

APM Academic

ACCREDITATION

CASE STUDY



Introduction

Blackpool and the Fylde College is one of the UK's elite colleges awarded Beacon status in recognition of excellence, innovation and outstanding delivery.

It is one of the largest general further education colleges in the North West, with a national reputation for the diverse range of further and higher education learning opportunities it provides.

The achievements of this award-winning college are the result of the effort and commitment of staff and students, working with local and regional partners to ensure that the regional economic priorities are addressed and that regeneration of the area is based on improving skills and education.

Blackpool and the Fylde College is committed to providing high quality, flexible and easily accessible learning opportunities for individuals, organisations and the local community. Some 40 per cent of students are mature entrants looking to change their career or progress within their current employment.

Over the past 20 years it has developed a vibrant higher education curriculum focused on addressing business development needs and the aspirations of employers and employees. A major milestone in this strategy was the opening in 2009 of a £10 million university centre with degrees validated by Lancaster University.

Blackpool and the Fylde is an associate college of Lancaster University and among its nationally recognised

achievements are success in the National Training Awards scheme and in the Centre of Excellence in Leadership for Social and Community Cohesion, demonstrating its reputation for high quality training for industry.

Playing a vital role

Having qualified for up to 375.7 million of investment from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) between 2007-13, regeneration is high on the agenda for the North East.

Blackpool and the Fylde College recognised that effective, professional project managers would play a vital role in this regeneration, as well in helping other industries and businesses to become smarter and more responsive in an increasingly competitive global environment.

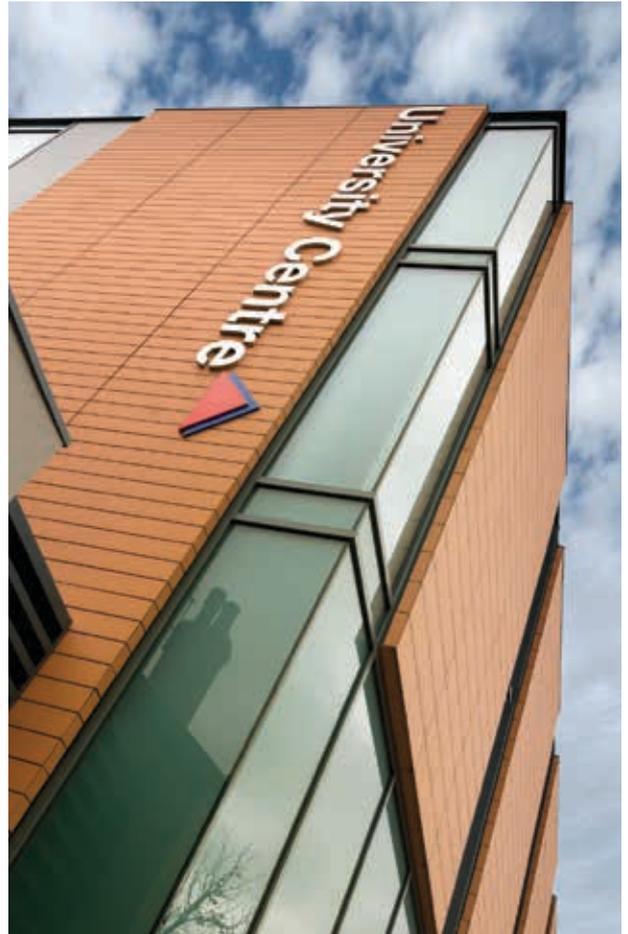
The college responded to this demand by developing a foundation degree in project management, building on experience and expertise that already existed among tutors in the School of Engineering, rated as Grade 1 Outstanding by Ofsted.

This programme has been designed in close collaboration with a large local employer, BAE Systems, to meet its need to train staff as project managers who are responsible for part of a project whose overall management lies with project managers. The college was invited to tender and won. BAE set the framework for the programme and the curriculum team worked to this brief, discussing ideas with practitioners in the company as the programme evolved and making changes to the module content requested by BAE.

Although the degree has been developed to meet the needs of one employer who has guaranteed to provide a certain number of students each year, the programme is not designed exclusively for them. BNFL and Leyland Trucks – two other local employers – have also expressed interest.

