



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This month we are looking at the journey of...
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WHO ARE BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY?

Bournemouth University currently offer levels 5, 6 and 7 apprenticeships in Health and Social Care, Engineering and Business.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY AS A PROVIDER?

Like many universities, our apprenticeship provision developed organically through individual departments developing apprenticeship programmes without having a full understanding of apprenticeships and the systems in place to be able to ensure compliance with the funding rules. As the number of apprenticeships has increased, we realised that new governance structures and a central apprenticeship team was required to provide oversight of the provision to ensure compliance and oversee quality. This required a substantial investment in staff and the development of many new policies and processes. It has taken some while to get academic staff to understand the different requirements of an apprenticeship through delivering a series of CPD and for the central apprenticeships team to put in place all the processes to ensure compliance. We are now in a position where we are confident our current provision is of high quality and are now in the process of growing our provision.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOURNEY TO OUTSTANDING?

The journey has had its ups and downs. We thought we were well prepared for our new provider visit, which took place in November 2022. However, it exposed some areas of non-compliance we were not aware of despite undertaking our own audits of the provision. This experience enabled us to accelerate our plans for growth of our central apprenticeship team and CPD plans for staff. The new provider visit also enabled us to assess what went well and what changes we needed to make to prepare for and manage the full visit.

Learning from the experience of the new provider visit, when it came to the full visit we felt prepared and were confident we knew all aspects of our provision. We were open and honest from the first introduction presentation with inspectors on which areas we still needed to work on. This honest assessment of our provision was well received by the inspectors. Our key message would be that to be an outstanding provider, you don't have to be perfect in all areas, but you do have to know where the areas for development are and can demonstrate you have a credible plan in place to address them.

'We were concerned from talking to other providers who had been through their Ofsted visit, that the inspectors might not understand the higher education context. We were pleased that the inspection team all had experience of higher education and we felt this enabled conversations between the team and us to be richer.'

EVENT

**Aiming for Outstanding
With Bournemouth University**

Date: 20th November 2024

Time: 2pm - 3pm

See our website to book



PHIL SEWELL

Director of Apprenticeships and Skills and a professor in engineering.



JULES FOREST

Head of Academic Quality



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WHAT WERE YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THESE?

The greatest challenge has been the accelerated development has sometimes put strain on faculty teams who felt that a disproportionate amount of time and resource was being spent on the apprenticeship provision which is much smaller than our undergraduate and postgraduate provision. Getting buy in from academic teams has been crucial to our success.

Also, in the build up to our Ofsted visit, Ofsted steering group meetings were being held every two weeks. This drove forward our Ofsted preparation action plan but also created anxiety in staff who were on edge each week waiting for the call. Managing the anticipation of the visit also proved challenging.

WHAT FIN RESOURCES OR EVENTS HAVE YOU FOUND MOST USEFUL AND WHY?

Both myself, as the shadow nominee and Jules, as Ofsted nominee, attended the FIN Ofsted bootcamp in 2023. This event provided us with a great introduction to what to expect from our first Ofsted visit. In addition, it was a great networking opportunity, enabling us to build links with other universities offering apprenticeships.

WHAT BENEFITS DO YOU EXPECT FOR YOUR BUSINESS AS A RESULT OF BEING OUTSTANDING?

We are already seeing the benefits of being rated as outstanding. Internally, we are seeing an increased interest in apprenticeships from our staff across the institution. This enabled us to develop a bid to the Office for Students degree apprenticeship development fund and have now secured £465k to develop five new apprenticeships which are due to commence in September 2025. Externally, we are seeing an increased interest from employers in working with us to develop new apprenticeship opportunities.

“We have utilised many of the FIN guides as we have developed our policies and processes. The guides on assessing our provision by asking key questions to staff, employers and apprentices have been particularly useful in our development.”

IF YOU COULD GO BACK TWO OR THREE YEARS, WOULD YOU HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY?

In hindsight we would have paused delivery at the point we realised we needed to develop central oversight and develop our central apprenticeship team. Trying to develop new policies, processes and ways of working while still onboarding new apprenticeship cohorts has been a challenge. This would have been made even harder if we had continued to expand our provision into new areas at the same time. We only now have the confidence to expand our provision.

‘An honest self-assessment and realistic quality improvement plan have been key for our development. These documents have been key to ensuring the delivery teams understand where our areas of weakness were and enabled us to drive up our standards.’

THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS

Thank you so much to Phil and Jules for sharing their journey. We are delighted that they are also hosting this months ‘Aiming for Outstanding’ event. Visit the events page on our website to book your space.