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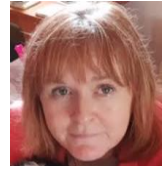
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Handout: Co-creating Assessments with Employers: What Worked, What Challenged, and What We Learnt

Overview

Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) programmes integrate academic study with full-time employment. Apprentices attend university on a day-release basis while applying theories, concepts, and tools to workplace projects that benefit their employers. This handout summarises findings from a project exploring how co-creating assessments with employers particularly through workplace mentors can strengthen the alignment between academic requirements and authentic workplace practice.

The Challenge

Some apprentices struggle to identify work-based projects that simultaneously:

- Meet academic assessment criteria
- Are realistic within their specific organisational context

Mentors, who understand organisational priorities, constraints, and project pipelines, are well placed to help, but their role in shaping assessments is often underutilised.

Key Enablers of Effective Co-Creation

Our survey of apprentices and employers identified several factors that support successful collaborative assessment design:

- **Regular tripartite check-ins:** Aligns project timelines with assessment schedules, reduces last-minute crises
- **Cross-team project sourcing:** Enables apprentices in less obviously aligned roles to find suitable projects while working with other teams in their organisation
- **Mentor mobilisation of internal expertise:** Connects apprentices with specialist colleagues



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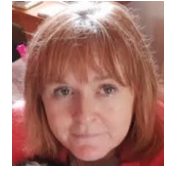
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- **Dual feedback (mentor + academic):** Integrates theory and practice more effectively on work-place problems
- **Peer support among apprentices:** Shares practical strategies and reduces isolation

Common Identified Challenges

- Low visibility and perceived relevance of existing mentor training
- Limited mentor familiarity with academic assessment language and criteria
- Data governance or confidentiality constraints restricting how workplace activity/data can be evidenced/presented outside of the organisation

Recommended Interventions

Based on respondent feedback, the following support structures can increase mentor confidence and improve project-assessment fit:

- **Mentor skills sessions** — Practical training on supporting apprentice assessments
- **Clear assessment criteria and exemplars** — Shared with mentors and apprentices
- **Structured access to specialist colleagues** — Facilitating cross-team input
- **Mentor/peer learning spaces** — Facilitation for mentors/apprentices to share experiences and strategies

Key Takeaway

Positioning mentors explicitly as co-creators of assessment opportunities, rather than passive supporters enables more sustainable, partnership-based assessment practices that balance organisational priorities with apprentice workloads and academic standards.

References

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2. Bovill, C. (2019). A co-creation of learning and teaching typology: What kind of co-creation are you planning or doing?. International Journal for Students as Partners. 3. 91-98. 10.15173/ij sap.v3i2.3953.