“APM was selected as an accreditation partner as it is the leader in project management development and has an appropriate kudos which is recognised within industry, including BAE Systems.”

Kraig Reeves-Brown



“The project management and management of large projects is fast becoming a focal point for many large and medium size employers, with global competitiveness becoming a real threat to UK business,” said Kraig Reeves-Brown, Curriculum Leader for HE Development & Project Management, School Of Engineering & Computing.

“Due to this, customer demand for an efficient and cost effective service is driving industry to become smarter and more responsive thus requiring highly effective project management and management personnel.”

The ethos behind the degree programme resonates with APM's mission statement to 'develop and promote the professional disciplines of project and programme management for the public benefit'. As well as providing a sound educational experience to create graduates with a critical understanding of the key components of project management, the programme has also been designed to give candidates the skills to manage projects within dynamic and changing environments.

The first students were accepted in 2007 and 42 have graduated with an FDS degree in project management. The BSc (Hons) Top Up was developed and introduced in 2009, which two full time students have completed so far and a further 22 part-time students are completing in 2012.

A programme for professionals

The modular foundation degree programme offers flexible ways for students to gain the necessary credits for the qualification – two years' full-time study, three years' part-time or a mixture of the two as appropriate for the individual student.

Applicants are expected to already hold qualifications such as A' Levels or a National Diploma and demonstrate a high level of analytical and communication skills. Students without the standard entry requirements but who are in current employment are considered through an interview process.

The aim is to equip them with the skills, knowledge and informed critical awareness in preparation for the issues and opportunities they will face. The academic elements provide the essential tools and techniques. Work placement, role-play and simulations expose them to the reality of the working project environment and how the theory and knowledge apply in practice.



Networking is also positively encouraged, creating an environment for cross pollination of practices and ideas from an array of working backgrounds to strengthen the students' understanding of the dynamic role of working and practicing project managers.

The APM Body of Knowledge and Competence Framework have been embedded throughout the development of the foundation degree and modules are aligned to the Body of Knowledge. This ensures that the students meet both the academic requirements and, most importantly, the practitioner requirements as defined by the five dimensions of professionalism to ensure they meet the needs of industry.

Teaching is by a combination of lectures, seminars,

discussions and tutorials, supplemented by practical and workshop sessions. Presentations, debate and other directed study creates an engaging, student-centred approach to learning and development.

The teaching team takes a collaborative approach that provides a comprehensive and challenging environment, offering a plethora of delivery methods and contrasting perspectives. The students thrive on this, with the majority averaging merit and distinction grades on every module.

Even if they are unable to attend all classes because of work commitments, students are still able to engage with their colleagues and tutors in real-time through the blended virtual learning environment. This flexible online tool allows them access to materials and to contribute to on-line forum discussions before, during and after delivery in the classroom. It is also used to provide audio verbal feedback to each student about assessments for each module.

The success of this blended approach has been recognised by the Project Management Network for Excellence in Learning & Teaching.

Commented external examiner Miles Shepherd, vice president of APM: "The programme and the modules are pedagogically sound and are presented in an interesting and innovative manner. The teaching design is also sound and some of the delivery mechanisms are innovative."

Personal development is another integral part of the programme, encouraging communication skills and analysis capability, problem solving, the presentation and justification of rational argument and alternative courses of action.

Each student has an individually tailored scheme of work, a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plan and uses a personal development profile (PDP) process to monitor and reflect upon their skills development. This allows tutors to support and guide students in setting realistic goals and targets, aided by assessments that cover both the theory and practical application.

Membership of APM is encouraged as part of the students' commitment to becoming project professionals and signing up to the professional code of conduct. This is underlined during the Legal, Ethical and Professional Practice Module, which requires students to develop a Code of Professional Conduct for Project Managers.

The foundation degree course continues to develop and improve. Every aspect of the programme's integrity is audited, reviewed and challenged to ensure processes are being met, standards maintained and that it remains relevant and fit for purpose.

Members of the teaching staff - all key specialists within their fields - undergo annual performance reviews and there are regular meetings with employers to ensure the programme's content stays focused and in line with what industry needs. Students also have a role to play in influencing the curriculum through representation on the course committee and staff/student liaison meetings.

