Delivering Quality Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

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The Middlesex apprenticeship vision

• To be a significant and well-reputed provider of higher and degree apprenticeships.
• To broaden opportunities to access higher education and the professions through higher and degree apprenticeships.
• To offer apprenticeships in areas of high skills demand both regionally and nationally.
• To be recognised for working collaboratively with industry and business partners to design and deliver apprenticeships.
• To work collaboratively with other academic partners and learning providers to ensure that the apprenticeship offer to industry is of the highest quality.
• To provide apprenticeship opportunities for Middlesex University staff.
Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
in Construction Management
- Levels 5 and 6
Higher Apprenticeship in Care Leadership and Management – Level 5
Degree Apprenticeship in Professional Aviation Pilot Practice – Level 6
Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in Retail Management – Levels 4 (5 and 6)
Creative Skillset - Exploring Higher Level Apprenticeships in Higher Education
Degree Apprenticeship for B2B Sales Professionals – Level 6 (7)
Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship – Level 6
Degree Apprenticeship for Academic Professionals – Level 7
Public Sector Degree Apprenticeships…
QAA Literature Review

- Work-integrated degrees: context, engagement, practice and quality
  - The Government's drive to increase the number of new apprenticeships
  - Parity and transferability between higher and degree apprenticeships and traditional degrees
  - Vital that the new degree apprenticeships are of a high quality.
- Aim
  - To identify what can be learned about effective approaches to the development and delivery of employer-sponsored, work-integrated higher education programmes.
  - What does the academic literature tell us about the quality issues and their solutions associated with the delivery and assessment of degree level programmes where students are sponsored by employers?
Scope of the review

- **Work-integrated degrees** – UG and PG – ‘degree apprenticeships’
  - “degrees that include workplace learning and are sponsored by an employer…and contain a substantial period of work-integrated learning that contributes to the accredited outcomes of the programme.”
  - “It excludes programmes with short work placements, and it is not specifically designed to inform practice related to the provision of foundation degrees or level 4 or 5 apprenticeships.”
  - “Published literature principally on work-integrated and work-based degrees, degree and higher apprenticeships, foundation degrees and other examples of collaborative higher education.”

- **Papers published from 2005 onwards**
  - 258 articles, chapters, government and other reports, guidance documents, regulations
  - 199 which were considered in the final review
Entry-routes to higher-level occupations and professions

- **Sequential routes** involve the theory being imparted first, typically via a degree, professional course, or both, followed by learning in the workplace.

- **Parallel routes**, a course runs alongside a traineeship, traditionally in day- or block-release format; there need not however be any co-ordination between the theoretical and practical components.

- **Experiential routes** emphasise individually-organised learning from and in response to work. These routes may be supplemented with an academic qualification via a ‘top-up’ process that normally includes recognition of prior learning.

- **Integrated routes** also involve theoretical and practical learning taking place in parallel, in a more co-ordinated and inter-related way.

- ‘**Professional status**’ and ‘**licence-to-practise**’, normally denoted by a chartered or regulated title or a qualified class of membership.

- The potential for alignment between ‘**professional competence**’ and academic qualification – ‘**integrating knowledge, understanding skills and values**’ (Engineering Council)
The workplace as a site for learning

- The **workplace becomes a source of academically-valid learning**, rather than simply a site for gaining experience and applying what has already been learned
  - *The unexpected benefit of integrated approaches*

- ‘**Restrictive**’ or ‘**expansive**’ work environments and job roles
  - *Narrow, threshold competence – professional competence that enhances on-going development*
  - *Critical reflection on practices and values in the workplace – a culture that values learning*

- **Workplace mentoring**, coaching
  - *Line management / mentoring*
  - *Business objectives / challenge and learning development*
  - *The development and support for workplace mentoring*
Collaboration and engagement by employers

- Barriers to engagement
  - **Bureaucratic and slow, inflexible**, not understanding the needs and timetables of business, concerned with academic curricula and theory-driven teaching rather than relevance to practice, and steeped in their own language which may differ between institutions and not be particularly precise or intelligible

- The specific needs of SMEs

- **Workforce development** is a diversion from mainstream work, undermines academic standards, and is not cost effective or is too risky

- Solutions and success factors
  - **Champions** - senior staff members who are able to ‘sponsor’ collaborative projects
  - **Workforce development fellows** - academic staff who have credibility in the industry and understand the business context
  - **Solutions-led** rather than product-led approach
  - **Institution wide strategy** for engagement - workplace-facing department or unit
Programme delivery, assessment and quality assurance

- **Recruitment and admissions**
  - Who selects and/or admits the learners?

- **Curriculum design and development**
  - Co-design and construction, curriculum frameworks

- **Learning and teaching methods**
  - The integration of theory with practice, the source of ‘valid’ theory, ‘signature pedagogies’

- **Assessment**
  - Assessment methods grounded in practice – appropriate and valid in the workplace
  - Reflective learning logs, portfolios, work-based projects, professional artefacts etc

- **Staff roles and staff development**
  - Facilitation, liaison and support for workplace mentoring, knowledge and ‘expertise’

- **Quality assurance and enhancement**
  - Fitness for purpose of the Code and a ‘risked-based approach’
  - Subject Benchmark Statements – FHEQ – Characteristics Statements
  - Contracting, negotiation and learning agreements
Delivering quality higher and degree apprenticeships

- Key themes from the review
  - Supportive, funding-backed policy environment
  - Openness by professional associations and regulatory bodies
  - Employers engaging and collaborating
  - Minimising barriers to employer engagement to create successful employer-provider partnerships
  - Role of employers in programme design and delivery
  - Shared responsibilities for recruitment and admissions
  - The workplace as the primary site for learning
  - Flexible curricular structures geared to integrating practical and theoretical learning
  - Work-integrated learning ‘signature pedagogies’ – reflection on practice, workplace mentoring, work-based projects, co-creation of learning
  - Productive learning from practice through enhancement and innovation
  - Valid and appropriate methods of assessment that reflect working practices
  - Appropriate quality assurance principles, standards and processes that are ‘fit for purpose’
Some references