# Pairing Modules to focus employer engagement

## a course leader's strategy to focus employer engagement by pairing up modules around connected themes in the town and country planning apprenticeship

# Aim

The key objective of this strategic course level pairing exercise was to offer employers a clearer set of focussed themes around which to plan experiential opportunities for the Apprentice in their job role. A reorganisation of module delivery and its communication to employers was intended to address the risk of dis-connect and to address the challenge of securing a progressive approach to 20% Off--The-Job-Training.

# approach

This case study was set in the context of a shift in national educational approach to Town Planning. Using a recently approved standard, running quite uniquely from level 4 to level 7 (a postgraduate outcome), the SHU course team worked quickly to establish the apprenticeship offer, with multiple entry points to meet the needs of employer organisations. The employer staff were largely new to apprenticeships and so this called for an incremental testing and embedding of work based learning and parallel development of academic staff within SHU as well.

Early feedback from employers, often channelled through the SHU WBL Coach, indicated that employers were concerned how best to meet the 20% Off The Job Training and how to structure work based rotation ,experiences and project work to integrate with the degree programme and its calls for work based activities.

The Course Leader decided to conduct some holistic planning to re-frame the delivery and messaging to employers. Examples of these themes include:

* Planning Policy Development
* Planning Implementation
* Environment and Sustainability

# Benefits

* The approach delivered a re-alignment of a more managed assessment journey. Assignments were rationalised with clearer links to KSBs.
* This enables a refocussing of staff resources to small group sessions for a richer and more heutagogic discourse during delivery, which will be a critical facet of a move to on-line delivery of block days.
* The paired modules will provide a diversity of *activities and tools* for Apprentices to draw on and discuss with Academic Advisors as they prepare to deploy those tools in the work place.
* By reconsidering the delivery at a macro level the Couse Leader was able to identify one *focussed* *theme* per semester, giving the employers a stronger steer on how to generate connected work experience.
* By pairing modules within common KSB connections the Apprentice can be more confident to conduct SMART planning and evidence-based review with their mentor and the SHU WBL Coach.

# Future Developments

For successful implementation the course team will need to deploy a range of enhanced on-learning platforms and engage in both formal and informal professional development activities. Much of the learning for academic staff will by necessity be through active experimentation.

This evolution of the course and the associated staff capability will be framed by a stronger *virtual narrative* for the Apprenticeship delivery.

Monitoring of the new approach can initially focus on how staff might capitalise on logistical easing to optimise face to face sessions on varied digital platforms.

Secondly we need to look at any observable shift in employer engagement and development of training plans and project work.

We have no prior benchmark for attainment so a more holistic view of apprentice impact might be attained through qualitative feedback and observations of the new approach in action.

In the medium term the outcomes of this project might inform a move towards 30 credit modules, instead of the 15 credit blocks that currently dominate the curriculum.

# Recommendations to Other Staff

The transition to a blended delivery will involve significant adaptation of our delivery strategies and methods. This creates a new space where for a brief period we are forced to innovate and we might be expected to make some mistakes. However, the employers partners who spend their levy, or ESFA funds with us and the time-pressed apprentices will quickly set new expectations. Perhaps ask yourself as a course leader and your fellow module leaders how you can use this transitionary period to tackle other big questions about your apprenticeship curriculum.

# Further & Related Information

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| Key Platforms | Andragogic Impact (including WBL) | | | | | |
| [Laurillard](https://shu.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/44SHU_INST/at0fmn/alma99470140602501) learning activities (shade the applicable cells green) | | | | | |
| *Platform 1:* | *Acquisition* | *Inquiry* | *Discussion* | *Practice* | *Collaborate* | *Production* |
| This case study does not address technical platforms | See the Appendix 1 - for the initial analysis and pairing of modules. | | | | | |

# Profile

Tutor name(s): Kaeran Van Vliet

College: SSA

Size of cohort: Circa 15

Key themes: On-line; Town Planning, work based learning; Curriculum Design Module Pairing, Employer Engagement, WBL Projects, Heutoagogic.

**Appendix: MSc Urban Planning Delivery routes 20/21 - Current DA Delivery Pattern and Pairings**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Year 1** | | | **Year 2** | | | **Year 3** |
| **Semester** | **Semester 1** | **Semester 2** | **Semester 3** | **Semester 1** | **Semester 2** | **Semester 3** |  |
| Learning stage | New apprentice learners adapting - | Establishing learners | Established learners | Established learners | Experienced learners | Experienced learners | Experienced learners |
| Focus and themes | Planning context, issues, strategy & policy | Planning Implementation: Design and Development | Professional Project | Environmental and Human well being | Specialist focus | Specialist focus | Specialist focus |
| Modules | 1 DA Planning Theory and Context  2 DA Policies for Space and Place | 1 DA Housing Planning and Development  2 DA Shaping Places | 1 DA Professional Project | 1 DA Environment & Infrastructure  2 DA Sustainable City Ecologies  3 DA Applied Research Methods | 1DA Healthy Places  2 DA Planning and Growth  DA Applied Research Methods | 1DA Applied Dissertation | 1DA Applied Dissertation |
| Current LTA support | Standard module tutors | Standard module tutors | Assigned tutor | Standard module tutors | Standard module tutors | Assigned tutor | Assigned tutor |
| Ideal work areas ***private sector*** | Policy research  Plan development | Scheme/project development and application process | Project in Specialist area  KSB gap | Environmental and human interaction at any scale | Economic or social aspects | Project in specialist area | Project in specialist area |
| Ideal work areas - ***public sector*** | Policy and plan development | Development management | Project in Specialist area  KSB gap | Environmental and Human wellbeing at any scale | Economic or social aspects | Project in specialist area | Project in specialist area |
| Assessment Approaches |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |