



# BRIDGING THE GAP

How business schools are building pathways  
to success with degree apprenticeships

February 2024

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# FOREWORD

The Magna Carta had not yet been signed when the first degrees were awarded in England. Apprenticeships became formally and nationally recognised training just a few years after Elizabeth the First took the throne. Degree Apprenticeships, which combine these two educational heritages, have in just the last eight years, come to form a hugely important part of skills provision for learners, employers, and business schools. As a consequence there are more than 100 higher education institutions on the Apprenticeship Providers and Assessment Register.

However, the impacts of Degree Apprenticeships are often poorly understood, including by key stakeholders, as they lack visibility in many traditional forms of sector data. This report makes visible the demographic impact business and management apprenticeships have within England, making clear how and why these support the social and economic aims of the UK.

The economic impact of Business & Management apprenticeships has been made clear, with the CMI suggesting they return £700 million to the economy each year. Business & Management apprenticeships form the largest part of apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7, and as such have significant economic impact. The UK historically has low levels of management training and poor management practices which are a cause of the UK's long-standing productivity lag. With the ONS estimating that the UK has the lowest labour productivity amongst the G7 countries, management apprenticeships provides employers and the economy as a whole a route map to raised productivity through high quality management

The Chartered ABS strongly believes in the importance of continued investment in degree and higher apprenticeships to support UK businesses to address vital skills shortages, enhance productivity, and provide a significant ladder of opportunity and social mobility. Higher education institutions, and especially business schools have a key role to play in achieving these benefits, through the quality of education they can provide, with expertise not only in subject disciplines, but also in supporting business to deliver on their development and performance objectives.

The data presented in this report highlight the significant impact of Degree Apprenticeships on societal engagement and development within higher education. Apprenticeships already provide a significant contribution to the lifelong learning agenda, reach into communities where higher education engagement is at its lowest, and support new pathways into successful careers. In this context, level 6 and 7 business apprenticeships, in particular those in leadership and management, play important roles in widening participation on multiple measures and are key to the levelling up agenda, an ambition which is damaged when changes to apprenticeships occur, such as the removal of mandatory qualifications.



**Jonathan Lawson**  
Director of Strategic Partnerships, Faculty of Business and Law & Apprenticeship Unit, Manchester Metropolitan University

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There remains much which can be done to ensure the impact of apprenticeships within the business sector reaches everyone in our communities. This is not work that can be done by business schools alone. Apprenticeships remain in the employers' control as both the sponsor and locus of learning, whilst the regulatory frameworks in which apprenticeships sit, and choices such as mandatory qualifications and integration of end point assessment, all impact engagement with provision. Development of this impact is also partly dependent upon the willingness of the sector to engage in what is a highly regulated, scrutinised and complex delivery area, with little financial support to offset this. The sector can, and is, acting in the best interests of learners, organisations, and society, but without support from across all parties in the apprenticeships landscape, what can be achieved is curtailed.

And what can be achieved is worthwhile. Degree Apprenticeships represent a unique opportunity to break down centuries' old barriers between the academic and the vocational, between universities and businesses and between work and education.

### **Acknowledgements:**

We are grateful to our Apprenticeships Committee for their guidance, and in particular Dr Helen Charlton, Associate Professor and Head of Apprenticeships at Newcastle Business School, for her generosity and commitment in leading on writing this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT APPRENTICESHIPS

## **Business & Management is the most popular degree apprenticeship subject**

Business & Management makes up 47% of degree apprenticeship starts at levels 6 and 7 combined. In 2021/22 apprenticeship engagement at level 7 is heavily reliant on the Senior Leaders standard, making this a key standard for higher level apprenticeship impact.

## **Business & Management apprenticeships provide true progression routes**

Across level 6, 86% progress from lower-level qualifications, with nearly a fifth joining with less than A-level equivalents (12% at level 0, 6% at level 2, 48% at level 3, 10% at level 4 and 10% at level 5). Only 9% held a degree prior to their apprenticeship. At level 7, the largest proportion of apprentices progress from level 6 and 25% join with no prior degree qualification, including 10% of apprentices with no prior qualifications. Level 7 degree apprenticeships allow fast track progression for those with lower level qualifications (including those with no qualifications) at five times the rate of equivalent non-apprenticeship programmes.

## **Business & Management apprenticeships play a significant role in offering learning routes for both young and mature learners**

While young people comprise the largest share of business school level 6 apprentices, with 40% aged 24 or under at the start of their study, programmes have significant impact in extending opportunities to mature learners at a scale nearly twice that of standard undergraduate programmes.

## **Business & Management apprenticeships successfully engage women and ethnic minority learners**

Business & Management degree apprenticeships successfully engage proportionally more women (52%) and increase their representation in traditionally male dominant professions. Ethnic minority apprentices represent 15% of the total. This is a lower proportion than seen for traditional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in business schools and increasing engagement from ethnic minority learners is an area for development.

## **Business & Management apprenticeships overcome educational disadvantage on multiple measures**

Almost one-third of level 6 Business & Management apprentices come from communities with low higher education participation rates. Apprenticeships are particularly attractive to mature learners who may not otherwise access higher education, and this is also the case with business school apprenticeships. Business & Management apprenticeships overwhelmingly support those who studied in state schools, with just 3% of level 6 apprentices originating from public/private schools. They also have a higher percentage of learners who are 'first-in-family' than traditional business school programmes.

Business & Management apprenticeships successfully engage proportionally more women (52%) and increase their representation in traditionally male dominant professions.

# INTRODUCTION

This report presents a detailed analysis of reported apprenticeship data for English<sup>1</sup> business schools based on a bespoke dataset from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record for 2021/22<sup>2</sup>. All source data within this report is the Intellectual Property of Jisc.

The dataset considers demographic information about apprenticeship standards typically taught within business schools. By exploring this, we seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of apprenticeships in business education and identify areas where improvements and further utilisation of apprenticeships can lead to more inclusive and effective educational pathways.

Ofqual identified that business and administration forms the most significant sector of the apprenticeship market, with 27% of all apprenticeship end point assessments in 2022/23 in this route<sup>3</sup>, more than double the next highest. Within this, standards such as Accountancy or Taxation Professional and Senior Leaders formed over 6% of all end point assessments taken in the same period<sup>4</sup>.

As such, the data presented offers valuable insights into how apprenticeships are contributing to business schools, but also more broadly to higher education and society. It demonstrates that, in certain instances, apprenticeships surpass standard higher education business programmes, particularly in terms of their ability to facilitate broader participation and lifelong learning. However, this analysis also reveals untapped potential within the realm of apprenticeships, suggesting that more can be done to harness their capabilities in further enhancing educational and career opportunities.

We seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of apprenticeships in business education.

<sup>1</sup> Differing models apply in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and are not considered here.

<sup>2</sup> **Source of data:** The data used in this report, unless otherwise stated, is from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, Student Record 2021/22. Copyright Jisc 2023. Neither Jisc nor Jisc Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by Jisc or Jisc Services Limited. The analysis was undertaken by the Chartered Association of Business Schools in January 2024.

**Disclaimers:** While the Chartered ABS strives to make the information in this report as accurate as possible, the Chartered ABS makes no claims, or guarantees about the accuracy or completeness of the data obtained from Jisc.

<sup>3</sup> Ofqual (2023) Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments Statistical Report: March 2022 to February 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-end-point-assessments-statistical-report-march-2022-to-february-2023> NB this includes all levels.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

# METHODOLOGY

In this report we are discussing a custom dataset provided by HESA from the 2021/22 student data returned by institutions. This reports student data by academic programme title, and not by apprenticeship standard, and as such it is difficult to interpret like-for-like data in the context of apprenticeships. This limits the level of detail achievable and may obscure significant demographic detail.

Therefore, to analyse by apprenticeship standard we have mapped the reported programme titles to the known or most probable apprenticeship standards as defined by IFATE<sup>5</sup> (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education) falling within the Business and Administration, Legal, Finance and Accounting or Sales Marketing and Procurement occupation routes. Data is reported by apprenticeship standard and therefore only refers to business schools in England. Further detail on methodological approaches to comparison can be found below and further on within the analysis.

Within the source dataset, there are instances of unreliable or incomplete data. It should be noted that this could hamper the accuracy and robustness of any analysis based on this dataset. Furthermore, where we make comparisons to Department for Education data (for example, in tables 1 to 5), note that this is from the 2022/23 data, and as such should not be taken to be a like-for-like comparison, but as broadly comparative data given that the statistics have not changed significantly compared to 2021/22. It is crucial to acknowledge these limitations and be cautious when drawing conclusions from such data.

We identified significant discrepancies in reporting between the publicly available DfE datasets and the HESA dataset used for this analysis, particularly around the Accounting and Taxation Professional Standard. This probably reflects the large number of non-university providers delivering these programmes which do not report to HESA. This report focuses on the apprenticeship provision of business schools but some comparison with apprenticeship standards in other subject areas is offered.

## **HESA rounding and suppression methodology**

As the data in this report refers to the number of students enrolled on courses it uses the HESA rounding and suppression methodology to anonymise statistics. This means that numbers referring to students are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5 and any number less than 2.5 is rounded to 0. Any form of percentages based on less than 22.5 individuals are not published. Due to the application of the rounding methodology, the sub-totals of a category may not correspond precisely to the sum of the total.

## **Comparison with other data sources**

In some sections the report provides comparisons with other data sources, including Heidi Plus and official statistics from the Department for Education.

<sup>5</sup> IfATE (2023) Occupational Maps <https://occupational-maps.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>

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Where Heidi Plus data is used to compare with the wider student population, it should be noted that the Heidi Plus data also includes apprentices within the totals as these cannot be disaggregated within Heidi Plus.

The apprenticeship figures from DfE do not match those from the HESA dataset on which this report is based as the DfE data includes apprenticeship provision by FE colleges and private providers. The HESA apprenticeships data only covers higher education institutions in England.



# DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP STARTS BY SUBJECT IN 2022/23

## Business & Management in comparison to other apprenticeships

- Data from DfE (for England only)<sup>6</sup> in 2022/23 reveals that Business, Administration and Law is the second most popular apprenticeship subject area at level 6, accounting for 19% of all level 6 starts, second only to Health, Public Services and Care which accounted for 46% of all starts.
- At level 7 Business, Administration and Law was the most popular apprenticeship subject in 2022/23 comprising 80% of all starts. Looking at degree apprenticeships overall (levels 6 and 7), Business, Administration and Law was the most popular choice of subject with 47% of all starts in 2022/23.
- Tables 1 to 3 below provide a breakdown of the total number of starters in each apprenticeship subject at levels 6 and 7 and in aggregate.

**Table 1 – Level 6 apprenticeship starts in 2022/23 by subject area**

Sector Subject Area Tier 1	Social Science/STEM	Starts	As % of total
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	Social Science	110	0%
Arts, Media and Publishing	Social Science	50	0%
Business, Administration and Law	Social Science	4,710	19%
Education and Training	Social Science	1,330	5%
Health, Public Services and Care	Social Science	11,460	46%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	Social Science	230	1%
Social Sciences	Social Science	80	0%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	STEM	2,650	11%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	STEM	1,920	8%
Information and Communication Technology	STEM	2,360	9%
Science and Mathematics	STEM	130	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25,030</b>	<b>100%</b>

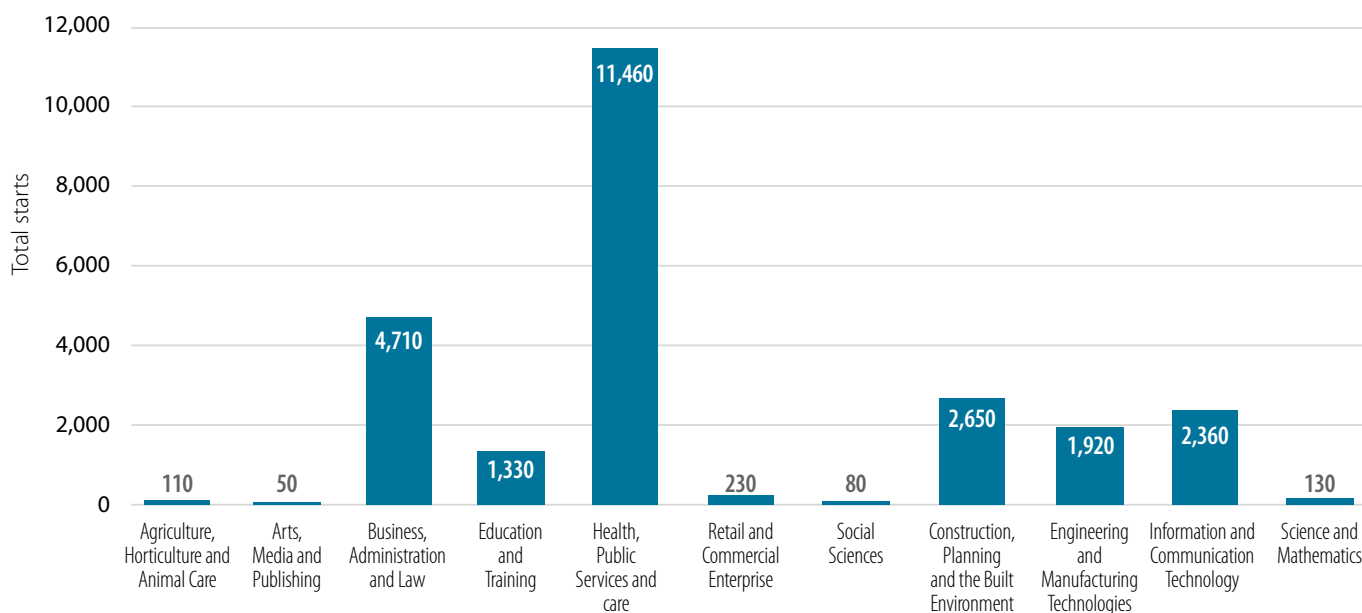
Department for Education [2022/23]

