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Aptem's role in London South Bank University's strategic expansion of apprenticeships

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The multi award-winning apprenticeship provision at London South Bank University (LSBU) is dependent on technology to support efficient, compliant programme management. In 2022, after a rigorous selection process that involved three technology providers presenting their products, the LSBU team selected Aptem as its apprenticeship management platform.

Aptem has since transformed the onboarding experience for learners and has enabled the apprenticeship team to turn their attentions from time-consuming administrative tasks to a strategic, value-add approach.

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How implementing Aptem has enabled the strategic expansion of LSBU's apprenticeship provision

London South Bank University (LSBU) launched its first apprenticeship programme in 2016. Today, the provision boasts more than 3,000 learners in collaboration with more than 1,000 employer partners.

Supported by Aptem, LSBU's apprenticeship initiative has won multiple awards, including the Apprenticeship Compliance Team of the Year 2024 at the Quality Professional Awards. The provision is now established as a strategic priority for the university, consistently strengthening and expanding its impact.

3,000

The provision boasts more than 3,000 learners in collaboration with more than 1,000 employer partners.

EST 1892 **LSBU**

# Choosing a system designed to support LSBU's organisational objectives

With apprenticeships a strategic priority and ambitions to grow quickly, LSBU turned to technology to help deliver on its goals. Led by Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, the team began looking for a platform that could:

- ✔ Enhance the experience for learners, tutors and employers.
- ✔ Reduce the administrative burden of compliance.
- ✔ Gain better business intelligence.

There were a number of key outputs that the team needed from a new system. These included:

Integration with the university's student records system.
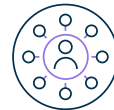
A better user experience for learners, employers and tutors.

Sophisticated functionality that LSBU can grow into.

Significant time-saving for an overstretched, admin-heavy apprenticeship delivery team.
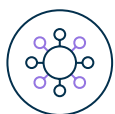
Freedom to focus on progressing apprentices, providing additional support to employers, and enhancing the overall apprenticeship experience.

Reasons for choosing Aptem

End-to-end offering — including everything LSBU needs to run its provision from a single platform.

Excellent user experience for learners, employers and LSBU staff.

Clever use of technology — including unique automation and trackers.

Rich industry expertise — designed by apprenticeship experts with extensive higher education experience.

Platform configurability and Aptem team — willingness to listen and work with LSBU to make the system work for them.

An efficient, expert-led implementation

Appreciating the scale of the change for every single apprentice, employer and staff member, the team devised a phased project plan that would allow them to validate the user experience via a series of pilots.

In just three months, 30 programmes were built within the system, the platform was prepared to accept new applicants, and the first pilot began. Following two successful pilots, Aptem was used to onboard all 700 new apprentices in September 2022. The team then began the next phase: migrating their 2,800 existing learners and Individual Learner Records (ILR) to Aptem.

It's something Sammy is very proud of, and he's grateful for the implementation support throughout. *"For me, the experience was great. We had weekly project calls, and our Implementation Consultant spent significant time meeting with us, sometimes more than twice a week, to keep things moving at pace.*

Aptem's Head of Implementation explains the journey to successful implementation:

"One of Aptem's key strengths is its configurability, allowing us to tailor the platform to meet LSBU's unique needs. This requires collaboration and input from the right stakeholders to ensure alignment with LSBU's goals, making the partnership critical to success.

Digital transformation is complex, and managing change effectively is essential to ensuring everyone is ready to adapt. We focused on change management, guiding LSBU's staff, learners, and stakeholders through the transition while keeping them engaged and confident.

A clear vision was key – this project wasn't just about replicating old processes, but about reimagining how things could be done better. We aimed to improve both the learner, employer and tutor experience while boosting operational efficiency."

The Aptem team really takes the time to understand your processes and gives expert advice on how to best use the system, as well as guidance on where your processes could be improved. Without that level of input, we wouldn't be in the position we are today.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

Establishing clear roles ensured accountability and effective teamwork. Aptem's experienced implementation team provided support at every step, combining education sector expertise with implementation know-how to ensure a smooth transition. Together, we've created a solution that not only meets LSBU's current needs but sets them up for future success.

Our approach to training and supporting LSBU has been both comprehensive and highly effective. At the heart of our strategy is the train-the-trainer model, empowering key LSBU staff to become experts in Aptem and enabling them to train their colleagues. This creates a ripple effect, ensuring knowledge and confidence are spread throughout the organisation for lasting impact.

LSBU further reinforced this by creating a dedicated role focused on training and adoption, providing continuous support to learners, employers, and staff. This role, alongside a full training programme and regular drop-in sessions, ensures ongoing guidance and fosters collaboration. The result has been strong engagement and a smooth transition to the new system.

Key to this success was buy-in from senior stakeholders, with Sammy playing a crucial role in driving the initiative forward. *"Together, we're aligning with LSBU's broader goals to create a transformative educational experience."*

Organisational objective 1: Enhance the experience for learners, tutors and employers

Aptem has transformed how LSBU's apprentices learn and engage with their programme

Sammy says, *"From a learner point of view, Aptem is game changing. Once an apprentice is aware of the potential of Aptem and how they can use it and the ease of the use of the system, they're fully engaged with it. I have seen great examples of some apprentices who are ahead of where they should be on their training plan because they're so engaged with it. It's a million times better than our previous system which had no visibility of progress, and no oversight or ability to report on either progress or the user experience."*

Prior to Aptem, the LSBU team took around three months to manually add apprentices into their system. After that, it took another month or two to add employers into that platform, so apprentices that joined in September didn't get access to an online system until the following January. Sammy explains, *"It was tough for the learners who were being asked to record the off-the-job learning, yet they had nowhere to put it. Spreadsheets and inconsistent documentation processes were unsustainable and the move to Aptem was, as a result, welcomed by learners, employers and our team."*

When I began my apprenticeship, LSBU had a different system. After a year, we switched to Aptem. The transition was smooth, enabling us to instantly track marked-off KSBs and see our completion percentage. Aptem is a really easy system to use. My employer can view my off-the-job hours, identify gaps in applying KSBs, and better support me.

Annabelle, Level 6 Digital Marketing apprentice

User experience has exceeded expectations, with 90% of apprentices engaging with Aptem at least monthly. A new LSBU role was created to ensure ongoing focus on system awareness and understanding. Drop-in training runs daily for apprentices and three times per week for employers, meaning stakeholders are never left wondering how best to use the platform.

The visibility of learners' engagement with eLearning afforded by Aptem means LSBU is much better equipped to measure and influence apprenticeship achievement, by intervening to offer additional learning support or stretch tasks to help learners excel.

Aptem allows LSBU to target apprentices who are not on track, offering additional support and therefore maximising the use of resources and ensuring success.

What Aptem has delivered

- ✓ Quicker application processes for learners.

- ✓ Learner access to learning plans on day one, compared to five months previously.

- ✓ Engaging and clear onboarding journeys.

- ✓ Proactive monitoring of learner progress.

- ✓ Enhanced consistency and quality of learning materials and learner support.

- ✓ Personalisation of learning plans.

70%

Learners have more ownership of their learning journey, and up to 70% are now on-track or ahead in their programmes, compared to 30% previously.

Since we introduced Aptem, I have been able to target support towards apprentices that need it most. Aptem has transformed our ability to monitor and track progress. As a manager I feel confident that I can deliver on my KPIs to benefit apprentices and employers.

Deborah Underwood, Apprenticeship Delivery Team Leader

Organisational objective 2:
Reduce the administrative burden of compliance

Aptem is saving LSBU an estimated £150,000 – £200,000 annually in administration cost and time, thanks to clever automation, innovative trackers and integrations

Automation and in-system process management take care of tasks such as completion of training plans, apprenticeship agreements and initial assessments – tasks which previously required days of manual checking, transferring and chasing. Instead of downloading and transferring thousands of records per year from their student records system – wasting time, risking error and creating duplication – system integration allows the team to seamlessly view all records within Aptem.

Reporting and audit capabilities have also transformed Ofsted preparedness. Within two minutes, LSBU can pull a report revealing the exact progress of any given apprentice for inspection - something that would have been impossible prior to Aptem. According to Sammy, "*In our last funding audit, we had to manually prepare 2,000 pieces of evidence – a hugely time-consuming task prone to human error. For our next audit, we will simply give our auditor access to Aptem, as all data is already prepared and accessible.*"

LSBU has streamlined the entire onboarding process and put guardrails in place to prevent progression until essential information is provided. Integrations remove the need for learners to log into multiple systems, ensure all data is captured and auditable, and put a stop to manual re-keying of information. Sammy shares, *"We now have 100% confidence in our onboarding compliance. We know that once a learner has completed onboarding, everything is audit-proof."*

No longer occupied with administration, the apprenticeship team can think creatively about learning delivery and quality. A team previously seen as a data processing and compliance function is now rightfully recognised for its teaching innovation, and its achievements are celebrated by leadership.

