

# Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship for School Business Professionals

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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

The Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship for School Business Professionals (SLMDA) 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 to my school?**

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

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

The programme modules will include:

- Leadership and Context
- Finance, Strategy and Resource
- Leading and Managing Change
- Consultancy Skills
- Project Management
- Education and Sustainability

The apprenticeship will develop and examine the knowledge, skills and behaviours of activities associated with the role of a School Business Managers or Director and in addition to the above modules, the learner will complete a work-based project which should address a genuine challenge within their school.

### **When will the programme start?**

We have two intakes per year. Please refer to the SLMDA web page for latest options: [www.serco-ese.com/serco-education](http://www.serco-ese.com/serco-education)

### **What's the cost?**

The fee for the SLMDA programme is £18,000. The training costs are covered as part of the Apprenticeship Levy, provided your school/academy are contributing to the 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.

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As long as your school/ organisation has sufficient funds in their digital apprenticeship account (DAS) then there is no additional cost for the programme delivery.

If you are a non-levy paying school then ESFA currently pay 95% of the cost of the apprenticeship with the school paying just 5% of the total cost of the programme (please contact us for further details of this option). You will need to reserve your funding for the programme – please see 'Apprenticeship funding for employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy' document in the Key Documents section.

### **How do I pay?**

Providing you are from a levy-paying school, then, as a general guide, 80% of the apprenticeship cost will be paid to us by ESFA in monthly payments, with the remaining 20% payable on completion. (This is a simplified example of the payment process). Serco will start to claim monthly payments from your levy fund soon after you start the programme.

### **How will the Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship for School Business Professionals (SLMDA) benefit me?**

Successful apprentices will achieve:

- An MEd 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 professional pathway for future development
- A network of fellow professionals sharing knowledge and experience
- Level 2 in maths and English (if you do not already have these qualifications)

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

SLMDA is a 27-month programme. Once you have successfully completed the MEd 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.

### **Can I study the Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship for School Business Professionals if I already have a Master's qualification?**

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

### **What are the entry requirements?**

Applicants for SLMDA should have been in a senior leadership role for a minimum of two years and have a degree (although applicants with significant experience maybe accepted onto the apprenticeship).

You will be required to demonstrate that you are a) currently 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 assessment and b) hold a qualification at Level 2 in each subject. 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 short diagnostic assessment).

The apprenticeship is suitable for School Business Managers and Directors in schools, academies or trusts in England.

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It is essential that all applicants have the support of their line manager as the apprenticeship will involve their support both to allow time to attend workshops and mentoring sessions and to ensure that the student can undertake all activities required to meet the apprenticeship standards. The line manager must also agree to allow the student a minimum of 20% of their normal working hours in which to undertake work or activities which contribute to their learning. We will require a statement from your line manager supporting the application (see separate Line Manager Guidance and the Personal Statement & Line Manager Support documents). Applications will not be accepted without the line manager's full support.

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

There is a two-part application process:

- Online application form
- Personal Statement & Line Manager Support (within 5 days of submitting your application)

In addition to the online application form we require a personal statement (submitted within 5 working days of receipt of the application form) that recognises the commitment required along with a statement from the line manager confirming support. Applicants may then be asked to participate in a phone interview.

A formal offer of an apprenticeship will be sent to successful applicants approximately 5 to 6 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 the programme at a later date.

Successful applicants will also need to complete an **Apprenticeship Agreement, Commitment Statement** and an **Enrolment Form/ILR document**, as well as an **Individual Learner Plan (ILP)** plus other documentation, and to confirm your employer's funding/payment details.

### **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 MEd. 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 SLMDA. 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 SLMDA programme if I work outside England?**

Levy funding is only available to apprentices who live or work in England. If you are based outside of England but interested in studying for the apprenticeship please contact us for more details.

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

Upon completing the apprenticeship you will gain an MEd 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. We require

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a personal statement that recognises the commitment required along with a statement from the line manager confirming support. Please visit our website to start the application process.

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

Your apprenticeship will be terminated if you leave your current employer before completion unless you move to another employer who is willing to let you continue your studies with us. If you are made redundant then you will be given 12 weeks to find employment in order to continue your studies or to complete them if you are within 12 weeks of completing the programme. If you haven't got a level 2 in Maths and/or English then as long as you have started your studies for these qualifications with Serco, you are able to continue until you complete them.

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

You may be able to take a Break in Learning from your studies for up to a year, depending upon circumstances.

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

You will be able to take a Break in Learning from the programme for up to a year. You will not be able to continue the apprenticeship while you are on maternity leave, but can resume once you return to work.

**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. A facilitator and mentor will help guide your learning.

You will receive visits from your mentor at your workplace each term or a touch point phone call. Your mentor will support you in developing the portfolio of evidence and offer pastoral support as required. In addition, you will have an annual review with your mentor and employer at the end of your first year of study.

Please note that, whilst your learning will be guided, with support from your tutors (at the workshops and online) and your mentor, you will be expected to work through the learning materials online. Each module you study will have a start and end date and you may have one or two milestones during the modules, 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.

**Where will the training be delivered?**

The pilot cohort will be based at the University of Gloucestershire Oxstalls Campus in Gloucester. For future cohorts, 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; overnight accommodation may be required for any two-day workshops, depending on your location. Your reviews/assessments with your mentor will be at your place of work.

**Do I have to attend every training event and mentor meeting?**

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

**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 7 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.

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Apprentices will probably spend more than 7 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 SLMDA; you will be required to maintain a log of your off-the-job training hours.

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

You will need to discuss this with your line manager before applying to join the apprenticeship to ensure that you are both content and timings are workable. The programme will contain a minimum of 20% off-the-job training including shadowing, reading, attending workshops, completing a project and preparing your portfolio of evidence etc. You should be given time off work to attend workshops and review meetings. 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.

All 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.

Note: the term 'schools' used in this document applies to both maintained and independent schools as well as academies, multi academy trusts, etc

### **Further information:**

[www.serco-ese.com/serco-education](http://www.serco-ese.com/serco-education)

### **Enquiries:**

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