

# **Senior Leader Apprenticeship (MBA) for School Business Professionals**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (October 2024)**

## **Who is the programme for?**

The Senior Leaders (MBA) Apprenticeship for School Business Professionals (SLA-SBP) programme is aimed at School Business Managers and Directors employed in schools, academies and trusts. The programme offers the opportunity to gain formal recognition of their knowledge and skills at master's level.

## **What are the benefits for my school?**

Research has shown that apprentices increase innovation and drive quality. The SLA - SBP programme will help learners to develop job-specific skills that will benefit the school and increase the school's, academy's, MAT's etc profile, achieving raised standards, reputation and possibly their Ofsted rating. Employers offering opportunities for higher level qualifications, such as the SLA-SBP programme, attract and retain high-calibre individuals with the potential to progress.

## **How will the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship for Schools benefit me?**

Successful apprentices will achieve:

- An MBA awarded by the University of Gloucestershire
- CMI Chartered Manager Status
- The highest quality skills and knowledge directly relevant to the School Business Management profession
- A network of fellow professionals sharing knowledge and experience
- Level 2 in Maths and English (if you do not already have these qualifications)

## **What topics will I study?**

The programme modules will include:

- Personal development
- Business strategy and resource
- Innovation, sustainability and change
- Business and financial management
- Project and operational management
- Contemporary issues in education
- Leadership and organisational management
- Brand value

The programme will develop and examine the knowledge, skills and behaviours of activities associated with the role of School Business Managers or Directors and in addition to the above modules, the learner will complete a work-based project which addresses genuine challenges within their setting.

## When will the next programme start?

Please refer to our website for the latest options and start dates at [Senior Leader Degree Apprenticeship \(SLA\) for School Business Professionals \(SBPs\) \(serco-ese.com\)](https://www.serco-ese.com)

## What is the cost?

The fee for the SLA for SBP is £14,000. The training costs are covered as part of the Government Levy, provided your school/academy are contributing to the apprenticeship levy. Your school/employer should have a digital apprentice account or be able to provide us with the contact details for the parent organisation holding the account; this may be the local authority or academy trust for example.

If your employer is non-levy, the apprenticeship can be funded by the employer co-investment scheme. Your employer will be invoiced for 5% of the total cost of the programme and must reserve funds on their Digital Apprenticeship Account to cover the remaining 95%.

Regardless of whether your employer is levy or non-levy, they must be registered on the Government's Digital Apprenticeship Service. Please visit the link below for more information: [Funding an apprenticeship \(apprenticeships.gov.uk\)](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

Should you be eligible to fast-track through part of the programme (through the Accreditation of Prior Learning, or APL process) the fee will be reduced accordingly.

## How long will it take to complete the programme?

The SLA for SBPs is a 27-month programme. Once you have successfully completed the degree and a portfolio of evidence you will need to complete a one-day assessment centre (end-point assessment or EPA) with an external assessor. This end-point assessment (EPA) should take place within 8-12 weeks of the successful completion of your apprenticeship studies. **You will then have the option to gain your Master's status from the University of Gloucestershire.**

## What are the entry requirements?

Applicants for the SLA for SBPs should have been in a senior leadership role for a minimum of two years and have a degree (although applicants with significant experience may be accepted onto the apprenticeship). The apprenticeship is suitable for School Business Managers and Directors in schools, academies or trusts in England.

You will be required to demonstrate that you are working at a minimum of Level 2 (same level as GCSE Grade A\* - C) in English and maths through the completion of a web-based initial functional skills and diagnostic assessment. If you do not have these qualifications, we can help you gain the Level 2 requirements during your studies. If you already have Level 2 in maths and English qualifications we will need to see your original certificates (you will still need to take the initial and diagnostic assessment).

The apprenticeship is suitable for school business managers and directors and those in similar business and support roles in schools or academies who are responsible for people, projects, operations and/or services to deliver long term organisational success.

It is essential that all applicants have the support of their line manager as the apprenticeship will involve attendance at two-day workshops at the beginning of each block of modules - 18 days over the full three years. Applications will not be accepted without the line manager's full support.

### **Can I study the Senior Leader Apprenticeship if I already have a Master's qualification?**

Yes, as long as it is in a different discipline (i.e. not business).

### **What is the application process?**

The application process comprises several stages:

- After submitting an initial Enquiry form, the learner submits an online application form
- The learner completes a skills scan based around the Standard of the apprenticeship applied for
- The learner completes an English and Maths Initial Diagnostic assessment
- The learner provides proof of ID and evidence of Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths
- The learner participates in a remote interview
- The Learner and their line manager sign registration documents

Please note:

- Any applications received after the application deadline for a specific cohort will be considered for the following cohort.
- For cohort planning purposes, we have to apply strict onboarding cut-off points. Any learner not returning signed registration documents by a pre-set deadline will be deferred to following intake. This will apply even if the learner has signed the paperwork but their line manager has not.

Please also note that, as part of the onboarding process, you will need to register with the University of Gloucestershire. The link to do so will be forwarded on to you and, once received, you will have 5 working days to register.

### **What is the time commitment needed from participants?**

It is difficult to estimate the time commitment for each apprentice as study habits differ considerably. We anticipate that a minimum of 6 hours a week, on average, will be required in addition to the workshops and meetings with your mentor. The amount of time required will vary depending upon your stage of learning. Apprentices will probably spend more than 6 hours a week completing the formal assignment tasks attached to each module but may spend less than this when reading through materials or undertaking research.

