



Coláiste | National
Náisiúnta^{na} | College of
hÉireann | Ireland

Apprenticeship Programme Award:

National College of Ireland
– International Financial Services Associate Apprenticeship



1. Apprenticeship Programme: Demonstration of development, objectives and differentiation

The International Financial Services (IFS) Associate apprenticeship fulfils NCI's mission: "Changing Lives through Education". Developed in partnership with Financial Services Ireland (FSI) and an industry consortium, it leads to the Level 6 Higher Certificate in International Financial Services. Recognised in the 2026 Ireland for Finance strategy as an "...alternative route for individuals to develop their skill set and provide an additional talent source for firms."



IFS Associate Apprenticeship leadership team (left to right): Darragh Brien (Apprenticeship Engagement Specialist) Jonathan Brittain (Apprenticeship Manager), Susan Maher (IFS Associate Programme Director)

Revalidated 2024 and redesigned to the latest industry skills reports, consortium and apprentice feedback, revalidation enabled the opportunity to add value, enrich the learning experience, and attract employers. The overriding goal was to grow the number of apprentices:

- a minimum of 25 apprentices each year (previous averages of 12)
- 75% retention

The programme is clearly differentiated from other apprenticeships:

- The only apprenticeship targeting skills needs of the IFS sector
- Work-Based Learning (WBL) that is graded, credit bearing and weighted, contributing to the final award classification
- All new modules, developed with the industry consortium and guided by FSI industry skills reports 50% of all assessments are Work-Based Learning (WBL), graded, credit-bearing and weighted, contributing to the final award classification
- A new blended programme enabling nationwide participation
- NCI Academic Supervisor (AS) to support each apprentice and each Workplace Mentor
- Creation of bespoke e-Portfolio allowing 360 feedback
- Workplace Mentor participation in assessment

2. Overview: Implementation over the past 12 months with specific examples, and examples of Excellence in Training & Development

Inaugural IFS Apprenticeship Conference February 2025

A unique feature, a conference organised especially for apprentices, implemented in 2025.

The conference aims to:

- Enhance employer engagement with industry speakers
- Inform of 'hot topics' in the industry
- Inspire apprentices with career updates from apprenticeship alumni
- Enrich the learning experience and support retention
- Promote personal and professional development
- Act as a diverse WBL assessment tool
- Promote the apprenticeship through branded merchandise
- Promote apprentice social media professional profile
- Support Sustainability with the gift of a tree.



National College of Ireland's IFS Apprenticeship Conference 25 th February 2025 Programme Schedule		
Opening Remarks	Overview/Agenda	10:00 A.M. - 10:15 A.M.
Jean Cassidy Head of Statistics Central Bank of Ireland	Central Bank Data & Statistics	10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.
Shakeel Jerroburkan Senior Analyst Fidelity International	My Apprenticeship Journey	10:45am - 11:10 a.m.
Break	Light Refreshment	11:10 a.m - 11:30 a.m.
Stephen Lynch COO HSBC	Career in Financial Services	11:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Dr Mary Liz Trant Executive Director National Apprenticeship Office	NAO Overview	12p.m - 12:15 p.m.
Myles Collier Business Intelligence B Flexion	Alumni Fireside Chat Maximising your journey	12:15 p.m. - 12:45.P.m.
Sarah Jane Reynolds Lead Client Solutions Consultant Fenergo		
Cian McCaffrey Client Reporting Assistant Manager Fidelity International		
Lunch	Hospitality	12:45pm - 1:30 p.m.
Aidan Kearns Country Head, Global Services Payments HSBC	Innovation, Technology & Digital Transformation	1:30pm - 2pm
Jennifer Brennan Thrive Marketing CEO	Defining your Personal Brand	2 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Closing Remarks	Review of Day	2:30pm - 2:45pm

