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Centre for Enterprise **IMPACT**

Work-Based Learning Edition

Autumn 2015

**Latest UK
apprenticeships stats**

**Professor Julia Clarke,
Dean of the Faculty of
Business and Law,
explains our approach to
work-based learning**

**Do new apprenticeships
combine the best of work
and university?
Companies and
apprentices explain**

**NW LEP Chairs on how
they are supporting
work-based learning**

- **Meet the pioneers - teachers and apprentices**
- **Are you ready to #SEEDIFFERENT?**
- **The Skills Company MD, explains Trailblazers**
- **NEF calls for consistency**



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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Latest developments in apprenticeships and the future agenda explained



First of its kind Digital & Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship



The Legal Services Apprenticeship celebrates its third year and recognises this years' graduates

"Putting knowledge to work to grow your business"

The Centre for Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University is passionate about turning research into practical knowledge that can be applied to improve regional businesses. Our areas of expertise are growth, leadership, entrepreneurship and sustainability. We offer a range of programmes around these themes, many of which are fully-funded. Register with us to access our knowledge, our business network and to grow your business.

DIRECTOR'S WELCOME



Welcome to the Work-Based Learning Edition of IMPACT. We make no apologies for dedicating this edition to apprenticeships, even though we support a range of work-based learning outside of these new awards at higher and degree level, as an institution we have taken a lead nationally in this area.

Our aim at the Faculty of Business and Law and across the Department of Business and Management at our Cheshire Campus is to *"develop socially and environmentally responsible 'early career professionals' for successful careers in management and the professions"*. Work-based learning has proved to be an excellent way to ensure this happens. As well as our work in collaborating with external organisations to develop curriculum, we have led the way with degree and higher-level apprenticeships. Our Dean, Professor Julia Clarke, explains our commitment to this School Mission (page 4).

But don't take our word for it! Hear it from the students, companies and tutors, who are working together to provide exciting new apprenticeships, developed in partnership with business and industry (from page 6). Whether it is the new Digital & Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship or the new programmes in Legal Services, academics and support staff at Manchester Metropolitan have risen to the challenge - and learned a lot themselves in doing so. Our students are working in companies throughout the North

West, while developing new skills and knowledge to support their studies, earning a salary in the process.

We know, though, that we do not operate in a vacuum. Outside higher education, apprenticeships are developing quickly and across subject areas. Professor Medhat from NEF: The Innovation Institute, known for its work nationally in further education, sounds a cautionary note in there being a need for consistent standards across providers (page 16). Jayne Worthington, MD of The Skills Company in Greater Manchester explains their approaches to bringing apprenticeships within the reach of students and companies across their area. Across the North West, our Local Enterprise Partnerships are committed to making work-based learning and apprenticeships, key themes in addressing economic and social issues (page 14).

What of the future? Well, our Apprenticeships Director Liz Gorb explains how things might develop (page 13). We have launched a new Business Management Degree Apprenticeship, with three faculties, and national companies working in partnership, starting in September 2016 (page 4). Therefore, there will be many opportunities to take part as an employer and as a student, to build the right skills base for tomorrow's needs.

Professor Lynn Martin

Director of the Centre for Enterprise

Want to contribute?

Each issue of IMPACT carries a central theme, but also relies on contributions from the businesses we work with, our dedicated research team, the wider MMU community and our partners. We always welcome your input, so please get in touch.

For future IMPACT issue themes and to submit a contribution for consideration please email john.williams@mmu.ac.uk or give us a call on **0161 247 3919**.

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#ASKTHEEXPERT

In each issue we feature an expert who will answer your questions.

Our expert this issue is MMU Apprenticeships Director, **Liz Gorb**. Turn to page 13 to read more. Keep an eye on our twitter feed([@mmucfe](https://twitter.com/mmucfe)) for the topic of next issue's #AskTheExpert. Questions can be submitted via twitter or by emailing:

cfe@mmu.ac.uk

The Apprenticeship Agenda

What are the latest developments in apprenticeships? Dr Jacqueline Carter looks at policy and research.



Recent Developments in Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are not new, but you could be forgiven for thinking they were the brainchild of modern politicians. The Government is looking to expand the numbers significantly, targeting three million by 2020. They are introducing a raft of measures to support this expansion, including a large business levy and national insurance exemptions for employers of under 25 year olds. Apprenticeships are seen as promoting skills development, economic growth and social inclusion (Fuller et al, 2013). They are offered by 170 industries, in a range of large and small businesses and in 1,500 job roles.

Is the new target for apprenticeships designed to address the drop in employees receiving training? There was a drop from 141,000 in 1995 to 18,000 in 2014 (HM Treasury, 2015) of employees attending training outside of their workplace. As paid employees, apprenticeships last 12 months or more and include at least 20% of an

apprentice's work time being taken in off-the-job training.

The Richard Review in 2013 recommended a redefinition of apprenticeships as training in a job. It recommended improving the quality of apprenticeships through increased focus on the needs of the employers, giving them greater input into developing suitable qualifications and standards. In response, 1,000 employers from 75 sectors are participating in developing new apprenticeship standards, through participation in the Government's Trailblazer groups (read more about Trailblazers from The Skills Company on page 9).

The recent introduction of degree apprenticeships combines the benefits of an apprenticeship and University education, allowing participants to achieve a Bachelor's or Master's degree as part of their programme. These degree courses are being developed through consultation with employers, universities and professional bodies. For example, health care assistants with practice

experience can take an employer-backed apprenticeship scheme, which enables them to take a nursing degree.

The Government Apprenticeship Ambassador for SMEs and CEO of Hols Group, Jason Holt, advocates apprenticeships for SMEs

"...I am a fan of apprenticeships and that's because I have seen for myself that a strategy for growth is best combined with a strategy for skills – for me that has always involved employing apprentices..."

Evaluation of Apprenticeships

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) commissions annual research to ensure that apprenticeships meet the needs of both employers and apprentices. The 2014 survey included 4,030 employers and 5,822 apprentices. Overall, 80% of employers were satisfied with their programme. They saw apprenticeships as paramount to maintaining and improving future skill levels in the business (95%), improving product/service quality and improving productivity (80%+). Of these, 48% of employers recruited from existing staff and 46% recruited externally. People hired externally as apprentices were usually recruited on fixed-term contracts to new posts in a firm rather than to replace staff who had left. Internal recruits were appointed to improve the organisation's skill set and to aid career progression.

For apprentices, the most popular reasons for embarking on a programme were to:

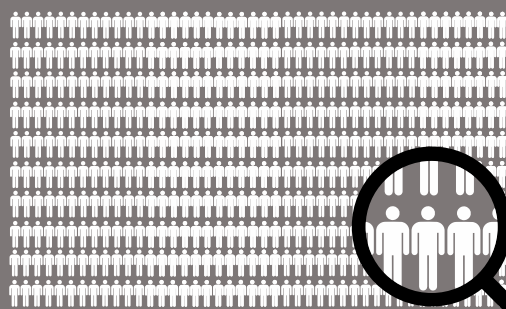
- gain a qualification and get paid whilst training,
- develop work-related skills, and
- enter into or progress in a career.

