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Case study: University of Portsmouth

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Aptem has been transformative for the University of Portsmouth: from confident and successful Ofsted and internal ESFA Audit outcomes, to massive improvements with programme oversight reporting, and substantial time-savings within the Apprenticeship Administrative team.

Aptem – transforming apprenticeship management and oversight at University of Portsmouth

University of Portsmouth started its apprenticeship provision on a small scale back in 2017 with just six apprentices in one Faculty. It grew to around 50 the next year and rapidly expanded over the following five years. There are currently around 800 apprentices across all five Faculties. The introduction of Aptem has been nothing short of transformational for the nine-strong apprenticeship team and their work-based tutors.

800+

apprentices across
all five Faculties

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

The challenges of degree apprenticeship management without Aptem

Prior to implementing Aptem, apprenticeship management had become unmanageable at University of Portsmouth, with the effects being felt by work-based tutors, employers and the apprenticeship team members themselves.

Prior to Aptem

- **!** Pulling the Individual Learner Record (ILR) out of SITS was laborious, taking many days of back-and-forth emails about errors.

- **!** Using Moodle to track Off-the-Job hours was not fit for purpose.

- **!** Faculty staff struggled to manage changes of circumstances, such as moving to a new employer or taking a Break in Learning.

- **!** Forecasting Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) was manual and inaccurate.

With Aptem

What the introduction of Aptem allowed us to do is really take stock of our processes, using the HEI expertise within the Aptem implementation team to systematically streamline what we had been juggling for so long.

Paul Goldthorpe, Senior Accounts and Compliance Manager, University of Portsmouth

Claire Middleton, Degree Apprenticeships Manager at University of Portsmouth, explains, *"as university systems are not designed for apprenticeships, we had ended up with multiple systems and countless spreadsheets. It was a nightmare to manage.*

Our scenario may be familiar to others who don't yet have a purpose-built apprenticeship management system. With the complex requirements of apprenticeships, we had added layer upon layer of bureaucracy and it would take days to answer a simple question such as how many live learners we had.

We would literally be writing it down on bits of paper and then adding it up manually. There was no way to get that data before it was published, and that was really difficult. Signed reviews were again in spreadsheets and Dropboxes all over the place. Important questions were very difficult to answer, such as 'when was the last review?', 'what issues were raised?', 'who signed it off?'.

Chasing people once they'd gone past their end date was also tricky because people lacked clarity over exactly when that planned end date was."
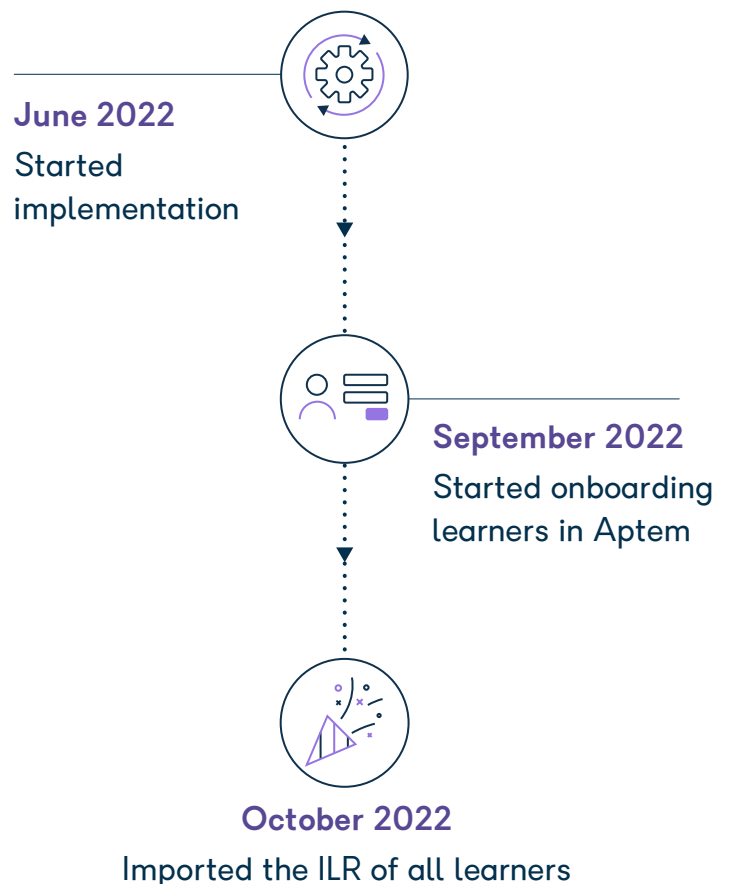
Selecting Aptem – the only viable option for degree apprenticeship management