<sup>6</sup>Department for Education. Apprenticeships and traineeships academic year 2022/23. November 2023, Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/data-guidance> (accessed: 8 January 2024)

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**Figure 1 – Starts by sector subject area in level 6 apprenticeships (2022/23)**



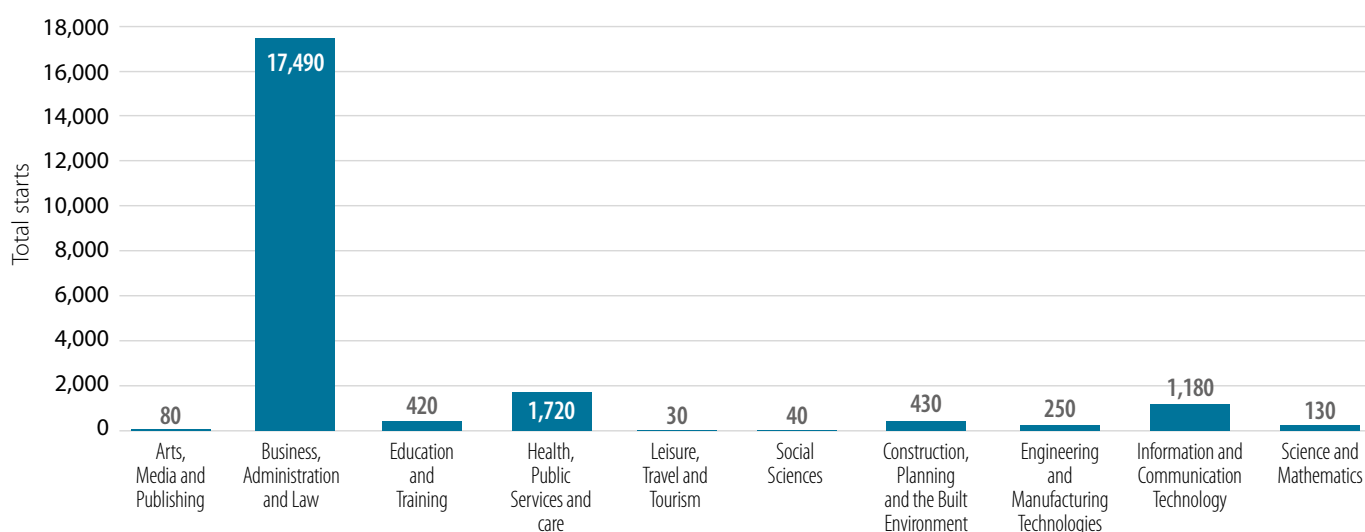
Department for Education [2022/23]

- There were 4,710 starts within the Business, Administration and Law subject area at level 6 in 2022/23, second only to Health, Public Services and Care which recorded 11,460 starts. After Business, Administration and Law, the subject area with the third highest number of starts at level 6 was Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, with 2,650.

**Table 2 – Level 7 apprenticeship starts in 2022/23 by subject area**

Sector Subject Area Tier 1	Social Science/STEM	Starts	As % of total
Arts, Media and Publishing	Social Science	80	0%
Business, Administration and Law	Social Science	17,490	80%
Education and Training	Social Science	420	2%
Health, Public Services and Care	Social Science	1,720	8%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	Social Science	30	0%
Social Sciences	Social Science	40	0%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	STEM	430	2%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	STEM	250	1%
Information and Communication Technology	STEM	1,180	5%
Science and Mathematics	STEM	130	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>21,770</b>	<b>100%</b>

Department for Education [2022/23]

**Figure 2 – Starts by sector subject area in level 7 apprenticeships (2022/23)**

Department for Education [2022/23]

- At level 7, Business, Administration and Law was by a considerable margin the most popular apprenticeship subject area in 2022/23 with 17,490 starts. The subject area with the second highest number of starts, Health, Public Services and Care, recorded 1,720 starts.

**Table 3 – Total degree apprenticeship starts (levels 6 and 7) in 2022/23 by subject area**

Sector Subject Area Tier 1	Social Science/STEM	Starts	As % of total
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	Social Science	110	0%
Arts, Media and Publishing	Social Science	130	0%
Business, Administration and Law	Social Science	22,200	47%
Education and Training	Social Science	1,750	4%
Health, Public Services and Care	Social Science	13,180	28%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	Social Science	230	0%
History, Philosophy and Theology	Social Science	0	0%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	Social Science	30	0%
Social Sciences	Social Science	120	0%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	STEM	3,080	7%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	STEM	2,170	5%
Information and Communication Technology	STEM	3,540	8%
Science and Mathematics	STEM	260	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46,800</b>	<b>100%</b>

Department for Education [2022/23]

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- Tables 4 and 5 provide a breakdown of Business, Administration and Law at levels 6 and 7 by the constituent subjects. Even accounting for the inclusion of a small amount of Law starts, the core business subjects remain the second most popular choice for level 6 apprentices and the most popular choice for level 7 apprentices.

