

Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Operations Management

College Briefing Note

This briefing note provides advice to colleges which may be interested in offering the Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Operations Management.

What is the Higher Apprenticeship?

The Higher Apprenticeship in Construction Operations Management (HA COM) is an industry-recognised apprenticeship. The Higher Apprenticeship was developed at the request of CITB-ConstructionSkills who in turn were responding to a request from employers in the industry to develop a Higher Apprenticeship. All Apprenticeships are governed by statute and are *'designed to develop the knowledge and occupational competencies an individual needs to perform a defined job role, by combining learning and work'*¹.

The HA COM has been approved by CITB-ConstructionSkills (the issuing authority) as compliant with the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE). The HA COM is based on a new, specially developed and validated Foundation degree in Professional Practice in Construction Operations Management. This accredits the knowledge and competency requirements of the framework. The apprentice must follow a series of core modules but there are opportunities to choose from a small number of specialist optional modules, thus tailoring the learning to suit the apprentice's individual and the employer's business needs. The apprenticeship is work-based, but blended learning or college-based learning play an important part in delivery.

The Foundation degree used to deliver the knowledge and competency requirements of the Higher Apprenticeship is currently only offered by Middlesex University, although other HEIs and colleges with Foundation degree awarding powers may choose to offer the same programme in the near future. Apprentices must be employed: the Higher Apprenticeship is only achievable through work-based learning. Depending on previous qualifications, it will typically take three years to achieve the HA COM.

As the Higher Apprenticeship is delivered on a part-time basis, it is outside current student number controls. Students who meet all or part of the fees are able to draw down student loans from the SLC. Details of repayment arrangements are outlined on the SLC website.

Why might your college want to offer the Higher Apprenticeship?

CITB-ConstructionSkills estimate that there will be a need for over 3,000 new Construction Operations Managers each year². The HA was designed to meet this demand. Senior staff in large construction companies believe that these jobs will require the integrated and applied skills learned in the course of the Higher Apprenticeship. Their view is that the learning style implicit in the Foundation degree is particularly relevant to the training needs of future middle/senior managers.

¹ Meeting Employer Skills Needs Consultation on criteria for Higher Apprenticeships at Degree Levels – National Apprenticeship Service P5

² Labour Market Intelligence from the Construction Skills Network for 2012-16 indicates an annual recruitment requirement for 3380 Construction Managers across the UK see http://www.cskills.org/uploads/CSN-Report-National-Overview_tcm17-28589.pdf

What do employers think of the Higher Apprenticeship?

This Higher Apprenticeship has the backing of CITB-ConstructionSkills, major UK employers and the Federation of Master Builders. Large companies such as the Lovell Partnership and the Seddon Group have confirmed the need for the Higher Apprenticeship if a steady supply of skilled and knowledgeable managers is to be guaranteed. They also value the level of input they can have in the way that the Higher Apprenticeship is delivered and the opportunity for less off-site time. See the recent article in Construction Manager for further information at <http://construction-manager.co.uk/news/work-based-construction-qualification-launched/>.

How does the Higher Apprenticeship differ from the HNC/D?

The fundamental difference between HNC/Ds and Higher Apprenticeship is that a Higher Apprentice must be employed. Work-based learning - the accreditation of work-based learning and occupational competence - is a fundamental component of the Higher Apprenticeship. HNC/Ds are valued by many employers but they are not work-based in this sense. As a work-based HE qualification, the Foundation degree has been specifically designed, developed and approved to provide evidence of meeting the knowledge and competence requirements of the Higher Apprenticeship as required by the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE). HNC/Ds cannot provide this evidence for the HA COM. Unlike most HNC/Ds, the Foundation degree includes guaranteed progression to a level 6 (Honours degree) for all those who successfully complete the learning programme. The Higher Apprenticeship and Foundation degree will be suitable for those students who are in employment and who have the aspiration, ability and potential opportunity to develop into a construction operations management role. As such, the Higher Apprenticeship will be appropriate to learners who may previously have considered applying for an HNC/D if, in the view of teaching staff and their employer, they are likely to be able to adapt successfully to the learning style of the Foundation degree. This assumes an ability to apply theory learned through a blended learning approach, supported by a mentor and a visiting college tutor.

How would the relationship between the college and Middlesex University work?

If Middlesex University accepts the college's proposal to run the Higher Apprenticeship it will then conduct a largely paper-based process of Institutional Approval. If this is successful, the college will enter into a franchise relationship with Middlesex via a Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC). Under the franchise arrangement Middlesex University is responsible for ensuring academic standards and the quality of the learning experience, but specific delivery approaches are determined by the college on the basis of employer and learner need. The college also sets and collects the tuition fee for the programme.

Colleges are provided with a suite of standardised learning resources, including Programme and Module Handbooks for students, which can be used by all participating colleges. Middlesex University will produce these, free of charge, at both level 4 and Level 5. The University will also offer advice to college tutors, provide guidance for company-based mentors and provide staff development events for college staff and those engaged in the delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship. All students enrolled on the programme will also have full online access to Middlesex University Learning Resources Centre, Library etc. and are eligible to have a Middlesex University student card.

