SLA Mentor Handbook

2026/27

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1. Introduction

1.1 University Centre Quayside (UCQ) develops people to achieve excellence in leadership and management, supporting their career potential and helping to enrich their working life and that of the teams they lead and manage. Programmes are created and delivered by leading practitioners who combine their practical business expertise with experienced programme delivery.

1.2 UCQ specialises in supporting managers that have, or are preparing to change their profession, as well as those that favour a vocational rather than traditional academic education. The approach works because there is a tripartite agreement between UCQ, the individual and the employer, working together to share success and achieve lasting results. Programmes include a strong focus on experiential learning and contextualisation of assignments directly to the employment.

1.3 UCQ is approved by the Open University as an appropriate organisation to offer higher education programmes leading to Open University validated awards.

2. Mentoring: guidance from the Chartered Management Institute

2.1 Mentoring is an increasingly common developmental approach which can produce excellent results for the mentor, mentee and the organisation both parties are affiliated with. It is an approach used to support apprentices through their studies and training. Mentoring demonstrates organisational commitment to the individual's development. The mentor is backed by the organisation to listen to, guide and advise the mentee. All organisations have managers with a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. Passing this on to apprentices will not only benefit the individual but also your organisation as a whole.

2.2 Mentoring is a two-way process, which takes place over a set period of time. The mentor manager will offer support to enable the mentee to explore their professional situation and work towards pre-determined goals and objectives. The activity of mentoring also has benefits for the manager offering the support.

2.3 For the mentor, it offers:

- The opportunity to help and guide others in their career development
- The opportunity to help others reflect and learn from their mistakes
- Increased job satisfaction, sense of value and status
- The opportunity to develop your own management, leadership and mentoring skills

2.4 For the mentee, it offers:

- An objective and safe source of support in the development of new skills and directions
- Access to a mentor who understands their industry's or organisation's culture and ways of working
- Knowledge about options and ideas they may not have considered
- Increased confidence in their ability to achieve their goals

2.5 For organisations, it offers:

- A cost-effective way to support talent development and succession planning
- Better staff retention levels and recruitment prospects
- Improved communication and acclimatisation of employees to the organisation's culture

3. Key UCQ contacts

UCQ details	
Name	University Centre Quayside Limited (UCQ)
Head office address & postcode	University Centre Quayside Quayside i-4, Albion Row Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE6 1LL
Head office telephone	03330048470
Email address	enquiries@ucq.ac.uk
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Safeguarding Team	
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Designated Safeguarding Lead: **Ben Devine**	Tel 07366 564 165 or ben.devine@ucq.ac.uk

Other important contacts	
Appeals/Complaints	appeals@ucq.ac.uk complaints@ucq.ac.uk
Extenuating Circumstances Administrator	extenuating@ucq.ac.uk
Apprenticeship Helpline	Tel 0800 015 0400: 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week Email: nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk

4. The Senior Leader Apprenticeship (SLA)

4.1 The Strategic Management and Leadership is delivered as part of an Apprenticeship (SLA), an overview of which is shown below.

Elements of SLA	Training organisation	Awarding body	Level
CMI L7 Strategic Management and Leadership Practice	UCQ	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)	7
SLA Apprenticeship – extended diploma	UCQ	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)	7
Chartered Fellow Status	UCQ	Chartered Management Institute (CMI)	N/A

4.2 The Strategic Management and Leadership Apprenticeship (SLA) enables students to develop their knowledge, skills, behaviours and understanding of the operational and strategic dimensions of management within a real working environment.

Upon successful completion of the SLA the five following learning outcomes will have been achieved:

1. An in depth understanding of the main areas of strategic leadership and the way these areas interrelate.

2. Knowledge and understanding acquired through formal learning and applied to the business environment.

3. An ability to apply an independent approach to develop the skills required by a strategic leader.

4. Skills acquired and demonstrated through continuous professional development in the workplace.

5. The ability to apply critical tools and techniques that enable the integration of theory and practice within a work environment.

4.3 Each of the units will be assessed through a range of methods. Some of these methods include:

- Essays
- Reports
- Presentations
- Reflective reviews
- Observations
- Professional discussion
- Witness testimonies
- Peer reviews
- Work product evidence

4.4 This SLA has two stages; stage 1 comprises of 36 credits and stage 2 comprises of 32 credits. 195 guided learning hours (GLH) The estimated duration of this programme is 2 years.

