

## TITLE

***Using HDAs to increase diversity, course funding and employer mentor engagement***

## SUB-TITLE

*Augmenting the FdA in FM with a parallel Higher Apprenticeship route*

## AIM

*What did you set out to do and why? (100 words)*

*The aim was to augment the existing part-time blended learning Facilities Management (FM) Foundation Degree (FdA) with a Higher Apprenticeship (HA) route. The course student demographic – mature students in existing FM employment – was a strong fit for ‘early adopter’ HDA provision, affording careful education and awareness management opportunities regarding the stigma of the ‘Apprenticeship’ label with some students and employers. With an awareness of the forthcoming Apprenticeship Levy and associated Government changes, developing the HA was a key early step to promote the sustainability of a successful programme in a changing educational environment. The enhanced mentor liaison opportunities ‘built in’ to the programme aimed to prime the course for further SHU FM course awareness through ‘snowball’ recruitment.*

## BENEFITS

*About 3 or 4 bullet points (50 words)*

- *Recruit more students and enhance diversity*
- *Develop deeper relationships with employers and mentors*
- *Access alternative funding mechanisms for course sustainability*
- *Become positioned in the industry as a HDA authority and ‘early adopter’*
- *Sector visibility and contribution to Trailblazer Standard while being developed*

## THE APPROACH

*What's involved and what happened (up to 350 words)*

*The existing FdA FM course has a work-based learning ethos. The learning, teaching and assessment approach in all modules encourages students to consider their own organisational practice in academic terms.*

*Coupled with the FM industry’s established Apprenticeship presence, and its service-provider led and professional body supported Trailblazer group working on the*

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*forthcoming FM HDA Apprenticeship Standard, the internal and external context suggested a strong fit for for HDA conversion of the course.*

*To run the HA in parallel with the existing FdA meant adding explicit personal and professional development (PDP) and mentoring elements into the course, as a robust work-based project element was already present. These were developed to work hand in hand and be mutually supportive.*

*Following confirmation of mentor appointment at enrolment, a simple timetable of mentor engagement – both at the university and within the workplace – was arranged around the learning agreement commitment, to embody the three-way Apprentice/employer/university relationship.*

*Early in the course, once the Apprentice had settled into the course and the student/SHU relationship was established, each mentor was invited for a collective introduction to SHU and the HA, and three-way meeting with the Apprentice and course leader. At this stage, the Apprentice and mentor were supportively tasked with developing, agreeing and documenting a range of bespoke PDP objectives to complement their current employee development plan, alongside the university requirements.*

*During course, periodic Apprentice/mentor progress meetings were encouraged in workplace, and monitored through Apprentice/course leader update meetings at the university during study blocks. A virtual 'open door policy' was adopted by the course leader for all Apprentice and mentor communications.*

*At the end of the course, 'celebration of achievement' presentation events at SHU will showcase and document both PDP successes, reflective practice and the developing vocational skills of each Apprentice. Mentors and other employee representatives will be encouraged to be present, increasing opportunities for further business development discussions.*

## THE OUTCOME

*What was the result of this intervention or activity? Do you have any evidence you can include? (150 words)*

*Apprentices are currently on the programme, and enjoying the course. With only small numbers at this stage, the concurrent 'traditional' and HA course routes promote the wide attendance during challenging economic times, while employers benefit from attractive government match-funded options whilst they take stock pending the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.*

*Mentors are generally responding well to the three-way engagement, promoting warmer links for SHU with new organisations. This activity requires attention and energy to promote its success. The increased PDP focus onto a course already*

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*underpinned by reflective practice is challenging students positively to demonstrate tangible, timely organisational contributions.*

*“My Apprenticeship has really supported me to start to learn a new career in Facilities Management, with the benefits of learning academically at Sheffield Hallam University and using my on the job training and practical experience. I find that every day is different working in Facilities Management for the City of York Council, with new challenges ahead of me on a daily basis. I love my job and I feel I am able to learn new skills and knowledge with the reassurance and support of my line manager and mentor”*

Apprentice Charlotte Hadden, City of York Council

*“As an employer, working with Sheffield Hallam University to offer an Apprenticeship in Facilities Management, I was really pleased to be welcomed into the University to meet the course tutors. This was invaluable and gave me a thorough understanding of the expectations given to our Apprentice, so I could support them more effectively. The learning modules on the course are complementing the real work experience at the Council, so I would highly recommend this opportunity to others”*

Mentor Andrew Laslett, Strategic Services Manager, City of York Council

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

*Will you be developing this? Why? How? Or scaling up the approach? (100 words)*

*The three-way relationship between the Apprentice, mentor and university a key element of a positive HA student experience. Using the newly available Apprenticeship Employer feedback form as the basis for a formalised periodic review process will encourage enhanced mentor engagement and potentially more powerful three-way discussions.*

*It will also afford a more concrete opportunity for the course leader (or a nominated team member) to meet the Apprentice and mentor in the workplace, enhancing relationships and potentially affording further business development opportunities.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO OTHER STAFF

*(100 words)*

*Being an early adopter as HDA governance unfolds requires being amenable and reactive to unfolding information and developing requirements. Be very aware of SFA compliance requirements, including student eligibility criteria. Develop a good link with SHU DEEP to ensure a strong collective understanding of the HDA situation.*

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*Work closely with professional services course support staff to develop a strong partnership approach to build compliance requirements into the administrative lifecycle of the course. Getting HDA requirements right requires a cross-faculty team mind-set to create a 'best practice' approach, not a compliance one.*

*Keep an eye on mentor relationships and use all resources available (e.g. the newly available Apprenticeship Employer feedback form) to drive engagement.*

*There are existing templates for mentor training sessions that might be useful. Also, contact DEEP for updates on our electronic mentoring SHOOC for apprenticeships.*

### FURTHER & RELATED INFORMATION

*Useful links or references to help people who are thinking about following your lead.*

*FM Subject Group Leader Paul Wyton provides an honest perspective, suggesting the hard work involved in the early adoption of Apprenticeships, and also the benefits for the future:*

*"The introduction of the HDA has been a challenge. Achieving consistent acceptance and understanding with students and employers is critical. Where there is good engagement the learning and student experience has been very good. The approach of combining Apprentices with traditional students has tested university systems and process, and enabled us as a subject group to identify and address the differences Apprenticeships present. Whilst the numbers are not huge, the learning has been invaluable for the development and transition to an integrated Degree Apprenticeship due for launch later in 2017."*

### PROFILE

Tutor name(s): Paul Wyton, FM Subject Group Leader **[add headshot photo to case study]**

Faculty: Sheffield Business School

Size of cohort: Small

Key themes: Course sustainability, mentor engagement, employer engagement, Trailblazer involvement, PDP, early adoption, higher and degree apprenticeships