



UNIVERSITY OF BUCKINGHAM

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023-2025

INTRODUCTION

The University of Buckingham has an established history of working with employers and businesses. Its status as a private university has ensured that its provision has developed specifically to support the specialist industries and professions it engages, through its academic schools and departments. The University focuses on employers seeking professional education and career enhancement, in a range of industries and skills including business; international security, computing; education; law, medicine and the allied health sector.

The University of Buckingham Employer Engagement Strategy is intended to:

- 1 Set out the University's underpinning Employer Engagement objectives
- 2 Provide the rationale for employer engagement activity
- 3 Give context linked to the industries and students the University supports
- 4 Explain how the University will engage and work with employers
- 5 Detail key outcome measures for Employer Engagement

This strategy should be considered in conjunction with the University's overall Strategic and Operational Plans, its Apprenticeship Strategy and learner enhancement activity such as the University's Careers and Employability Hub and its services.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- Engaging and working with employers active in the University's provision specialisms;
- Effectively identifying professional development solutions for employers of all sizes;
- Enabling workforce employees to enhance or gain new skills in their industry setting;
- Ensuring high levels of graduate employment and transition to relevant careers;
- Enhancing understanding of the labour market, jobs, careers, and progression routes;
- Employers being more involved with the development, planning and delivery of the University's provision and wider enhancement activities.

RATIONALE

The University's role as an international, national as well as a regional higher education institution, ensures a diverse marketplace for its provision. Despite being a relatively small University, changes in the global and UK national economic and social complexion, has also meant that the University's position as one of the country's few private university's gives it unique flexibility.

This enables the University to evolve its content and method of higher education, whilst providing an alternative to public sector institutions. This characteristic is a key facet of the University's ability to effectively engage with and identify education and training solutions for a wide range of employers and industry sectors.

The University has therefore established a core offer across its schools of degree and post-graduate degrees in both taught and research provision. Where appropriate the University has also developed partnership arrangements to support and deliver the higher-level training and professional development required across our industry subject specialisms.



Recent and on-going Government policies concerning placing employers at the heart of decision making and choice, with respect to training, has also changed the complexion and narrative in which providers work. The development and introduction of Apprenticeship Standards through employer supported Trailblazers, the establishment of the Institute of Apprenticeships, the implementation of the Levy for larger employers and revised models of funding for non-Levy SMEs has also meant that providers have had to significantly improve or evolve their engagement methods and forms of interaction with employers.

Notably the Apprenticeship Standards offer both the University and partner organisations scope for meeting employer needs through new modes of delivery and professional development in on-the-job and off-the-job contexts. The University fully recognises the flexibility in learning in the workplace offered through the degree level apprenticeship model and will work to develop and also expand the current range of appropriate Apprenticeship provision going forward from 2023-2025.

The University currently offers the following Apprenticeship Standards:

- **Teacher Level 6**
- **Business Administrator Level 3**
- **Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist Level 7**

The Business Administration has been introduced for in-house delivery enabling the UOB to offer employment opportunities to those in the local community whilst also meeting UOB talent pipeline requirements.

The introduction of the Teacher Apprenticeship has been well received, it launched in 2021 and since then we have noted an increase in applications of 208% demonstrating the employer demand. We are looking to expand our intake with an additional entry point in January to help meet those employer demands and help to reduce the national teacher shortage as documented [here](#)

The continued delivery of the Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist Level 7, in conjunction with a Main Provider, has continued to meet National Digital Skills gap shortages and the university is currently looking into expanding its digital offer further. Digital skills have been highlighted by the county as an area for further development in the Local Skills Improvement Plan Nov 2022.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The University's Employer Engagement Strategy is set within several inter-linked strategic frameworks, which inform its implementation and delivery at an operational level.

University of Buckingham Strategic Overview Vision:

To maintain and develop the tradition of liberal, open-minded, independent scholarship and teaching at one of the finest small universities in the world, building on a great past while anticipating the needs of the future.

Mission:

To help our community of students, alumni, staff and associates to be the best they can at every stage of their life journey.

Values:

- Responsible, realistic, and sustainable — recognising our role and place in the global community; working within our means and improving societal and holistic wellbeing.



- Respectful, inclusive, and supportive — providing equality of opportunity for all to fulfil their potential in a supportive, caring environment; being respectful of the dignity of others and practicing solidarity in our community.
- Honest, accountable, and open-minded — understanding the premium to be gained by approaching opportunities and setbacks with integrity, humility, and acceptance.
- Innovative and creative — championing enterprise and creating value, working together to share ideas, take risks and learn from mistakes; inducing and welcoming change; working together in the face of challenge.