Overall, 80% of apprentices speak highly of their training. Most apprentices continued in full or part-time employment following their apprenticeship, often with their existing employer. Over 70% of all apprentices felt they were performing better at their job and their career prospects had improved, as well showing increased loyalty to their employer.

Academic Research

Academic research has investigated the value of apprenticeships. Nielsen & Pedersen's 2011 research describes the benefits of work-based learning. The trend has seen traditional mass production moving to countries with lower labour costs, so western societies now require more specialised and flexible production units. This is fuelled by rapid technological change, which demands continual learning to adapt to the changes in production. As a result there is a strong emphasis on life-long learning in the current working environment. Many of these new skills are easier to adapt for apprenticeship learning than a more formal educational setting.

Bishop's 2014 research compared the



440,000 annual
apprenticeship starts
in England



The number of
apprenticeships
started
annually in
England by
gender

Top 3 sectors for apprenticeships

Business,
Administration & Law



28.6% - UK
33.2% - NW

Health, Public
Services & Care



28.6% - UK
33.2% - NW

Retail & Commercial
Enterprise



28.6% - UK
33.2% - NW



9 in 10 employers with an
apprentice report benefits



For each £1 invested, apprenticeships
return £18 to the economy

£34bn

The estimated
contribution
apprentices
make to the UK
economy

£214_{pw}

Average
reported
increase in
productivity for
firms with
apprentices

UK Apprenticeship Stats 2013/2014

learning experiences of apprentices in large and small businesses and found an effective learning environment can be created in firms of all sizes. He also found smaller firms were often able to offer earlier exposure to workplace practice and more freedom for an individual apprentice to shape their learning journey. In larger firms it may be easier to achieve standardised learning outcomes and there may be more structure to the apprentice's training. But for some apprentices that training can be seen as very formal, lacking in choice and offering restricted exposure to the production process. While some people thrive in a highly structured environment, others prefer the flexibility and freedom of a smaller firm.

Exploring successful apprenticeship schemes in England and Wales, Sloman (2013) found that apprenticeship schemes

were most successful when they combined a business case with local community needs. He also found the most successful apprenticeships were tailored to the needs of the organisation and could not always be transferred to another business environment.

Improved business fit was also found by Chan (2013), when bakery apprentices attained new skills and their integration into the workplace progressed. On completing their apprenticeship, they had developed increased autonomy and occupational identity. She also found that apprentices gained skills that were difficult to quantify in national qualifications, such as the acquisition of problem solving skills from other workers, specific to their industry.

Young people see apprenticeships as a valuable alternative to university

(Newton and Williams, 2013). The extensive work experience offered by an apprenticeship is seen as providing an advantage over graduates, as they could demonstrate attributes valued by employers. They would also avoid the debts usually taken on when studying a traditional degree programme.

Over the next few years, continued research and evaluation of apprenticeship programmes will be needed. This will help provide solutions to issues such as occupational segregation by gender and under-representation of some ethnic minority groups in apprenticeships (Newton & Williams, 2013). The Centre for Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University hopes to be a part of that collective research, by examining the experiences of apprentices on the Legal Services and the Digital & Technology Solutions programmes.

The MMU Approach

Professor Julia Clarke explains the way MMU works in partnership to develop apprenticeships

Historically, students have had to choose between academic and vocational routes for education post-secondary school. Degree apprenticeships remove this dichotomy by offering pathways that combine work-based learning and practice, with the theoretical dimension provided in the university environment. Degree apprenticeships differ from the more traditional models of part-time study because they provide a truly integrated model. The whole programme of study is jointly designed and delivered by the employers and the academics. Students are not coming away from work to university – they are bringing their work with them onto campus and their campus experiences are directly informing how they work.

North West businesses are seeking to recruit, develop and retain the best talent in the region. Degree apprenticeships offer a new way in which organisations can find, develop and upskill their people. The new degree-level apprenticeships are suitable for both school leavers, in place of a more traditional university based degree, and for existing employees looking to develop their skills and capabilities with the

sponsorship of their employers.

Where the North West leads the rest of the country follows! The degree apprenticeship schemes really are a win-win scenario for students, employers and educators. They ensure that we in the universities are developing our higher education offering in ways that are relevant to employers. Employers benefit from the development of employees who not only possess specific skills, but who also bring a problem-solving approach to their work. The apprentices, in turn, gain from access to a degree level qualification without taking on the debt associated with standard degrees.

Here at Manchester Metropolitan University we are committed to the future of degree apprenticeships. Our vision is to be the sector leader for higher and degree apprenticeships with a steady state of around 500 students enrolling each year by 2018/19. We are making significant investments in the development of higher and degree apprenticeships across a broad range of disciplines (including Law, Management, Health and Education). Early in 2016 we



Professor Julia Clarke, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law

will launch the Manchester Metropolitan University Centre for Apprenticeship Based Learning and Education (ABLE), through which we will roll out apprenticeships across the institution.

House of Commons launch for Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship

Manchester Metropolitan University has launched their new Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship at The House of Commons.

The event on 11 November was attended by key industry partners and political leaders, who were all keen to emphasise the important role of the new programme.

As a holder of the Small Business Charter Mark, MMU are one of the first providers to offer this new opportunity. The apprenticeship will welcome its first intake of students in September 2016 and already has significant interest from regional and national companies.

The Chartered Manager programme is the latest in a new wave of trailblazer degree apprenticeships, designed in collaboration with employers of all sizes. It is an exciting new work-based route for developing a management and

leadership career.

As a result of a partnership with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), successful apprentices studying at MMU will benefit from recognition as CMI Chartered Managers, as well as receiving a BA (Hons) Business Management degree.

Talking about the importance of this new apprenticeship the Skills Minister Nick Boles, said:

"Increasing the number of people who understand how to lead and manage people is essential to the UK's future. This Degree Apprenticeship will equip people starting their careers with the leadership and management skills needed to rise to the top and shape the future of UK industry."

The Government has reaffirmed its



commitment by agreeing to fund up to two thirds of the fees for apprentices.

The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship is a great opportunity both for existing managers to build on their experience with formal qualifications and for new students looking to start a career in management.

If you would like to offer opportunities for management apprentices in your organisation, please get in touch or find out more information on our website.

www.business.mmu.ac.uk/management-apprenticeships

SME PERSPECTIVE

We surveyed North West SMEs to find out about their apprenticeship experiences

The Centre for Enterprise summer survey of North West SMEs, probed business leaders for their experiences of apprenticeships. Over a third of the respondents had taken on an apprentice and, importantly, all of those businesses confirmed they would take them on again in the future.

