

HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL
ESSENTIAL APPRENTICESHIP GUIDE

Succeeding as an apprentice



Henley
Business School

UNIVERSITY OF READING

Where business comes to life

Succeeding as an apprentice

As a higher or degree apprentice, you are embarking on a journey of growth and discovery. You will be equipped with a deeper and broader understanding of the latest business insights, enabling you to become a strategic and responsible leader. You will also undoubtedly face some challenges, particularly when it comes to balancing your apprenticeship with your other work and home responsibilities.

This guide shares ideas and recommended actions that will help you succeed as an apprentice.

Essential Apprenticeship Guides

This guide is one of a series designed to help our clients engage with apprenticeships and deliver best value to their organisation and their apprentices.

Further reading

Creating an impactful work-based project
Understanding off-the-job training

henley.ac.uk/business/apprenticeships/essential-apprenticeship-guides



1

Decide whether this is the right step for you

Starting an apprenticeship should be a mutual decision between you and your organisation. The most successful organisations embark on apprenticeships with a clear view of the benefits that they want to achieve – from growing the talent pipeline to delivering organisational change. Likewise, apprentices will be best placed to meet the challenges of the programme if they have a clear sense of what they want to achieve personally and professionally.



Recommended actions:

- Reflect on what you hope to gain personally and professionally from the opportunity – and how you can deliver positive benefits for your organisation.
- Discuss becoming an apprentice with your manager to obtain their support. Make sure they understand the time and other requirements of an apprenticeship, and make plans for any other changes that you might have to make to facilitate this.
- Where appropriate, consult other senior colleagues to seek their endorsement and gain their perspective on how your participation could benefit the organisation.
- Talk with a coach or mentor, if you have one.
- Seek support from others who may be impacted, including, where relevant, your family.

2

Understand the apprenticeship standard and learning programme

The core of what you will learn is the apprenticeship standard – a summary of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that each apprentice is required to develop. Training providers like Henley create a learning programme to deliver the standard. This should be customised to reflect your starting points, as well as the context and challenges of your organisation. There will be a variety of components within your apprenticeship (including, in some cases, an integrated degree) and you will need to achieve them all and pass your end-point assessment in order to complete your apprenticeship.

Recommended actions:

- Review your apprenticeship agreement and learner commitment statement, keeping copies for future reference. These documents cover the commitments that you and your organisation have made to your apprenticeship.
- Check that you understand each component of your apprenticeship and how it will be assessed.
- Take ownership of your development: plan for what you need to do to successfully complete your programme and achieve the outcomes that inspired you to start an apprenticeship.

Keep on top of your work and ask for help when you need it

3

Undertaking a degree or higher apprenticeship on top of your job will have its challenges. Successful apprentices take a systematic and realistic approach to balancing work, studying and home commitments.

■ ■ My top tip for succeeding as an apprentice is to stay focused on the goal of applying your learning in the workplace. Every time you have the chance to apply your learning at work is an opportunity for you to collect evidence for your portfolio. Collecting evidence helps you to embed your learning more deeply, so this benefits you personally, as well as meaning that your evidence portfolio will be in great shape well before your end-point assessment. ■ ■

Dr Anne Dibley

Recommended actions:

- Ensure you and your manager have key deadlines and review meetings scheduled into your diaries.
- Plan how you will meet deadlines set out in your learning schedule from Henley. Different people take different approaches to managing workload; keeping on top of things and working steadily towards deadlines is always recommended.
- Ask for help when you need it. It is common for apprentices to need support with certain areas, such as study skills or academic writing. Your apprenticeship tutor or programme director can point you in the direction of further support if you need it.

4

Make the most of your off-the-job training

It is a government requirement that, as an apprentice, you spend a minimum of six hours per week (equivalent) of your working hours in off-the-job training. Taking time away from a busy job is never easy, but it is important as it allows you to assimilate new knowledge, consider new ideas and try out new approaches.

Recommended actions:

- Work with your manager and tutor to plan for your off-the-job training, including what Henley will provide and what is to take place within your organisation.
- Take up opportunities across your organisation to gain valuable learning that will also count as off-the-job training.
- Ensure you record your off-the-job training in your portfolio of evidence.
- Seek support from your manager or tutor if you are having difficulties in allocating enough time to your training.

5

Apply your learning in the workplace

Applying learning in the workplace will allow you to bring your new insights to life and deliver lasting impact for yourself and the organisation.



Recommended actions:

- Review your learning programme and planned projects with your manager and consider opportunities within the workplace where your learning can be deployed for positive impact.
- Identify any experts in the discipline within your organisation with whom you might wish to connect.
- Focus on making connections between your learning and your organisation's strategy, opportunities and/or challenges.
- Keep your manager and wider organisation up to date with your progress and successes.

6

Develop an impactful work-based project

The final stage of the apprenticeship requires you to undertake a significant work-based project. You will need support from your organisation in identifying a suitable project and gaining wider buy-in, as well as in progressing and implementing your project.

The project should be meaningful to you and to your organisation and provide significant stretch to enhance your development.

Recommended actions:

- Engage with senior stakeholders to find a project aligned to organisational needs and strategy.
- Use your project to build your reputation and networks internally.
- Share good news about how the project has delivered value to your area or organisation.

7

Retain your professional curiosity and keep learning

Apprenticeships really start to deliver impact when apprentices are inspired to take up new opportunities and to positively challenge the status quo. Henley programmes will challenge and develop you as an independent learner, giving you the self-awareness and analytical skills to be an effective leader for today and for the future.

■ ■ My overall advice to anyone thinking about starting [an apprenticeship] is to approach it with an open mind, enjoy the journey, be curious and excited to learn.

There will be subject areas where you feel confident and others, perhaps like Finance and Accounting, where most people (apart from the Finance leaders) are not so confident. However, if you stay positive and work hard, you'll find that when you apply it back in the workplace, it all starts to make sense. ■ ■

Marc Bunce, Director of Business Excellence, UK & Ireland, ADP

Recommended actions:

- Look outside your organisation and think about how it can bring in new approaches or technologies to improve its performance.
- Seek out routes for personal and professional development, such as taking on new projects or responsibilities, or seeking opportunities for career progression.
- Plan for your ongoing development in addition to, and after, your apprenticeship.
- Mentor others within your organisation to apply your newfound knowledge, skills and behaviours and play a role in improving the capabilities of others.

Emerging skills: Top five skills identified as being in high demand

1

Active learning and learning strategies

2

Analytical thinking and innovation

3

Creativity, originality and initiative

4

Complex problem-solving

5

Critical thinking and analysis

(World Economic Forum, 2020: 115)

Where business comes to life

Henley is a triple-accredited business school with over 75 years' experience in developing confident, resilient business leaders and supporting organisations in reaching their strategic and transformational goals.

We are one of the largest providers of leadership, management and digital apprenticeships. Our programmes support around 1,600 learners and are enriched by the cutting-edge research and wide-ranging commercial experience of our academics.

The depth and breadth of this knowledge base equips learners with an extensive understanding of leadership and, along with the latest sector-specific insights, enables them to become the strategic and responsible leaders of the future.

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