What Aptem has delivered

- ✓ Ability to pull a progress report for inspection within minutes.

- ✓ Removal of manual preparation of documents ahead of audit.

- ✓ 140 hours per month saved preparing funding documents such as ILR.

- ✓ 1,100 hours saved as learners enter data once and it is surfaced wherever it is needed.
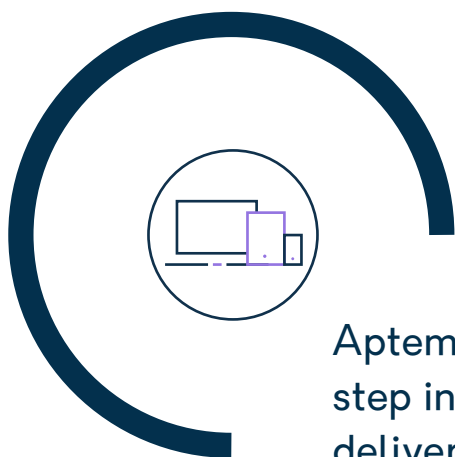
Aptem has digitised and streamlined every step in the complex, multi-year process of delivering an apprenticeship. Learners receive a higher standard of consistency and quality across their apprenticeship journey.

Organisational objective 3:
Get better business insights

Aptem's powerful reporting capability enables the LSBU apprenticeship team to demonstrate value to the wider organisation and make data-driven decisions

As the Group Director of Apprenticeships, Sammy logs into Aptem at the start of each working day. He uses the built-in dashboard to track and monitor progress across the provision, and also to share key metrics with senior colleagues. The dashboards are split into four areas, covering compliance, funding, quality and tutor caseload.

Prior to Aptem, LSBU found reporting "*very, very difficult and labour intensive*", taking at least a day just to collate basic information. The data available showed what funding they had received, but there was no capability to give financial projections. In just one click, the team can now see the projected value of the apprenticeship provision for the current academic year.
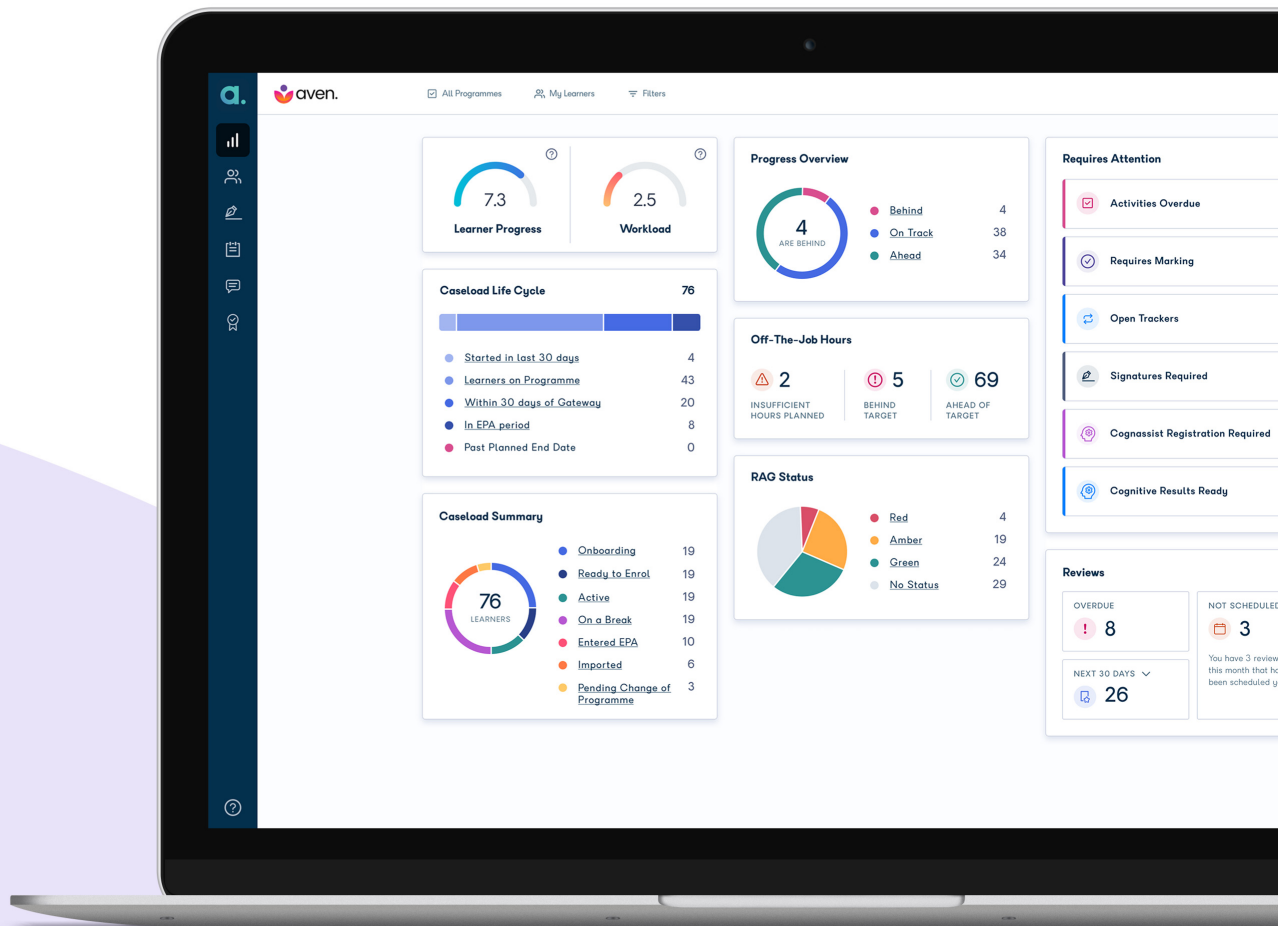
In addition to funding, the LSBU Skills Coaches have their own dashboard where they can see their caseload. At a glance, they can see who's behind in their programme, what needs marking, and more. Senior leaders within the organisation can then look at the overall dashboard to get a holistic view of the state of play, including an easy-to-digest RAG status of learner progress.

