



Supporting Learners on Degree Apprenticeship Programmes

Employer Work based assessor/mentor and Line Manager Guide

**Healthcare Science Practitioner
Degree Apprenticeship
at Manchester Metropolitan University**

November 2022



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1 | Introduction to Degree Apprenticeships at Manchester Met

Manchester Metropolitan University is a leading, modern university and one of the largest in the UK, educating over 38,000 students each year. The University takes its responsibility for creating work-ready graduates very seriously and has a rich history of education and employer engagement since 1824.

This embedded philosophy has enabled the University to take an industry-leading role in Degree Apprenticeship creation and delivery. We are one of the largest national providers, working with over 500 employers and 2500 degree apprentices on a range of programmes across leadership and management, digital technology, health and social care, and laboratory science.

In November 2022, we retained our Ofsted 'Outstanding' grading following a full inspection, and we have been rated as the highest placed University provider by RateMyApprenticeship for the last four years.

If your organisation is interested in any of our other [apprenticeship programmes](#) Please email apprenticeships-employer@mmu.ac.uk



2 | Apprenticeship Work based assessor/mentor Guidance and Support

Whether you are joining the process as a new work based assessor/work based assessor/mentor or your apprentice has rotated into your department from another, this guide is designed to give you an overview of the apprenticeship work based assessor/mentor role when supporting apprentices in the workplace.

An apprenticeship is a tripartite relationship between the apprentice (as the learner), yourself (as the employer) and the University (as the apprenticeship provider). Apprenticeships are only successful if this relationship is strong and supported by strong communication and contact.

In addition to this guide, you will be assigned a dedicated Skills Coach who will conduct regular reviews with yourself and the apprentice to monitor progress and set targets. They are also an invaluable source of information and guidance about how to support and develop apprentices in the workplace, so please reach out to them and ask for advice.

Webinars and information sessions are also held throughout the year and there is a range of resources that can be found on our [Employer Resources page](#).

There is a lang page for generic information relevant to all programmes as well as a specific landing page for Healthcare Science Practitioner programme

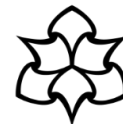
The following pages aim to answer frequently asked questions and share best practice from our employer network. However, if you have a question that this guide does not answer, please contact:

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Key points:

- **Reviews:** Proactively engage with the tripartite review progress and utilise your Skills Coach for support and guidance
- **Support development:** Help the apprentices to access internal and external development opportunities related to the apprenticeship standard
- **Manage the off-the-job development time:** Ensure that your apprentice receives the appropriate off-the-job development time and help them use this time effectively. ESFA funding rules stipulate that currently this should equate to 6 hours per week.



- **Engage with work-based projects:** support the apprentice to find suitable work-based projects which are aligned to organisational need and, where necessary, work based assessor/mentor them in delivering these effectively.

3 | Role of an Apprenticeship Work based assessor/mentor

Every apprentice on programme should have a work based assessor/mentor in their organisation who is required to engage in termly tripartite reviews with the University. These reviews will monitor progress, identify suitable workplace development needs and set targets for the apprentice in line with the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours listed in the apprenticeship standard. In addition, the work based assessor/mentor should provide ongoing informal support and guidance to the apprentice and help them to reflect on their learning and development whilst on programme.

In many cases, the apprentice's line manager will be their apprenticeship work based assessor/mentor, as they are well placed to understand the particular requirements of the role and proactively identify any challenges and support requirements. They are also well placed to understand and help support the time-management challenges which arise from undertaking a degree whilst in employment.

However, it may be the case that someone else in the organisation is best placed to act as a work based assessor/mentor, and there have been many examples of this arrangement working successfully. Similarly, organisational requirements may require the apprentice to have several short-term work based assessor/mentors at different stages of their apprenticeship, eg as they rotate around in the organisation. In this situation, we would advise that the apprentice is also assigned an additional work based assessor/mentor who will take overall responsibility for their development. Both short- and long-term work based assessor/mentors could then attend and partake in the tripartite review process.

Every organisation is different, so we encourage you to have early and proactive conversations with your apprentice and Skills Coach in order to determine the most appropriate and successful arrangement.

