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Case study: London South Bank University

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The growth trajectory and scale of apprenticeship delivery at London South Bank University (LSBU) is dependent on efficient, compliant apprenticeship management. After a rigorous selection process, the LSBU team decided to adopt Aptem as their chosen technology platform. The platform has already transformed the onboarding experience for learners and is enabling the apprenticeship team to turn their attentions from time-consuming administrative tasks to a more strategic, value-add approach.

Implementing Aptem at London South Bank University to enable growth of the apprenticeship provision

London South Bank University (LSBU) launched its first apprenticeship programme in 2016, and now has more than 2,800 learners across 30 apprenticeship programmes spanning Levels 4 to 7. The university is set to continue this rapid growth with ambitions to have 6,000 apprentices enrolled at LSBU in 2025.

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Prior to implementing Aptem, it took up to five months to give apprentices and employers access to an apprenticeship system

The LSBU apprenticeship team, headed up by Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, was bogged down with time-consuming manual tasks, aware that lengthy setting processing was fast becoming unfit for purpose as the university's apprenticeship provision was scaled up.

Sammy explains: "It was taking my team around three months to manually add apprentices into our previous 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.

It was tough for the learners who were being asked to record the 20% off-the-job learning, yet they had nowhere to put it. Spreadsheets and inconsistent documentation processes were unsustainable and so we needed to find a more suitable apprenticeship management system."

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LSBU has gone from learners having to wait up to five months to start using an online apprenticeship management system, to having it available on day one of their programme. That makes a huge impact on their engagement and progress.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

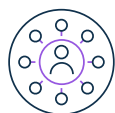## The search for a more innovative, effective system

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

Integration with the university's student record 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.

LSBU investigated the market and invited three suppliers to showcase their products, services and expertise. Aptem came out on top for a number of reasons.

"The Aptem system and sector experts gave real clarity on what they could provide, and it was a very compelling offer. The selection process was rigorous, and involved several meetings, presentations and collaborative discussions with various internal colleagues," explains Sammy.

In addition to clarity, the LSBU team highly rated the willingness of Aptem experts to engage and really listen to their challenges.

We got a sense that the Aptem team would partner with us to resolve our issues, and we have not been disappointed. Employers who have used Aptem with other providers also encouraged LSBU to switch and highly rated their experience using Aptem.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

An efficient, expert-led implementation

With the support of a highly experienced Implementation Consultant, the LSBU team was able to build 30 programmes to migrate and import the existing student body evidence files and records, import the ILR files and begin new student application and enrolment learning – all in just two-and-a-half months. Phase two is to continue importing migration files, move all 2,800 existing learners onto Aptem and be ready to onboard new apprentices straight onto the system in September.

It's something Sammy is very proud of, and he's grateful for the implementation support throughout. "For me, the experience has been great. We have had weekly project calls and our Implementation Consultant has spent significant time meeting with us, sometimes more than twice a week, to keep things moving at pace. He really takes the time to understand our processes and give expert advice on how we can best use Aptem, as well as guidance on when our processes might be improved. I consider him to be an LSBU member now; he has just been so supportive of the whole implementation. Without that level of input, we wouldn't be in the position we are today."

Time-saving integrations and building a high-performing apprenticeship team

In September, as part of phase two, integration work will begin between Aptem and LSBU's Student Record System. For the apprenticeship team, this will be a game-changer as they will no longer need to download thousands of documents each year. Instead, attendance, results and other key pieces of information will be seamlessly available within the student record on one platform.

The BKSB integration for English and Maths Initial Assessment is already saving an estimated month of an LSBU team member's resource.

"Prior to Aptem, someone had to go in manually, check the results of every individual applicant and then upload them onto their previous system. A few minutes of work for every applicant adds up, especially when you have more than a thousand applicants, many of whom need chasing. As we scale, that task alone would have been untenable."

The team is growing, no longer through being under resourced, but in order to focus on more value-added activities. Once all the implementation has been completed, and the learning plans have been all set up, two people will be responsible for the day-to-day activities and another for reporting. All will be laser focused on getting the most out of the system.

The apprentices themselves are really engaging with the platform and that's great to see.

Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU

"LSBU will assess the impact of implementing Aptem and will produce an ROI report to senior management to demonstrate the savings and increased engagement which we are confident will be realised from Aptem," explains Sammy.