**Table 4 – Breakdown in starts at level 6 in 2022/23 by constituent subjects in Business, Administration and Law**

Sector Subject Area Tier 2	Starts	As % of total
Business Management	3,540	75%
Marketing and Sales	350	7%
Accounting and Finance	760	16%
Law and Legal Services	70	1%
Total	4,720	

Department for Education [2022/23]

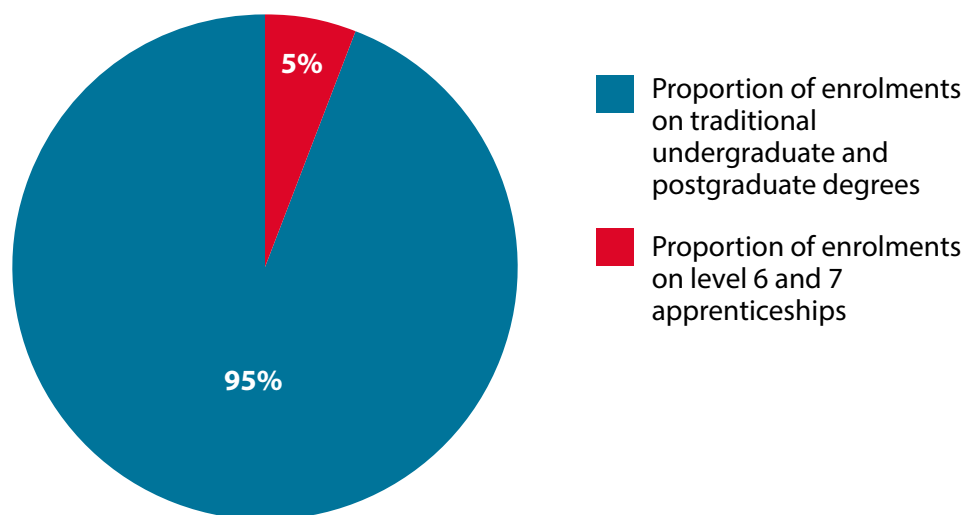
**Table 5 – Breakdown in starts at level 7 in 2022/23 by constituent subjects in Business, Administration and Law**

Sector Subject Area Tier 2	Starts	As % of total
Business Management	6,920	40%
Accounting and Finance	9,770	56%
Law and Legal Services	800	5%
Total	17,490	

Department for Education [2022/23]

## Level 6 and 7 Business & Management Apprenticeships

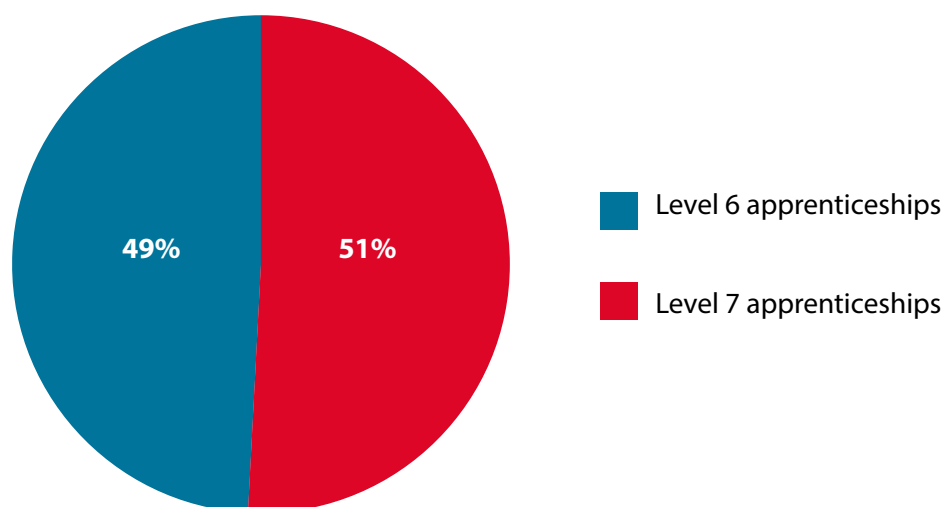
**Figure 3 – Proportion of Business & Management students enrolled on traditional degrees and level 6 and 7 apprenticeships (2021/22)**



*HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc*

- In 2021/22, of the 305,000 students enrolled in a higher education course that has an element of Business & Management, 16,175 were on an apprenticeship programme which represents 5% of the total. As shown in figure 3, traditional Business & Management undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes comprise 95% of all enrolments at levels 6 and 7 combined, with apprenticeships accounting for the remaining 5%.

**Figure 4 – Proportion of enrolments by level for degree apprenticeships in Business & Management (2021/22)**



*HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc*

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How business schools are building pathways to success with degree apprenticeships

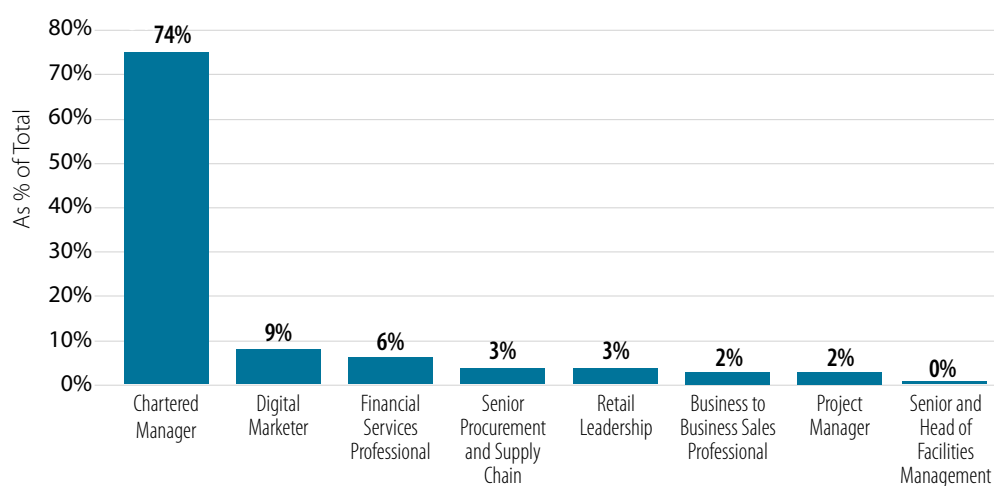
- By level of study, there was an almost even split between those studying a Level 6 apprenticeship in Business & Management and those studying a Level 7 apprenticeship (see figure 4 above). Apprenticeships formed 3% of all Business & Management undergraduate programmes (Level 6), and 19% of Business & Management postgraduate programmes (Level 7).

