

# The Professional Economist Degree Apprenticeship in the UK Civil Service.

## Addressing Diversity: from Tender to Launch.

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**Aim: to discuss...**

**The University of Kent's  
Professional Economist Degree Apprenticeship  
in the Civil Service  
(Government Economic Service, GES).**

**For which a key objective is to address diversity  
in the Civil Service.**

**Account of tender process through to launch.  
Highlighting Lessons learnt .**

## My personal journey:

- Joined University of Kent in 2012 (Pharmacy) on T&R.
- 2016: apprenticeship reform and Kent required to engage with ESFA (20 learners).
- Seconded by DVC (on 0.6FTE, 2FTE support staff) to establish a professional service department (CHDA).
- Rapidly became apparent that CHDA needed to also function as an Academic Centre.
- Kent currently has >500 higher and degree apprentices across 10 apprenticeship programmes (Director [T&S] 1FTE, 23FTE support [admin, apprenticeship advisors & learning technologists and academic staff]).
- CHDA evolving into 'Work-related Learning' Division.

Apprenticeships, professional accreditation, professional practice, on-line courses, CPD, professional skills training, PGCHE, industry involvement in curriculum development, pedagogic research.

## University of Kent:

- >20,000 students and >3,500 staff.
- Campuses at Canterbury and Medway (Chatham).
- Ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in *Guardian University Guide 2018*.
- Awarded a Gold rating in the Government's *Teaching Excellence Framework*.
- Top 10% in World University Rankings (*THE*).
- 17<sup>th</sup> in UK for research intensity (*REF*).
- Launching Medical School in 2020.
- Apprenticeship provision is a key strategic priority of University; past recipient of HEFCE/OfS funding.

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# Spoiler alert: First cohort of 68 learners



## The journey (2 years summarized):

1. Involvement with the Trailblazer Group.
2. Tender application.
3. Award.
4. Project Initiation and defining Governance.
5. **Attraction.**
6. **Selection.**
7. Curriculum Design.
8. **Enrolment and Induction.**
9. Employee Engagement and Experience (**Delivery**).
10. **Assessment and Evaluation.**
11. Repeat steps 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

# 1. Involvement with the TB Group

## Account of event:

- Worked very closely with the TB group.
  - Representation from CHDA (apprenticeships)
  - Representation from Academic School
- 12 month investment.
- 0.2FTE academic.

## Lessons learnt:

- Delicate relationship.
  - Knowledge transfer.
- It is an investment.



## 2. Tender Application (July 2018)

### Account of event:

- After working with the TB Group – poised for the tender release.
- Short window for applications.
- Advertised cohort of 75 apprentices; 2 + 2 years.
- Five main objectives

<b>Cohort Size</b>	Support cohorts of around 75 new apprentices a year, starting in September each year.
<b>Talent Pipeline</b>	Help increase flow of skilled, talented, economists through GES and wider economics profession –addressing current skills shortages.
<b>Diversity</b>	Attract candidates from broad, diverse, talent pool enabling GES to recruit from parts of the community other programmes don't reach.
<b>Relevant Skills</b>	Equip apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be effective, high-performing economists within GES.
<b>Progression</b>	Support apprentices' progression to higher level job roles and further study.

- Typical tender questions, Framework Agreement and Call-off Contract.
- Flurry of activity by academic school and CHDA.

## 2. Tender Application (July 2018)

### Lessons learnt:

- Ensure registered with the correct tender portal.
- Reiterate to bid writers that an apprenticeship is not a standard academic programme.
- Expert legal advice.
- Agreeing to terms of Framework at submission (not signed).
  - Cyber Essentials certification
  - KPIs
  - Secretariat support for the project board
  - Project Manager
  - Monthly non-apprenticeship charge for CCS
  - Financial responsibilities and penalties
- Competitive pricing is essential.

### **3. Award (August 2018)**

#### **Account of event:**

- 10-day standstill.
- Appointed assistant Project Officer.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

- Enjoy the elation.
- Ensure Framework permits publicizing the success.