Qualities of an effective apprenticeship work based assessor/mentor:

- Dedicated to the development of the apprentice and committed to degree apprenticeships.
- Understanding of the independent learning approach required when studying for a degree



- Involved with the apprentice in their day-to-day scientific role and with suitable personal expertise to help them progress within this.
- Aware of the individual development needs of the apprentice and willing to explore these, challenging and coaching as required
- Senior enough and trusted within the organisation to ‘open doors’ and facilitate access to development opportunities
- Approachable and encouraging, helping the apprentice to reflect on their learning and how to apply it in the workplace
- Proactive and available to attend tripartite reviews to monitor progress and development
- Able to bring out the aspirational qualities in an apprentice and encourage them to think about their long-term development, within and outside the organisation.
- Has enough time to be available to the apprentice when needed.

Work-based projects

Work-based projects are an essential component of degree apprenticeships at Manchester Met. Work based assessor/mentors have a crucial role to play in these projects, in terms of helping apprentices to identify a suitable project area, helping apprentices to manage the project whilst it is ‘live’ and helping them to reflect on the impact and future implications of the project. Finally, projects are a fantastic opportunity for apprentices to showcase their capabilities and demonstrate a return on investment for their employer.

It is very important that these projects are ‘live’ workplace projects that deliver a real tangible result or outcome. As a work based assessor/mentor, you can help apprentices to understand the importance of developing a project which will yield something of value to their organisation, rather than an abstract or desk-based research project.

Your apprentice may also need support to get buy-in and approval for a project, especially if it requires support from different departments or additional resource commitment. They may also need support to identify all project stakeholders and work with them to identify their expectations from the project.

It is also inevitable that some projects will fail to meet their objectives, and the work based assessor/mentor can play an important role in helping to re-align projects and encourage reflection.



4 | Apprenticeship Review Process

Throughout the academic year, reviews of progress will take place between the apprentice, Skills Coach and workplace work based assessor/mentor every 12 weeks. These tripartite meetings will review academic and vocational progress and identify any areas for development against the apprenticeship standard.

The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that the apprentice is making good progress against the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) listed in the standard. The knowledge and skills are included within the formal course structure. However, we ask for apprentices to have opportunities to further embed these through workplace application. Behaviours will be developed and exhibited in the workplace and we will ask apprentices to evidence these as part of the review process.

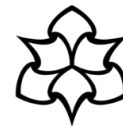
In these reviews, your Skills Coach will encourage you and the apprentice to identify opportunities for the application of KSBs in the workplace, so that apprentices can develop occupational competency and apply their learning in practice. This is a crucial component of all apprenticeships, and the work based assessor/mentor needs to be in a position to support and encourage these development opportunities. Whilst the University will support this development through training, relevant academic assignments and the Skills Coach, support from the employer is also essential.

Periodic skills scans will be used throughout the programme to help identify developmental needs. Apprentices, with their work based assessor/mentors input, will annually be asked to rate their competency against all aspects of the apprenticeship standard. These skills scans will be shared and discussed in the tripartite reviews. SMART targets relating to any development needs will be set and the apprentice will be required to provide evidence of their development against targets at later reviews.

5 | Apprenticeship Standards and End-Point Assessments

The apprentice is working on a programme tailored to meet the criteria of an apprenticeship standard relevant to the industry in which they are working. Apprenticeship standards are developed by employers, providers and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in trailblazer groups. Apprenticeship standards are supported by an assessment plan, which outlines any specific assessment requirements for the relevant apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship standard for Healthcare Science Practitioner can be found here:



[Healthcare science practitioner \(integrated degree\) / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#)

All apprenticeship standards will contain an occupational profile (providing an overview of the role and any specific responsibilities), and will list the KSBs that are to be developed and evidenced as part of the apprenticeship programme:

- **Knowledge** (*knows and understands*): is delivered and assessed through the formal degree qualification
- **Skills** (*able to do and demonstrate*): are developed and assessed through the formal degree qualification. Apprentices should have opportunities to further embed in work (including through workplace projects)
- **Behaviours**: are developed and acquired in the workplace, supported by relevant academic assignments (eg projects)

End-Point Assessments

Although the degree component of the apprenticeship is assessed throughout the programme, the apprenticeship is not formally assessed until the end of the programme, during the End-Point Assessment (EPA) process. The EPA assesses occupational competency and ensures that all KSBs have been met by the apprentice. You can read the End-Point Assessment plan here: [healthcare_science_practitioner.pdf \(instituteforapprenticeships.org\)](#)

The assessment plan lists the specific assessment methods of the apprenticeship standard, for the Healthcare Science Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship this comprises:

Apprentices must achieve a Pass, or better, in each of the three components to successfully complete the EPA. The EPA components are:

- **1 hour written Readiness for Practice Test (RPT)** (which is a type of situational judgement test) which is set by the university
- **Face-to-face Professional Discussion** between the apprentice and a trained Independent Assessor (who has not been involved in the education or training of the apprentice). The Professional Discussion is based on the apprentice's record of evidence/portfolio (that includes a Competency Log of Skills) and which should take approximately 40 minutes.
- **Research presentation** of up to 15 minutes, followed by a 15-minute discussion and review of the presentation content with the Independent Assessor.