The University will also provide resource to support a Delivery Partnership Manager in each partner college or delivery partnership to:

1. Promote and support recruitment to the Higher Apprenticeship/Foundation degree
2. Support the effective delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship/Foundation degree
3. Support the development and use of effective information, advice and guidance
4. Support the development of specialist pathways and level 6 progression routes
5. Coordinate and support staff development activities provided by Middlesex University
6. Work closely with construction sector employers

Further details are available on the Middlesex website at www.mdx.ac.uk/higher-apprenticeships

How will the cost to the college of implementing the delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship be met?

Colleges which satisfy the Institutional Approval criteria will be asked to identify a named individual who will manage the Higher Apprenticeship Construction Operations Management. A written Delivery Partnership Manager (DPM) Agreement will then be signed between the University and the College. Middlesex University has undertaken to make a block payment of £25,000 towards the time of DPMs recruiting students in the autumn 2012 term, and £20,000 for those recruiting in the spring term 2013.

As indicated above, Middlesex University will also provide comprehensive learning resources including programme and module handbooks as well as full access to the University's online resources to support the delivery of the HA COM. The University will also support the delivery of the HA COM by providing tailored staff development events for delivery teams at the college. Ongoing support, information, advice and guidance will also be provided through the provision of a University Link Tutor.

Is there a charge for the Institutional approval event?

No. This is likely to be a paper-based exercise rather than a formal visit to the college by university staff.

Does Middlesex University decide what fee the college must charge?

No, this is a matter for the college in consideration of its delivery costs and their local/regional market. The MoC franchise agreement with Middlesex University will include an Institutional Charge of 20% of the tuition fee set and collected by the college for the programme (whatever the level) to cover the costs of quality assurance and other administrative costs. There are no other charges for colleges that establish delivery partnerships during the life of the project (up to March 2013).

Middlesex University does suggest delivering the total 240 credits of the programme over three years on a pattern of 90, 90 and 60 credits for each year respectively, which equates to 0.75 FTE year 1, 0.75FTE year 2 and 0.5 FTE for year 3.

Is there help in marketing the Higher Apprenticeship to local employers?

Middlesex University is prepared to support regional events where appropriate. The project, however, relies on existing good relationships between colleges and employers. It is recognised that this is easier to maintain in some geographical regions than others and Middlesex University is exploring the ways in which

CITB-Construction Skills and the Federation of Master Builders - both of which have a regional structure - may be involved in marketing the Higher Apprenticeship.

All marketing material will be available via the Middlesex University Higher Apprenticeship website.

What is expected of the college?

The main requirement is to support delivery of the Higher Apprenticeship and the integrated Foundation degree, with all that implies in terms of learning style, assessment and approach to student development. The Higher Apprenticeship is a workforce development programme designed to develop the competence and performance of construction industry employees; colleges will therefore want to consider the Apprenticeship in this context. Colleges will need to be aware of the statutory requirements of Apprenticeship (see Annex 1) and QAA's expectations regarding the colleges approach to Higher Education provision. It is therefore important that departmental staff/apprenticeship staff have regular contact with the college's Director of HE or similar personnel.

Middlesex University will appoint a University Link Tutor whose role primarily relates to Quality Assurance and teaching, learning and assessment support. The college would normally identify a Link Tutor who is the main point of contact for the University Link Tutor. The project also provides a resource for a Delivery Partnership Manager. Employers are expected to identify a Workplace Mentor to support Apprentices in the workplace and to contribute to the formative assessment process.

There is an expectation that the college link tutor will develop a closer relationship with participating employers than might previously have been the case with HNC students. He or she is the single point of contact for the student, the employer and the learning mentor within the company and this relationship is best established through face-to-face contact on a regular basis. The college link tutor is responsible for the assessment process but must work closely with the employer to ensure that this is done openly and fairly.

A final role for the college link tutor is to develop an understanding of what experience each employer can offer and to find appropriate ways of pooling this between the Higher Apprenticeship cohort. If one large employer is able to offer a particular work setting or project which is not available to all students, then it would be hoped that the college link tutor, in discussion with the mentor, might be able to negotiate a sharing of this particular work experience. The college link tutor is a critical friend to the identified Workplace Mentor and the student.

Does the college have to notify UCAS and SLC of student enrolments?

UCAS does not handle part time applications, so the student simply applies to the college. As the college will be collecting the fee from the employer or potentially from the SLC, the college would have to be listed with SLC. As with other Apprentices, Higher Apprentices should be registered nationally: this can be undertaken retrospectively and further details will be provided by Middlesex University. As a franchise arrangement the apprentices will also have to be enrolled with Middlesex University and this will trigger their access to University learning resources. This is likely to be conducted as a joint enrolment (College and University) to avoid duplication.

