

UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER 

APPRENTICESHIPS MENTOR HANDBOOK



ABOUT WESTMINSTER

The first polytechnic in London, and one of the first in the UK, the University of Westminster was established over 180 years ago to educate the city's working people.

Today, we remain as committed as ever to shaping the future of professional life; from access to specialist facilities and our talented pool of students, to bespoke training and professional development, research and consultancy. Our world-leading academic experts support companies of all sizes, both start-ups and those more well-established.

The Government's industry-designed apprenticeships scheme brings together the best of higher and vocational education, something we've been doing for almost two centuries. More recently as an apprenticeship provider, we've already worked with over 100 employers to train their staff through our apprenticeship programmes.

At our most recent Ofsted inspection, which evaluates quality of education, learner welfare and leadership, Westminster's degree apprenticeships were awarded with a rating of Good in all areas and commended the University for its strong leadership and clear vision for continuous improvement. The inspectors graded Westminster's apprenticeships on five key aspects: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, and safeguarding.

The quality of education on offer at Westminster was recognised for providing learners with an engaging curriculum and a supportive learning environment, equipping them with the skills needed for success in the workplace and beyond. Along with this, Ofsted found that the University places a strong emphasis on learner well-being, ensuring that support services are accessible and effective in promoting mental health, inclusion, social mobility and learner engagement.

OUR VALUES

Right from the start, Westminster has had a pioneering spirit. As a progressive university, we look forward, anticipate what's changing, embracing the new with energy and imagination, just as we have with apprenticeships.

The University is known for the many ways in which we help our 19,000 students to realise their full potential, regardless of background. Our teaching is practical, relevant and contemporary, while our research is driven to make an impact in the world.



THE APPRENTICESHIP

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships combine paid work, bespoke Off-The-Job training and further / higher education. They're essentially a job where the apprentice works for you but spends on average 6 hours of their weekly working hours in study or training with a recognised apprenticeship training provider.

They are a cost effective way for you to upskill your workforce, giving your employees the chance to gain practical experience and a nationally recognised qualification debt-free. Research has proven that the opportunity of an additional qualification will not only help you as an employer to attract new talent, but also keep existing staff motivated and committed for the long-term, improving employee retention.

Name	Level	Equivalent Education Level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Apprenticeships are offered at different levels of learning; from the equivalent of qualifications achieved by a Year 11 school-leaver to either an undergraduate (or first) degree – a Bachelor of the Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) depending on the subject. The highest award we currently offer is a postgraduate degree (for which a first degree is generally required), referred to as either a Master of the Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MSc).

The portfolio of apprenticeships reflects the undergraduate and postgraduate provision taught here at the University. We are one of the leading providers of construction, real estate, planning, project management, management and healthcare related apprenticeship programmes in the country.

APPRENTICESHIPS – WHAT'S NEW?

In 2016, the Independent Panel on Technical Education led by Lord Sainsbury and a number of industry leaders undertook a complete review of apprenticeships. It concluded that the old apprenticeships were simply not fit for purpose – they weren't giving employers a workforce with the skills they needed, with little room to tailor the programme for the employers themselves.

“YOU GET A DIFFERENT MIX OF PEOPLE TO THE USUAL GRADUATE INTAKE. WE HAVE FOUND THEM TO BE BETTER MOTIVATED AND BETTER TRAINED, MORE USEFUL, BY THE TIME THEY QUALIFY.”

JOHN BANBURY, ALLSOP

Industry panels were brought in to rewrite the specifications for each apprenticeship standard. From 2017, a simplified process (two sides of A4) is used to identify the core Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) required to succeed in the relevant profession. This gives huge flexibility to tailor the course to your individual organisation and for each apprentice, beginning with an Initial Assessment which determines the applicant's suitability for the programme.

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD?

Apprenticeships are aligned to a profession-based standard which is referred to as an 'apprenticeship standard'. The new standards were introduced as part of the Government's major apprenticeship reforms and are regularly reviewed in partnership with employers.

Apprenticeship standards are designed by groups of employers known as 'trailblazer groups' to meet skill shortages in their sectors, linked to an occupational profile. The academic element of the apprenticeship programme is mapped to the apprenticeship standard. What this means is that you can be confident that trainees will learn the new Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) they need to fulfil the relevant occupation, as academic study needs to be backed up by exposure to the KSBs in the workplace throughout the apprenticeship, including outside of university term time.

The changes represent an overall shift from assessing to learning. The standards don't include continual assessment – instead each apprentice must take an End Point Assessment (EPA) to pass their qualification, which assesses their occupational competency against the KSBs.

HOW DO APPRENTICESHIPS WORK?

Apprenticeships are a collaborative system of training agreed by you, your apprentice and training provider to prepare a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession via a combination of On- and Off-The-Job training.