5. Unit overviews

5.1 Stage 1 Units (Year 1):

Unit no.	Description	Credits	GLH
701	**Strategic Leadership** The aim of this unit is to equip leaders with an in-depth understanding of strategic leadership within an organisational context. Leaders will explore the complexities of the role and the theoretical perspectives, approaches, behaviours and skills which can enhance their professional practice. The unit focuses on the leader's ability to respond creatively to complex organisational challenges and understand how to set and deliver sustainable strategic goals.	11	36
702	**Leading and Developing People to Optimise Performance** The aim of this unit is for leaders to develop an in-depth understanding of how to effectively lead and develop people. They will explore the influence and impact of leadership theories, culture, wellbeing, development and design, policy and strategy that can be used creatively within the leadership role. Ultimately, leaders will have the opportunity to propose a leadership and development strategy. The aim of which values people whilst optimising an organisation's performance.	10	34
705	**Leading Strategic Change** The aim of this unit is for leaders to understand the scope, context, and complexity of leading strategic change. Leaders will understand how the application of analytical techniques, theories, and models of change, and creative problem-solving can be used to equip them to lead strategic change with confidence. The unit culminates in giving leaders the opportunity to develop a proposal to lead a strategic change.	8	24
716	**Strategic Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing** The aim of the unit is for leaders to understand the impact of mental health and wellbeing on organisational performance. Leaders will critically assess the complexities of managing wellbeing and will appraise contemporary approaches for the creation of healthy work systems. The unit culminates in leaders being given the opportunity to propose a series of recommendations to create and sustain a positive culture of mental health and wellbeing within an organisational context.	7	18
Total		**36**	**112**

5.2 Stage 2 Units (Year 2):

Unit	Description	Credits	GLH
612	**Coaching Skills for Leaders** Coaching is a powerful learning and development tool. Used effectively, it is able to optimise individual and team performance and the achievement of organisational goals. Coaching has rapidly become an essential leadership tool. It enables the professional manager and leader to support, motivate and empower individuals and teams in a conversational and insightful way. This contrasts with and complements the use of traditional directive leadership approaches.	7	15
608	**Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability are topics keenly related to organisational accountability. Definitions and approaches taken to manage and lead CSR and sustainability vary according to the type and purpose of an organisation and its governance. Approaches typically include the development of aims and objectives, policy and strategy, with the intent to address the impact of an organisation's activity on society, the environment and a commitment to ethical and responsible conduct.	6	20
712	**Strategic Management Project** The aim of this unit is for leaders to undertake a strategic management project of their own choosing. To achieve this outcome, leaders will develop a business case, propose research design to inform the project's direction and recommend project management methods and tools to structure the delivery of the project. Leaders will report on project outcomes and reflect on the skills and behaviours which ultimately influence the success of the strategic management project.	10	24
714	**Personal and Professional Development for Strategic Leaders** The aim of this unit is to support leaders to understand approaches to personal and professional development. Leaders will critically reflect on the interrelationship between the skillset and mindset to develop as a strategic leader. Vitally leaders will reflect on their own personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies and behaviours to lead strategically. The opportunity for leaders to reflect on their own performance will equip them to develop a meaningful personal and professional development plan.	9	24
Total		**32**	**83**

6. Responsibilities, Opportunities and Experience

Throughout the programme the line manager will be expected to ensure the apprentice has the necessary opportunity, within the workplace, to be provided with the required responsibilities and exposure to enable the new knowledge, skills and behaviours, to be further developed, to enable successful progression and completion of the apprenticeship. The following tables outline the types of activities and opportunities this could incorporate.

6.1 Year 1

Unit	Skill requirements from apprentice	Evidence collected from apprentice	Apprentice responsibilities/opportunities/ experience required within their role for EPA standards
Unit 701 Strategic Leadership	Demonstrate the ability to apply principles of strategic leadership to respond to complex situations	Reflective Review Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **S17** Lead and influence people, building constructive working relationships across teams, using matrix management where required – *work products **701** peer review **701*** **S21** Shape and manage the communications strategy for their area of responsibility - *work product **701*** **K11** Approaches to strategic workforce planning, for example, talent management, learning organisations, group work, workforce design, succession planning, diversity and inclusion. - *work product **701***
Unit 702 Leading and Developing People to Optimise Development	Demonstration the ability to lead and develop employees Demonstrate the ability to lead and develop people to optimise performance	Reflective Review Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **K10** Organisational/team dynamics and how to build engagement and develop high performance, agile and collaborative cultures - *work product **702*** **S15** Give and receive feedback at all levels, building confidence and developing trust, and enable people to take risks and challenge where appropriate – *work product **702*** **S16** Enable an open culture and high-performance working environment and set goals and accountabilities for teams and individuals in their area - *work product **702*** **S18** Optimise skills of the workforce, balancing people and technical skills and encouraging continual development - *work product **702*** **An observation can be carried out to cover some of these areas**

Unit	Skill requirements from apprentice	Evidence collected from apprentice	Apprentice responsibilities/opportunities/ experience required within their role for EPA standards
Unit 705 Leading Strategic Change	Demonstrate the application of applied principles of strategic leadership to respond to complex organisational challenges	Reflective review Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **K1** How to shape organisational mission, culture, and values. - *work product **705*** **K4** Innovation; The impact of disruptive technologies (mechanisms that challenge traditional business methods and practises); drivers of change and new ways of working across infrastructure, processes, people and culture and sustainability. - *work product **705*** **K17** Crisis and risk management strategies – *work products 705* **S1** Use horizon scanning and conceptualisation to deliver high performance strategies focusing on growth/sustainable outcomes - *work product **705*** **S4.1** Lead change in their area of responsibility, create an environment for innovation and creativity - *work product **705*** **S4.2** Establish the value of ideas and change initiatives and driving continuous improvement – *work products 705* **S5** Lead and respond in a crisis situation using risk management techniques – *work products **705*** **S9** Drive a culture of resilience and support development of new enterprise and opportunities – *work products **705***
Unit 716 Strategic Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing	Demonstrate the ability to develop a culture which sustains and supports positive mental health within the organisation	Reflective review Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **S14** Create an inclusive culture, encouraging diversity and difference and promoting well-being - *work product **716***