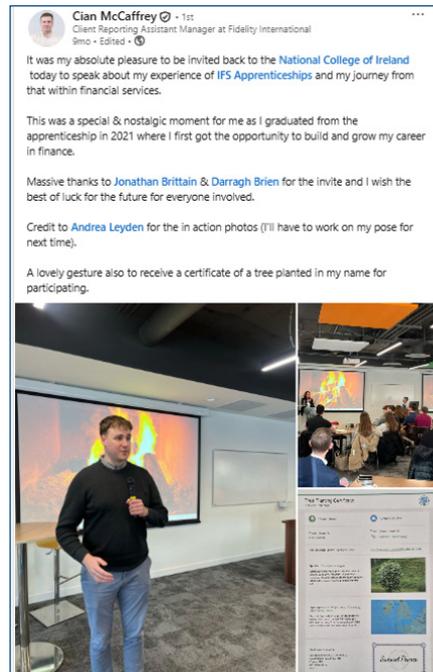
Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) Participation & Launch February 2025

In celebration of CBI's participation a launch event was held hosting industry partners and community groups. Most compelling speaker was James Nolan, a school leaver in 2019, who graduated in 2021 securing a permanent post with his sponsoring employer Amundi Ireland. He has subsequently completed an MSc in Finance.

Further reading:

[Central Bank of Ireland in collaboration with IFS Apprenticeships](#)

[LinkedIn CBI & IFS Apprenticeships Launch](#)



Cian McCaffrey (Fidelity International) Graduate 2021. [Click here](#) to see post.



Oleksii Kondratenko 1st Year Apprentice with HSBC. [Click here](#) to see post.

Apprenticeship Completion Event (ACE) April 2025

This new initiative aimed to recognise the commitment and resilience of apprentices in completing their challenging journey, offer career support, and build apprentices' social media professional profile.

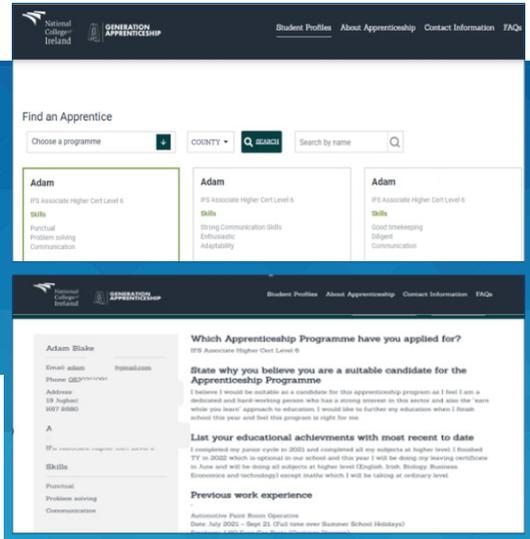


[Click here](#) to see post.

Recruitment director Skai O'Sullivan presented on next career steps, "Owning your own journey in Financial Services". An example of leveraging our alumni, Skai completed NCI's Recruitment Executive apprenticeship in 2024.

Digital Candidate Booklet February to May 2025

Adding value to employers, NCI sources candidates. Past approaches had numerous issues: CV formats & information differed; information difficult to find, or absent; not a 'live' up-to-date candidate booklet; candidates not pre-screened. A digital candidate booklet is now implemented which standardises information. The booklet is 'live'. All candidates included are pre-screened. Candidates give consent to information sharing, and employers are given a secure link with passcode for access.



Minister Robert Troy Department of Finance (Special Responsibility for financial services, credit unions and insurance) May 2025

To promote IFS Apprenticeships we met Minister Troy at the Department of Finance. The Minister agreed to open and speak at the 2025-26 IFS Apprenticeships Conference. [Click here to read the article.](#)



[Click here to read the blog post.](#)

Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Leadership Exchange Programme (LEX) September 2025

Dublin was chosen for the 35th annual LEX programme, with an interest in bridging the gap between business and community we hosted a workshop with 15 business leaders covering: IFS landscape in Ireland; a comparison of US versus Irish apprenticeships; IFS Apprenticeship programme and outcomes. The team included the IFS Consortia partners Stephen Lynch (COO HSBC) and Myles Collier, Business Intelligence Analyst at B-Flexion, together with NCI colleagues.

Apprentice of the Year Awards September/October 2025

Our highest number of apprentices for the *Apprentice of the Year*, Finance category – six apprentices shortlisted, all presented at the Heroes stage, RDS.

Apprentice Pre-Ceremony Event at Graduation November 2025

Enabling the student voice, Robert Reidy (pictured) delivered the speech on behalf of his class. Stephen Lynch (centre) Consortia Chair, also spoke and joined the academic procession, further embedding the industry and academic partnership.