When procuring Aptem, the University of Portsmouth team went through a formal, detailed market review. They had well-defined criteria and graded each of the systems on the market. "*We wanted something tried and tested and one member of our team was keen to go with another supplier as she had used it before. However, we were walked through our requirements during the Aptem presentation, and were really impressed with how the team could literally answer everything.*"

The University team wanted to test the Aptem product further by speaking to other HEI users and this is what gave them the confidence to purchase the system. As part of those conversations, Claire and the team spoke to one Aptem customer, Middlesex University, who "*literally couldn't say anything negative; and I was pushing them, saying there must be something!*" All referral conversations were positive and so Aptem was selected, "*with flying colours*".

From purchase to implementation

The implementation experience was "*a joy*", in no small part due to the fact that staff formed a fantastic partnership with their Implementation Consultant. "*She was well informed, knew the sector and was always straight with us, which we really appreciated. She was on the ball with everything, highly responsive and spoke our language, consulting with us to put together the processes that we're now so proud of,*" explains Paul Goldthorpe (Senior Accounts and Compliance Manager). "*She truly was part of the team through the whole period.*"

June 2022
Started implementation

September 2022
Started onboarding learners in Aptem

October 2022
Imported the ILR of all learners

Life with Aptem

(1) **Taking full control of the apprenticeship journey**

Paul says, "*since 2017 we've been putting sticking plasters over our processes to try to fix them. What the introduction of Aptem allowed us to do is really take stock of those processes, using the HEI expertise within the Aptem implementation team to systematically streamline what we had been juggling for so long.*"

The University of Portsmouth team now has much more control and oversight of the whole process. Previously, they only looked after the upfront part of the apprenticeship journey, and the apprentice would be managed by the relevant Faculty,

just like any student, as soon as they were live on programme. This was far from ideal, as there are of course many nuances to apprenticeship management.

Claire and her team have now completely redesigned the learner journey of live apprentices. Those important nuances, such as changes of employer, breaks in learning and withdrawals are now managed within Aptem, by the team that really understands the process. It means the external returns team, which deals with the overall university HESA returns, is no longer bogged down with also trying to manage apprentices. It also means the learner has a much more tailored 'apprenticeship' experience.

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Aptem Trackers automate the efficient and compliant management of circumstantial changes. This would have previously involved at least half a dozen emails between the member of the team dealing with the apprentice, and myself.

Paul Goldthorpe, Senior Accounts and Compliance Manager, University of Portsmouth

2 Centralised data for key stakeholders

Claire explains the impact of centralised data for all those involved in apprenticeship delivery.

For the team: *"One of the difficulties that we have in universities is that each apprentice will probably have contact with 12-plus academics, because each module is delivered by its own specialist. Getting that report of how they are doing is really tough, but now we've got the ability to see their Off-the-Job training, module reports and scores, and compliance documents in one place. Previously, that would have involved several systems and time-consuming data-matching for my team of account managers."*

For employers: *"Aptem enables better engagement with our employers. Those with larger numbers of apprentices require monthly reporting. This is simple with Aptem's Employer Dashboard, where Paul and his team can quickly drill down to see where their conversations with employers need to be focused."*

For Ofsted inspections: *"The ability to report and pull data came into its own during University of Portsmouth's latest Ofsted inspection. We were able to ask work-based tutors for specific examples as requested by the inspection team, and it was so easy to retrieve from Aptem. Whatever they wanted to see, we could provide. They were reassured that, although still in implementation, with the investment in Aptem we had everything in hand."*

