



Aptem at work — Middlesex University



Aptem develops innovative SaaS technology solutions to enable skills development and employability. Our solutions drive compliance, operational efficiency and business control.

Case Study – Middlesex University

Middlesex University contracted Aptem to help manage and grow their degree apprenticeship programmes. In this case study, we talk about their experience of Aptem and how it has helped them get on top of apprenticeship administration and compliance.

Middlesex University delivered its first apprenticeship in construction in September 2017 with a small cohort of 25 learners. Since then, their apprenticeship offering has grown to seven subject areas – policing, nursing and healthcare, digital, business and management, teaching, social work, and environmental and occupational health and safety.

Within these subject areas, they have eighteen-degree apprenticeship programmes and over 700 apprentices. A significant growth area is the new police constable degree apprenticeship.



Administrative overload

Middlesex signed up to Aptem Apprentice in February 2019. Before Aptem, says Steven Willis, CAS Operations Manager at Middlesex, the university was mired in administration for its growing cohort of apprentices:

“Our sales returns officer, who was responsible for doing the ILRs, would spend a whole month preparing an ILR file with a race to get it in by the submission day. Then, as soon as she submitted it, she started the following month’s!”

Other compliance issues were also causing a problem, such as onboarding paperwork and monitoring off-the-job hours:

“We were manually doing commitment statements which were a real nightmare, especially when we started getting bigger numbers in. With our first nursing apprenticeship cohort, we had 160 learners, and we had to create 160 manual commitment statements. For me, that was the tipping point where I said we really need to get a solution to this!”

“But in addition to that, one of the biggest challenges has been recording and monitoring the off-the-job training elements. The systems we had weren’t built around that, and again it needed a lot of manual work.”

Aptem steps in

Aptem Apprentice seemed to offer the ideal solution:

“One of the biggest plusses of Aptem when we were looking at the systems on offer was the fact that we could use it to do all of our submissions. Aptem has now proven to be our one central place, our digital bible if you like. We know if something happens it goes in Aptem, it’s recorded, and that’s the one place we need to look.”

One of its particular benefits is that it has cut down the amount of time administration takes, says Willis:

“Aptem’s gone a long way to solving our ILR problem. Our sales officer is a lot happier because it’s taking her a lot less time to get those ILR submissions in. Now, it takes around about a week to prepare a file, put it in, see all the anomalies, then fix those and get it all submitted. It’s become much easier and she’s not working on a rolling basis anymore, which is great.”

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And Aptem has also solved the problem of commitment statements, off-the-job hours and tripartite reviews:

“Aptem has solved all the administration issues around onboarding. It allows us to record off-the-job hours easily – something academics now really understand and have got on board with – and tripartite reviews. The recording of the reviews and the outcomes of these all in one system is a big plus.”

Customer service

Willis praised the Aptem team for their attentiveness during implementation. Universities have many different stakeholders – from administration to academics and learners – and Willis had to explain to each segment what the system could deliver and why it was necessary:

“One of the challenges with a new system always is getting people to understand what this new system was going to do to help make their lives easier. The Aptem implementation consultant – Lou James – did an excellent job of explaining that.

“I was still new to the system myself, so trying to convince people that I knew what I was talking about was quite a difficult job. So it was good for Lou to come and reinforce that message, and then be able to demonstrate it for everybody:



‘This is how this works’, and, ‘This is how you do that’, and, ‘This is what you need to do for this automatic process to kick in’, as people are sitting with the system in front of them real-time. That was the thing that convinced them Aptem was going to make their lives easier.”

During implementation, Middlesex won the police constable degree apprenticeship contract, which meant working with three other universities and three different employers. Aptem was critical in helping to integrate the programme into the system:

“Lou went above and beyond what she would typically be expected to do. We also worked with John Brightwell, who proved to be invaluable and we appreciated his input. We probably used John and know John a lot more than maybe your typical customers would because of our needs at the time. That’s been a really valuable thing for us.

“We’ve also appreciated the quick turnaround on developments and tweaks to the Aptem system – that’s been one of the big bonuses.”



A self-sustaining system

Importantly, Aptem doesn't just solve problems reactively; it also builds apprenticeship capacity by 'running itself'. Willis argued that before having Aptem, Middlesex was very reliant on "people like me knowing what we should be doing". Now, the system is self-sustaining:

"What we found before we had Aptem was that it was almost like we were going on a journey where every day we'd come in, and someone would say: 'Are we doing this?' I would generally say, 'No, we're not. Right, we need to come up with a solution to how we're going to do that.' So it was mapping out that apprenticeship journey. But now, Aptem has helped us stay on top of that journey and generally the answer to: 'Are we doing this?' is 'Yes we are.' Aptem has definitely made my life a lot easier."

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Does what it says on the tin

“Aptem is one of those systems that does what it says on the tin,” says Willis.

“When it was pitched to us initially as a full end-to-end system which would help us with the delivery of apprenticeships as well as compliance, it really does do just that.

“There isn’t anything we need to do outside of Aptem. It will take you from the initial contact with an employer all the way to the end-point assessment. It allows you and gives you the ability to become fully compliant with the Education and Skills Funding Agency without the need for outside assistance.”

Aptem helps Middlesex to manage its growing apprenticeship proposition with ease, making administration more efficient and delivering on compliance. It is everything Middlesex needs to become one of the leading providers of degree apprenticeships in the UK.

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Find out how Aptem can help you with all aspects of apprenticeship delivery.

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