**Table 6 – Enrolments in Business & Management by level 6 apprenticeship standard (2021/22)**

Level 6 apprenticeships	Enrolments per standard
Business to Business Sales Professional	190
Chartered Manager	5,850
Digital Marketer	705
Financial Services Professional	465
Project Manager	170
Retail Leadership	210
Senior and Head of Facilities Management	30
Senior Procurement and Supply	215
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,835</b>

HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

**Figure 5 – Proportion of apprenticeship enrolments in Business & Management by level 6 standard (2021/22)**



HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

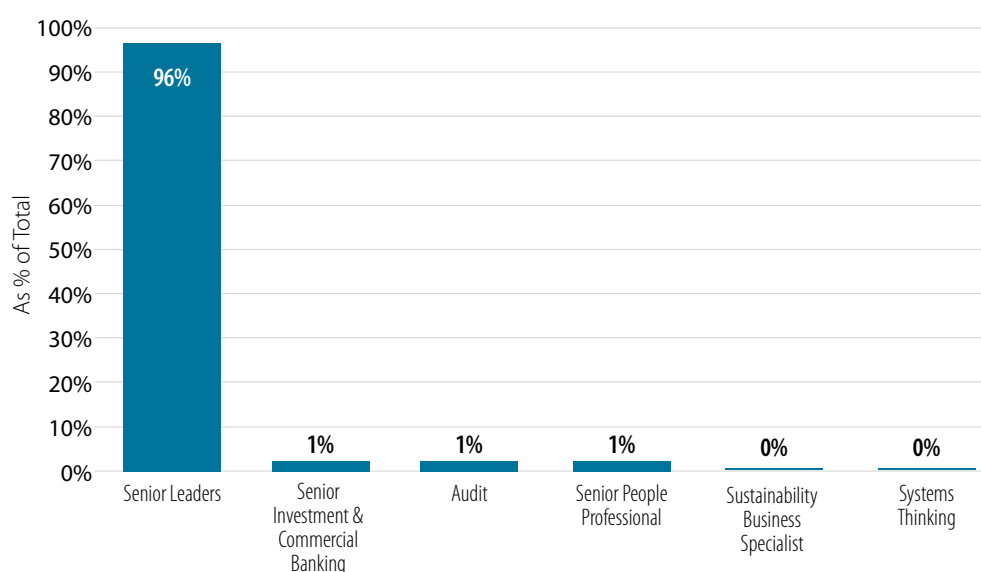
- At level 6, Chartered Manager was the most significant Business & Management apprenticeship standard, accounting for 74% of all apprentices. Digital Marketer had the second highest proportion of enrolments (9%), followed by Financial Services Professional (6%). The remaining standards comprised no more than 3% of total enrolments each.

**Table 7 – Enrolments in Business & Management by level 7 apprenticeship standard (2021/22)**

Level 7 apprenticeships	Enrolments per standard
Audit	85
Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	115
Senior Leaders	7,960
Senior People Professional	75
Sustainability Business Specialist	40
Systems Thinking	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,305</b>

HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

**Figure 6 – Proportion of apprenticeship enrolments in Business & Management by level 7 standard (2021/22)**



HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

- Senior Leaders is the most popular Business & Management apprenticeship standard at level 7, with 96% of all apprentices. The remainder have very small enrolments, including Senior Investment & Commercial Banking (1%), Audit (1%) and Senior People Professional (1%).

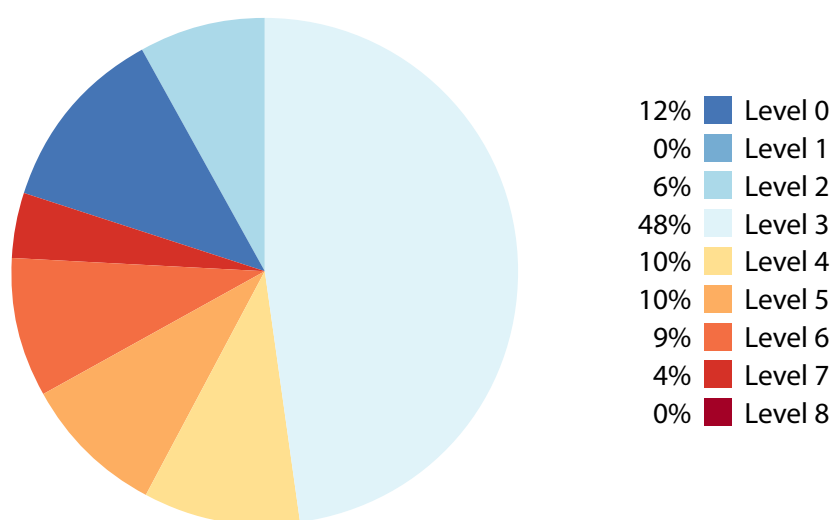
**In summary, business school apprenticeships form the most significant part of degree apprenticeship provision.**

- According to the DfE in 2023, English business school apprenticeships represented 47% of total apprenticeship provision in higher education.
- Undergraduate (level 6) apprenticeships in Business, Administration and Law represented 19% of undergraduate apprenticeship provision, with the majority (75%) of the provision on Business & Management routes.
- Postgraduate (level 7) apprenticeships in Business, Administration and Law represent 80% of postgraduate provision, with the majority (56%) on Accounting and Finance routes.
- Our analysis shows that apprenticeship enrolments, and in particular leadership and management routes, play a significant role in business schools, despite being the smaller proportion of all routes including traditional programmes.
- Within this, management and leadership form the greatest part at both level 6 and 7 provision overall, reflecting the role of apprenticeships in responding to employers' needs for skills development in these areas, and the economic drivers for apprenticeships generally.



# ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

**Figure 7 – Business & Management level 6 apprentices: highest prior qualification by level**



HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

- There is significant diversity in the highest prior qualification achieved by those undertaking a Business & Management apprenticeship at level 6. Across all the level 6 Business & Management apprenticeship standards, 48% held a level three qualification as their highest (of which 21% are A/AS levels – see appendix for a more detailed breakdown), 9% already held a level 6 qualification (mostly a UK first degree), and 10% held a level 5 qualification. 12% of level 6 Business & Management apprentices held no prior qualification (level 0).

