



Mentor handbook

Welcome to
The University
of Bolton's
apprenticeship
program. We
appreciate your
commitment
to serving as a
workplace mentor
for one of our
apprentices.



The University of Bolton is a Teaching Intensive, Research Informed (TIRI) University with a distinct emphasis on professional and vocational education. The University proudly traces its history back to the foundation in 1825 of the Bolton Mechanics' Institute; one of the first to be established in the United Kingdom. To this day, the University retains its primary purpose of providing educational opportunities to the widest range of individuals and enabling them to achieve their full potential.

The University's Apprenticeship provision is graded by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as 'Good' with an emphasis on Management, Leadership, Teaching and Learning. Our apprenticeship provision continues to grow and we currently offer degree apprenticeships in Nursing, Health, Digital and Engineering with more apprenticeships planned for the future.

As an apprentice mentor you will play a vital role in helping apprentices acquire practical skills, industry knowledge, and professional experience, ultimately contributing to their career development and success. Effective mentorship can positively impact an apprentice's confidence, competence, and readiness for their chosen profession. While this responsibility may appear challenging at first, it offers valuable leadership and management lessons. It helps you develop essential skills, including a sense of responsibility, effective communication, time management, and a strong sense of accountability to help support you in career progression.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a structured training program that combines practical work experience with classroom-based or theoretical learning. These programs are designed to provide individuals with the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge, and qualifications in a specific trade or occupation while earning a wage.

The apprentice will be employed directly by the organisation and are entitled to the same benefits as everyone else in the workplace. These include sick pay entitlement; paid holiday etc.

Part of an apprentices contracted hours includes time spent at university along with learning within the workplace.

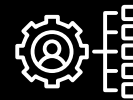
An apprenticeship has 3 key elements*:

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Behaviours



Knowledge

The information, technical detail, and 'know-how' that someone needs to have and understand to successfully carry out the duties. Some knowledge will be occupation-specific, whereas some may be more generic.



Skills

the practical application of knowledge needed to successfully undertake the duties. They are learnt through on- and/or off-the-job training or experience.



Behaviours

Mindsets, attitudes or approaches needed for competence. Whilst these can be innate or instinctive, they can also be learnt. Behaviours tend to be very transferable. They may be more similar across occupations than knowledge and skills. For example, team worker, adaptable and professional.

*InstituteForApprenticeships.org, 2022

What is off-the-job training?

A crucial part of any apprenticeship entails allocating ample time for the learning of new knowledge, skills, and the behaviours. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has determined that this period should amount to no less than 6hrs per week throughout the apprenticeship program's duration. However, Higher level Apprenticeships are very intense and require a mass amount of study so apprentices will normally require more than the minimum 6hrs of Off-the-Job training per week. In your role as an employer mentor, it is your responsibility to facilitate the apprentice's access to this developmental time and ensure that it is properly recorded in the e-portfolio system.

For learning to contribute to the OJT hours it must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard and teach the apprentice NEW knowledge, skills and behaviours they require to reach competence in their particular occupation

This dedicated off-the-job development time encompasses various activities, including university studies (such as attending lectures, workshops, tutorials, and engaging in online learning) and tasks performed in the workplace that contribute to the development of skills and behaviours specified in the apprenticeship standard.

It is the decision of the university and the employer to decide how off-the-job training is delivered. The types of activities that can be included as off-the-job training are:

- Face to face delivery (e.g. lectures/training sessions)
- Role playing/simulation exercises
- Distance/online learning
- 1:1 coaching, shadowing and mentoring
- Industry visits/manufacturer training
- Participation in competitions
- Assignments and projects
- Supported Study Days

Additional study time

Along with the time spent at university, apprentices may require additional time to complete their coursework and assignments. As their mentor, it is beneficial to engage in early in discussions with your apprentice regarding how this additional study time is managed. Apprentices should understand that while some extra study, research, and development time will be necessary, it won't be unlimited but rather sufficient to pass the assignment or meet the agreed-upon target. Additional study time should be tailored to each individual apprentice based on their confidence, experience, and the complexity and scope of their assignments or projects.

Study time could include:

- Study leave days in addition to their regular work hours, to focus on coursework, exam preparation, or research.
- Additional study leave according to assignment submission dates or a fixed number of study days that can be taken per term.
- Study sessions during work hours. Allocate specific hours during the work week when apprentices can dedicate their time to studying or working on assignments. This can be especially helpful during busy periods.