Would the student have to leave the programme if they lost their job?

Students have to be in work to be able to complete the programme. The student will not be able to complete the work-based modules if they do not have access to a workplace. Higher Apprentices must be in employment – the relationship between the employer and individual is subject to an Apprenticeship agreement - see Annex 1 for details of this requirement. If a student loses their job during the course of the programme, they may be able to rejoin the Higher Apprenticeship at a later date if they are able to find alternative employment in the sector or transfer to another learning programme at the discretion of the college.

What doors will this open for my students – why would they undertake a Higher Apprenticeship?

They will develop the knowledge and occupational competence required to undertake construction operations management roles. In career terms they will therefore be well-placed to work as site supervisors, site manager or project managers. Apprentices will obtain a Foundation degree and gain a Higher Apprenticeship completion certificate. As with other Apprenticeships, Higher Apprenticeship certificates are issued through the online Apprenticeship Certificates England (ACE) system. The Foundation degree has a guaranteed link to the final year of an honours degree, so they could obtain a BA/BSc(Hons) from Middlesex University if they wanted to continue their studies or transfer to another university if there was a course there that they preferred. Alternatively, they would be able to apply to undertake other qualifications at level 6.

How do we apply to deliver the Higher Apprenticeship?

The college must complete a proposal setting out:

Section A - Overview of the College

1. An introduction to the college, size, scope of provision, existing partnerships, experience of delivering higher education
2. Capacity and experience in delivery construction related provision including links with sector related bodies
3. Experience of delivering work-based and/or blended learning
4. Evidence of the quality of provision such as IQER, other accreditation/recognition

Section B - Proposal for establishing a Delivery Partnership

1. Projected number of Higher Apprenticeship opportunities
 - between September and December 2012
 - between January and March 2013
 - after March 2013
2. Links with Construction employers and identification of employer partners who will support the proposal
3. Projection of the routes through which Higher Apprentices will have progressed e.g. from Advanced Apprenticeship, other vocational level 3, HNC etc

Criteria for establishing a Delivery Partnership

- Employer demand and engagement
- Alignment with identified CITB-ConstructionSkills National Skills Academy projects (where appropriate)

- Significant existing Advanced Apprenticeship (or other vocational level 3) provision in construction of provider organisations
- Evidence of previous experience and track record of construction employer engagement of provider organisations
- Evidence of higher level construction sector capacity and expertise of provider organisations
- Evidence of higher level work-based delivery expertise of provider organisations
- Evidence of the quality of higher-level provision
- Evidence of previous experience and track record of collaborative development projects of provider organisations.

The proposal must be supported by the College Principal and/or the relevant member of the college senior management team.

For further information: www.mdx.ac.uk/higher-apprenticeships

Email: higher-apprenticeships@mdx.ac.uk

Annex 1

Higher Apprenticeship Statutory Requirements

Colleges will be aware that statutory requirements apply to Apprenticeships (including Higher Apprenticeship). In our view the requirements are not onerous and most add value to the Apprenticeship e.g. the Apprenticeship Agreement and Apprenticeship Certificate. Middlesex University is working to ensure the requirements of the Foundation Degree and Higher Apprenticeship are consistent and as far as possible not duplicated. For further information on the statutory basis of Apprenticeship please contact the National Apprenticeship Service. Below are some of the key issues:

Higher Apprenticeship Framework

Colleges should refer to the SASE (Specification for Apprenticeship Standards for England) approved Higher Apprenticeship framework – Pathway 1: Foundation Degree Professional Practice in Construction Operations Management to ensure the content of the Apprenticeship is appropriately delivered.

Apprenticeship Agreement

There is a requirement under the ASCL (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning) Act 2009 sections 32-36 for an Apprenticeship Agreement between an employer and an apprentice at the commencement of the Apprenticeship for all new apprentices. The Apprenticeship Agreement must state that the apprentice will be undertaking an Apprenticeship in a particular skill, trade or occupation. Further information on the requirement for an apprenticeship agreement and a template agreement is available at:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Partners/Policy/Apprenticeship%20Agreement.aspx

Colleges should ensure all employers employing Higher Apprentices comply with this statutory requirement.

Apprenticeship Certificates England (ACE)

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 covers requirements for Apprenticeship completion certificates. Apprenticeship Certificates England is the online system through which apprentices (or their learning provider or employer acting on their behalf) apply for their Apprenticeship Certificate. Where the application is facilitated by a training provider, employer or parent/guardian, there must be evidence that this was done at the request of the apprentice. Further information including an Apprenticeship Authorisation and Declaration Forum is available at:

<http://ace.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

Registration of Apprentices

Although not legally mandatory, the National Apprenticeship Service is requesting that all Higher Apprenticeship starts are registered centrally. Registration can be undertaken retrospectively. We will provide delivery partnerships with further information on the process for registration once we receive further information from the National Apprenticeship Service.