



## Staffordshire University

### Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

Staffordshire University has been validating awards for delivery as part of Higher Apprenticeships for seven years. More recently, the university has responded to the Skills Funding Agency's (SFA) call for HEI lead providers of apprenticeships at higher education and degree level. By the end of July 2016, with strategic leadership driven from executive level, Staffordshire will be delivering higher apprenticeships to more than 180 higher level apprentices.

Employer conversations have been gaining momentum, with the Apprenticeship Levy and targets for public sector bodies in relation to the number of apprentices who work for them in England driving interest in apprenticeships which has not previously existed.

#### 1. Apprenticeship Frameworks

Nine foundation degrees validated by Staffordshire University are approved for delivery on five Higher Apprenticeship Frameworks (Advanced Manufacturing; IT, Software, Web & Telecoms Professionals; Management; Health - Assistant Practitioner; Contact Centre Operations Management). In addition, one further Staffordshire University approved qualification has recently been added to the Management Apprenticeship Framework to provide additional flexibility for SMEs. This shorter, level 5, 60-credit university diploma will enable apprentices to complete the level 5 Management apprenticeship in 13 months.

In the majority of cases Higher Apprenticeship Frameworks require the apprentice to complete a knowledge qualification (e.g. foundation degree or university diploma) alongside a competency qualification (e.g. QCF diploma). Three of the University's approved programmes are combined foundation degrees which are designed to enable the demonstration of knowledge and competency, both in and through work, which means a separate competency qualification is not required.

A systematic review of existing Apprenticeship Frameworks is currently underway to identify areas which link to the priorities outlined in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership strategic plan and skills strategy. Where relevant university qualifications exist, alongside employer demand, a range of mapping activities (in collaboration with the framework owner/developer) will be undertaken to add the programmes to the Frameworks.

Apprenticeship Frameworks utilise (roughly) a 50:50 co-funding model with the government contributing a maximum of 50% and the employer a minimum of 50% of the cost of the Apprenticeship (for apprentices over the age of 19 on their start date).

#### 2. Apprenticeship Standards

Having watched the development of Apprenticeship Standards from the announcement of the early employer-led Trailblazers, Staffordshire University has progressed to become involved in Trailblazer developments. Involvement has been both with existing groups and in supporting groups of employers to consider new Trailblazers in undeveloped occupational areas.



Academic experts from the university's four faculties (Arts and Creative Technologies; Business, Education and Law; Computing, Engineering and Science and Health Sciences) are committed to reviewing the development of new Standards and to exploring opportunities for delivery of programmes to meet Standards which are ready for delivery. University representatives are also active in responding to monthly BIS consultations on applications for new Standards and submissions of Standards and assessment plans.

Plans are underway to deliver the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship summer/autumn 2016 and the Digital Technology Degree Apprenticeship in spring 2017.

Apprenticeship Standards currently utilise a £1:£2 funding model with the government investing £2 (to a maximum cap) for every £1 invested by employers.

### **3. Apprenticeship Delivery**

The University is currently delivering and planning delivery in the following areas of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships:

#### **I. IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals**

Staffordshire University operates as lead provider for a large telecommunications organisation. Apprentices are new to the businesses and are recruited to fill specific project delivery roles. 32 apprentices are currently studying a University Foundation Degree (knowledge) in IT alongside an Edexcel Diploma (competency) which the university subcontracts to an FE partner college. Apprentices attend blocks of study at six-week intervals. Two apprentices are under 19 years-old and as a result attract 100% funding.

#### **II. Health (Assistant Practitioner)**

Staffordshire University has led the development of a consortium of six West-Midlands based NHS mental health trusts, each of which has committed to developing their Assistant Practitioners. Each of the 32 current apprentices are existing employees and most are over the age of 24.

90 apprentices are scheduled to begin studying on this Apprenticeship Framework in June 2016.

#### **III. Advanced Manufacturing; and Management**

Open programmes which will enable regional employers to develop smaller numbers of Apprenticeships (compared to closed programmes which deliver to larger cohorts commissioned by single employers) are scheduled to begin delivery in May/June 2016. The university is looking forward to welcoming 12 apprentices onto each of the frameworks above, studying either a Foundation Degree in Mechanical Technology or a University Diploma in Leadership and Management.



#### **IV. Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship**

An open programme will provide the region's employers with an opportunity to trial the Degree Apprenticeship recruitment and development route. 15 apprentices are expected to begin the programme in summer/autumn 2016.

#### **4. Sector Support**

In order to drive the agenda in HE and to support the sector to respond to the call for more HEIs to become lead providers, colleagues at Staffordshire University have been contributing to a range of initiatives including:

- Sector groups (e.g. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills led Degree Apprenticeship "Ginger-Group").
- Sector-led and driven research undertaken by UUK, HEFCE, The Strategic Development Network (as the lead partner delivering the Future Apprenticeship Support Programme) and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC).
- Provider Readiness Groups (PRG): as joint primary contact/lead for the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (alongside Sheffield Hallam University) and contributor to the Automotive Control Technical Support Engineer PRG reports; written by representatives of the skills sector for the benefit of those who deliver, or will deliver, Apprenticeships.
- Skills Funding Agency led North-West Apprenticeship Development Group.

In addition, the central service from which the Apprenticeship agenda is led at the University of Staffordshire, has hosted visits from and provided support to six HEIs to share expertise in strategic and operational developments.

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**March, 2016**