For ESFA audits: *"In our latest internal ESFA audit, there were 13 key actions. Most of them were historic issues that occurred when working with multiple systems. We were really, really happy that we could explain how such occurrences won't happen going forward as Aptem now takes care of everything in one place for us. We're so much more confident in the data now and can, hand on heart, say that's a big improvement."*

3 Improving tutor impact

Implementing Aptem has profoundly impacted work-based tutors at the University. "*They too had felt the pain of working from spreadsheets*," explains Claire. "*Aptem as a system is designed for apprenticeship management. And at our organisation it's been configured for us and the way in which we manage our provision. Our tutors find Aptem intuitive, and engaged with the system quickly because they could find everything they needed in one place. Crucially, it has transformed how they track learner progress, which will positively impact the quality of our delivery and reduce dropouts and out-of-funding learners.*"

Claire recalls one instance where a tutor used the Skills Scan tool to revisit current Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) of apprentices who had already been on the programme for a year; helping to get a more realistic picture of capability.

The tutors now use the system – in particular the RAG rating – to demonstrate to employers where the KSB gaps are, resulting in a more compelling case for employer engagement, identification of learning opportunities, and support.

Word is getting around about Aptem and the apprenticeship team find that colleagues are now knocking on their door wanting to take a look at what it does. For example, one Faculty member who had oversight for the apprenticeship approaching EPA had a requirement for detailed information about each apprentice. The team enabled him to self-serve, saving valuable to-and-fro requests and extracting the right information, faster.

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Claire Middleton, Degree Apprenticeship Manager, University of Portsmouth

10 ways in which Aptem is impacting University of Portsmouth's apprenticeship provision

✅ Learner enrolment is more efficient and compliant than ever before.

✅ Apprenticeship data is now more accurate and easier to access.

✅ Built-in Power BI dashboards give a succinct snapshot of actual and predictive metrics.

✅ Changes of circumstances, such as breaks in learning and withdrawals, are now dealt with efficiently and compliantly through Aptem Trackers.

✅ Employer information is more easily kept up to date throughout the apprenticeship.

✅ Employers are consistently engaged from the start of the apprenticeship programme, through onboarding reviews.

✅ Off-the-Job OTJ hours and evidence is fully tracked, as learners upload it to Aptem via a 'miscellaneous component' where it's validated by the work-based tutors.

✅ Learners always have somewhere to record their observations as self-service reviews are available and open for editing for 12 weeks at a time.

✅ The ILR submission process has been shortened from around 10 days each month to just four to five hours. With the team processing changes of circumstances in real-time, there is no longer a rush at month end.

✅ Prior to Aptem, confidence in compliance was just three or four out of 10. The team is now at an eight, leaning towards a nine.

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To have everything in one place has just been amazing. We have more control over the data and have a more accurate picture of what's going on for all apprentices.

Amy Dymond-Hobbs, Quality Manager, University of Portsmouth

Getting the right technology in place is a critical piece of the quality jigsaw. Since the introduction of Aptem, we're already seeing increases in pass rates for those learners who began their apprenticeship journey with Aptem.

Claire Middleton, Degree Apprenticeship Manager, University of Portsmouth

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Intelligent technology®

If you are an organisation that helps deliver further education and employment programmes and would like to transform the way you deliver in a cost-effective, efficient and compliant way, get in touch:

enquiries@aptem.co.uk

020 3758 8540

www.aptem.co.uk/apprentice

Aptem is one of the fastest-growing SaaS software companies to manage vocational training, skills and employability programmes. In addition to Aptem Apprentice, we offer a range of other solutions to support the development of vocational skills and re-employment.

✓ **Aptem Enrol,** remote onboarding of apprenticeship students, for colleges.

✓ **Aptem Employ,** a unique, flexible, award-winning employability system that helps to get people back into the workplace quickly and for the long term.

✓ **Aptem Skills,** our award-winning end-to-end delivery platform that enables fully compliant AEB course delivery and accelerates re-employment.

✓ **Aptem Assess,** a cognitive assessment tool that enables you to seamlessly identify and respond to learning needs.

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