Would you have another apprentice?

The importance of apprentices to businesses and their enthusiasm for the chance to offer apprenticeships is apparent from our survey results. **Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents, confirmed they are planning to make opportunities available in the future.**

Our survey found a wide spread of SMEs offering apprenticeships, with no one particular sector dominating the results. The apprentices were employed in varied business areas including: laboratory work, technical support team, electrical services, finance, technology, administration, media, retail/confectionary, warehouse operations, digital marketing, bridge inspection, pre-press support, label finishing and food production.

The majority of businesses employing apprentices were positive about their experiences, however, some had experienced challenges as seen in the comments below.

Are the costs an issue?

The cost of taking on an apprentice was thought to have more of an impact on SMEs than larger businesses. This may be alleviated by government announcements in summer 2015. This included a levy to be paid by larger businesses to help fund the cost of apprenticeships. Other initiatives such as reductions in National Insurance payments for SMEs (HMRC, 2015) may help with the cost of employing apprentices. There is also funding available specifically to help SMEs with the cost of apprenticeships.

Other issues

The quality of training was an issue for some SMEs. Training content may be improved by the Government's recent Trailblazer group initiative. This gives employers more say in the standards expected of apprentices and the training



MMU apprentices are working with successful North West SMEs

required for employment in their business sector (Newton et al, 2015).

It seems that finding an appropriate provider is currently a challenge for some employers. To enable employers to find the right training provider, improved communication of the services offered by the different training providers may be required.

On apprenticeships, they said:

"We've had some really good ones who have moved up within our business"

"So far it's been great for the company"

"Very positive experience in terms of the people we have employed and the schemes they have been on."

On the work environment, they said:

"...Providing a welcoming and professional working environment, with regular constructive positive feedback is very important."

On training providers, they said:

"As a small business owner, it was difficult to give time to the individual we took on. Thankfully the organisation who provided the apprentice, also provided excellent training and regular meetings with the individual concerned...."

"The apprentices are generally good, the colleges we have to deal with are poor, both in what they deliver and in how awkward they are to deal with."

"A recent change to pure online learning did not suit our apprentices, so we have gone through a process of changing our training provider."

On finding the right apprentice, they said:

"Easy process once we found out where to start. Not very easy to find apprentice in the first place though, as schools/colleges not always very forthcoming"

On selecting a provider, they said:

"The selection process is key and its important to work with an established quality Apprentice provider, who provides high quality training..."

"The initial phase of engaging with providers is a real challenge - it is so confusing to understand the differences each provider is offering and which of them are competent etc."

Pioneering Degree Apprenticeships

First Digital & Technology Solutions degree apprentices enrol at Manchester Metropolitan University



Sixty apprentices started in September 2015

More than 60 of the UK's first degree apprentices have enrolled at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) to pursue a new model of earning and learning that brings together the best of higher and vocational education.

The new Degree Apprenticeship in Digital & Technology Solutions has been designed and developed by the Tech Partnership and MMU, together with leading regional employers such as Barclays, AstraZeneca, Lloyds Banking Group, Thales, MC2, Network Rail, DWP, Apadmi, Reality Mine, Shaping Cloud and Bright Future Software.

It is one of a number of new degree apprenticeship programmes to launch

this autumn in the UK and is backed by the government, which funds two thirds of the course fees. The new programme supports the UK demand for the one million vacancies expected in the digital sector in the next decade.

The apprentices are studying towards a BSc (Hons) in Digital & Technology Solutions at MMU's £75m business school, while working for their employer. This will prepare them to work in a variety of IT related roles and covers a flexible curriculum, enabling specialisation in either software development or business.

Professor Jean-Noël Ezingeard, Deputy Vice Chancellor, MMU, said:

"Curriculum innovation is at the heart of Manchester Metropolitan University and we are delighted to be one of the first selected universities able to offer the Digital & Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship. Our programme has been developed in partnership with employers and

accredited by the Tech Partnership for its content and quality. This means that the employers can be confident that their degree apprentices will be developing the very best and most relevant skills and knowledge that industry needs for its future development."

The degree apprenticeship integrates academic learning at degree level with work-based training. Students earn while they learn and come away with skills that are directly relevant to employers, who have an opportunity to instil their own business culture and working style from an early stage. The programme is open to existing employees, as well as new entrants.

Among the new apprentices is 20 year-old Nadia Johnson from Bolton, who has been appointed by Thales UK. She comments:

"I've always been a fan of learning something and then going and doing it. So studying in a university environment and then putting it to use in the workplace helps to make it more concrete in my mind. Having a job alongside study was important to me. I'm fascinated by IT, and working in a field that relates to what I am learning at university is a great opportunity."

John Peachey, Head of Software for Thales UK, describes the programmes benefits:

"This will provide a unique opportunity for the new generation of software engineers to develop the academic and hands on technical and personal skills to be a key member of the Thales UK Software Development team."

Helen Ford, Practice Manager (New Entrants Programmes) for Network Rail, explains the attraction for new recruits:

"This is a fabulous opportunity for young people to earn whilst they learn and for us to be able to bridge the gap between earning and learning - providing a broad and deep experience across IT."

Do you want to engage with future Business and IT professionals?

We are looking for enthusiastic employers to come on board for 2016. Benefit from nurturing new talent within your business, while they acquire the functional skills required to boost your business growth. Find out more about the degree apprenticeship opportunities in Digital & Technology Solutions:

www.business.mmu.ac.uk/techsolutions

BUSINESS VIEWPOINT

AstraZeneca, MC2 and Thales explain their approach to apprenticeships - both now and in the future



Hayley Cooney
Graduate and Early Talent Programme Manager at AstraZeneca

Why do you offer opportunities for apprentices at AstraZeneca?

AstraZeneca IT believe in investing in new skills and bringing fresh talent into our organisation. Employing apprentices opens the door to millennial thinking at a number of organisational levels. Our apprentices provide us with the opportunity to understand the perspective of a new generation, which has enabled us to listen, learn and at times modify our delivery from a traditional approach.

What benefits does hiring apprentices have for AstraZeneca?

Our apprentices have been phenomenally successful, they have invigorated our teams, brought a fresh new perspective, raised our productivity and been instrumental in creating an engaging and vibrant team environment. Our apprentices bring genuine enthusiasm to their teams, which is infectious and a degree of curiosity, which allows them to question our practice and offer new ways of thinking.

How do you think earning qualifications, while gaining workplace experience benefits apprentices?

Apprentices who undertake the BSc Digital & Technology Solutions as part of an apprenticeship programme are able to gain a wealth of work experience coupled with an academic understanding of IT and business practices. This helps them to build their professional foundations and be well rounded IT practitioners with a high level of business acumen. Having this experience early in their careers not only develops their technical and business skills, but also their leadership qualities, enabling us to grow technical leaders of the future.

