

# Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship (SLMDA)

## Guidance for Line Managers

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**'To be the best managed business in our Sector... we've got to have the best managers.'** Rupert Soames

Serco Education is proud to have been given the opportunity to deliver the **Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship**, a new apprenticeship scheme, the first of its kind in our industry.

The Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship (SLMDA) provides an opportunity for colleagues within Serco who contribute or lead on strategic decisions to study for a Master of Business Administration degree (MBA) accredited by the University of Gloucestershire. In addition, successful apprentices will have an opportunity to gain full chartered membership status with the Chartered Management Institute (Chartered Member or Chartered Fellow, depending on experience).

SLMDA will benefit 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. With practical work-based assignments customised for Serco, the line manager of a SLMDA apprentice should quickly see tangible benefits in the workplace as the apprentice demonstrates their learning and skills.

### **Programme Overview**

Applicants signing up to the SLMDA are committing themselves to a two year programme of study. Once accepted onto the programme, each apprentice will agree an individual learning plan with their mentor and their line manager. They then begin their academic studies, completing 8 modules, a dissertation and a work-based project. Each module will begin with a face to face workshop but the remainder of their studies will be online, maximising the flexibility of learning to suit not only the individual's needs, but also the needs of the workplace.

In addition, the apprentice will receive 2 visits each year from their mentor who will ensure, with their line managers support that the learning is put into practice and help the apprentice develop a portfolio of evidence that fully meet the knowledge, skills and behaviours attached to the apprenticeship. The mentor will also visit the apprentice and their line manager at the end of the first year for an annual review to ensure that progress is on track.

In order to successfully complete the SLMDA, the apprentice will attend a one-day assessment centre once they have completed all activities.

### **Benefits to Serco**

SLMDA is one of the Trailblazer apprenticeships designed by employers. Serco has been involved in the design of this apprenticeship right from the beginning, welcoming the opportunity to expand both the practical and theoretical experience of Serco leaders. The theory behind the qualification will develop leadership and strategic development skills, knowledge, self-awareness and behaviours.

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The modules of the degree will consider 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.

This theory has to be put into practice in order to successfully complete the apprenticeship, with the expectation that each apprentice will deliver impact, behave ethically and demonstrate their commitment to continual learning and development.

### **What is my role as a line manager of an apprentice?**

We will only accept applications from individuals who have the support of their line manager. You will be asked to provide a written statement in support of their application so that we are satisfied that each party understands the commitment being made. You will also be signing to confirm that you have read this guidance document.

Once accepted onto the SLMDA, the mentor will meet with both the line manager and the student to discuss the skills and behaviours that will need to be evidenced over the two year programme. For example, evidence that the student leads beyond their area of control/responsibility, creates an inclusive culture, supports development of new enterprise and opportunities.

Depending on the role of the apprentice, we may ask you to support the student by offering opportunities to shadow, observe activities that they may not normally participate in etc in order to develop their skills and experience.

### **Cost**

The cost of the training programme is covered by the apprenticeship levy. However the apprentice will have to attend a face to face workshop, at the beginning of each module (8 in total). Workshops will be situated in the closest location for the majority of participants within the cohort so your employee may have to travel. You will need to agree with your employee whether your business unit will cover the cost of travel. It is unlikely that they will require accommodation but we recommend that you confirm what your business unit will cover prior to the programme commencing.

### **Time Commitment**

Line managers will be required to:

- Join the first meeting between the apprentice and mentor for approx. half an hour to ensure that all key parties are aware of the requirements of the individual learning plan.
- Actively contribute to the mentoring sessions held with the apprentice twice a year – you will not be required to attend the full session. Some of these sessions could be observations by the mentor of the apprentice undertaking certain activities. It is unlikely that you will be required to attend these events unless they are part of your daily work activities.
- You may be asked to observe your apprentice undertake certain activities and complete a proforma to confirm that you observed certain skills and behaviours. The apprentice will add this proforma to their portfolio of evidence.
- Attend an annual review of progress between the mentor, apprentice and yourself. This should not exceed 2 hours.
- Ensure that the apprentice is given time to attend the above meetings and the face to face workshops. This must not be deducted from their annual leave allowance. Please note that the workshops, WebEx sessions and mentoring/assessment sessions are mandatory elements of the apprenticeship. The apprentice cannot successfully complete the programme without full attendance.

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- Support the apprentice in their studies, identifying opportunities for them to develop their skills alongside their learning
  - Provide the apprentice with support when identifying their work-based project. You will also be expected to help ensure that the apprentice has appropriate access to other staff, documents etc. in order to carry out their agreed project.
  - In addition to the above mentioned workshops etc., apprentices should be given at least 3 days per month to study, complete assignments and to collect information for the work-based project. Study time should be flexible to minimise the impact in the workplace, for example, 1 hour at the beginning/end of every day or a half day/full day. This should be agreed between you and the apprentice prior to them starting the programme.

### Next Steps

If the SLMDA seems to be the right way forward for a member of your team and you are confident that they are committed to these studies then they will need to complete an application form which can be found at <https://www.leadershiplearningcentre.com>. Once submitted they will have 5 days to complete a personal statement which we also require you as their line manager to sign. Your signature is required to confirm that you have read this guidance document and fully support the applicant. We will not consider applications unless we receive a personal statement which is also signed by the line manager.

We will also contact the Divisional Director and the HR Director to confirm that they are content for the application to proceed.

We may invite applicants for interview as part of the selection process. Applicants will receive confirmation of their place on the SLMDA approximately 4 weeks prior to the start date. Should an applicant be unsuccessful in their application they will be offered feedback and recommendations to help prepare them to study the SLMDA at a later date.

The pilot SLMDA programme starts in November 2018 and new SLMDA cohorts will start in May and November each year. The application round will remain open throughout the year with published deadlines for each cohort.

Please remember that you have a key role in helping your apprentice successfully complete their programme of study. Without your support, encouragement and interest they will struggle to achieve this challenging programme.

Please go to our website: <https://www.serco-ese.com/serco-education/programmes/serco-slmda> for more detail about this programme including FAQs.