Extensive support and guidance is given in the run-up to EPA, and a range of resources can be found on the apprentice's programme page on Moodle. We include mock questions during reviews in the apprentices final year and competency-based questioning is a key component of reviews throughout the apprenticeship. However, you can also help to support the apprentice in the run-up to EPA by utilising our mock questions and providing opportunities for them to practice their project presentation.

End-Point-Assessment Organisation

For the Healthcare Science Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship MMU is the End-Point Assessor. EPAs are generally held at Manchester Metropolitan University and scheduled as soon as possible after completion confirmation of Gateway. We will work with you to encourage swift completion of the End-Point Assessment and achievement of the degree qualification.



6 | Apprentice Clinical Portfolio

The work-based training in Year 1 exposes the learner to the clinical environments across Physiological Sciences and specifically within the Cardiovascular, Respiratory and Sleep, and Neurology Physiology pathway. It is expected that the learner will gain an understanding of how departments function, the range of investigations undertaken, the professional and inter-professional relationships which exist and a wider understanding of the NHS.

The topics contained within the Clinical Work-based Portfolio across all years underpin safe and effective practice within the workplace. On completion learners are able to contribute, promote and monitor good professional practice.

The Clinical Portfolio provides clear guidance as to the learning outcomes, assessments and what should be included in the Clinical Portfolio - only assess the relevant areas for each year of study.

Please make sure that both you and the learner sign the relevant sections as required, otherwise log books will be returned for amendments and this may delay the End-Point Assessment.

Please also ensure that the apprentice does not include any patient data eg: DOB, pacing lead serial numbers , bar codes etc. If evidence is received with any patient data it will be shredded and will delay End-Point Assessment.



7 | Apprentice E-Portfolio

Throughout the apprenticeship, and in preparation for the EPA, your apprentice will develop a portfolio of evidence which collates evidence of all knowledge, skills and behaviours defined by the apprenticeship standard. This portfolio will comprise the following main components:

- Work submitted on vocational units within degree programme which address specific Ks and Ss.
- Reflective statements on units where apprentices are asked to reflect on how knowledge gained on the course has been applied in work.
- Behaviours tasks which include work based assessor/mentor questionnaires asking you to rate (and evidence) how well your apprentice demonstrates the workplace behaviours defined by the standard.

Additional evidence of apprentice progression towards meeting the standard is contained in

- **Reviews:** These are written up and accessible within the e-portfolio and record progress made against vocational targets.
- **Skills Scans:** These are completed annually and will evidence apprentice progression against all KSBs.
- **Clinical Portfolio**

Your Skills Coach can provide guidance on use of e-portfolios throughout the reviews and regular communications.

Your role in this process is to help the apprentice to access internal and external development opportunities that are required to develop the skills and behaviours listed in the standard and to apply the knowledge learnt at University within their job role. You can do this by arranging training, shadowing or providing them with more challenging, higher-level tasks as their skills develop.

You may also want to include targets within the apprentices workplace performance appraisal which reflect the competence requirements of the apprenticeship standard.

Gathering non-clinical evidence

Key questions for apprentices to ask themselves:

- Does this evidence showcase my **best** vocational work and expertise?



- Does the evidence translate clearly, or do I need to annotate it, explain it?
- Does the evidence showcase my competence **in the workplace** applying specific knowledge, skills, or behaviours from the standard?
- Have I made this clear and articulated this within my evidence description on the ROE form?
- Have I made sure there are no acronyms or confusing language within the evidence descriptions?
- Have I uploaded it to P



8 | Developing and evidencing behaviours

Behaviours are an important part of apprenticeship standards, but they can be difficult to define and evidence in the apprenticeship portfolio. Unlike skills (which can be evidenced through competence in a specific task), behaviours are demonstrated or observed on an ongoing basis through a range of actions.