WHO CAN BE AN APPRENTICE?

Apprentices must be over the age of 16 and cannot be in full-time education or any other education that involves drawing funds from the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Our apprenticeships are only available to those employed as part of an agreed apprenticeship scheme in a related role i.e. they must be earning at least the relevant minimum wage rate and meet the academic entry requirements. We also ensure that the apprenticeship is suitable through carrying out an Initial Assessment that takes into account prior learning and employment.

HOW LONG DO APPRENTICESHIPS LAST?

Apprenticeships take between one and five years to complete depending on the level of the apprenticeship, the industry sector and the apprentice's prior skills and experience. All of the apprenticeships we currently offer take between two and five years to complete.

Name	Level	Equivalent Education Level	Duration
Higher	4	Certificate in Higher Education (CertHE)	2 years
	6	Bachelor's Degree	3-5 years
Degree	7	Master's Degree	2 years

WHAT DOES THE APPRENTICE DO?

The apprentice will work alongside an experienced employee (a mentor) to learn specific skills, receiving work- and classroom based training towards a recognised university qualification. Each apprentice receives their own learning plan from the University which clearly sets out the expectations placed on them and you as their employer.

As part of the Apprenticeship Agreement, apprentices are entitled to spend 6 hours a week of their working time on Off The-Job training.

During term-time, they will attend University one day a week. Their work-based training should take place all year round. Apprentices record all Off-The-Job training on our online apprenticeship platform until they reach 'Gateway'; the point at which they are deemed ready for the End Point Assessment (EPA), the final element of the apprenticeship.

WHAT IS OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING?

Off-The-Job training must make up on average 6 hours of the apprentice's normal weekly working hours (paid hours excluding overtime) over the planned duration of the apprenticeship. This does not include progress reviews and on-programme assessment, but it can include practical training, for example, shadowing, mentoring or industry visits.

As well as campus-based learning at the University, Off-The-Job training can be delivered in your workplace, provided it is directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard and involves learning new knowledge, skills and behaviours. This gives you an opportunity to identify skills or knowledge gaps and then tailor the apprentice's learning accordingly.

WHAT IS GATEWAY?

Gateway takes place before an End Point Assessment (EPA) can start. The employer (mentor) and training provider will review their apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviours to see if they have met the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship set out in the apprenticeship standard, and are ready to take the assessment.

WHAT IS THE END POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)?

The End Point Assessment (EPA) is the final stage of an apprenticeship. It is an impartial assessment of whether your apprentice has developed the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard. As well as successfully completing the EPA, your apprentice may need to complete several additional requirements before completing the apprenticeship. This does include Level 2 Maths and English, however the apprentice's prior attainment may mean that they have exemption from having to take additional study for Functional Skills.

End Point Assessments are designed by employers in the sector and are conducted by independent bodies known as End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs). Once all elements of the apprenticeship are completed, the apprentice will receive their apprenticeship certificate.

“THE BEST PART OF BEING AN APPRENTICE IS THAT I'M ALREADY IN EMPLOYMENT. I'M MEETING PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE SAME SITUATION AS ME AND NO JOB INTERVIEWS WHEN I GRADUATE!”

BRONWEN SEVEL, APPRENTICE



THE MENTOR

ABOUT MENTORS

Each apprentice is assigned a workplace mentor by their employer, who is responsible for providing the internal support an apprentice needs to engage with the programme.

Mentors play a critical role in apprenticeships, providing the much-needed counsel, support and guidance – often based on their own experiences and expertise – to help their apprentice navigate the workplace and succeed in their chosen profession.

Since apprentices are often young people entering the workplace for the first time, mentoring can help them settle quickly into their new role and thrive at a time when they are facing the pressures of learning both on the job and in the classroom. Mentoring more mature apprentices can be an opportunity to gain a new perspective on industry practices and stretch your capabilities.

WHO CAN BE A MENTOR?

A mentor is someone from within the organisation, who is an industry expert in the apprentice's relevant vocational field and is willing to use their experience and proficiency to support and guide their mentee (apprentice) throughout their apprenticeship journey.

A mentor can be a line manager, a more experienced work colleague, or any other suitable individual who is committed to encouraging an apprentice's development.

THE MENTOR'S ROLE

In your role as a mentor/coach, you essentially provide a support system for the apprentice within the workplace. A mentor acts as a guide, providing the apprentice with advice on completing their apprenticeship, as well as future career

options and progress. As a mentor, you will be expected to support your apprentice/mentee to:

- Set SMART goals
- Develop the KSBs necessary to perform their role and their programme of study
- Overcome career obstacles, challenges and resolve any issues quickly
- Develop management capabilities or move into managerial role
- Gain broader knowledge and skills.