Association for Project Management and Blackpool and the Fylde College

By embedding the APM Body of Knowledge and Competence Framework on the foundation degree course, students on the Blackpool and the Fylde College programme meet both the academic and practitioner requirements defined by the association's five dimensions of professionalism. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to professionalism through membership of APM

The teaching team has presented at the annual APM Educational Network Forum on becoming more market-led in developing specific programmes for industry. The foundation degree in project management has been developed with and validated by Lancaster University, a corporate member of APM.

“ On the back of completing the Foundation Degree and the skills that has given me I have been promoted at work and now have the grand title of Performance Manager and responsible for continuous improvement, quality and business performance across the whole company”.

Jason Bradford, graduated with distinction



Personal story

When I first started on the Project Control Foundation Scheme in September 2007, I wasn't too sure what to expect – I was a new student on a brand new scheme. I had a sense of excitement and I was really keen to start the job and my training.

The scheme is set up so that BAE students work full time in their job placement at either Warton or Samlesbury, and attend Blackpool and the Fylde College one day during the week for a BSc Honours Degree in Project Management, while also receiving other qualifications funded by the organisation, such as NVQs and APM qualifications.

Blackpool and the Fylde College in association with Lancaster University has been very supportive to each and every student, to ensure that we gain the most we can from the scheme and reach our greatest potential. Not only do the college and Lancaster University gain from the partnership with BAE Systems, but BAE Systems themselves are receiving new project management skills and talent, transferable throughout the organisation.

It has been a wonderful experience. The scheme has allowed me to grow in confidence as an individual within the work environment and also beyond. Initially, I thought I would struggle to study for a degree, study for the APM exam and undertake the NVQs, while also maintaining a social life. However, working and studying alongside one another has benefited my results and my overall experience as an individual. As far as my fellow scheme members and I are concerned, the Project Control Foundation Scheme is a best practice scheme, which other organisations should consider for their future.

Joanna Cinis, BAE Systems – Typhoon Mission Support Systems Capability, Export Programmes Project Management, Combat Air Support

Testimonial

The introduction of the Project Control Foundation Scheme in 2007 was a long term solution to the requirement to re-generate the Project Control community and capability within the Military Air and Information division of BAE Systems.

The entry criterion was set at good A' Level standard however, in order to attract the high calibre individuals and to provide a formal Project Management education a partnership was established between BAE SYSTEMS and Blackpool and the Fylde College. In order to meet the requirement specified by ourselves, the college tailored an Honours degree programme in Project Management and achieved Honours degree status accreditation from Lancaster University which was vital to creating an attractive offering to our trainees.

The partnership has continued to develop over the last four years. This partnership now provides seamless delivery of a 5 year development programme for the trainees that combine the academic learning, provided by the College, dovetailing with the work experience allowing the trainees to learn and become practitioners of Project Control and Management.

The way the scheme has been established and run between ourselves and the college has re-created that community we were looking for.

Andy Bloor, BAE Systems

Association for Project Management

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FIVEDimensions of Professionalism

APM Corporate Accreditation

APM Corporate Accreditation will help you stand out as an exemplar in the development of project management professionals. It provides assurances to your customers and suppliers and allows you to attract and retain the best project management talent in the country.

APM Corporate Accreditation recognises the commitment of organisations and professional development services to the defined APM FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism, each of which is supported by an APM standard:

Breadth

The *APM Body of Knowledge* defines the knowledge needed to manage any kind of project. It underpins many project management standards and methods including the National Occupational Standard in Project Management.

Depth

The *APM Competence Framework* provides a guide to project management competences. It is part of your professional toolkit; mapping levels of knowledge and experience to help you progress your skills and abilities.

Achievement

APM qualifications take your career in new and exciting directions. They are recognised across the profession and aligned with IPMA's 4 level Certification Program.

Commitment

Continuing Professional Development helps develop your project management practice. A targeted development plan will enhance your project management career.

Accountability

The APM Code of Professional Conduct outlines the ethical practice expected of a professional. Becoming an APM member shows your commitment to the Code and sets you apart from others.