

Support Apprentices

Helen Curtis, School Manager

Supports learning style

Being at college is about 'right and wrong' and everything hinges on one exam – it puts too much pressure on you. If you get something wrong at work, you're just show how to put it right.

Easier to understand work when you are doing it rather than learning theory, apprentices get to learn by doing

Get more 121 time with line manager, in college 100 other students to one tutor – more supportive environment with opportunities to ask questions and get advice

Positive environment

More supportive – encouragement to learn instead of judgement and failure if you get something wrong

Inclusive – able to be self, organisation meets their values

Part of a team that has knowledge, you can admit to not knowing something, and everyone in the team is happy to help you. Great to be with lots of experienced staff.

Welcoming environment, friendly, fun activities and team days

Challenges

Double transition – need to adjust to working and getting used to being at the University.

Anxiety – about meeting new people, working with different ages, abilities to understand tasks, and whether they will fit in.

Feelings of being out of depth at the beginning

Getting used to staff changes in the team, with staff coming and going for example maternity leave or manager leaving.

What has helped

Weekly catch-ups with managers, team catch-ups and fun activities

Ability to ask questions straightaway through teams chat or in person

Some blended working as different staff have different needs

Development opportunities – including projects that fit with interest and skills, training and courses

Working with previous apprentices

What is the apprenticeship scheme?

Our UoB flagship apprenticeship programme – eXcelBristol – provides opportunities to attract and develop new talent from a diverse range of backgrounds, such as, groups that are currently under-represented at different levels across our Professional Services professions.

Creating entry level careers opportunities and enabling career pathways to help tackle skills shortages and provide the University with the skilled workers that are needed for the future, as well as providing a positive contribution to social mobility and supporting our civic ambitions.

Creating opportunity for junior colleagues to join the team and bringing in different types of people.

Watching them develop and succeed is very rewarding & bring enthusiasm to team

Extra pair of hands, can pick up repetitive tasks

It has made managers think more about how to manager. They have to adjust to think through exactly how to do a task as often apprentices have not worked in an office or lab environment before. This is seen as positive challenge.

Benefits of apprentices

Time commitment – need more supervision, list of daily tasks, additional support, planning out what they do, checking if they have done everything correctly

Due to pandemic apprentices working at home perhaps too much autonomy at the beginning hard to pull it back, can see apprentices picking up things more quickly for being back in the office, but they need supervision.

Not understanding expectations of working environment, consistency with tasks, perhaps only doing the fun tasks, need more support on communication

Manager's Challenges

More infrastructure to support managers

Sharing the workload across the team – everyone takes a role in supporting the apprentices, projects with a supervisor for the day.

1 line manager in the team throughout for consistency

Professional mentor – to support professional behaviours

Carefully plan number of apprentices two at a time can be too much

Opportunity to improve

Since the introduction of enhanced support for apprentices the Medical School has had seven business admin apprentices and 1 technical apprentice, with another joining shortly.

We have had a high success rate, with all completing their apprenticeships, 6 going on to secure positions in school or wider organisation.

Last year we conducted two focus groups (one with apprentices, and one with their managers) to understand their experiences and plan for future.

Successes