**Table 8 – Highest qualification on entry – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices**

Level	Business to Business Sales Professional	Chartered Manager	Digital Marketer	Financial Services Professional	Project Manager	Retail Leadership	Senior and Head of Facilities Management	Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	Total
8	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
7	1%	5%	2%	2%	8%	3%	3%	1%	4%
6	9%	10%	8%	4%	14%	10%	3%	10%	9%
5	1%	12%	2%	5%	8%	3%	6%	3%	10%
4	6%	11%	6%	14%	18%	2%	31%	4%	10%
3	65%	41%	75%	71%	40%	71%	31%	67%	48%
2	14%	6%	2%	4%	6%	4%	9%	13%	6%
1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
0	5%	15%	5%	0%	5%	6%	16%	3%	12%

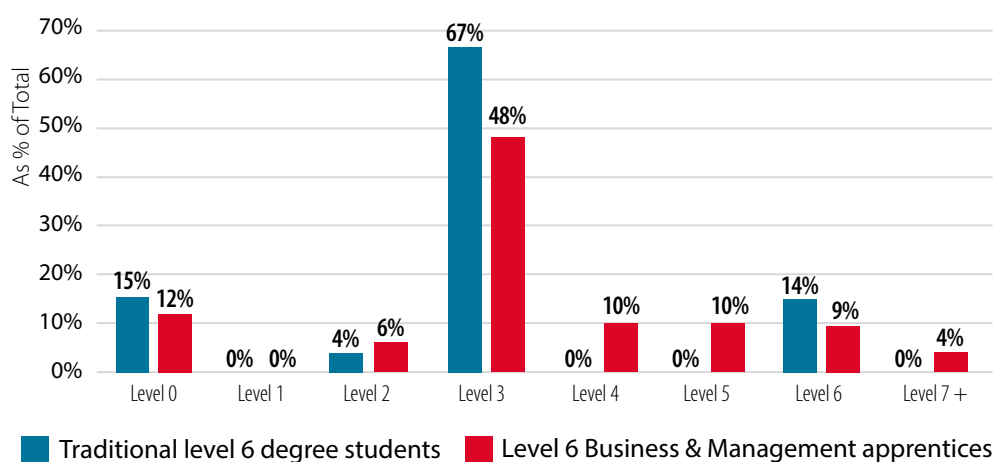
HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

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- As displayed in table 8, the following apprenticeship standards at level 6 have higher than average proportions of entrants with a level 3 as their highest prior qualification: Digital Marketer (75%), Financial Services Professional (71%), Retail Leadership (71%), Senior Procurement and Supply Chain (67%), and Business to Business Sales Professional (65%).
- The Project Manager standard has the highest proportion of individuals who already hold a level 6 qualification (14%) compared to an average of 9% for all Business & Management apprentices at level 6. The Project Manager level 6 standard is also more likely to have apprentices who hold a level 7 qualification (8%), compared to an average of 4% overall.
- The data shows that level 6 apprenticeships offer routes into higher education for non-traditional entrants. For example, 8% of Chartered Manager and 5% of Project Manager apprentices were recorded in the HESA dataset as being 'mature and admitted based on previous experience and/or an admissions test' (level 0).
- Similarly, entry to level 6 apprenticeships with level 2 qualifications was also notable. The following standards have a higher than average proportion of apprentices with a level 2 qualification: Business to Business Sales Professional (14%), Senior Procurement & Supply Chain Professional (13%) and Senior and Head of Facilities Management (9%). The proportion of Chartered Manager and Project Manager apprentices with level 2 as their highest prior qualification was in line with the average of 6%.

**Figure 8 – Highest prior qualification: level 6 Business & Management degree students compared to level 6 Business & Management apprentices**



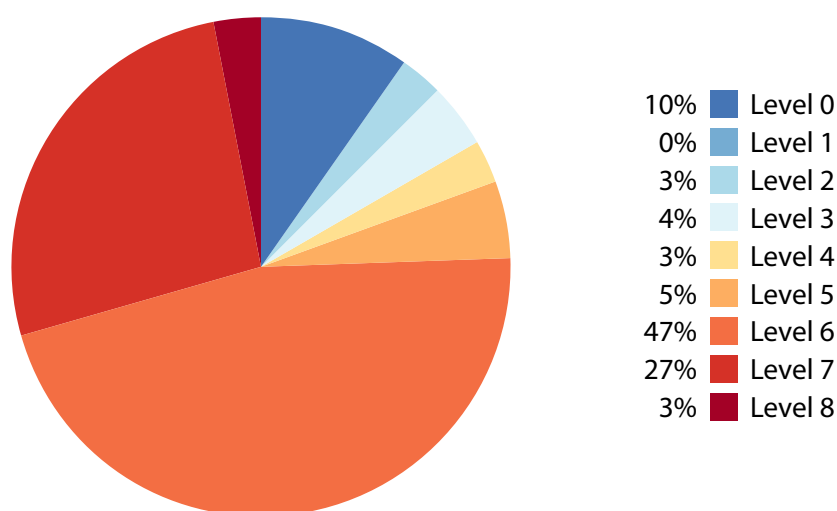
HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

- The qualifications in the HESA dataset were matched against the corresponding levels to identify the level of the highest prior qualification attained by apprenticeship learners in Business & Management. The data for traditional Business & Management degree students was extracted from the Heidi Plus system<sup>7</sup> so that the highest prior qualification for degree students could be compared to those on apprenticeship routes.

<sup>7</sup> HESA Student Record 2021/22, data sourced in January 2024 via Heidi Plus, the online data dissemination tool for the HE sector.

- The data in figure 8 shows that traditional Business & Management degree students at level 6 are much more likely to have a level 3 qualification (such as A/AS-levels) than level 6 Business & Management apprentices. They are also more likely to have a prior level 6 qualification than those studying an apprenticeship. In contrast, Business & Management apprentices at level 6 are more likely to have a level 4 or 5 qualification than their traditional degree counterparts.

**Figure 9 – Business & Management level 7 apprentices: highest prior qualification by level**



HESA Student Record [2021/22], Copyright Jisc

- For level 7 Business & Management apprentices, the highest qualifications attained are much more narrowly concentrated. For 47% of level 7 apprentices, a level 6 qualification, usually a UK first degree, was their highest level of attainment, and 27% already held a level 7 qualification. In the case of the latter, around half of these were a UK Master's degree, with most of the remainder being level 7 diplomas or certificates.

**Table 9 – Highest qualification on entry – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices**

Level	Audit	Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	Senior Leaders	Senior People Professional	Sustainability Business Specialist	Systems Thinking	Total
8	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	9%	3%
7	15%	14%	27%	21%	33%	28%	27%
6	51%	54%	47%	52%	64%	38%	47%
5	4%	1%	5%	4%	0%	9%	5%
4	12%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%
3	13%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%
2	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%
1	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
0	2%	28%	9%	20%	0%	13%	10%

