



# Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship (SLMDA)

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is the content of the MBA?**

The MBA aims to develop leadership and decision making skills, knowledge, self-awareness and behaviours. Modules include Leadership by Design, Understanding Markets and Customers, Business Decision Making, The Consultancy Intervention, Financial Tools for Business, Project Management, Strategic Management and Innovation and Change through Design. Students will also be required to complete a work-based project and a dissertation.

### **When will the MBA start?**

The pilot programme starts in November 2018 and we expect to have new SLMDA programmes starting each year in May and November. Our website will indicate which intake is currently open to applications.

### **What's the Cost?**

The cost of the training is covered by the Apprenticeship Levy. However, this does not cover the cost of travel expenses or accommodation (if needed) when attending the 4 annual workshops. Your business contract may be willing to cover these costs for you, please check with your line manager.

### **Who is the MBA for?**

The apprenticeship is suitable for all colleagues who have some input or lead on strategic decisions within their contract business unit. This includes those who already have graduate and post-graduate qualifications in disciplines other than business. The MBA is targeted at middle and senior managers who lead teams, projects, operations and/or services to deliver long term organisational success, with the expectation that they will deliver impact, behave ethically and demonstrate their commitment to continual learning and development.

The SLMDA programme that begins in May of each year will also be linked to Serco's LEAD programme which is part of the talent development suite of programmes.

### **How will the SLMDA benefit me?**

You will gain:

- A high quality master of business administration (MBA) degree
- The opportunity to gain chartered membership of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- Support to put your learning into on the job experience
- Professional pathway for future development
- Structured and reflective approach to your personal and professional development as a manager
- Regular assessment of your progress, including 360° feedback

### **How long will it take to complete the SLMDA?**

The SLMDA is a 2 year programme. However, participants with previous relevant qualifications and/or experience, **gained in the last 5 years**, can have this recognised, reducing the duration – subject to accepted recognition by the University.

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## **What are Serco's Entry Requirements?**

It is likely that applicants will already hold a business degree (such as the CMDA) or have at least 5 years' management experience. All students completing a higher apprenticeship are required to evidence that they have English and Maths at Level 2 (GCSE/O Level) by the time they complete their apprenticeship. As this is a significant commitment, all applicants will be required to complete a personal statement. Applicants may be invited to interview.

English and maths will be required to be demonstrated at a minimum of Level 2 (the same level as GCSE grade A\* - C) through the completion of a web-based initial assessment. Please note that in addition to completing the initial assessment (whatever the outcome) successful applicants to SLMDA will need to provide evidence of prior attainment of Level 2 in maths and English (i.e. GCSE certificates). SLMDA students who don't achieve Level 2 in the initial assessment and/or who do not have certificates showing prior attainment will need to complete Functional Skills training and tests in maths and English alongside their SLMDA course.

It is essential that all applicants have the support of their line manager as the apprenticeship will involve attendance at workshops as well as potential shadowing, observations etc. In addition apprentices will be required to complete job-related assignments that may require them to have greater access to senior management activities. We will require a statement from a line manager supporting the application. Applications will not be accepted without the line manager's support.

## **What is the Entry Process?**

Performance and development reviews provide an opportunity for individuals to discuss their development with their line manager. This is an opportune time to identify whether the SLMDA will help support individuals to develop all aspects of leadership and strategic development skills, knowledge, self-awareness and behaviours.

If SLMDA is the agreed way forward then the next step is to complete an application form with details of current role as well as previous experience and qualifications. In addition we require a personal statement that recognises the commitment required along with a statement from the line manager confirming support. Applicants may then be invited to interview.

A formal offer of an apprenticeship will be sent to successful applicants approximately 4 weeks prior to the apprenticeship commencing. Unsuccessful applicants and their line managers will be notified and offered guidance and support to enable them to join SLMDA at a later date.

The SLMDA is also linked to the LEAD programme, part of the talent management suite of programmes. Students nominated for the LEAD programme will be required to complete the SLMDA application.

## **What is the Time Commitment needed from the participants?**

Learning will be vocational with flexible delivery. There is no block release but apprentices will be required to attend a workshop at the beginning of each of the 8 modules (4 per annum). There may also be web conferences usually an hour in length, a maximum of two per module. In addition to this, apprentices and a nominated manager (usually their line manager) will attend a quarterly meeting with their mentor and an end of year review.

Throughout the programme, apprentices will keep a portfolio of evidence of the skills, knowledge and behaviours they have developed, as well as a work-based project which may require additional time to undertake surveys, liaise with colleagues, attend additional management meetings etc.

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It is difficult to estimate the time commitment for each apprentice as study habits differ considerably. We anticipate that a minimum of 4 hours a week will be required, in addition to the workshops and meetings mentioned above, during year 1 and this could rise to 8 hours a week by year 2. The amount of time required will vary depending upon your stage of learning and experience. Apprentices will probably spend more than 4 hours a week completing the formal assignment attached to each module but may spend less than this when reading through materials or undertaking research.