9 | Off-The-Job Development Time

An important part of any apprenticeship is that time that the apprentice is given to learn and develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours as listed in the relevant standard. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have decided that this should constitute no less than 6 hours per week of an apprentice's contractual hours and normal working days over the duration of the apprenticeship programme. As an employer work based assessor/mentor, you need to be in a position to support the apprentice in receiving this development time and ensure that the apprentice is tracking it on the e-portfolio system.

This equates to:

41.5 days (249 hours) per year.

24 of these days are spent on campus at Manchester Met and the remaining 17.5 days are to be agreed between you and the apprentice.

You should negotiate and arrange with the apprentice how they will receive the remaining off-the-job development time. Although we advise a weekly allowance of time, it can be flexed around larger units of study, assignments, needs of department and annual leave etc. to suit both of your needs.

Dedicated off-the-job development time includes University studies (including attendance at residential sessions and online learning) as well as activities undertaken in the workplace that contribute to the development of skills and behaviours outlined within the apprenticeship standard.

A range of activities can be counted towards the off-the-job requirement provided that the activity is directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard and developing new knowledge, skills or behaviours. Examples include:

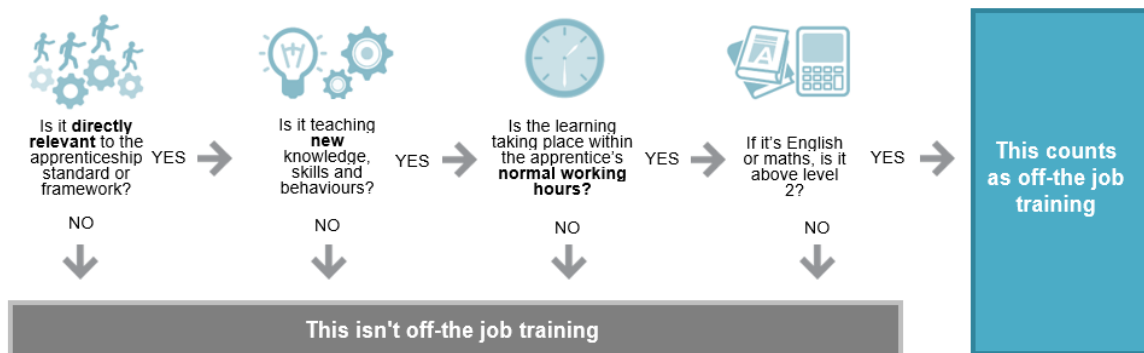
- Online training or learning related to University units



- Research, study and development of University assignments and projects
- Additional training or development based on identified needs
- IT or technology training
- Shadowing, work based assessor/mentoring or visiting other departments
- Attendance at competitions, conferences or industry visits
- Learning support provided by the employer or University
- Taking on additional responsibilities and tasks

Use the flow chart below to establish if the work counts to OTJ:

Off-the-job training: steps to help you determine whether an activity counts as off-the-job training



Key facts

1 Off-the-job training must make up at least 20% of the apprentice's normal working hours (working hours capped at 30 hours a week for funding purposes only). For a full-time apprentice, this is an average of 6 hours a week over the planned duration of the apprenticeship.

2 You can deliver off-the-job training in the apprentices' normal workplace or at an external location.

3 Time spent on initial assessment, onboarding, progress reviews, on-programme assessments and English and maths up to level 2 does not count towards off-the-job training.



Department for Education



The following **can not** be classed as OTJ:

- Work or training completed **outside of normal working hours**
- **Progress/review meetings**
- Training that does not link to the development of **KSBs**
- Time off for **functional skills**



Attendance at University is monitored through ID badges which are used to ‘tap in’ to each session. It is expected that apprentices attend ALL university sessions but they should inform us in advance if they are unable to do this by emailing apprenticeships@mmu.ac.uk and cc’ing the Programme Lead and relevant Unit Lead.

Study days

Study time would generally be made up of their study day and a few hours in their own time. The exact amount of time will depend on the individual apprentice; their capabilities, previous learning, work ethic and time management. However, if your apprentice seems to be doing significantly more or less than this, it may be worth you discussing this with them. You can use the Apprentice Timetables (available on the [Employer Resources](#) webpage) to gain an overview of what they should be studying at any point in time.

The apprentice will also benefit from training and development opportunities that are based in the workplace and which are directly related to identified skills and development opportunities based on the standard. This will be explained to apprentices during induction, but it is important that you re-emphasise this message.