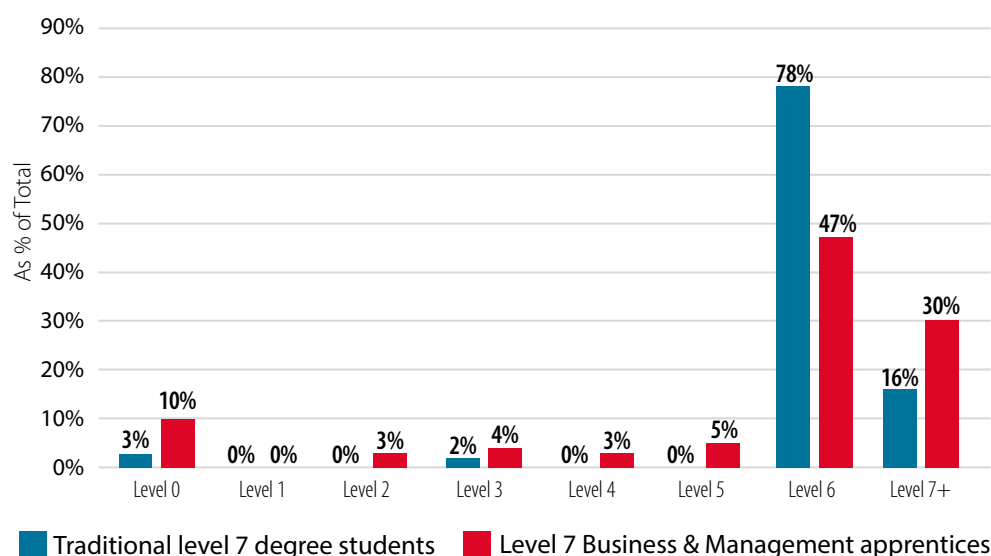
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## Bridging the gap

How business schools are building pathways to success with degree apprenticeships

- Looking more closely at specific level 7 Business & Management apprenticeship standards, the following have higher than average proportions of apprentices with a level 6 as their highest prior qualification: Sustainability Business Specialist (64%), Senior Investment & Commercial Banking (54%), Senior People Professional (52%), and Audit (51%).
- For the Sustainability Business Specialist standard, one-third of apprentices already held a level 7 qualification as their highest prior attainment, compared to an average of 27% across all level 7 Business & Management apprentices.
- Level 7 apprenticeships also offer a route to higher education for those without a first degree or level 6 qualification. For example, 10% of those on the Senior Investment & Commercial Banking standard had no formal qualification, while 5% of apprentices on the Senior Leaders standard had no formal qualification or were admitted based on experience.

**Figure 10 – Highest prior qualification: level 7 Business & Management degree students compared to level 7 Business & Management apprentices**



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- At level 7, the gap in prior attainment is even more pronounced, with 78% of Business & Management degree students holding a level 6 qualification as their highest prior attainment compared to 47% of Business & Management apprentices. Conversely, one-quarter of Business & Management apprentices at level 7 already hold a qualification at this level, higher than the 16% recorded for Business & Management postgraduate students. One in ten Business & Management apprentices at level 7 held no formal prior qualifications (level 0) compared to only 3% for Business & Management postgraduate students. This is further evidence that apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 open up pathways to higher education for learners from more diverse backgrounds.

**In summary, business school apprenticeships successfully offer access into higher education for non-traditional entrants with lower, or no, entry qualifications, and progression routes at all levels.**

- 18% and 13%, respectively, of level 6 and 7 Business & Management apprentices start their course in higher education institutions with their highest prior attainment being a qualification within levels 0, 1, and 2, which are below the qualification levels typical for traditional degree routes.
- The majority of level 6 business apprentices come from non-standard entry routes, and less than 10% have prior level 6 qualifications. Only 9% of entrants to level 6 business school apprenticeships do so as a second degree, and where these do occur they tend to be in disciplinary specific routes outside of leadership and management. In comparison to traditional level 6 business students, apprentices are less likely to have a prior level 3 qualification.
- At level 7, 25% of apprenticeships have no prior higher education qualification, five times that of standard entry learners, and are significantly less likely to already have a level 6 qualification. This is particularly significant at level 7, where traditional entry tends to rely upon prior HE qualifications, and therefore excludes those who have not been able to access this opportunity.
- Business school apprenticeships therefore provide access to higher level qualifications than the learner previously held in the vast majority of cases, playing a role in accelerating lifelong learning into higher education, and in turn the associated personal, social, and economic impact for those who may not otherwise have done so.

# AGE AND MATURE ENTRANTS

*Table 10 – Breakdown by age – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management undergraduates*

<b>Level 6 apprenticeships</b>	<b>18-21</b>	<b>22-24</b>	<b>25-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>61-70</b>	<b>% mature (22+)</b>	<b>% mature (25+)</b>
Business to Business Sales Professional	55%	21%	11%	8%	4%	1%	0%	45%	24%
Chartered Manager	21%	9%	15%	30%	19%	5%	0%	79%	70%
Digital Marketer	59%	18%	10%	9%	4%	1%	0%	41%	23%
Financial Services Professional	66%	18%	8%	5%	2%	0%	0%	33%	15%
Project Manager	26%	14%	19%	23%	13%	5%	0%	74%	60%
Retail Leadership	25%	17%	30%	24%	3%	1%	0%	75%	58%
Senior and Head of Facilities Management	0%	9%	16%	34%	25%	16%	0%	100%	91%
Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	46%	10%	17%	19%	8%	1%	0%	54%	44%
<b>All level 6 Business &amp; Management apprenticeships</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional undergraduates (Level 6)</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>32%</b>

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- Level 6 apprenticeships within business schools show strong engagement with mature learners, with 60% of apprenticeships undertaken by those aged over 25, compared to 32% of traditional undergraduate Business & Management students. However, take-up of level 6 Business & Management apprenticeships is also significant amongst younger cohorts, with 29% aged between 18-21 and 11% aged 22-24. This shows the attractiveness of degree apprenticeships to learners of all ages.
- By specific apprenticeship standard, the following have the highest proportions of mature apprentices (aged 25+): Senior and Head of Facilities Management (91%), Chartered Manager (70%), Project Manager (60%), and Retail Leadership (58%). In the case of the Senior and Head of Facilities Management standard, this role is unlikely to be held by a new entrant, emphasising the importance of apprenticeships to the lifelong learning agenda.

**Table 11 – Breakdown by age – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management postgraduates**

<b>Level 7 apprenticeships</b>	<b>18-21</b>	<b>22-24</b>	<b>25-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>61-70</b>	<b>% mature (22+)</b>	<b>% mature (25+)</b>
Audit	7%	12%	24%	30%	19%	8%	0%	93%	81%
Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	2%	3%	24%	47%	19%	5%	0%	98%	95%
Senior Leaders	0%	1%	10%	41%	37%	11%	0%	100%	99%
Senior People Professional	0%	4%	35%	30%	25%	6%	0%	100%	96%
Sustainability Business Specialist	0%	13%	35%	28%	23%	3%	0%	100%	88%
Systems Thinking	0%	3%	9%	44%	38%	6%	0%	100%	97%
<b>All level 7 Business &amp; Management apprenticeships</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional postgraduates (Level 7)</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>72%</b>

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- Level 7 apprentices within business schools would be expected to be more mature, and this is stronger than for traditional postgraduate Business & Management students, with 99% of level 7 apprentices being over 25, relative to 72% on traditional postgraduate programmes. Looking at those further up the age ranges, we see that 87% of level 7 Business & Management apprentices are 31 or older compared to 52% for traditional Business & Management postgraduate students.

