeship scheme. ”

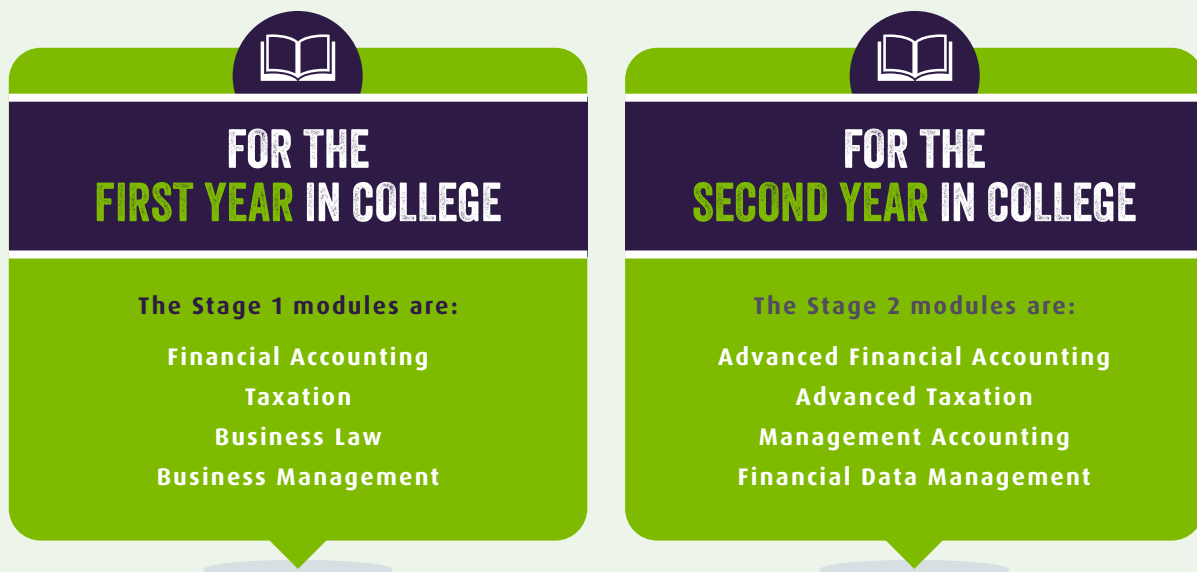
**Rodney Allen**  
**Chief Operating Officer**



\* Whilst public sector employees can enrol on the off-the-job training, they cannot currently avail of DfE HLA Funding- the apprentice and /or employer would need to cover this cost.

# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW AND ROLE OF WORKPLACE MENTOR

The on-the-job training lasts for two years (104 weeks) and takes place with the employer 4 days a week in term time and 5 days a week outside term time.



**Online Exams for each module will take place in June each year with an opportunity to repeat any failed exams in August of the same year**

Apprentices will also be required to complete two Work Based Modules. The Work-Based modules are a mandatory part of the ATI Level 5 Diploma for Accounting Technicians enabling learners to apply, consolidate and extend their learning within a workplace environment. They have two elements:

- Completion of a programme of Work-Based Learning (WBL).
- Work-Based Assignments (WBAs).

**Each Work-Based module has four equally weighted Work-Based Assignments:**

- Work Practice module - 2 WBAs on Financial Accounting and 2 WBAs on Business Management
- Advanced Work Practice module – 2 WBAs on Advanced Financial Accounting and 2 WBAs on Financial Data Management



**Throughout the two years on the HLA programme an apprentice will need to be assigned a workplace mentor to oversee and support them in their on the job training.**

The mentor will need to be a qualified professional accountant or accounting technician.

The main **role** of the workplace mentor is to:

- Be responsible for the training of the apprentice;
- To make sure the apprentice settles in, is introduced to their colleagues and peers and becomes familiar with their surroundings.
- To ensure the apprentice has adequate exposure to all relevant work experience for the programme.
- To agree a customised Training Plan with the apprentice at the beginning of each year.
- Ensure that their apprentice is able to adequately record their work-experience for assessment purposes.
- To review the apprentice's completed four work place assessment tasks per year.
- To provide pastoral care in the workplace on an ongoing basis and bring any support needed or concerns to ATI.
- Meet with their apprentice formally every 10- 12 weeks for periodic review meetings to review the apprentice's progress and modify the agreed training Plan where necessary.
- Ensure their apprentice successfully submits the approved four workplace assessment tasks per year in line with the programme timetable and submission deadlines.
- Ensure their apprentice is on track with study preparation each year towards their exams and for any repeat exams.
- Meet with an ATI representative/college mentor periodically to update on their apprentice.



## THE HLA ACCOUNTING TECHNICIANS LEVEL 5 IS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FOLLOWING COLLEGES AND AT THESE LOCATIONS:

- Belfast Metropolitan College, Titanic campus
- Northern Regional College, Coleraine campus
- North West Regional College, Strand Road campus
- Southern Regional College, Newry campus
- South Eastern Regional College, Lisburn campus
- South West College, Omagh campus, Enniskillen Campus & Dungannon Campus

**EMPLOYERS REGISTER YOUR INTEREST TO RECRUIT NOW WITH YOUR LOCAL FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE**

**WE ARE HOLDING A SERIES OF VIRTUAL OPEN DAYS FOR APPLICANTS, EMPLOYERS AND CAREERS ADVISORS OVER THE COMING MONTHS - SEE ATI WEBSITE BELOW FOR MORE DETAILS.**

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT US:



[www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie](http://www.accountingtechniciansireland.ie)



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[apprenticeship@accountingtechniciansireland.ie](mailto:apprenticeship@accountingtechniciansireland.ie)





“ATI Accounting Technician Level 5 provides students with a combination of skills that help boost employability in the future. The course not only provides students with academic knowledge, but the opportunity to put theory into practice and develop interpersonal skills through their employment. This HLA route provides students with an attractive set of employment skills, that will help them explore a variety options and excel in their chosen career.”

Grainne McSorley,  
HLA Co-ordinator, South West College







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