The LSBU team is truly delighted to have procured Aptem and have it make such a difference so quickly. Sammy explains the impact on his role:

"For those apprentices already using Aptem, the visibility is fantastic. I can go in at any point and see how they are doing. I can see if there are red flags of anyone falling behind and needing intervention to keep them progressing and on track. The apprentices themselves are really engaging with the platform and that's great to see. And I can do my job of reporting to senior leaders on a monthly basis on our retention, recruitment, achievement and flag any issues and needs."
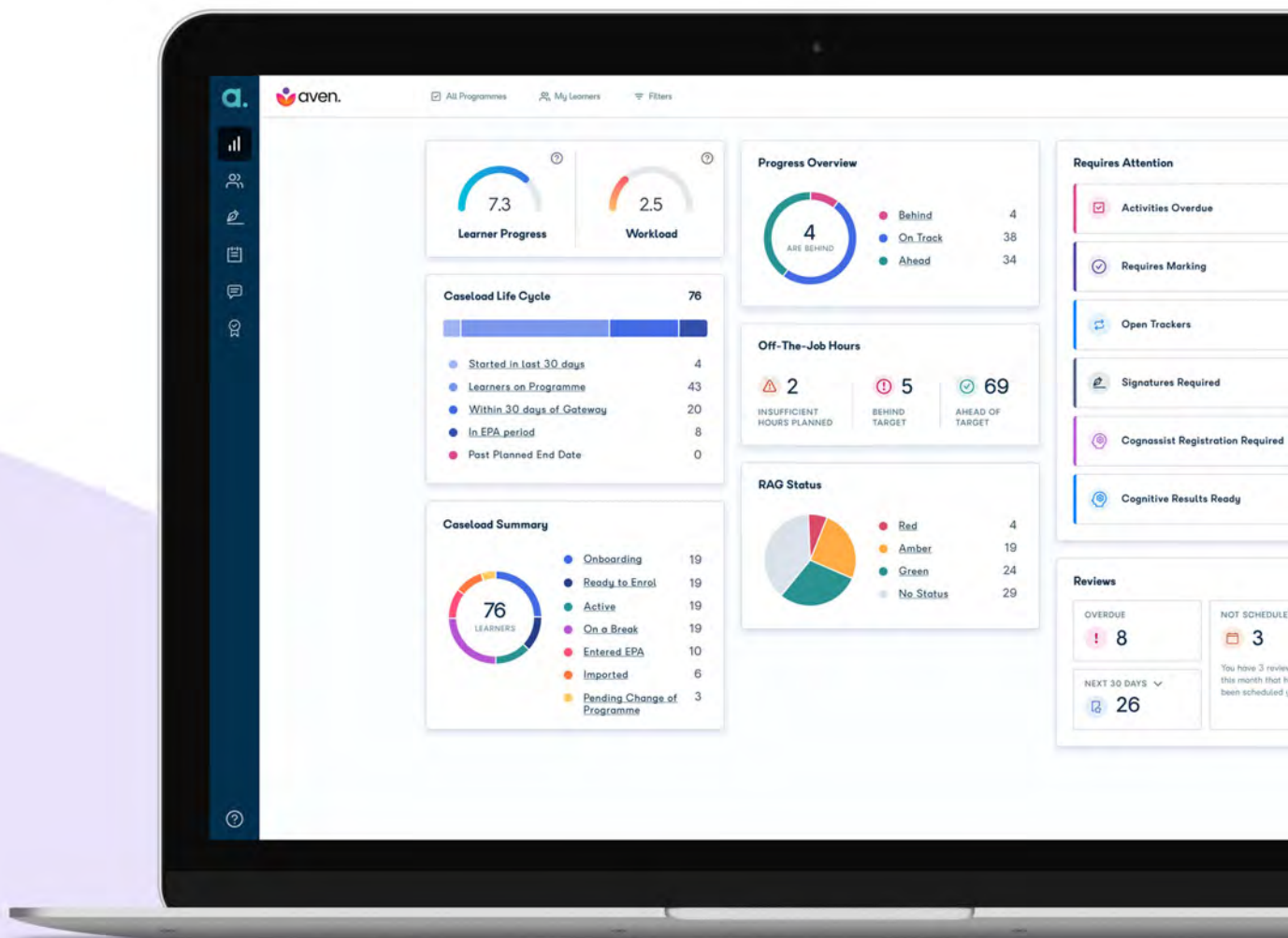
An optimistic future for LSBU apprenticeships

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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Our Aptem Implementation Consultant really takes the time to understand our processes and give expert advice on how we can best use Aptem, as well as guidance on when our processes might be improved. I consider him to be an LSBU member now.

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