Once again, it is important to have early and open conversations with your apprentice about how the off-the-job development time and dedicated study time will be managed. It might be useful to remind apprentices that, whilst study time is a requirement of their apprenticeship, they should not expect unlimited time in work to spend on their assignments. If the apprentice wishes to achieve the highest marks, then they can be encouraged to do this in their own time. An important element of balancing work and study is for apprentices to learn when it is ‘good enough’. Whilst we encourage apprentices to fulfil their potential and strive to do well on all assignments, we also want them to recognize they need to be time efficient in their work.

You can help your apprentice by

- **Dedicated time each week:** Ideally apprentices should have one day a week study time. Bear in mind that smaller slots of time can make the apprentices study quite ‘bitty’ and is not as efficient a use of time.
- **Identifying a good place to study:** If apprentices do their study in their normal work environment (e.g. at their desk in a communal office) it can be difficult for them to avoid distractions or getting pulled in to helping for ‘just 10 minutes’ on a work issue. You can help your apprentice to maximise what they achieve on their study day by helping them find a quiet place to study where they won’t be interrupted (this could be a meeting room or studying at home).



- **Helping them plan:** Many apprentices find time management a real challenge, especially at the start of their course. You can help them with things like prioritizing tasks, breaking work down into manageable chunks, planning their study days.

Apprentices must log their off-the-job (OTJ) development time on the e-portfolio system, and the progression against their target will be monitored and reported on at each tripartite review. As a work based assessor/mentor, you will be able to see the off-the-job entries in the e-portfolio system.

Please encourage your apprentice to log their development time regularly and keep accurate records. We would encourage apprentices to enter their OTJ time on their e-portfolio on a weekly basis e.g. at the end of each study day. Setting up calendar reminders to do this can be helpful to ensure they don't forget.



10 | Supporting Apprentices

Workplace Assessors/work based assessor/mentors also have an important role to play in helping apprentices to apply their newly-acquired knowledge and manage the challenges of studying for a degree whilst also working in full-time employment. Each apprentice learning journey will be different, and we encourage you to check in regularly with the apprentice about how they are finding their apprenticeship experience and encourage them to share their concerns and challenges.

Please ensure that you understand the academic programme, so that you know what your apprentice is studying whilst at University and can encourage them to apply their knowledge in the workplace. Apprentice timetables and Unit Handbooks are available on our employer webpage.

Level of support

Just like inducting a new employee, you will find that you need to provide more support during the initial stages of an apprenticeship. Once they settle into a new rhythm and pattern of work and learning, support can often be scaled back, as the apprentice becomes a more independent learner and worker.

As a minimum, we suggest that you schedule regular monthly catch-up meetings with your apprentice, to establish a regular pattern of support. These may need to be weekly in the early stages of their apprenticeship. These meetings might be used for updates on their University or occupational progress, or could be used to explore a particular concern or development need that has been identified. Creating this dedicated space and time for discussion and reflection about the apprenticeship will help them and you to ensure issues are identified early.

Like any employee, there will be 'pinch points' in the year when even the most able apprentice has to juggle conflicting work and university demands. Again, these will be different according to sector and organisation, but we encourage you to be proactive and make sure you know when your apprentice has assignments due. You should also encourage them to talk to you early if they are having any issues with completing work on time.

Opening doors

One of the key roles of the employer work based assessor/mentor is to help the apprentice to access information, people, resources and opportunities that they would not otherwise know existed or that were available to them. Whilst you should always encourage your



apprentice to take the lead, and proactively reach out for support, your connections and organisation-specific knowledge can prove to be invaluable to their development.

If your apprentice is new to your organisation, they will need help to learn about all the different teams and functions in your organisation and how they all fit together. At first, they will be unaware of these different components, and you may be able to help facilitate the initial connection that allows them to shadow someone in a different part of the organisation, for example.

Existing employees may also struggle to see the opportunities and resources that are available to them. In one example, an apprentice mentioned in a tripartite review that they were struggling with an assignment relating to strategy because they had ‘searched the intranet high and low, but couldn’t find anything.’ Slightly surprised, the line manager turned to a filing cabinet and pulled out the strategy document. ‘Why didn’t you just ask?’ The reality is that it is often difficult to ask, especially when an apprentice is so embedded in organisational structures and ways of working. Again, being proactive and open can help overcome these barriers.