[View post on LinkedIn](#)



Financial Services Ireland Dinner: Amundi Ireland IFS Apprenticeship Academic Excellence Award

Ibec/Financial Services Ireland Dinner: IFS Apprenticeship Academic Excellence Award Presentation November 2025

The IFS Apprenticeship Academic Excellence Award is presented at the Financial Services Ireland Dinner in November - a flagship event for the IFS community. The event enables promotion and recognition of the IFS Apprenticeship brand. It is kindly sponsored by Amundi Ireland. The 2025 award was presented by Verena Ross, Chair of the European Securities and Markets Authority to IFS Associate graduate Dany Rusu.

LinkedIn Page Creation & Development December 2024 to December 2025

Over the last year the IFS Apprenticeships LinkedIn page has grown from 0 to almost 1,400 followers whilst achieving more than 20,000 impressions, contributing to IFS Apprenticeship brand recognition.

Highlights
Data for 12/9/2024 - 12/8/2025

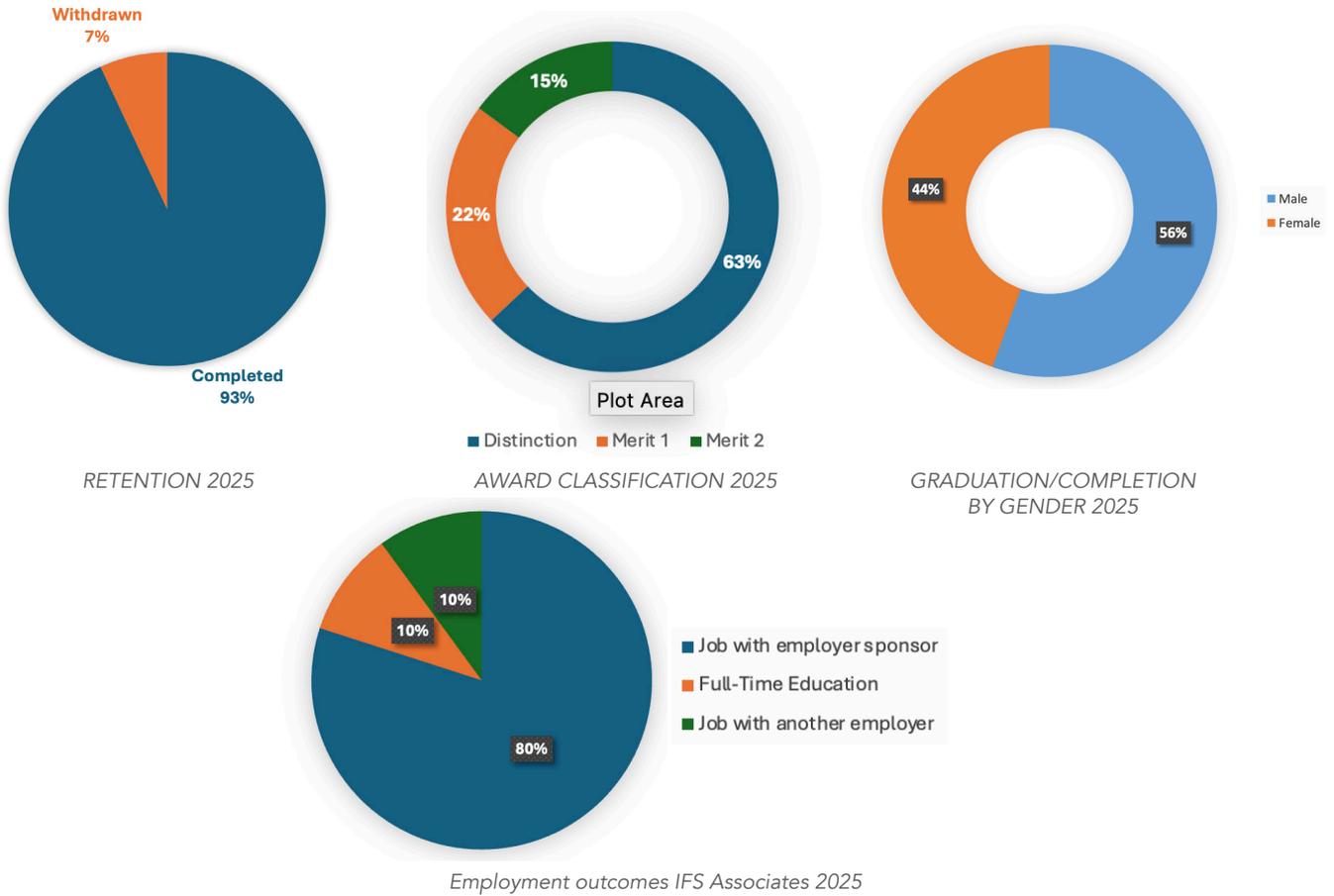
IFS Apprenticeships
Enhance your Page
1,386 followers