Apprentice responsibilities/opportunities/
Additional experience required within their role for EPA standards not necessarily linked to a specific unit

S10 Oversee development and monitoring financial strategies and setting of organisational budgets based on key performance indicators (KPIs), and challenge financial assumptions underpinning strategies – *report with work products*

S12 Oversee procurement, supply chain management and contracts such as consideration of sustainable approaches – *report with work products*

6.2 Year 2

Units	Skill requirements	Evidence collected from apprentice	Apprentice responsibilities/opportunities/ experience required within their role for EPA standards
Unit 612 Coaching Skills for Leaders	Demonstrate critical thinking in relation to the adaptation of coaching to meet induvial need. Demonstrate evidence of coaching in practice	Reflection	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **K10** Organisational/team dynamics and how to build engagement and develop high performance, agile and collaborative cultures - *work product **612*** **S18** Optimise skills of the workforce, balancing people and technical skills and encouraging continual development - *work product **612***
	Demonstrate evidence of coaching and supporting approaches to coaching in practice	Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	
Unit 608 Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability	Demonstrate how to support approaches to strategic corporate and social responsibility	Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	**Suggestions to be completed for EPA evidence** **S6** Act as a sponsor/ambassador, champion lean projects and transformation of services across organisational boundaries such as those impacted by sustainability and the UK net carbon Zero by 2050 target. - *witness, work product **608*** **S7** Challenge strategies and operations in terms of ethics, responsibility, sustainability, resource allocation and business continuity/risk management. - *witness work product **608*** **S8** Apply principles relating to corporate social responsibility, governance, and regulatory compliance – work product **608** **K19** Approaches to developing a corporate social responsibility programme – *work products **608***
Unit 712 Strategic Management Project	Demonstrate the application of management project skills within the organisation	Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	

Units	Skill requirements	Evidence collected from apprentice	Apprentice responsibilities/opportunities/ experience required within their role for EPA standards
Unit 714 Personal and Professional Development for Strategic Leaders	Demonstrate the development as a strategic leader through personal and professional development	Reflective review	
	Demonstrate the ability to produce a professional development plan to improve strategic leadership	PDP	
	Demonstrate personal and professional development as a strategic leader	Work based evidence to meet the required standards for EPA	

7. Off the job training

7.1 It is a government requirement that all students on an apprenticeship programme must have a minimum amount of their employed time dedicated to 'off the job training' (this is detailed in their Individual Training Plan). This is learning which is undertaken outside of the student's day-to-day workplace roles. The allocation is across the duration of the programme. As a work-based programme, this apprenticeship requires that a minimum proportion of the student's paid employment be dedicated to off the job training.

7.2 Off the job training can be delivered at UCQ and/or at the student's place of work and can include:

- Attending lectures and seminars and online learning
- Meetings with the Professional Development Assessor
- Practical Learning: shadowing, mentoring, and industry visits;
- Private Learning: time spent reading, researching and writing assignments.

8. Progress reviews

8.1 Progress reviews will be undertaken every 8-12 weeks between the mentor (you), student and Professional Development Assessor. These reviews provide an opportunity for review and feedback on all aspects of the programme to ensure that the student is getting the most out of their degree. Reviews will take place as a virtual meeting and allow mentors to further support their mentee on their learning journey through active participation and engagement.

8.2 Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours Confidence Skill Scan: Milestones

8.2.1 Throughout the apprenticeship, students undertake regular confidence scans alongside assessments of their knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs). These are reviewed and discussed during Individual Learning Plan (ILP) meetings. In addition, workplace mentors are required to provide illustrative examples of how they have observed the student demonstrating competence across various KSB areas. This evidence contributes to a cumulative witness journal, which is submitted as part of the End Point Assessment (EPA).

9. Further advice and guidance

9.1 If you would like any further advice or guidance regarding your role as a mentor or the wider SLA programme, please do not hesitate to contact the Apprenticeships Standard Manager Colleen Henderson. Colleen can be contacted via email colleen.henderson@ucq.ac.uk

9.2 UCQ value your feedback. If you would like to provide additional feedback to UCQ please email feedback@ucq.ac.uk

9.3 Further information about UCQ can be found at www.ucq.ac.uk

9.4 UCQ has a duty to provide a safe environment for all staff and students. UCQ's safeguarding single comprehensive source of information, including information related to sexual misconduct and harassment, is available at: https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent/

9.5 In order to enhance the student experience, all students are required to be able to access a work environment conducive to learning, to include access to a quiet space for online lectures/tutorials; webcam; headset and microphone. Employers are asked to enable this by providing the necessary equipment as necessary.