What are the challenges of employing apprentices or interns?

Our apprentices have made a huge impact across the organisation, so the main challenge that we have is matching

the demand with supply, which is testament to their hard work and reputation across the business.

How do you see the role of apprentices at AstraZeneca developing in the future?

Due to the success of our North West based apprenticeships we are considering operating the programme at a national level to try and meet some of the demand we have for them in our other business locations.

As our current apprentices progress through their degree with MMU, coupled with their work place experience, we expect them to move into a number of different roles across the IT function and continue to support us to make our IT services world class.



Claire Tennant
Managing Director at MC2

Why do you offer opportunities for apprentices at MC2?

PR is a fast-moving industry, where developing and retaining talent is essential to success. With that in mind, it's really important that we invest in intelligent young people that will grow and drive our business with new ideas further down the line. By investing in them and nurturing their development, we expect that they will become the creative minds that influence decisions in the boardroom. Mapping out that career journey for our apprentices shows them that we will support them, right up to director level.

What benefits does hiring apprentices have for MC2?

Investing in apprenticeships has given us the opportunity to bring in creative and enthusiastic individuals to add to and learn from our experienced team. As well as bringing new ideas to the table, it means we can train and embed them into our culture and way of working so they can be the ones to take the business forward in the future.

How do you think earning qualifications, while gaining workplace experience benefits apprentices?

Gaining a qualification during an apprenticeship is extremely beneficial, particularly in an ever-evolving industry like PR and Communications. It gives our apprentices the chance to match their 'real life' training, where they're constantly developing, with an educational balance that gives them the tools they need to thrive.

What are the challenges of employing apprentices or interns?

Making sure you have the right structure in place to support an apprentice can be one of the challenges in the early going. They will be juggling both work and educational commitments, whilst transitioning into a new environment, so you need to think how your team can make that process as easy, but stimulating as possible.

How do you see the role of apprentices at MC2 developing in the future?

Apprenticeships are quickly becoming as important to our recruitment process as our graduate programme. As the awareness of Degree Apprenticeships increases, we expect to see more and more high quality applicants joining the business and we're looking forward to them becoming an integral part of MC2's culture.



Sarah Macdonald
Professional Development Partner at Thales

Why do you offer opportunities for apprentices at Thales?

Together we, at Thales, clarify the confoundingly complicated problems our customers face across Aerospace, Space, Transportation, Defence and Security. It is critical therefore, for the growth of our ideas and business success that we have a continuous pipeline of emerging talent who are passionate about technology and engineering and who can bring us enthusiasm, drive, resourcefulness and commitment. Year on year Thales increase the number and range of apprenticeship, intern and graduate opportunities available within our business as we recognise the

Continued on page 8

contribution these programmes make, not only to the individuals, but also to the wider business as we develop our leaders and technical experts for the future.

What benefits does hiring apprentices/interns bring to Thales?

Thales is incredibly diverse and our needs and demands are always changing, therefore our emerging talent population are fundamental to our future skill requirements. Hiring apprentices, interns and graduates also has a positive impact on our overall employee engagement as we place a strong emphasis in the business for all generations to knowledge share. Undoubtedly the costs of hiring an apprentice are attractive to employers, however at Thales we see the real benefits as the return on investment that our emerging talent population gives us so early on, making them a real asset to the business and future of Thales.

How do you think earning qualifications, while getting workplace experience benefits apprentices?

The on the job learning, combined with study allows our apprentices to start their fledging career in Thales learning from the best in the business. From day one our apprentices receive a competitive salary and plenty of support, with a mentor and training plan to help guide them through their chosen career path. We work on giving our apprentices a greater awareness of their strengths and abilities, honing not only their technical abilities, but also their soft skills, such as building their confidence in leading a team and discovering how they can best contribute to one. And the learning does not stop after the completion of their apprenticeship. With the ever-changing nature of our business we continue to help our employees reach their full

potential, whether that is through further education or on the job learning we want to grow our employee's skill set to the fullest.

How have you found working with MMU?

I have worked with MMU several times over the last few years (most recently on the development of the Degree Apprenticeships) and on all occasions I have found everyone I have come into contact with at MMU very professional and keen to partner with employers. Despite the Degree Apprenticeships being a step into the unknown for all involved, MMU have partnered well with employers to make navigating the new government initiative as straightforward as possible whilst ensuring the needs of the apprentice and employer were addressed as they shaped their courses.

#SEEDIFFERENT

How a Manchester campaign invites you to look past preconceptions and embrace exciting new apprenticeship opportunities.

You might think apprenticeships and university don't necessarily go hand in hand, but in fact more and more young people are turning to Degree Apprenticeships as a way of accessing higher education, as well as getting valuable experience of the career ladder. Young people and employers alike are recognising the huge benefits of the development of career relevant skills and knowledge, for both the future career prospects of the individual and the future of the business.

To this end, presenting apprenticeships as a viable and exciting option to young people, parents, learning providers and employers is one of the key goals of the See Things Differently campaign. The two-year campaign, designed to increase the uptake of apprenticeships across Greater Manchester, is a consortium enterprise from the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Marketing Manchester and marketing communications specialist MC2.

The campaign has set out to emphasise the benefits of apprenticeships to all stakeholders, by highlighting their effectiveness in delivering relevant and high quality work-based learning, and stressing their vital contribution to the economic growth of individual

businesses and the wider Greater Manchester community.

One of the campaign's key aims is to show that through their unique combination of work and study, apprenticeships offer an exciting and effective way to kick-start any prospective career. Greater Manchester is a hive of high level Apprentice success stories and See Things Differently hopes to draw on this to present apprenticeships as a real option for young people wondering what to do next. With experience and knowledge in the bag, apprentices present a strong offering for future employers in the increasingly competitive job market.

By distilling the current reams of information and advice available to those considering apprenticeships and bringing it all together under a coherent umbrella campaign, the goal is to transform the perception of apprenticeships and motivate young people in Greater Manchester to consider in depth the options available to them.

The See Things Differently promotional team were out in full force over the summer to raise awareness of the campaign ahead of its full launch in early Autumn. Promotional activity to date has



included town centre flashmobs across the ten boroughs, a bus tour of Greater Manchester and taking pride of place on a float at Manchester Pride 2015. The campaign's branded sunglasses and wristbands have gone down a storm throughout the summer activity, helping to create a buzz around the campaign and get young people thinking about their future.

At the centre of the promotional activity has been the dynamic morph team who have been inspiring young people throughout Greater Manchester to engage with the #SEEDIFFERENT hashtag in an effort to win an Apple watch. Young people have been sending in their imaginative selfies and photos with their #SEEDIFFERENT giveaways via social media channels to try and get their hands on the prize.