### **What happens if I only want the MBA and not the apprenticeship?**

The apprenticeship levy can only be used for recognised apprenticeships which include the SLMDA. It is a requirement of this funding that applicants complete all aspects of the apprenticeship including the end point assessment.

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

The MBA – all assignments will be completed and submitted electronically according to set deadlines for each module. They are submitted online as reports, assignments or as shorter assessment tasks for each module. You will receive guidance and support from your facilitators to help prepare you for the assessment process. If, for any reason, a participant does not achieve a pass for the first submission of an assignment, then they are able to resubmit a few weeks later.

Chartered Management status – during the end point assessment you will be interviewed by an external assessor who will determine whether you meet the criteria for Chartered Manager/Fellow status.

SLMDA – once you have successfully completed all assignments linked to the degree and submitted your portfolio of evidence and work based project, you will be invited to an end point assessment where you will give a presentation on your work based project and participate in a panel interview. Only upon successful completion of this end point assessment will you be awarded your degree and Chartered Manager status.

### **Do I have to be new to the role of a manager to become an apprentice?**

No, the SLMDA apprenticeship is open to existing employees of any age who are in a leadership role.

### **Is becoming an apprentice a backward step in my career path?**

Not at all. This is a new opportunity for colleagues to gain a recognised business qualification along with on-the-job experience and a professional pathway for future development. The SLMDA apprenticeship enables you to undertake recognised qualifications at no charge for the training and without taking a break from your career.

### **Can I study the SLMDA if I already have a master's degree or higher qualification?**

Yes, as long as it is in a different discipline (i.e. not an MBA or equivalent). If you have gained a master's degree in the last 5 years, you may be eligible to have some of your prior learning recognised, thus shortening the length of your apprenticeship. Please note that this is at the discretion of the University.

### **Can I apply to study SLMDA if I work outside England?**

Levy funding is only available to apprentices who work in England for at least 50% of their working hours (Scotland and Wales have separate apprenticeship schemes). If you are based outside of England but interested in studying for the degree element of the apprenticeship please contact us at [higherapprenticeship@serco.com](mailto:higherapprenticeship@serco.com) for more details. Please note that this will be at your own or Serco's corporate expense.

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**What qualification will I achieve?**

Upon completing the apprenticeship you will gain a Master of Business Administration degree (MBA) and the opportunity to become a Chartered Member/Fellow of the CMI.

**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. If you are willing to commit to 2 years of study and if SLMDA is the agreed way forward then the next step is to complete an application form with details of your current role as well as previous experience and qualifications. In addition we require a personal statement that recognises the commitment required along with a statement from the line manager confirming support. Applicants may then be invited to interview. Please go to our website:

<https://www.leadershiplearningcentre.com> to apply.

**What if I leave Serco after I have started the SLMDA?**

Your apprenticeship may be terminated if you leave Serco before completion. In some cases, for example, where a TUPE agreement is in place, it may be possible for you to continue the programme with Serco if your new employer agrees.

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

You may be able to take a Leave of Absence of up to a year from the SLMDA programme depending upon circumstances.

**What if I become pregnant once I have started SLMDA?**

You will be able to take a Leave of Absence of up to a year from the SLMDA programme.

**How will the training be delivered?**

Predominantly online and in the workplace, but with a face-to-face workshop at the start of each module (there are 8 modules in total and a dissertation and work-based project). A facilitator and mentor will help guide your learning.

Please note that, whilst your learning will be guided, with support from your facilitators (at the workshops and online) and your mentor, you will be expected to work through the learning materials via our learning platform. Each module which you study will have a start and end date and you may have one or two milestones during the module, 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 in. At the end of each module there is a formal assignment with a deadline. This may be a different style of learning to your previous experience and it relies on your own motivation to succeed.

**Where will the training be delivered?**

The location of workshops will be based on the location of the majority of participants in your learning group so some travel may be involved. Your reviews/assessments will be at your place of work,

**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.

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**Will I be given time off work in order to study?**

As SLMDA is an apprenticeship, your contract is required to allow you to spend a minimum of 20% of your **normal working hours** undertaking activities which will contribute to successful completion of the apprenticeship (including, for example, workshops, online learning, shadowing, cross-site visits and assignment writing). This time also includes development opportunities within your role, for example, attending an SMT meeting. You will need to discuss this with your line manager before applying to join the apprenticeship to ensure that you are both content that this is achievable. You will be given time off work to attend workshops and quarterly and annual reviews as well as the end point assessment in year 2. You will also need time to undertake your work based project and to prepare your learning portfolio. You may be able to negotiate additional study time and we encourage line managers to consider this.

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

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