Apprentices and their line manager will need to attend a quarterly meeting with the apprentice's mentor and an end of year review. Throughout the programme, apprentices will keep a portfolio of evidence, demonstrating knowledge, behaviours and skills. As an apprentice your employer must agree to let you spend 20% of your time studying for the SLA-SBP; you will be required to maintain a log of your off-the-job training hours. Useful guidance has also been issued by the DfE on what does and what does not constitute OTJ training ([Apprenticeships: off-the-job training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeships-off-the-job-training))

### **How will I be assessed?**

You will be required to complete a formal assignment at the end of each module to enable you to complete the Apprenticeship and MBA. You will also be required to develop a **portfolio of evidence** and **work-based project** as part of the apprenticeship. There is a final end-point assessment which will be conducted by an external assessor once you have completed all elements of the SLA-SBP. This will take place within 8 – 12 weeks of the successful completion of your studies. It will be done online and will comprise a presentation based on your work-based project followed by questions and a professional discussion based on a review of your portfolio.

### **Can I apply to study the SLA for SBPs Apprenticeship if I work outside England?**

Levy funding is only available to apprentices who live or work in England.

### **What qualification will I achieve?**

Upon completing the apprenticeship, you will gain an MBA from the University of Gloucestershire. You will also receive an Apprenticeship Certificate and be eligible to gain Chartered Manager status.

### **How do I apply?**

You should first discuss with your line manager whether this apprenticeship is appropriate for you based on your role and its demands, the support they can provide and the amount of time you can dedicate to study. Please go to our website to start the application process: [Senior Leader Degree Apprenticeship \(SLA\) for School Business Professionals \(SBPs\) \(sercoese.com\)](https://sercoese.com)

### **What is the role of my line manager?**

We will only accept applications from individuals who have the support of their line manager. Your line manager will be asked to sign registration documents to confirm their commitment and support your programme and to confirm their agreement to take part in the review process. Your line manager may wish to identify a mentor to support you throughout your programme of study rather than undertake this themselves.

Your line manager, or the mentor identified by your line manager, will be required to:

- Join the first meeting between you and your coach to ensure that all key parties are aware of the requirements of your training plan
- Actively contribute to all the progress reviews held with yourself (they will not be required to attend the full sessions)
- Observe you undertaking certain activities such as giving a presentation and complete a proforma confirmation observation of certain skills and behaviours, which will be included in your portfolio
- Attend and contribute to an annual review progress with you and your coach
- Ensure that you are given time to attend the progress reviews and all face-to-face workshops. This must NOT be deducted from your annual leave allowance. Please note that the workshops, web conferences, progress reviews and assessment sessions are mandatory elements of the apprenticeship that provide essential information and support for you to successfully complete the programme
- Support you in your studies, identifying opportunities for you to develop your skills alongside your learning
- Allow you a minimum of 20% of your working hours / 6 hours per week to complete off-the-job training activities.

### **What if I leave my employer after I have started the apprenticeship?**

Providing you are continuing to work in a suitable role, your new employer may agree to your continuation and fund the remaining costs from their levy.

### **What if I must suspend studying due to ill-health or other circumstances beyond my control?**

You may be able to go on a Break in Learning (BiL) for up to a year, depending upon circumstances.

### **What if I become pregnant once I have started the programme?**

You will be able to defer (known as a Break in Learning) from the programme for up to a year.

### **How will the training be delivered?**

Predominantly online but with a face-to-face workshop at the start of each module. A tutor and coach will help guide your learning. You will have a progress review with your coach every 10 weeks, plus additional phone contact if required. Your coach will discuss your progress and can advise on your portfolio. Please note that, whilst your learning will be guided, with support from your tutor and your coach, you will be expected to work through the learning materials via the University of Gloucestershire's online platform.

Each module you study will have a start and end date and you may have one or two milestones during the unit, but aside from these it will be up to you to determine the pace at which you study and the amount of additional reading you do. This may be a different style of learning to your previous experience and it relies on your own motivation to succeed. You

will also upload the evidence you gather to an online portfolio, which shows your progress through the apprenticeship.

### **Where will the training be delivered?**

The workshops will be based at the University of Gloucestershire Oxstalls Campus in Gloucester. Overnight accommodation may be required for any two-day workshops, depending on your location. The progress reviews with your coach are most likely to be online.

### **Do I have to attend every training event and assessment?**

Yes, 100% attendance is mandatory. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to ensure you have a 100% attendance record.

### **Will I be given time off work in order to study? (20% off-the-job requirement)**

The programme will contain a minimum of 20% off-the-job training. This will include shadowing, reading industry articles/research, attending workshops, completing a project and preparing/building your portfolio, etc.

### **What if I work part-time?**

You are still eligible to join the programme; however, if you work fewer than 30 hours per week then the length of time in which you study will be extended, pro rata, to reflect your normal working hours.

Further information: [Serco Education - training education and business professionals \(serco-ese.com\)](https://www.serco-ese.com)

Enquiries: [learnerrecruitment@serco.com](mailto:learnerrecruitment@serco.com)

Please note that apprenticeship funding is managed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the Government agency accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. As an apprenticeship training provider our activities must adhere to ESFA guidance and requirements. Many of the required onboarding documents and forms are necessary to meet ESFA requirements.