See Things Differently presents a fresh look at the options available to young people in Greater Manchester and the huge benefits to employers. Visit the website to see how you can get involved:

www.theapprenticeshiphub.co.uk

Recruit, Train and Retain!

Construction boss David Lowe explains how the same ethos that brought him into the firm as an apprentice almost 35 years ago is still as important as ever.

Construction is an industry that has historically endured the worst peaks and troughs in the economy and as a result is a sector where many firms build their businesses on the foundation of flexible, sub-contracted labour. However, Manchester and Cheshire Construction, graduates of the 10,000 Small Businesses programme, have been more creative. In 1971, the firm's founders recognised the opportunities available in taking on a directly employed labour force and built about recruiting the most skilled tradesmen, offering greater security and job conditions. David says:

"From the first generation we've been a company that strives to employ enthusiastic and ambitious people and support them to grow and develop. We value our labour highly and see it as an investment, rather than an overhead."

The 'trades' on which the construction sector relies heavily, have long been associated with apprenticeships. Manchester and Cheshire Construction have brought through 15 trade apprentices since 2007, and have a policy of employing at least two more each year. But, they have also looked beyond the building site, expanding recruitment of apprentices in all areas to ensure their workforce can support the firm's growth targets.

The industry is experiencing a shortage of quantity surveyors (Qs) and David needs to employ more of them to keep up with growing and expected future demand. This is the current focus of David's recruitment efforts. He says:

"The discussions around apprenticeships are really timely for us. We've recently been supported by The Skills Company to

run an assessment day for a group of ten, 16 to 18 year olds as we look to take on two new apprentice Qs"

David continues:

"Experience will be gained through spending time in each department, while also working for their BTEC and HNC. Hopefully they go on to complete a full degree, so the commitment is an exciting one as we watch these young people develop over the next seven years."

The Challenge

However, the journey is not one that has to be or should be taken alone. For employers, there is support from apprenticeships providers, both financially and with planning a suitable work-based learning programme. For the apprentice the importance of a work place mentor is vital and David admits that not getting these support systems in place can bring challenges.

"Over time we've learnt the lesson that you have to ensure that mentors have sufficient time to give to the apprentice, to both teach them and nurture them appropriately."

David is keen to convey that apprentices are encouraged to be collaborative within the organisation and their contribution is invaluable.

"We find that some people are surprised by the amount of responsibility we give apprentices. But, we find they get a lot from interacting with clients and in a way being thrown in slightly at the deep end."

David enjoys the reward of finding someone with the right work ethic and



values, and watching them develop the skills they need.

"I'm a big believer in the person rather than the skills set, as you can teach anybody to do anything if they have the right motivation."

Focusing on bringing in the people with the best business fit and then upskilling has played its part in the firm's success, winning multiple seven-figure contracts and numerous awards, including being the first recipient of Salford City Mayor's Employment Charter.

Changing Perceptions

As an advocate of apprenticeships, David is determined to dispel some of the myths they carry. Some people incorrectly see them as low paid, with few university prospects and existing on the periphery of the 'regular' workforce. David explains:

"Many employers, like ourselves, pay well above the apprenticeship minimum wage. The jobs we offer such as the QS roles have incredible potential, both academically with the chance of completing a degree and financially with Qs frequently earning over £50,000 per year"

"This is a great industry – buildings will need refurbishing, people will want new buildings, there will always be a need for construction. Apprenticeships should be a very attractive option for many people and we need to get this message out there."

Manchester & Cheshire Construction:
www.mcconstruction.co.uk



TUTORS' VIEWPOINT

Key MMU academics discuss their experiences of apprenticeships and advocate the benefits a work-based context can bring to the learning experience.



Dr Robin Johnson
Principal Lecturer in Marketing, Operations and Digital Business



Amanda Isles
Senior Lecturer, MMU Law School



Dr Darren Dancey
Head of Division, School of Computer Science

1. How did you get involved with apprenticeships?

RJ: While revising one of our degrees we started to have conversations about the huge value that students get from a placement and we started to wonder whether there was some way to maximise the work-based learning. From there we developed a work-based learning degree called iBusiness. This took us into the apprenticeship space and as a consequence of this e-skills (now Tech Partnership) invited us to become involved in the development of the new apprenticeship degree in Digital & Technology Solutions.

AI: Having taught the work-based knowledge aspects of law in relation to the post graduate Legal Practice Course (LPC), the Legal Apprenticeships were a natural fit, having worked in practice as a solicitor.

DD: The School of Computing, Mathematics and Digital Technology was exploring part-time work-based degrees with companies in the North West, which lead naturally into working with the Tech Partnership on the Digital & Technology Solutions apprenticeship.

2. How does studying an apprenticeship enrich the teaching and learning experience?

RJ: Work-based learning provides a context to help apprentices understand formal learning that takes place at the University. It exposes them to professionals working in areas related to their studies, even if they themselves are not working in that area, e.g. they might be working as a project assistant on a software development project and are seeing how analysts, developers, QA

teams, testers and end-users are involved in the process of developing a new business application. Lastly, it offers scope for students to double up on effort by using their everyday work as part of their assessment at University.

AI: As the apprentices are taught whilst in the workplace, they are able to contextualise their knowledge by way of practical application immediately after studying. This enables the apprentices to have a better understanding of what they are studying as law is often best explained by way of practical application. They are also able to bring their knowledge from the workplace to their studies, which gives the apprentices more confidence. As the apprentices are partly assessed on tasks they are undertaking in the workplace, they are able to see the correlation between what they are taught and what they undertake as part of their everyday job.

DD: Being an employee within a technology company gives the apprentices a rich context to see how the topics being studied, actually impact their organisation.

3. What are the particular advantages of studying a university supported apprenticeship?

RJ: The new Degree Apprenticeships attract funding to cover university tuition fees. It also enables students to learn about how an organisation operates and to absorb the organisational culture while developing skills. The skills might be general skills or specialist skills related to their chosen profession, but either way these are in addition to the skills and knowledge that they acquire from their formal study. Nobody has any doubt that these students will be highly employable

after they have completed their degree when they will have a set of professional skills, a theoretical understanding of their subject and self-discipline in their professional thinking.

AI: Apprentices are MMU students and therefore enjoy the benefits of the full range of facilities and opportunities afforded to all MMU law students. This includes the opportunity to be members of a very active Student Law Society, full use of the library and IT services and sports facilities and access to both academics and practitioners based within the law school.

DD: The university can provide a wide perspective of the subject based on the university's excellent research and interaction with industry. The apprentices also benefit from the experience of being an MMU student including the student union and our excellent facilities and services.

4. What advice would you give other tutors thinking about offering apprenticeships?

RJ: Do it!

