



## Middlesex University

### Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Development and Delivery

#### 1. A track record of innovation in professional and work-based learning

Middlesex University is a large London university, with three overseas campuses in Dubai, Mauritius and Malta. The University has over 1,900 employees and approaching 40,000 students studying on Middlesex courses worldwide from highly diverse backgrounds. These courses are delivered both at our own campuses and also with partner institutions, making Middlesex one of the largest providers of British university education to international students.

The academic provision of the University is organised into six Schools and The Institute for Work Based Learning. The Schools include: The School of Science and Technology; The Business School; The School of Health and Education; The School of Law; The School of Art and Design, and The School of Media and Performing Arts.

Middlesex has been awarded three Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education for its innovative provision of work-based learning, giving people the opportunity to gain a degree for the knowledge and expertise they acquire through their work. The University has been recognised as a Centre for Excellence in work-based learning by the UK Higher Education Academy and has also been commended by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for the 'distinctive contribution' of the University's Work Based Learning programmes in providing opportunities for learners. Middlesex was also awarded the largest workforce development and employer engagement project in the country by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and has a track record of working with national and international corporations such as Lloyds Bank, easyJet, Logan Air, Asda, Marks and Spencer, Bovis Construction, the Royal Mail, SAP, Nationwide Insurance, Toshiba Tec and Sony Mobile. Middlesex was also one of only two universities nationally to lead UK government funded Higher Apprenticeship development projects. Recently, Middlesex has developed Higher and Degree apprenticeships in the construction, aviation, retail and care sectors. Middlesex University also came runner up in the 2014 Guardian University Awards Business Partnership category.

Middlesex University's Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL) has an international reputation for leading practice in the provision of professional doctorate programmes and has the largest number of professional doctorate candidates in UK universities. IWBL leads the University's Work and Learning Research Centre which includes researchers of high international standing in the field. IWBL also leads the University's work in recognizing prior learning (RPL) and a recent study suggests Middlesex may recognize more RPL claims than any university in Europe (Talbot 2016). The Institute leads the University's work in accrediting



external (often in-company) training. The Institute also operates the University's validated Work Based Learning Curriculum Framework, which is comprised of a suite of work-based learning modules that can be combined to lead to any qualification the University awards – from University Certificate to full Master degree. The combination of University accredited (recognised) in-company training with a highly flexible work-based learning curriculum enables Middlesex to develop workforce development programmes that are specifically designed to meet employers needs.

## **2. Higher and Degree Apprenticeship development and delivery**

Middlesex University's Institute for Work Based Learning has deployed its expertise in professional and work-based learning, working with the University Vocational Awards Council and other bodies to promote UK University engagement with the apprenticeship agenda since 2010. This has included hosting and engaging with a wide range of national events including briefing HEFCE national and regional teams. Middlesex has also worked with BIS, Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to both identify and seek to resolve barriers to university engagement with the Apprenticeship agenda at the higher skill level.

Strategically, Middlesex University is committed to building on its expertise in developing Higher and Degree Apprenticeships and is interested in working with key employers who have identified a clear need for workforce development. The University has significant experience of delivering professional learning in a wide range of fields but the flexibility of the University's work-based curriculum framework means that it can develop provision in any sector.

### **I. Construction Management**

Specifically, Middlesex was one of only two universities nationally to be awarded a Higher Apprenticeship Development Fund contract by the SFA in 2011. Working with UK Contractors Group employers, Middlesex developed three work-based degree programmes. This resulted in the development and approval of the Higher Apprenticeship Framework in Construction Management issued by the Construction Industries Training Board (CIBT). This Framework includes the following Middlesex University degrees:

- FdA Professional Practice in Construction Operations Management
- BA (Hons) Professional Practice in Construction Site Management
- BA (Hons) Professional Practice in Quantity Surveying and Commercial Management

These work-based degrees have apprentices studying on them with the University's partner New College Nottingham, one of which is the subject of the individual case study presented below. Middlesex is also on the Provider Readiness Group for the development of reports on the new Apprenticeship Standards in construction written by the sector to advise on implementation and delivery.



## II. Care Leadership and Management

Middlesex was also contracted by Sector Skills Council, Skills for Care to develop a work-based programme as part of the Higher Apprenticeship Framework in Care Leadership and Management. This approved Framework includes a Middlesex University Higher Diploma, Professional Practice in Learning and Managing Care Services, and provides the opportunity for Care Managers to specialise in Dementia Care, Quality and Service Improvement, Safeguarding or End of Life Care. Apprentices are currently undertaking this Apprenticeship and studying at Middlesex.

