



Introducing Sheffield Hallam University's Digital Degree Apprenticeship

Sheffield Hallam University has now officially launched its “Digital and Technology Solutions Professional” degree apprenticeship, with plans for delivery to start in September 2017.

The programme is designed to take three years, leading to a BSc Honours degree. The course content is based on a government approved standard which was developed by leading tech employers. It is accredited by The Tech Partnership and the University will also seek accreditation from the British Computer Society.

Students will all follow the same course of study for the first year, before focusing on a specialism for the next two years. At the moment, SHU is offering specialisms in Cyber Security, IT Consultancy, Network Engineering and Software Engineering. Currently, specialisms will only be available if there is a minimum cohort of at least 10 students signed up. However, following feedback from some local companies, the University is exploring how the course may be restructured to reduce this limitation. To date, SHU has confirmed that the Cyber-Security, Software Engineering and Network Engineering tracks will all be starting in September 2017.

The University is also working on getting a standard approved for a Master's degree apprenticeship in Software Engineering, with the aim of also having this available by September 2017.

Why employ or support a digital degree apprentice?

For employers, offering degree apprenticeships is a targeted and cost effective way to attract new talent, build capabilities within your organisation, develop and retain existing employees and bring new ideas into your business.

Employers also find that apprentice recruits tend to start contributing to the business faster than new graduates because of their immersion in the business and the substantial work-based learning that takes place.

Who can take a degree apprenticeship?

There is no upper age restriction for degree apprenticeships, although candidates must meet the entry requirements. For people starting their first job (eg school/college leavers) this is based on

UCAS points and includes recognition for A levels, BTEC qualifications and HE Diplomas. For people already in employment in the industry, recognition is given for practical experience - the University can provide more information relating to specific cases. Employees who already have a degree can still apply for an apprenticeship provided their degree is in a subject that is materially different.

Additional support is also available for people who need to upgrade core skills (for example, in Maths or English).

What is the commitment from the employer?

In addition to the costs described below, employers will need to commit to providing employment for the apprentice at the end of the three years. However there is recognition that circumstances may change and systems are in place to support the apprentice if needed.

More importantly, employers will need to work in close partnership with the University (via a link tutor) and the apprentice. They will need to provide workplace mentoring to help the apprentice connect what they are learning on the course with what they are doing at work. They will also need to accommodate the apprentice's course requirements within their wider team planning.

How does the University support the employer?

The link tutor from the University course is responsible for staying in regular contact with employers and apprentices to provide support and make sure the experience is beneficial for all parties.

To help employers who wish to employ new apprentices, the University is planning to run a series of open evenings for the digital sector to connect potential apprentices with employers. These are planned for the Spring - more details will follow.

Will the University help find suitable apprentices?

Yes. The University works with the Skills Made Easy programme to identify young people who are interested in and suitable for apprenticeships. **Employers can meet candidates at special recruitment events - please see the end of this document for details of the next event.**

What does it cost?

The cost of apprenticeships will be supported by the new Apprenticeship Levy, which comes into force in April 2017. The levy will only be paid by employers with wage bills above £3m a year but all companies will be able to benefit from the support.

The course cost for the SHU degree apprenticeship is £9,000 a year (£27,000 total). For employers

below the wage bill threshold, funding will cover 90% of the course costs. This rises to 100% if the employee is aged 16-18, or is aged 19-24 and is leaving care or has a Local Authority Education and Healthcare Plan.

Thus, the maximum course cost to employers will be £2,700. Employers must also pay the employee a salary of at least £3.20 an hour - but it is widely acknowledged that employers will either already be paying a competitive salary or will need to pay reasonable salaries to attract the right calibre of apprentice.

How does the course work?

The course is very intensive. In the first year, students take four taught modules of 12 weeks each, plus work-based learning that runs alongside the taught modules. Each taught module involves 1 week of pre-reading, 1 week block release at the university and 10 weeks of self-study and evaluation. There is the expectation that the employer will allow half a day of study time per week, but there are ongoing discussions about whether that has to be off-site. The work-based modules are agreed between the employer, the student and the course tutor to combine learning objectives with work that is relevant to the employer.

What does the course cover?

The first year of study is designed to provide students with fundamental skills in systems analysis and design, programming concepts, hardware and networks, and computer and information security. Software is covered in the system design module and is tailored as much as possible to what the employers are using (whilst balancing that with the need to properly cover underlying concepts).

In the second year, all students take modules in database administration and security, and planning and project management, plus two modules specific to their chosen specialism and a work-based project. The final year covers two further specialist modules and a final work-based project.

[View more details of the modules and pathways here.](#)

How to find out more:

Request a meeting with a SHU apprenticeship expert - you can get directly in touch with either Bob Drake (r.drake@shu.ac.uk) or Mark Rayner (m.rayner@shu.ac.uk) at SHU.

Attend an Apprenticeships Recruitment event - the next event is on Tuesday 4th April, 4:30pm-7:00pm. [Register here.](#)

Or get in touch with us if you have other questions: info@sheffield.digital.

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