20,322
Impressions

3. Evidence of Learner Benefits

Retention

The class of 2025 saw 27 out of 29 apprentices complete and graduate. 85% of graduates achieved either Distinction or Merit 1. No fails were recorded or PASS classifications. Female representation increased 6% to 44%, contributing to greater female participation in the apprenticeship sector, and in employment for women in financial services.



Learner Testimonials

Unsolicited testimonials posted by apprentices on social media/LinkedIn.

Samantha Moreschi Graduate 2025

Being part of the programme was truly transformative. The IFS Apprenticeship opens doors, provides incredible support, and creates real opportunities for growth. I had the chance to graduate, be promoted to analyst, and now continue my journey as a full-time employee.

Joe Bonner Graduate 2025

Couldn't recommend the IFS Apprenticeships enough for anyone looking to get started in the Financial Services industry. Looking forward to continuing in my role with AIB and further study at NCI.

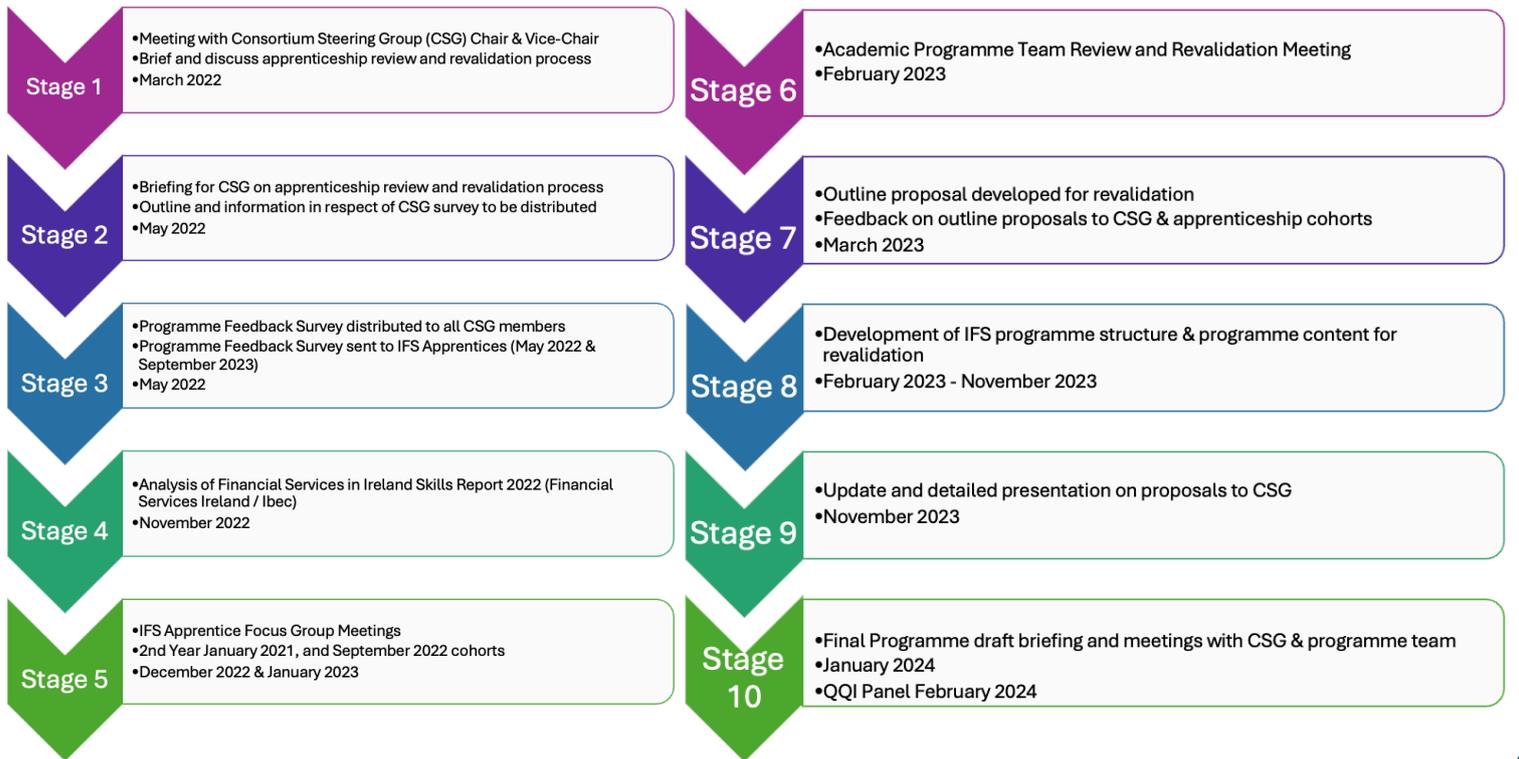
Adam Roche Graduate 2025

I am happy to announce I have completed my international financial services apprenticeship with the NCI, and I am now starting my new role as Senior analyst in the equity attribution team, here at Fidelity International.

4. Evidence of Learner Benefits:

The role of the stakeholders in the development, delivery or evaluation of the programmes.

Shown on the next page are the extensive steps involving the industry consortium, apprentices, and faculty, in the development of the revalidated IFS Associate apprenticeship, launched academic year 2024-25.



Demonstrate how this feedback has been used to enhance the content or delivery of the programme.

One example from CSG feedback highlighted the absence of Sustainability / ESG. This is now embedded in 2 new modules: Management in a Sustainable World; Contemporary Issues in International Financial Services.

One example from apprentice feedback identified the problems in studying from home. In response a room was made available each online week for apprentices who wanted to come on-campus and use NCI facilities, Wi-Fi, and socialise with other apprentices.

Benefits to IFS Industry Employers

Diverse Talent Stream