## III. Professional Aviation Pilot Practice

Middlesex was contracted by Sector Skills Council People 1st to develop a work-based degree for the Higher Apprenticeship Framework in Professional Aviation Pilot Practice for individuals seeking a career as a commercial airline pilot. This resulted in the approval of the Framework which includes the Middlesex University BSc (Hons) Professional Aviation Pilot Practice qualification. This work-based programme is highly innovative and is the only programme nationally that fully integrates Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) training to gain an Airline Transport Pilots Licence (ATPL) or Multi-crew Pilots Licence (MPL) with the first year of commercial flying as a First Officer. This initiative was also recognised in the Guardian University Awards, coming runner-up in the Business Partnership category for our work with our partner CTC Aviation.

## IV. Retail Management

Middlesex has a track record of developing work-based higher education programmes for the retail sector having previously worked with Marks and Spencer and currently working nationally with Asda and Halifax Retail Bank. Middlesex is also a member of the National Skills Academy for Retail Higher Education Advisory Group. As a member of the Higher Apprenticeship in Retail Management consortium, Middlesex contributed to the development of the level 4 Higher Apprenticeship Framework and was specifically contracted by People 1st to develop a work-based Foundation Degree for a Higher Apprenticeship Framework at level 5. Middlesex has validated a BA (Hons) Retail Management programme for Asda, which is a workforce development programme that integrates Asda Retail Academy in-company training with work-based University modules. The programme (although not constructed as a Degree Apprenticeship) is a model of what a Degree Apprenticeship should be as the integration of in-company training ensures that the programme is fully embedded within the talent management aims of the employer. The programme also offers 'step on and step off' entry and exit qualifications that are aligned with specific management job roles, from section leader to general store manager. The work-based approach ensures that the learning required to complete the degree also has business benefits to the employer through the enhancement of working practice.



### 3. Case study examples

**New College Nottingham**, in partnership with Middlesex University are the first in the country to have delivered the **Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management** at level 5 and 6.

Having consulted with construction employers including Lovell Partnerships Ltd and the Seddon Group, the project has established a national infrastructure and provided a work-based career development opportunity that did not currently exist in the sector.

The infrastructure comprises regional and local partnerships made up of employers and education and training providers including Middlesex University, CITB, The University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC), The Mixed Economy Group of Colleges (MEG) and the Lifelong Learning Network National Forum and has delivered 40 Higher Apprenticeship opportunities in the period 2013-2015. The first five students are due to graduate in June 2016 and two are on track to gain First Class Honours.

**Demand:** There is a huge demand within the industry, with The Higher Education Group of UK Contractors calling for a Higher Apprenticeship and integrated foundation degree.

There are currently approximately 25,000 construction professionals completing craft level apprenticeships in construction and the delivery of a Higher Level Apprenticeship is starting to provide crucial opportunities for career progression within the sector. CITB-Construction Skills have identified that there will be a need for over 3,000 new Construction Operations Managers year-on-year.

A study by ICM Research revealed that a quarter of employers in England rate qualified higher apprentices as 25 per cent more employable than those who took an alternative route into work.

**Sector endorsement:** Major UK construction employers and the Federation of Master Builders have confirmed that they view the development of the Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management as a very valuable contribution to meeting the need for management roles in the construction industry. Such endorsements include:

*People Development Manager, Bruce Boughton from Lovell Partnerships Ltd saying: "This initiative will help to ensure a supply of skilled and knowledgeable managers that are capable of working in a fast changing industry that is adapting to using more modern methods of construction."*

*Training and Education Executive from Seddon Group, Roy Cavanagh: "This development has the potential to be transformational in helping to provide the highly-skilled and fully trained*



*workforce, operating under efficient management, utilising the most modern techniques and technologies that the sector requires."*

*The Federation of Master Builders said: "The development of the Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Operations Management will help to ensure a competent and qualified flow of managers into the sector. We hope this will be useful for small and medium sized businesses looking for pathway to higher-level qualifications that will help support their business."*

**Government endorsement:** Then Skills Minister, John Hayes congratulated Middlesex University saying: *"Construction and civil engineering play a fundamental role in creating jobs and growth, and in tough times it is right for the Government and education providers to invest to develop the advanced skills firms need to prosper. By working with business to bring vocational learning onto a level playing field with academic study, Middlesex University is blazing a trail for others to follow."*

**Industry standards:** The qualification is 'Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England' (SASE) compliant and has been approved by CITB Construction Skills as the issuing authority. The Higher Apprenticeship is largely delivered through Professional Practice in Construction Management qualifications that are designed to develop both the knowledge and competencies specified in the Higher Apprenticeship to a nationally consistent specification and standard.