AI: Apprenticeships can be extremely rewarding – many of the apprentices are extremely highly motivated individuals with clear career goals. As an assessor it is possible to develop a good working relationship with the apprentice and also affords the opportunity to engage with practitioners on a daily basis. This can also contribute to enriching the experience that you are able to give to other non-apprentice students as it enables you to easily keep in touch with practice.

The setting up of apprenticeships can be complex and time consuming,

particularly as they don't fit within the usual university systems, but we have been extremely well supported by the Business Gateway team in making this as smooth as possible.

DD: Don't be put off by the perceived difficulties of starting an apprenticeship programme, the university now has experience and we are building the processes and procedures that will support such initiatives.

5. What other employer initiatives do you support?

RJ: The business school is very active in developing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs).

AI: Outside of Legal Apprenticeships we support placements for students on the LPC which usually take place over the Easter break. Our LPC students also have the opportunity to have a mentor from practice whilst they undertake their

studies. We also arrange prizes with legal employers for undergraduate students and mock assessment days with a large commercial practice based in the North West.

DD: The School has range of employer initiatives including sandwich degree placements, KTPs and industry linked PhD studentships. DigitalLabs@MMU provides a software development facility within the school bringing together industry best practice with research informed cutting edge expertise.



Jillian Griffiths, Senior Lecturer in Information and Communications, leads an activity during apprenticeship induction week

Blazing a Trail for New Apprenticeships

Trailblazers are keeping employers centre stage in apprenticeship development

The growth in apprenticeships in recent years has been remarkable. Since 2010, over two million people have started an apprenticeship in the UK, and the government has pledged to create three million new apprenticeships during the life of this parliament. Part of the strategy to achieve this expansion is the development of new apprenticeship frameworks known as Trailblazers. Trailblazers bring employers and industry experts together to design new standards and assessment plans to ensure that the apprenticeship training is truly relevant to the sector.

Emerging from the Richard Review of Apprenticeships published in 2013, the objectives of Trailblazers are:

- To put employers in the driving seat. Apprenticeships will be based on standards designed by employers, making them more relevant and therefore more attractive to existing and new employers.
- To increase the quality of apprenticeships. An apprentice will need to demonstrate their competence through rigorous and independent 'end assessment'.

- To simplify the system. The new employer-designed standards will be short and easy to understand. They will describe the skills, knowledge and behaviour that an individual needs to be fully competent in an occupation.

- To give employers purchasing power. Putting control of government funding for the external training of apprentices in the hands of employers, to empower businesses to act as customers, driving up the quality and relevance of such training.

So far, over 140 Trailblazers have been approved or are in the process of being approved, and they are all due to be in place by 2017. The breadth of apprenticeships covered by the Trailblazers is huge, and covers job roles as diverse as Journalism, Civil Engineering, Estate Agency, Veterinary Nursing and Video Game Production, including new Degree Apprenticeships in a range of occupations. As at present, graduates are expected to be eligible for apprenticeships at level 5 and above.

Jayne Worthington, Managing Director of The Skills Company, Greater Manchester's largest apprenticeship training provider said:



Jayne Worthington, Managing Director of The Skills Company

"If apprenticeships are to continue to offer a credible and valuable alternative to higher education, then the development of Trailblazers is crucial. The skill needs of employers are constantly evolving, and new industries are emerging, so it's essential that we work with employers to help them define their needs and produce the skilled apprentices for the future."

"Because of our extensive experience in the sector, we were invited to be involved in the development of new standards in the Insurance industry, and it's been a very rewarding experience to be at the forefront of such a ground breaking initiative."

IT HAS BROUGHT A CHANGE IN THE LAW

As the second cohort of Legal Apprentices graduate, we look back at the change it's brought to legal education and the success of our students.

"Great, absolutely brilliant!"

"The best 20 months of my life"

"Phenomenal"

These are just some of the ways in which graduates have described their experience of the legal services apprenticeship, and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) is proud to congratulate them on their graduation this summer.

We have been working in collaboration with Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and a number of law firms in Manchester to give students the opportunity to access a career path in Law via a less-traditional route. While some firms already offered younger students work experience and graduate internships, for others this was the first time they have engaged with any employability initiatives. As the only University in the country with a dedicated apprenticeships unit working across faculties, MMU was selected by the group of participating law firms to deliver the qualification, and it has so far proved to be a huge success.

Developing the case

The Legal Services Apprenticeship has been developed by Manchester law firms and the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. They gained access to new funding, and chose to work with a university to develop a qualification that would help to attract

top performing school leavers who were interested in pursuing a career in law. The students who are accepted onto the apprenticeship gain a qualification from Manchester Law School without the price tag of an conventional university course, and with the added benefit of a huge amount of workplace experience and an established bank of contacts.



The apprenticeship

The apprenticeships offer a different route for students and can appeal to those who enjoy a "hands on" approach, prefer to learn on the job and through part-time



Legal apprentices celebrate graduation this June

study. To gain a place on the course students apply to the law firm directly, and are interviewed and recruited by the firm, much like a conventional job application. The successful candidates are then offered a place subject to their meeting the requirements set out by the university.

The apprenticeship scheme gives the students at least two years of employment, and has been used by firms to recruit for a range of roles, including paralegals and fee earning members of the team in various departments. There are three distinct areas of teaching and assessment making up the apprenticeship, with the technical qualification provided by CILEx (The Chartered Institute of Legal Executives) a competency element, assessed by a member of the teaching staff from Manchester Law School visiting the apprentices in their workplaces to observe them as they work. The functional skills aspect is to address key competencies in maths, English and ICT.

An optional University Certificate, equivalent to half of the first year of a law degree, is an award from MMU. This sets students on the way to completing a law degree and many of our apprentices have been supported by their employers to continue in this direction.

Employer and Student Experiences

We caught up with some of the graduates and employers on their graduation day, and got some of their views on how the apprenticeship scheme had worked out for them. The responses from both students and the firms was overwhelmingly positive.

The huge advantages to the students of contextual learning were highlighted; to be able to immediately apply the theory that they learn while at university when they go back into the workplace embeds the knowledge and makes it easier to apply in the future.

The employers have reported a number of the benefits to their business of hiring

apprentices. It allows the firm to shape their own workforce, and train their apprentices in accordance with their values as a firm. They also like that the apprenticeship introduces young and enthusiastic team members who may not have been able to access a career in Law through conventional routes.

The students were attracted initially to the apprenticeship because of the dramatic difference in cost when compared to a traditional degree. The apprenticeship allows them to earn while they train, and avoid the student debt associated with a normal undergraduate. The format of the qualification also proved to be a big pull, with students appreciating the value of entering the working world and kick-starting their

careers instead of spending a further 3 or 4 years in full time education before joining a firm. They were surprised at the amount of responsibility that they were given as apprentices, the students reported having their own caseloads and attending trials alongside qualified staff who are a lot older than they are.

The students we interviewed were all intending to continue their career in law. The majority have been offered positions within their apprenticed firms, with some of their future roles incorporating further study.

The students, employers and course providers involved all agree that apprenticeships are here to stay in terms of legal services going forward.

**Liam Crank,
Horwich Farrelly**



"I'm quite good at learning something by actually doing it and obviously that's what an apprenticeship is about."

**Junior Smith,
Express Solicitors**



"I feel I've moved into quite a senior position, even though I haven't got a degree yet."

**Carter Mitchell,
Weightmans**



"I would describe it as phenomenal! I'm very happy, very pleased and I've enjoyed every moment of it."

**Alice Robinson,
Slater & Gordon**



"I was surprised at the responsibility I was given. I've been given my own case load, which I never thought I would have during the apprenticeship."

#AskTheExpert: Question & Answer

Liz Gorb, Manchester Metropolitan University Apprenticeships Director, looks at the future for university-level apprenticeships

Q. We have seen rapid growth in university provided apprenticeship education, but which subject areas will be next?

A. MMU has been one of the first universities in the UK to develop and deliver higher and degree level apprenticeships.

The opportunities provided by these apprenticeships have really connected with both employers and students, so we expect to see the number of subject areas continue to grow.

In the immediate future the Business

Management Degree Apprenticeship, which recently launched in the House of Commons, starts here at MMU in September 2016.

We are in a great position to offer high quality education and workplace opportunities. We see areas such as Early Years Education, Digital & Creative Design and Cyber Security, all as having great potential for future Trailblazer apprenticeships.



Send future questions to:

Twitter: @mmucfe
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Phone: 0161 247 3989

LEP VIEWPOINT

Work-based learning has the potential to unlock growth in the North West. In this viewpoint article, LEP Chairs explain what is being done in their regions to support this agenda.

1. What role do employability initiatives, such as apprenticeships, play in the plans for your region?
2. Are there any particular initiatives you support in order to encourage participation in employability schemes in your region?
3. What are the main benefits to your region from such schemes?
4. Looking to the future, how do you see employability schemes in your area developing with time?

three million apprenticeships to which the government has committed during the current parliament.

Our focus is to ensure that meeting residents and

employer's needs, through high quality apprenticeships is the priority, rather than a 'numbers game'. It is crucial we provide an appropriate breadth and range of opportunities for young people, who are required to continue with some form of education or training until their 18th birthday.

2. The Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (GM AGE) is a devolved budget. The Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub has commissioned a major marketing and communications programme across all 10 local authorities. This activity aims to bring about a fundamental change in attitudes towards apprenticeships as a work-based route into skilled employment, with the benefit of combining paid work with qualifications up to and including higher and degree level apprenticeships.



Keswick and Derwent Water

CUMBRIA, GEORGE BEVERIDGE

1. Apprenticeship schemes are widely supported by major employers such as Sellafield, BAE and Pirelli. They are amongst the most successful in the UK. The Barrow area has the highest proportion of 17 year olds in apprenticeships in England and Cumbria LEP has been recently announced as the second highest performing LEP of the 39 LEPs across England.

2. In addition the LEP supports employability schemes, such as The Edge, that work with schools, colleges, employers and the Third Sector - using both UK and EU funds to sustain programmes.

3. The main benefits, are very low levels of N.E.E.Ts, strong routes into permanent employment and good graduate retention.

4. Our new Skills Plan will be even more employer led and focussed to link employability programmes to real, long term, sustainable jobs across a range of sectors such as nuclear, advanced manufacturing, rural/food and farming, visitor economy, construction and logistics.

GREATER MANCHESTER, MIKE BLACKBURN

1. Apprenticeships and traineeships form a central part of Greater Manchester's toolkit to get people of all ages into skilled employment. Greater Manchester is expected to deliver its share of the





MMU Business School

Away from apprenticeships, Greater Manchester has a range of initiatives in place to help get young people into the skills/employment pipeline. These include:

- Talent Match – a Big Lottery funding project, which offers mentoring support and employability activities to young people furthest from the labour market using talent coaches within community organisations
- Youth Contract Expansion – working with young people who have been out of work and claiming benefits for six to nine months to provide coaching and support.
- GM Commitment – employment initiative for young people aged 16-24 that provides three to six month paid placements training within employers across Greater Manchester.
- The Working Well Expansion is an employability initiative aimed at residents across Greater Manchester who have multiple barriers to work, including skills, mental and physical health issues, financial/debt problems, family and relationship issues and drug/alcohol dependency.
- Targeted support and capacity building activities within Greater Manchester's priority sectors
- Work is also underway to consider how best to retain and utilise graduate talent from Greater Manchester's four higher education institutions, particularly with non-traditional graduate employers such as SMEs.

3. Greater Manchester has a low skill/low wage economy and much of the productivity gap between Greater Manchester and other parts of the UK can be attributed to low skills. Most of the 920,000 new jobs, which will be required in Greater Manchester by 2022, will require skills at level 3 and level 4. However, data also shows more than 8,000 16-24 year old level 3 and above qualified residents are unemployed. So we need to do more to ensure even well qualified individuals have crucial employability skills. Apprenticeships are an ideal solution to this issue. High quality apprenticeships, both for those entering Greater Manchester's workforce for the first time and for the upskilling of the existing workforce, will help to provide a strong skills pipeline

supporting individuals and employers, right through from pre-employment and traineeships upwards.

4. Greater Manchester's youth unemployment rates, like those elsewhere, remain a concern at a time when overall unemployment figures are falling. Apprenticeships and other initiatives will play a key role in getting young people into work and training. Particularly as vocational learning up to and including degree level offer an attractive, high quality and affordable alternative to traditional pathways.

Moving forward, the devolution agreement allows Greater Manchester to create innovative ways of working across the skills and employment landscape, aligning supply of skills with the demand from GM's employers to ensure that residents can access and contribute to increased levels of growth and productivity.

LANCASHIRE, EDWIN BOOTH

1. Creating sustainable skills to drive prosperity is the key to Lancashire's future. We've created a Skills Board to engage with all our stakeholders in the delivery of centres of excellence and skills hubs, directly aligned to employers' needs.

Apprenticeships offer many solutions to advance Lancashire's skills priorities. We are working to ensure that businesses, potential participants and training providers, understand the opportunities in the region.

2. We founded the Lancashire Apprenticeships Hub in 2014, to increase the number of SMEs in Lancashire who

benefit from recruiting apprentices or trainees. Based on a co-ordinated partnership approach its aim is to provide additional focus and resource to meet the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's priorities and respond to gaps in current support.

In terms of broader skills training, the flagship scheme for the county has been Lancashire Skills Support for the Workforce (LSS), a £5.6m programme that funds accredited workplace courses and training for businesses and their employees, developed by some of the county's leading further education and training providers.