## 4. Project Initiation and defining Governance

### Account of event:

- Project Board defined and terms issued.
  - Provided secretariat support
- Framework signed.
- Project Plan created (to be approved by board).
  - Critical Path
  - Personnel
  - Risks
  - Issues
  - Decisions
  - Dependencies
  - Opportunities
  - Lessons
  - Actions
  - Assumptions
  - KPIs
  - Complaints
- Implementation plan created (to be approved by board).



## 4. Project Initiation and defining Governance

### Lessons learnt:

- Very specific styles of documentation.
- All actions to be approved by the Project Board.
- A qualified/experienced Project Manager is required.

## 5. Attraction

### Account of event:

- Selection plan created.
- Candidate pack created.
- Campaign goes live.
  - Social media
  - Promoters
  - Job boards
  - University of Kent
  - Outreach\*
- Weekly activity/impact meetings with Board.

# 5. Attraction

## Lessons learnt:

- Civil Service are experts at Attraction campaigns.
- 2500 EoI's in 1 month.
- Entry requirements need to be all encompassing and set at the correct level.
- Articulating how you will quantify experience is problematic.
- Mobile friendly webpages.
- 'To increase diversity' is a very vague term.
  - specific targets for diversity – female, bme, disability, FSM, aligned to overall civil service targets
  - Measured at what stage of the process?

## 6. Selection (£100K campaign)

### Account of event:

- Campaign/Application live.
- Expressions of interest.
- **Online test.**
- Shortlisting/sifting.
- **Written test.**
- Shortlisting/sifting.
- **Assessment Centre.**



## 6. Selection (£100K campaign)

### Account of event (continued):

- Pass mark determined.
- Offers made.
- Reserves list created.
- Results day(s).
- Reserves list activated where necessary.

## 6. Selection (£100K campaign)

### Lessons learnt:

- High acceptance of offers (vs. traditional university programmes).
- Reserves list is a delicate balance.
- Results day achievement higher than expected.
- Less attrition than expected (for those holding multiple offers).

# 7. Curriculum Design

## Account of event:

- Consultation with stakeholders.
  - Chief Economists, Line Managers, Recent graduates
- University of Kent internal approval process initiated.
- Demonstration of VLE and LMS.
- Appointment of EPA team.
- Booked locations for teaching (1 h rule).

## Lessons learnt:

- Everybody wants a 'specialist' module.
- Internal approval can be quick.
- Delivery Systems integration tests essential.
  - Laptops required by some departments.

## 8. Enrolment and Induction

### Account of event:

- Written agreement discussed and merged into Call-off contract.
- Security clearance for apprentices started.
- University application started (online).
- Unconditional offer made.
- Enrolment started (claim IT).
- Initial skills scan completed.
- Learning Needs and Functional Skills assessed.
- Training plans created.
- Apprenticeship agreement signed.
- Induction and start of face-to-face teaching.
- 30-day review in the workplace.

**Lessons learnt:** N/A, familiar territory.



## 9. Employee Engagement and Experience (Delivery)

### Account of event:

- Creation of Handbooks, SOP manual, Curriculum Calendar, Expected competency at set time points, Workplace tasks guide.
- Stakeholder (i.e. Line Manager) training.
- Alignment of University and Employer surveys and feedback.

### Lessons learnt:

- Board sign-off required.
- Inclusive Learning Plan assessments.
- Early feedback: learners are keen and time management poor.
- Outperforming traditional UG cohort.
- 16 government departments equivalent of 16 employers.

# 10. Assessment (of programme) and Evaluation

## Account of event:

- Creation of Call-off contract KPIs.
- Evaluation plan created.
- Monthly MI returns initiated.
- Monthly Board reports.
- Financial Strategy created.
- Self-audit certificate submitted.
- Continuous Improvement Plan created.
- Confidentiality Agreements signed.

## Lessons learnt:

- KPIs design crucial.
- Project Manager required for duration of programme.

# Summary:

Head of School of Economics:

*“both the best and worst experience of my academic career”*

Me:

*“we are better for the experience, and new doors have been opened”*

# THE UK'S EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

Questions please....

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University of  
**Kent**