The role of the mentor

As a mentor, your responsibility is to offer direction, counsel, input, and assistance to the mentee. You function as a source of inspiration, an educator, a confidant, an expert, a patron, a promoter, and an associate, adjusting your approach based on the particular goals and aims established in collaboration with the mentee. This adaptability is crucial for the apprentice's success and career growth. Below are some fundamental components of the mentor's function:

- **Guidance and support:** A mentor provides guidance and support to the apprentice throughout their academic and professional journey. They help the apprentice navigate challenges, set goals, and create a plan for achieving those goals.
- **Sharing knowledge and experience:** Mentors share their expertise and industry-specific knowledge with the apprentice. They provide insights into the field, offer practical advice, and help the apprentice gain a deeper understanding of their chosen profession.
- **Feedback and assessment:** Mentors offer constructive feedback on the apprentice's performance. They assess the apprentice's strengths and areas for improvement, helping them to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- **Networking:** Mentors help the apprentice build a professional network by introducing them to relevant contacts and providing opportunities for networking. This can be invaluable for the apprentice's career development.
- **Motivation and confidence building:** Mentors inspire and motivate the apprentice, boosting their confidence and self-esteem. They help the apprentice overcome self-doubt and setbacks, encouraging a positive attitude towards learning and growth.
- **Goal setting:** Mentors assist the apprentice in setting clear and achievable goals for their academic and professional development. They help the apprentice track progress and adjust goals as needed.
- **Problem-solving:** Mentors help the apprentice solve complex problems and make informed decisions. They encourage critical thinking and offer different perspectives on challenges the apprentice may face.
- **Professional development:** Mentors support the apprentice in identifying opportunities for further professional development, such as workshops, seminars, or certifications that can enhance their skills and qualifications.
- **Advocacy:** Mentors advocate for the apprentice within the organization or industry, helping them access resources, projects, or opportunities that can advance their career.
- **Role model:** Mentors serve as role models, demonstrating professionalism, ethical behaviour, and a commitment to continuous learning. They set an example for the apprentice to follow.
- **Listening and empathy:** Mentors actively listen to the apprentice's concerns, questions, and aspirations. They show empathy and understanding, creating a safe space for open communication.
- **Evaluation and Reflection:** Mentors periodically evaluate the mentorship relationship and reflect on its effectiveness. They adapt their approach as necessary to ensure the apprentice's needs are met.



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Your involvement in the apprentice learner journey

As a mentor it is important that you support and guide the apprentice throughout their apprenticeship journey with regular communication to ensure that they aren't facing difficulties in their apprenticeship, that they remain on course, make continuous progress, and are receiving the necessary support and opportunities to enable them to acquire the necessary skills.

Maintain regular check-ins with the apprentice

Ensure that you hold consistent meetings with your apprentice – we recommend starting with bi-weekly check-ins. These meetings are informal in nature (although it's important to document dates and times), and the apprentice should record them in their e-portfolio.

Participate in the Tripartite review meetings

Every 8-12 weeks you will be required to participate in a formal review meeting with the Apprenticeship Work Based Tutor and the apprentice. This meeting can take place at the apprentice's workplace or online. Your presence at review meetings is expected. These meetings serve to assess progress and ensure that development objectives are being met. Comprehensive records of these meetings will be documented in the apprentice's e-portfolio.

Provide support for the apprentice in completing the End Point Assessment (EPA)

As the apprenticeship nears its conclusion, the apprentice will reach the **Gateway stage**. This signifies that all the requisites outlined in the apprenticeship standard have been fulfilled. The apprentice will have achieved all the mandatory academic credits and qualifications in their apprenticeship, including evidence of passing English and math at Level 2. The employer must then acknowledge the apprentice's readiness to proceed towards the End Point Assessment (EPA). As their mentor you should be involved in this decision-making process. An apprentice should not be put forward for their EPA if they are not working at the level of the apprenticeship standard and have not completed all on-programme learning.

Following the Gateway, the apprentice will have approximately three to six months to prepare for and undergo their EPA. While there may be some input required from you, it is crucial that, at this stage, the apprentice demonstrates their independence. Generally, University tutors are not directly involved during this phase to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

The primary purpose of the EPA is to comprehensively assess whether the apprentice has met the values, skills, knowledge, and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard in a holistic manner. The EPA provides the apprentice with an opportunity to present both oral and written evidence of their acquired knowledge, skills, and behaviours developed throughout the duration of the apprenticeship.

Safeguarding

Please read our separate guide on **Safeguarding & the Prevent Duty for Employers**.



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