3. Making sure people have the skills to succeed in the workplace is vitally important for Lancashire. Individuals are able to make the most of their potential and it helps the county's employers to access the widest possible talent pool. This should, as a result, boost the county's economy and the quality of life of all Lancashire's residents.

We work closely with Lancashire's universities and our business community to ensure that the region can continue to benefit from students' talents and ideas when they finish their studies.

4. The Lancashire LEP now has oversight of around one billion pounds of economic investment, via programmes such as the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal and the Lancashire Growth Deal.

The LEP is keen to ensure new skills investment is well used, reflects employers' needs, and is aligned with broader growth strategies. To achieve this local partners developed the Lancashire Skills Hub to develop greater capacity, support the decision making of the LEP and provide greater coherence to the skills sector within the area. Its work in developing an evidence base for strategy development will enable us to further develop employability schemes for Lancashire that meet the needs of the county's priority sectors.

At present we are just concluding eight separate pieces of research, which will strengthen the LEP's evidence base around skills and inform the commissioning of Growth Deal Skills Capital resource and the use of ESIF funds.



BAE Systems at Samlesbury

Viewpoint

Apprenticeships need to be more consistent, for the sake of the economy as well as young people, writes Professor Sa'ad Medhat, chief executive of NEF: The Innovation Institute



Professor Medhat, chief executive of NEF

The fact that the UK needs more apprentices is a universal truth frequently trotted out by politicians and industrialists. The government has even set the ambitious target of creating three million new apprenticeships by 2020. This is something that will be difficult to achieve on our current trajectory: there have only been an estimated 30,000 higher level apprenticeships in the UK over past two years.

Even before they focus on numbers, politicians, colleges and employers need to take another vital factor into account: the quality of the training, and the breadth of experience on offer with each placement.

Across the country, apprenticeships are wildly inconsistent. Whilst some are admittedly excellent, leading to well paid jobs and the opportunity for further study, others are set at a low level and do little to enhance employment prospects. Indeed, the Sutton Trust's recent report: *Levels of Success: The Potential of UK Apprenticeships*, estimates that 60% of apprenticeships in this country are set only to GCSE standard, offering little value beyond traditional work experience placements.

This is an entrenched problem within the apprenticeship system. It not only devalues an important route for capturing and nurturing young talent, but is also

damaging the capacity of our national workforce to innovate and add value to the economy.

A shake up is urgently needed, and I would argue that government, educational providers and industry should be working towards nationally agreed criteria for apprenticeships. This is essential for rebuilding trust between all parties: employers need to feel confident that their investment in young people is worthwhile, and trainees need to feel reassured that their vocational path will bring them rewarding career possibilities.

Creating consistency

With this in mind, NEF has been collaborating with leading STEM companies and further education colleges to develop the Apprentice Assured standard. Currently being piloted this year, Apprentice Assured is the first standard in the UK to provide independent validation of the quality of an apprenticeship scheme, rigorously assuring the value it brings both to the employer, the sector and the trainee.

Apprentice Assured uses a unique six-section accreditation framework that helps employers and educational providers align their training provision, clarifying areas of responsibility and ensuring that the apprentice experience

is of consistently high quality.

Training programmes that achieve the Apprentice Assured accreditation will meet several essential criteria, including that apprentices:

- are able to develop a broad understanding of their organisation, the wider sector in which they operate, and how their competencies fit within it
- feel empowered to innovate, developing lateral thinking and problem solving skills
- are developing transferrable skills that are applicable to other sectors and industries.

In addition, one of the fundamental principles of Apprentice Assured is that the apprentice will be working towards nationally recognised professional qualifications, such as EngTech, with the chance of extending their study to a university degree and beyond, once their apprenticeship is complete.

It's still early days, but I hope Apprentice Assured, or something like it, will pave the way towards a national standard. Current inconsistencies within the system are tarnishing the reputation of apprenticeships as a whole.

It should not matter where the apprentice lives, which sector they have chosen to join, or what size of company they are placed with. All apprentices should be guaranteed a high quality training experience.

This is a work in progress, but if we can achieve consistent standards of apprenticeships, the long term effects will be a virtual circle. Employers, seeing how apprentices are invigorating and adding value to their businesses, may be encouraged to take on more recruits; correspondingly, school leavers will start viewing apprenticeships as something to aspire to, rather than a second best option if they can't go to university. And all this may just help the government meet its ambitious target for 2020.

Professor Sa'ad Medhat is chief executive of NEF: The Innovation Institute, an educational charity and professional body dedicated to creating a more innovative and entrepreneurial workforce.

www.thenef.org.uk

Work with us?

"It has been like having your own Mastermind group - it can help you identify and define a problem, then discussing the issue helps you to a greater understanding. The best thing about it is that you take time out to think about the problem from the outside"

Growing Businesses

Engage with other business leaders, use our expert business knowledge and access the latest research available, to help you grow your business. Whether you are a small firm, large firm or third-sector firm, we can support you. If you would like to find out more, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

"The 10,000 Small Businesses programme has made me recognise my strengths and it has helped me put processes into place"

Supporting Enterprise

Turn your idea into a business with entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. We work with undergraduates, graduates, alumni and academics to embed enterprise learning in the next generation of business leaders. Find out more @ www.mmucfe.co.uk

"I've been supported all the way by my coach who helped me with some crucial decisions, even giving me phone advice outside of sessions. We are in a very exciting place at the moment"

Re-energising Large Firms

Utilising our vast experience in helping SMEs develop and grow, it is no surprise that larger companies are now seeking support from the Centre for Enterprise. Our skills remain around the core strengths of leadership, entrepreneurial behaviour and growth, underpinned by authoritative research and benchmarking of best practice. Our programmes that are tailored for big enterprise, nurture the ethos of "Corporate Capability with SME Agility". Individuals, teams or whole organisations can be the beneficiaries.

"It has been really useful to have other company Directors to bounce ideas off. It gives you an opportunity to look at the business from outside, instead of just struggling with the day-to-day."

Embedding Research

Our specialisms are growth, leadership, entrepreneurship and sustainability. We are successful at generating high quality, original research, generating research impact and have a strong track record in research council funding. Find out more @ www.mmucfe.co.uk

"Research is the cornerstone of our successful start-up, growth and leadership programmes. Our sustained stream of research income comes from central and local government in the UK, the European Commission, business, charities and UK research councils.."

Informing Policy

We use our business engagement and research to practically impact upon regional and national economic growth, UK and European policy development and international academic advancement of knowledge. To find out more, please get in touch with us.

"The Centre has given me the opportunity to understand the latest research, network with other companies and get our views heard by key stakeholders in the North West."

Register with us for updates on support & events

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We would love to work with you. The first step is to get in touch with us and tell us a bit more about you and your business. Why not arrange a visit and perhaps we can tell you a bit more about the options available to you.





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