The highest intake of apprentices in 2025, 34 (up from lows of 8 in 2019, and 12 in 2021) indicate the programme is valuable source of talent. Diversifying the talent pool is a common benefit cited.

Employment

95.5% of graduates between 2019 and 2023 continue to work in financial services.

Retention on programme

Strong retention indicates high levels of programme satisfaction and employer support/experience. 95% of apprentices who started in 2023 graduated in 2025. 100% of 1st Year intake 2025-26 are still on the apprenticeship.

Retention of Employers

Employers such as AIB, Fidelity International, and State Street have now participated in the programme for 10 years (including their contribution in development of the apprenticeship).

Progression/promotion

A survey of graduates indicates 65% obtain promotion/ progression on completion of the apprenticeship.

Company Testimonials.

Testimonials from the CSG Chair, plus unsolicited social media posts.

Stephen Lynch, Chief Operating Officer, HSBC Continental Europe, Ireland Chair IFS Apprenticeship Consortium Steering Group
The revised curriculum of the IFS Associate course aligns the content with industry needs. This is evidenced through the correlation between the course content, and the skills reports for the sector. The programme was created through brainstorming sessions with a sub-group of the Consortium Steering Group, before being run by the wider Committee. It was agreed by all attendees this is the correct direction of travel and will no doubt ensure buy-in from potential employers going forward, with a resulting increase in apprenticeship opportunities and job offers.

Donal Holly, Talent Acquisition Countries Partner, Vice President, JP Morgan 2025
At JPMorgan Chase, we believe that great people come from many different paths. By recognising and supporting alternative routes into our industry, we're proud to welcome fresh perspectives and new energy to our team. Our apprentices, ... are already making a fantastic impact, and we're excited to watch their careers grow with us.

A heartfelt thank you to the NCI for running the IFS Apprenticeship programme and helping us connect with such promising talent.

Marie-Therese Landy, HR Business Partner, Amundi Ireland
A big thank you to ... for their continued support of the IFS Apprenticeship Programme. Programmes like this are vital for developing the next generation of talent in financial services.