When supporting apprentices, remember that your own experience and knowledge is also an invaluable resource for your apprentices. Sharing your experience with them can help them to think critically and develop awareness of your sector and the challenges of the role and career that they are working towards.



11 | Examples of Support

Although every apprenticeship journey will be unique, here are some common scenarios that workplace work based assessor/mentors have encountered:

- **Transition to Higher Education:** The apprentice is making the transition from further to higher education whilst also transitioning into full-time employment. They may struggle to negotiate the requirements and pace of their new role and manage their time effectively. Making the shift to a more independent and self-directed mode of study may also be challenging. The apprentice may benefit from being put in touch with another apprentice or graduate who has been through the same experience. They may also benefit from regular discussions about their learning, to help them understand key topics and issues. You can also help to remind them about upcoming deadlines and how to plan to meet these.
- **Overwhelmed by the opportunity:** especially if an apprentice is new to the organisation, they can find the process of ‘learning whilst they earn’ exhilarating and exciting. Indeed, degree apprenticeships are providing an opportunity that many people thought would never happen for them. That said, this process can also be overwhelming, especially around assignment deadlines. In these situations, the apprentice may benefit from planning study to solely focus on their upcoming assignments. They may also benefit from a discussion about setting realistic expectations.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** The apprentice is extremely diligent about their ‘academic’ studies but find themselves unable to keep up with the high standards that they are setting. They want to read every article and set out determined to achieve a first in every assignment. They may benefit from an honest conversation about priorities and unrealistic expectations (‘good is good enough’). They may also need help focussing on the bigger picture, and thinking about their broader development on the apprenticeship. Encouraging them to find time to have a life outside of work and study can be very valuable to prevent them putting themselves under too much pressure.
- **Returning to education:** The apprentice is returning to study after several years progressing through the organisation because of their developed skills and determination. However, despite this occupational competency, they are nervous about returning to study and/or the prospect of exams. You may wish to remind these apprentices to draw on their experience in their studies, and not to get



overwhelmed by the 'academic' component. The course has a strong vocational element and their workplace experience should enable them to do well in vocationally focused assignments. Once again, connecting them with a current or recent apprentice can also help settle some of these fears. You can ask their Skills coach to give them access to study skills support.

- **Application of knowledge:** The apprentice is struggling to see the relevance of the apprenticeship to their own development; there is a disconnect between the academic knowledge and the practical application in the workplace. Engaging in the tripartite reviews will help to explore the links between knowledge and skills, but you could also check-in with the apprentice regularly to ask them about their learning and assignments. In these situations, you may also want to consider encouraging challenge – based on knowledge recently gained on the course they may be able to take on new tasks at work. You can also help manage their expectations; it is reasonable to expect that they won't be able to apply all aspects of theoretical chemistry knowledge in their specific job role. However, you can help them understand where this knowledge is relevant and where they can use it to do their job at a higher level.
- **Struggling academically:** The apprentice is struggling on the course and not receiving the grades that they would like. In this situation, it is also important to have an open conversation about what 'good' looks like. Apprentices new to higher education are often disappointed even though they are achieving 65% (an upper second and a 'good' honours degree). You may also want to sit down with the apprentice and review the feedback from their tutor. Talking through their feedback often helps learners to self-identify the barriers to further progression. If they are struggling on a specific unit, please encourage them to contact the unit leader; they can make extra support available. Additional academic support can be provided by our academic study skills tutors (studyskills@mmu.ac.uk).
- **Mental health and emotional support:** If your apprentice approaches you with a concern about their mental health or emotional wellbeing, it is important to take the time to listen to them in a non-judgmental manner and help them to explore their options. In these situations, apprentices are often worried that they will be unable to complete their apprenticeship, something that is very important to them. Remind that there are many options in these circumstances, including extensions to assignment deadlines and a temporary break in learning to give them time to focus on their wellbeing. Your Skills Coach will be able to explore these options with you and your apprentice in more detail.



The University also has a confidential counselling service that the apprentice can access directly (counselling@mmu.ac.uk and 0161 247 3493). Your organisation may also have employee wellbeing support that they can access in addition to support from their GP.

The University also has a dedicated disability service which provides support and guidance for apprentices with disabilities or specific learning difficulties (SpLDs): disability.service@mmu.ac.uk and 0161 247 3491).

Your Skills Coach is the first point of contact in situations like this. They will be able to advise you and your apprentice on possible options and explore additional support opportunities that are available at the University.