Typical workplace mentor activities might include:

- Being a positive role model within the organisation
- Sharing your knowledge and experiences
- Signposting the apprentice to relevant members of staff
- Providing honest and constructive advice, guidance and feedback
- Acting as a sounding board for ideas and action plans
- Offering encouragement and support
- Celebrating the apprentice's success
- Identifying development opportunities, such as setting up interdepartmental training or shadowing to broaden understanding
- Building an apprentice's confidence, independence, and self-belief
- Supporting personal development and wellbeing

You have an obligation to support the apprentice on key activities throughout the apprenticeship programme: contributing to and attending formal review meetings; ensuring that any work-based elements of the requirements are completed on time; encouraging your apprentice to complete their Off-The-Job logs; and helping them prepare for and complete the End Point Assessment (EPA).

REVIEW MEETINGS

You will prepare for and attend formal review meetings, referred to as 'Progress Reviews', which occur which occur every 3 months. Held online, these meetings set clear expectations initially and monitor the apprentice's progress, ensuring development goals are being met. All records of these meetings are added to the apprentice's e-portfolio on the online apprenticeship platform.

MATHS AND ENGLISH

Apprentices who do not hold a Level 2 (GCSE grade 4/C or above) qualification in maths and/or English must be offered the chance to achieve Functional Skills qualifications. This training is fully funded by the Department for Education and delivered by one of the university's approved third-party subcontractors. You will need to give your apprentice the time to attend training and complete these qualifications during their regular working hours – this is in addition to the 6 hours per week of Off-The-Job training. Employers and apprentices can choose whether to opt in or out of this provision.

GATEWAY

The Gateway is the penultimate stage of the apprenticeship in which you as mentor and/or the employer confirm that the apprentice has met the relevant criteria to proceed to the End Point Assessment (EPA) and that you deem them to be occupationally competent across the KSBs of the Apprenticeship Standard. You will have worked closely with the apprentice since the outset and be aware of their attendance and grades throughout the course.

EPA SUPPORT AND PREPARATION

After Gateway, the apprentice has a fixed period of time (anything from three months to over six months, depending on the Standard) to prepare for and go through their EPA, which confirms whether or not the apprentice has achieved all the required academic credits/qualifications in their apprenticeship. At this stage, the apprentice should be fairly independent, though they may be grateful for someone to support with preparation for End Point Assessment, by participating in mock EPA activities and providing feedback and advice.

REGULATION OF APPRENTICESHIPS

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DfE)

The DfE is responsible for ensuring public funding for the delivery of apprenticeships is appropriately spent. They check that funding is spent on training that fits the apprenticeship model, fulfils learner needs and meets quality regulations, and that providers aren't claiming funding for training they're not actually delivering. The DfE uses different auditing methods to monitor providers throughout the year – from remote desktop reviews to full five-day onsite assurance reviews.

OFSTED

From April 2021, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) took over the responsibility for quality assurance in degree apprenticeships from the Office for Students. This means that Ofsted will now inspect all universities that offer apprenticeships at any level to ensure they are meeting the needs of employers and apprentices. As part of inspection, Ofsted will ask to speak to apprentices and employers about their experience. You will be contacted at the time of inspection (with 48 hours notice). Ofsted inspectors invite employers (mentors) to discuss their experience of delivering the apprenticeship programme. Find out more at: gov.uk/ofsted

At a recent Ofsted inspection, our Apprenticeship Provision was graded "Good" in all areas. Full report can be found here: reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/43/133898



SAFEGUARDING IN THE WORKPLACE

The term safeguarding is used to describe the protection of the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals. Under current UK legislation, all parties involved in an apprenticeship have to take reasonable action to minimise risks to apprentices.

Any educational organisation has statutory responsibilities under current legislation. Organisations offering any kind of apprenticeship or traineeship need to put processes in place to protect their learners and recognise when help is required.

There are many areas considered to fall under the definition of safeguarding, including but not limited to:

- Abuse (Emotional and Physical)
- Bullying (including online abuse)
- Discrimination
- Forced marriage
- Mental health
- Neglect and self-harm
- Radicalisation and extremism (Prevent)

We refer to **Ofsted's guidance** when looking to provide a definition of what is meant by safeguarding obligations in an apprenticeship setting.

PREVENT

Prevent is part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation. This hinges on four key objectives:

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks;
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism;
- Protect to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and
- Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

At the University of Westminster, we take a balanced, proactive approach to the implementation of the Prevent duty; working with colleagues, students, employers and partners to provide an inclusive, safe learning environment for all. At the heart of our **Prevent-related policies and procedures** is a desire to meet our legal obligations in an equitable and transparent way.



