



Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship

Frequently Asked Questions: Guidance 2020

Who is the programme for?

The Level 4 School Business Professional (SBP) Apprenticeship programme is aimed at both new and existing school business managers and those in similar business or support roles (e.g. (Finance Manager, Office Manager, Senior Administrator, Business Support Officer, Bursar, HR Manager, etc.) employed in schools and academies.

What topics will I study?

The programme includes units on:

- Leading Support Services
- Finance
- Procurement
- Marketing
- Infrastructure
- Human Resources

The programme will develop and examine the knowledge, skills and behaviours of these activities associated with the role of school business professionals.

When will the next programme start?

The first intake started in 2018, and we are now delivering new cohorts termly (from several regional centres). Please refer to the Level 4 SBPA web page for latest options and start dates at: www.serco-education.com

What's the cost?

The DfE funding band for the SBPA is capped at £6,000, however the cost of the programme may be reduced depending upon previous experience and qualifications.

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 (your employer is usually indicated on your payslip).

As long as your school/ organisation have 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 you can be funded through the Employer Co-investment scheme and your school will be invoiced for £300 + VAT, which is 5% of the total cost of the programme (please contact us for further details of this option). An updated scheme for non-levy employers was introduced in early 2020.

ILM accreditation for the Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers can be selected as an option at £175 (+ VAT) [2019-20 price]

How do I pay?

Providing you are from a levy-paying school, then, as a general guide, 80% of the apprenticeship cost is split into monthly payments to the provider, 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 School Business Professional Apprenticeship benefit me?

Successful apprentices will achieve:

- On-the-job experience
- A professional pathway for future development
- (Optional) An ILM Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers (£175 + VAT payable separately by the school)
- Level 2 in maths and English (if you do not already have these qualifications)
- Helps you gain specialist expertise in areas including leading support services, finance, marketing, procurement, HR and infrastructure management.

What is the content of the programme?

A brief summary of the main units included in the programme is indicated below:

a. Leading Support Services in a School

This unit underpins the Level 4 SBP learning content. Leading Support Services in a School aims to develop the learners' knowledge and skills relating to leadership and development in a school, managing change and policy and legislation that affects schools. It involves understanding leadership and development in a school and equips learners with the knowledge and skills required to lead, develop and co-ordinate support services within a school or trust.

b. Finance in a School

Finance in a School aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to support finance decisions in a school, contribute to budget planning and delivery and how to manage financial control systems. It develops an understanding of school budget planning and delivery.

The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the management of finances in a school.

c. Procurement in a School

Procurement in a School covers content relating to procurement strategy, managing the tendering process, and supporting contractor and supplier management.

The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to support the tendering process to ensure value for money and oversee the management of contractors and suppliers in a school environment.

d. Marketing in a School

This is a new topic area for the Level 4 qualification and reflects current trends in the role of school business managers. This unit aims to equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to support the planning, management and review of a range of marketing activities in a school.

The unit includes a variety of key marketing topics including the development of skills such as the planning and evaluation of school marketing activities. It will also enable the participant to be able to identify and plan income generating activity in a school and understand the importance of managing a school's reputation.

e. School Infrastructure Management

The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to contribute to the planning, management and review of asset and capital activities in a school.

Learners will develop an understanding of asset management in a school; be able to review and plan school asset management activities; be able to support capital management activities, and facilities management, in a school. Other objectives related to infrastructure management are included as well.

f. Human Resource Management in a School

The purpose of this unit is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills required to manage human resources within a school environment and ensure regulatory and legal compliance.

The HR unit includes: Understanding how employment and discrimination law impact school operations; reviewing school staffing structures; recruitment and selection processes, plus other sections on reward and recognition, etc.

How long will it take to complete the programme?

The Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship is normally a 21 month-programme (study period) based on a full-time all year-round contract. If your average weekly employment hours fall below 30 hours per week over 52 weeks, e.g. if you work, say, 26 hours per week term-time only, then the apprenticeship will be extended pro rata. However, you may be able to complete the programme in the same time scale as other members of your cohort but only if you are ready to do so.

In addition, you will then need to complete a one-day assessment centre (**end-point assessment** or EPA) with an external assessor once you have completed all activities. This end-point assessment (EPA) should take place within a 3-month window after the successful completion of your apprenticeship studies.

What are the entry requirements?

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 functional skills assessment (initial 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 short diagnostic assessment).

The apprenticeship is suitable for school business managers and those in similar business and support roles in schools or academies.