LSIP & Local Enterprise Partnership Priorities (Local Skills Improvement Plan Nov 2022)

Digital skills have significant influence in employment in Buckinghamshire. Approximately a quarter of all job postings between 2016 and 2022 for non-digital occupations in Buckinghamshire required a digital skill.

- Digital skills shortages exist across a range of sectors, not just within digital technology firms.
- 37% of respondents to a local business survey conducted in 2019 stated that a lack of awareness of digital technologies or a lack of digital skills were the largest factors limiting the adoption of technology within their businesses.
- Digital and data skills are expected to be critical for the workforce to deliver net zero, along with requirements for embracing Industry linked to AI, robotics, and digitisation.
- All of Buckinghamshire’s strategic growth sectors (high performance engineering, creative, MEDtech and space) require digital talent.

In short, the LSIP focus is on improving the following areas:

- Digital skills
- Green skills
- Work readiness

The University operates in the context of current labour market information and is responsive to Government and Local Enterprise Partnership education and skills priorities. The University notably is responsive to and works to support the following priorities through its Employer Engagement Strategy and operational activities.

- 1 Reduce those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) through more dedicated provision**
- 2 Prioritise and promote STEM subjects through to HE**
- 3 Expansion of higher apprenticeships**
- 4 Higher level skill needs, in areas such as computing, teaching and business**
- 5 Apprenticeships to support green careers/skills (COP27)**

University of Buckingham’s Apprenticeships Offer

The University is established as an Apprenticeships Standards provider. It is registered as a provider on the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP) and successfully underwent the RoATP refresh in Spring 2022.

The University is also registered as an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), and currently delivers End Point Assessment for the Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist Level 7 (integrated degree) and would consider expanding its provision should the market require it.



Within the next 2 years the University envisages development of an Apprenticeships offering in:

Senior Leader	Level 7
Academic professional	Level 7
Sustainability Business Specialist	Level 7

The University will continue to direct deliver Apprenticeship Standards and may also seek to engage in partnerships as appropriate to ensure employer requirements and demand is met.

HOW THE UNIVERSITY WILL ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYERS

The University will seek to work with employers both in the traditional engagement sense and in terms of greater direct collaborative involvement. All engagement methods are intended to ensure enhancement of the student experience. The University's Careers & Employability Hub also plays a key role in engaging with employers directly to place graduates into employment and to secure placements opportunities where relevant to the degree or programme's academic schools.

Engagement Commitments & Methods:

- Employer / Employee (Student) surveys, marketing media and business events;
- New degree level Apprenticeship Standards;
- Apprenticeship Levy funding promotion, information, and advice to employers;
- Establishment of an Apprenticeships Team within the University.
- Employer Key Account management.
- Annual Employer forums by sector
- Annual free webinars to promote current courses -open to employers and prospective Apprentices.
- Buckingham Business First Networking and Hubs
[Buckingham Business Hub Hub - Buckinghamshire Business First \(bbf.uk.com\)](http://bbf.uk.com)

Employers will be involved through:

- Participation in the development, design, and evaluation of provision;
- Aspects of the delivery and resourcing of training provision;
- Effectively planned and agreed off-the-job training in Apprenticeships;
- Enhancing work experience with planned employment progression routes;
- Improving the industry updating of the University's delivery staff and their CPD.
- 10-12 weekly tripartite progress reviews involving the employer, Apprentice and UOB

KEY MEASURES FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Through use of regular Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement indicators and measures, the University will regularly assess the effectiveness of its Employer Engagement Strategy and operational delivery. This will be monitored through annual SAR and QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) creation.

The University's existing policies and procedures including its various academic and quality handbooks will be updated to reflect the requirements for delivery of effective and compliant Apprenticeships provision.



Employer Engagement Effectiveness Measures

- 1 Apprentice recruitment growth
- 2 Development of and implementation of new Apprenticeship Standards
- 3 Increased numbers of employers engaging / involved with the University
- 4 High levels of annual Employer Satisfaction survey ratings
- 5 Apprenticeship achievement rates at or above national rates
- 6 Employer forum attendance
- 7 Webinar attendance uptake
- 8 **Demonstrable compliance and meeting of OfS Conditions of Registration**
- 9 Creation of a central database for all employer details

The above measures will be progressively benchmarked as the Strategy is implemented with a view to reporting on progress and outcomes annually via the University Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

STRATEGY OWNERSHIP

This Strategy is owned by: **University Executive Group** This Strategy is managed by: Emma Ward, Apprenticeship Manager