**Benefits:** The Higher Apprenticeship is particularly relevant to individuals who have completed an Advanced Apprenticeship (at level 3) and employees operating at craft levels who have the aspiration and ability to progress to management level roles. The approved Framework provides the first Higher Apprenticeship progression opportunity for these employees. It also provides opportunities for adult learners returning to the industry with appropriate qualifications or experience and embraces CITB-Construction Skills diversity and equal opportunity aims.

**Key benefits of the apprenticeship include:**

- It is designed to prepare for specific identified jobs in the Construction sector
- There is a clear and specific employer demand and recruitment market
- The Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management is currently the only SASE compliant Higher Apprenticeship available in the sector
- This Higher Apprenticeship attracts CITB Grants Scheme funding
- Potential for less off-site time through the flexible delivery of the work-based degrees
- Progression from level 5 to a level 6 Construction Management qualification is built in and guaranteed
- The programmes are designed to prepare for Professional Body membership
- The potential time saved in gaining professional membership is seen as a benefit by construction employers

UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

...championing higher level vocational learning







#### 4. Student Profiles

The students identified below have either progressed from a craft qualification at level 3 or are experienced workers who have progressed from either a HNC or CIOB programme. This has either been a two or three year journey for these students.

##### **Dane Munford**

Dane was an apprentice bricklayer who completed his level 3 Apprenticeship in Trowel Occupations, Dane started to develop his role in his company and then became successfully self-employed. Dane then pursued a career in Construction Site Management and commenced study of the FdA Professional Practice in Construction Operations Management with New College Nottingham. Dane then applied to be trainee Site Supervisor for David Wilson Homes and was successful. Dane is now a fully qualified Assistant Site Manager soon to progress to Site Manager status for David Wilson Homes. Here is his view of the course:

##### **What do think you learned from the course?**

I feel I have learnt how a construction project is produced from the very beginning including the proposal, cost and design considerations, to the location and how we as a construction team programme and sequence the tasks involved. The information within the course has given me the insight and appreciation of how many professionals are involved in the process too.

##### **How has the course helped your career journey?**

I have gained the knowledge and understanding of my responsibilities in my role as an assistant site manager through my studies with the modules set out through the foundation degree. The modules have demonstrated to me how we must support our actions in our career by way of reference, research and it's improved my academic approach with peers in the work place.

##### **How did the course help in your future plans?**

The foundation degree has helped me gain my current position in my job as an assistant site manager. In year one of the course I was working as a subcontracting bricklayer. In the beginning the course seemed overwhelming but after completing the first module and receiving feedback from my tutor it gave me the confidence to stick at the course and see it through; I felt the more I completed the easier it became and noticed my academic writing and research material referencing improved. By the end of the course I had applied and started working as a trainee site manager and within ten months received a promotion to assistant site manager thanks to the support from the foundation degree.

##### **How has the course helped you at the workplace?**

The foundation degree has helped me improve the way I present myself professionally and communicate with colleagues. It has given me the confidence to push myself and explore unfamiliar territory within the industry.

UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

...championing higher level vocational learning





**How has your employer supported your development?**

My employer has supported me during my studies with time and evidence to evaluate with regards to the modules. Talking to my colleagues and asking questions to help me complete my modules has been useful.

**Has taking the course surprised you in any way?**

Taking the course has given me confidence to reach unthinkable goals within the industry, from working on the tools alongside site management to joining them was something that I didn't think was achievable with my academic background but the support and benefits from the foundation degree have exceeded my expectations and now I feel that the sky's the limit in my career.

**Richard Brailsford**

Richard works in a Highways Agency, which seeks to maintain a city's highway road network in a safe and structurally sound condition for the public. While undertaking the level 5 Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management at New College Nottingham he completed the Sustainable Environment module.

Through using a work-based project approach, he undertook a project around repairing road surfaces and highways, for example filling in potholes and resurfacing. He identified that using a 24 tonne static hot box that allows asphalt delivery direct to the depot at a reduced cost and which conserves left over material for re-use the following day, could make a significant impact on sustainability. The potential savings on waiting time alone will be circa £109k per year. The added benefits of the new system include sustainable working, reduction in costs of materials and a lower carbon footprint. Richard has now progressed to the level 6 Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Management.

**Samantha Middleton**

Samantha originally began the course as a carpentry and joinery apprentice at New College Nottingham and has been successful in progressing her career at the company MBS Derby. Samantha says:

“I found the course hugely relevant to my role within the sector and it has allowed me to progress further in my career. My employers also found it really beneficial and have commented on my development throughout the course.”

**Dr Darryll Bravenboer**

Deputy Director, Institute for Work Based Learning

[d.bravenboer@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:d.bravenboer@mdx.ac.uk)

March, 2016