SAFEGUARDING YOUR APPRENTICE

Employers have a duty to ensure that any staff working with apprentices in a position of trust are appropriate for the role and do not present any danger or threat. Furthermore, if any employees – including yourself as mentor – are working with young or vulnerable people, it is important they have had an appropriate check completed with the Disclosure and Barring service.

Due to their relative inexperience in the workplace, apprentices may be particularly vulnerable to anxiety or struggle to cope with the transition. As their mentor, you're probably going to spend more time with them than anyone else within the organisation, so you will most likely be in the best position to spot if they are experiencing difficulties. You need to know what support is available to them, both within your own workplace and the training provider.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE MYSELF?

We recommend you familiarise yourself with relevant government legislation and take appropriate steps to understand what safeguarding means in practice within your organisation and in the context of your responsibilities to the apprentice. If possible, identify the person who coordinates safeguarding within your organisation and go through any relevant internal policies and guidance.

You can investigate the dangers apprentices may face using technology in the workplace, such as bullying and abuse, revenge porn, grooming, identity theft, and viruses. Ensure apprentices are made aware of your organisation's policies on using the internet and technology in the workplace, and that they know how to protect themselves online and ensure the security of their personal data.

SAFEGUARDING SERVICES AT WESTMINSTER

SERVICE GUIDANCE FOR APPRENTICES AND EMPLOYERS

Personal Tutors

Personal Tutors are a key point of support for apprentices within their academic school. They are able to refer apprentices to University Support Services, if any personal issues are affecting them and have an impact on their studies. Personal Tutors have been trained on how to make appropriate referrals for safeguarding concerns. To find out more about how to access Personal Tutors, check the **Student Hub**.

Progress reviews

Progress reviews provide an opportunity for apprentices to raise any concerns they may have with their Skills Coach. Where appropriate, and after discussion with the apprentice, the Skills Coach may then refer the concern on to colleagues in the Student Services team who can offer specialist support and advice.

How to raise a concern on the Report and Support portal

Our **Report and Support portal** provides a safe way for apprentices to report any concerns to the University about unwanted or inappropriate behaviour. The portal also contains re-sources and articles on a wide range of safeguarding topics and support services, so that apprentices can access information independently.

How to alert us to any concerns about radicalisation

We have a legal duty to prevent vulnerable individuals from being radicalised and drawn into violent extremism. Providing the right level of support is our priority. You can read more about how we manage our obligations and how to any concerns you may have about radicalisation on our **Prevent page**.

STUDENT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

safeguarding@westminster.ac.uk

STUDENT WELLBEING CONCERNS

student-wellbeing@westminster.ac.uk

CONCERNS ABOUT UNWANTED AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Make a report on the Report and Support platform: reportandsupport.westminster.ac.uk



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

WHAT SUPPORT IS PROVIDED TO MENTORS DURING THE APPRENTICESHIP?

You will be able to contact members of the apprenticeships team by emailing apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk and they will be on hand to provide you with advice and guidance as required.

HOW MUCH TIME/COMMITMENT IS INVOLVED IN BEING A MENTOR?

We recommend that you allocate at least one hour per week to fulfil your mentor responsibilities. You should regularly check in with your apprentice to review their learning plan, monitor Off-The-Job training and provide appropriate guidance. Some mentors deliver training to the apprentice themselves or organise training from others. Since each individual apprentice will have different needs, the required support (and time) can vary.

WHO WOULD MAKE A GOOD MENTOR?

Anyone with experience, compassion and empathy can potentially become a good mentor, but the following skills are particularly useful to have: active listening; questioning; building rapport; offering constructive feedback; setting targets; offering support and guidance; signposting; acting as a role model; confidentiality.

CAN THE APPRENTICE CHANGE MENTORS DURING THEIR APPRENTICESHIP JOURNEY?

Yes, this is possible. However, a consistent mentor presence during the Apprenticeship is vital for a successful experience for the learner. Changes of mentors should be informed as soon as possible to apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk

WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDED WEEKLY WORKING HOURS FOR AN APPRENTICE?

In order to deal with the workload created by the various elements of the apprenticeship, we recommend that apprentices are contracted to work between 30-40 hours per week. The apprentice's wellbeing is also considered when making this recommendation.

CAN AN APPRENTICE COMPLETE JUST THE UNIVERSITY QUALIFICATION AS PART OF THE APPRENTICESHIP?

No. The apprenticeship is based on complementary elements of a University qualification, work-based training and experience, and the EPA. All of these elements must be completed by the apprentice.

CONTACT US

To find out how your business can start benefiting from an apprenticeship, please get in touch with our apprenticeships team:

Email: apprenticeships@westminster.ac.uk
 Telephone: +44 (0) 207 911 5027
 Website: westminster.ac.uk/apprenticeships

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