The quality dashboard gives oversight of the breadth, scale and make-up of LSBU's provision, supporting strategic efforts to widen participation. The team regularly drill down into headline information including data points such as where learners are coming from and how many have learning support needs and can deep dive into how the various segments of the learner base are progressing.

Sammy explains, "*Apprenticeships can traditionally be siloed and undervalued within a university. However, Aptem's innovative reporting tools are helping us demonstrate our value to some of our most senior stakeholders. University leadership, including the Vice Chancellor and Deans of each School, now have real-time visibility of progress reviews, quality, compliance and potential achievement rates. This enhances their understanding of our provision and investment in their apprentices.*"

What Aptem has delivered

✓ Access to a wide range of pre-built dashboards showing essential metrics.

✓ Accurate income forecasting; people are truly bought-in to the accuracy of Aptem data.

✓ Increased investment from senior leadership, making data-driven decisions to boost retention and achievement.

Integration with LSBU's student records system means thousands of records are seamlessly accessed within Aptem, eliminating the need for time-consuming downloads and transfers, reducing errors, and preventing duplication.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

An optimistic future for LSBU apprenticeships

With ambitions to move from an Ofsted 'Good' rating to an 'Outstanding', LSBU's apprenticeship leadership is hugely optimistic now that they have a system in place that is designed to do the heavy lifting around best practice and compliance – including off-the-job hours, start and end dates, additional learning support funding claims and individualised learning journeys.

LSBU plans to focus its growth on what it already does well – growing provision across the business school, built environment and construction, health, engineering and the growing sector of sustainability. With apprenticeship technology in place that will grow with it, the university is looking forward to the coming months and years.

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LSBU currently has a 'Good' Ofsted rating. We have ambitions for this to become 'Outstanding'. We see Aptem playing a huge role in that journey.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

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We chose Aptem due to its rich functionality and uniquely extensive experience of working with so many UK universities that offer degree apprenticeships. Aptem's powerful platform for apprenticeship learning delivery and administration, coupled with its consultative approach and innovative roadmap, gave us the confidence it was the best platform to support our apprenticeship team, employers and learners.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

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