It is essential that all applicants have the support of their line manager as the apprenticeship will involve attendance at workshops (5 x one-day regional workshops at the start of most units). Your employer must also commit to **20% off-the-job training** time for you (this is an essential element of all apprenticeships). 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 support.

What is the application process?

There is a three-part application process:

- Online application form
- Personal Statement & Line Manager Support (within 5 days of submitting your application or by application closing date, whichever is the earliest)
- Skills scan (self-assessment conducted with the help of your line manager)

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 invited to participate in a phone interview.

Applicants are then asked to complete a skill scan self-assessment so that we can consider previous qualifications and/or learning and ensure that the applicant meets the requirements of the ESFA for apprenticeship funding. The self-assessment must indicate that there is sufficient scope for development across all areas of the apprenticeship.

A formal offer of an apprenticeship will be sent to successful applicants around 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 or signposting alternative opportunities.

Successful applicants will also need to complete an **Apprenticeship Agreement, a maths & English online initial assessment, a skill scan self-assessment, a Commitment Statement** and **Individual Learner Plan**, and confirm funding/payment details before the start of the apprenticeship. Please check with your local authority or MAT apprenticeship or HR team that you have approval from them for funding.

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 6-7 hours a week, on average, will be required in addition to the workshops and meetings. The amount of time required will vary depending upon your stage of learning. Apprentices will probably spend more than 8 hours a week completing the formal assignment tasks attached to each unit 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 coach and an end of year review. Throughout the programme, apprentices will keep a portfolio of learning which will be supported by 360-degree feedback.

Your employer must also allow you **20% of your normal working hours** to complete off-the-job training (which includes coach visits, face-to-events, relevant meetings, projects, updating your portfolios, etc.). You will need to discuss with your line manager the impact this will have on your daily workload. You will need to record the 20% off-the-job hours weekly.

You may find it useful to read the 'Day in the Life of a SBPA' which provides examples of activities that count towards the 20% commitment.

How will I be assessed?

There will be on-programme assessment carried out during the programme, this will consist of assignment tasks submitted at the end of each unit or element of the SBPA programme. You will also be required to produce a learning portfolio, and a portfolio of evidence, as part of the programme. There is a final end-point assessment conducted by an external assessor. This will take place within 12 weeks from the successful completion of your studies. It is arranged during the course of a day, usually at an external centre or remotely.

Can I study the Level 4 School Business Professional Apprenticeship if I already have a Level 4 qualification?

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

Can I apply to study the SBP Apprenticeship 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 the Institute for Apprenticeships SBP Apprenticeship Certificate, and, if you have selected ILM accreditation, the ILM Level 4 Diploma for School Business Managers.

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 a personal statement that recognises the commitment required along with a statement from the line manager confirming support. Please go to our website to start the application process: <https://www.serco-ese.com/serco-education/programmes/level-4-sbp-apprenticeship>

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, in certain cases, your new employer agrees to your continuation and can fund from their levy funds).

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

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

How will the training be delivered?

Predominantly online and in the workplace, but with a face-to-face workshop at the start of most units (there are 5 x one-day regional face-to-face workshops in total). A facilitator and coach will help guide your learning.

You will receive up to 6 visits from your coach at your workplace, plus additional phone contact if required. Your coach will discuss your progress and can advise on your learning portfolio.

Please note that, whilst your learning will be guided, with support from your facilitators (at the workshops and online) and your coach, you will be expected to work through the learning materials via our online learning platform.

Each unit 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 included in the eAssessor recording tool which shows your progress through the apprenticeship.

Where will the training be delivered?

The main cohort groups will be based around the country, with typically two or three regional centres per cohort, e.g. one in the north, one in the midlands, or one in the south. The location of workshops varies and will be based on the location of the majority of participants in your learning group so some travel may be involved. Your reviews and coaching support, etc., 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.

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

You will need to discuss this with your line manager/employer before applying to join the apprenticeship to ensure that you are both content and timings are workable. The programme will contain **20% off-the-job training** although this may include shadowing, reading, attending workshops, completing a project and preparing your learning portfolio etc. You must 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 per week (calculated over the full 52 weeks per year) then the length of time in which you study will be extended pro rata to reflect your normal working hours. If you work full time in term time only, then your study time will also be extended pro rata. You will follow the same learning and assessment schedule as everyone else in the same cohort but will have an extended time to complete your portfolio and prepare for your end-point assessment. (It may be possible to complete earlier than your extended end date, but only if you are ready).

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 have to adhere to ESFA guidance and requirements. Many of the required onboarding documents and forms are necessary to meet ESFA requirements.

Further information: www.serco-education.com

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