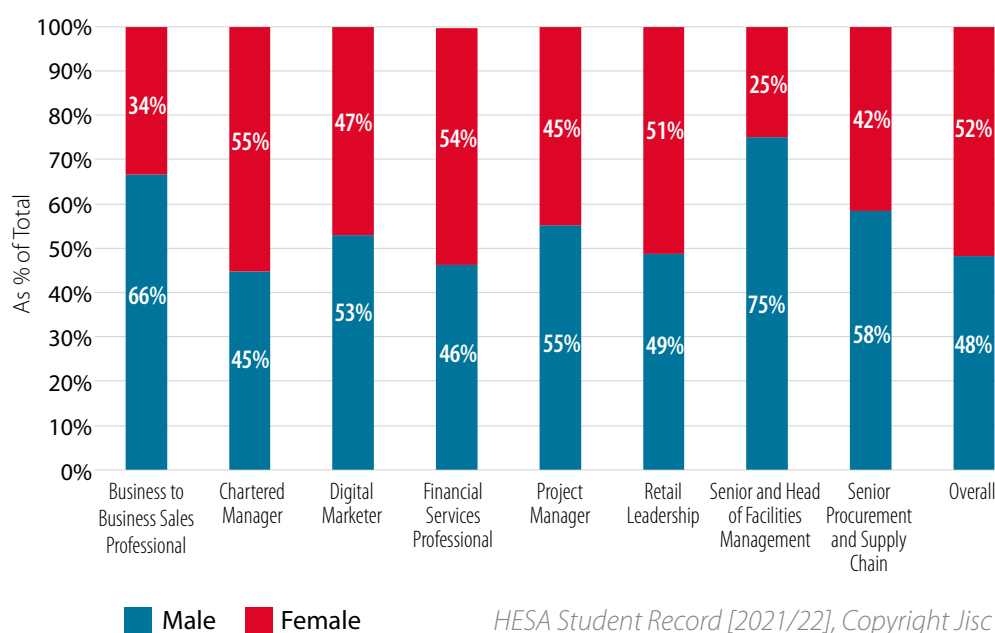
**In summary, business school apprenticeships play a significant role in offering lifelong learning routes for both young and mature learners.**

- Young people remain the largest share of business school level 6 apprentices, with 40% aged 24 or under at the start of their study. This contradicts the suggestion that apprenticeships are not providing routes into graduate roles for school leavers.
- At level 6, the proportion of mature entrants is almost twice that of standard undergraduate programmes. This has the greatest impact in popular programmes such as the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, where 70% of entrants are mature, reflecting the role this standard plays in developing the existing workforce with management and leadership skills which are critical to economic productivity and growth.
- This is echoed at level 7, where most Business & Management apprentices (87%) are over 31, again outstripping traditional entry routes to postgraduate education (52%).
- This further demonstrates the impact of business apprenticeships in the lifelong learning agenda and ensuring the economy has the skills it needs, in particular management skills which are required to address the UK's productivity lag.

# GENDER

- For level 6 Business & Management apprentices, there are slightly more female (52%) than male (48%). For some standards, a majority of the apprentices are female, namely, Chartered Manager (55%), Financial Services Professional (54%), and Retail Leadership (51%).
- The numerical dominance of the Chartered Manager standard at level 6 explains why females comprise a slight majority of overall apprentices at level 6. The apprenticeship standards at level 6 where males are the majority are Senior and Head of Facilities Management (75%), Business to Business Sales Professional (66%), Senior Procurement and Supply Chain (58%), Project Manager (55%), and Digital Marketer (53%).

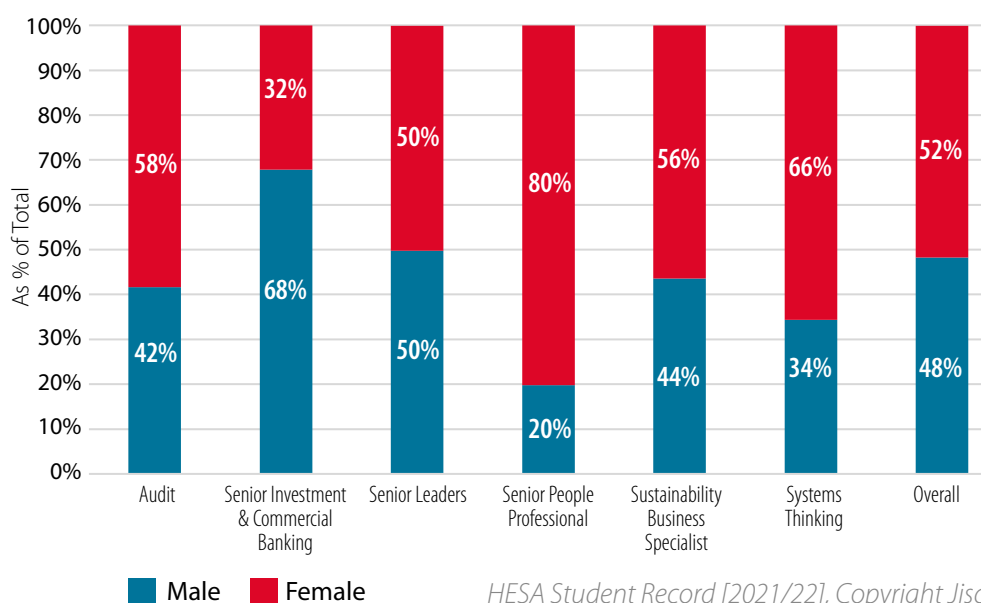
**Figure 11 – Gender breakdown for level 6 Business & Management apprentices by standard (2021/22)**



- At level 7 females again comprise a narrow majority of Business & Management apprentices overall. They comprise the majority of apprentices in the following level 7 standards: Senior People Professional (80%), Systems Thinking (66%), Audit (58%), and Sustainability Business Specialist (56%). Within the Senior Leaders cohort, the male-female split is 50/50 indicating a significant contribution to raising female attainment within management.

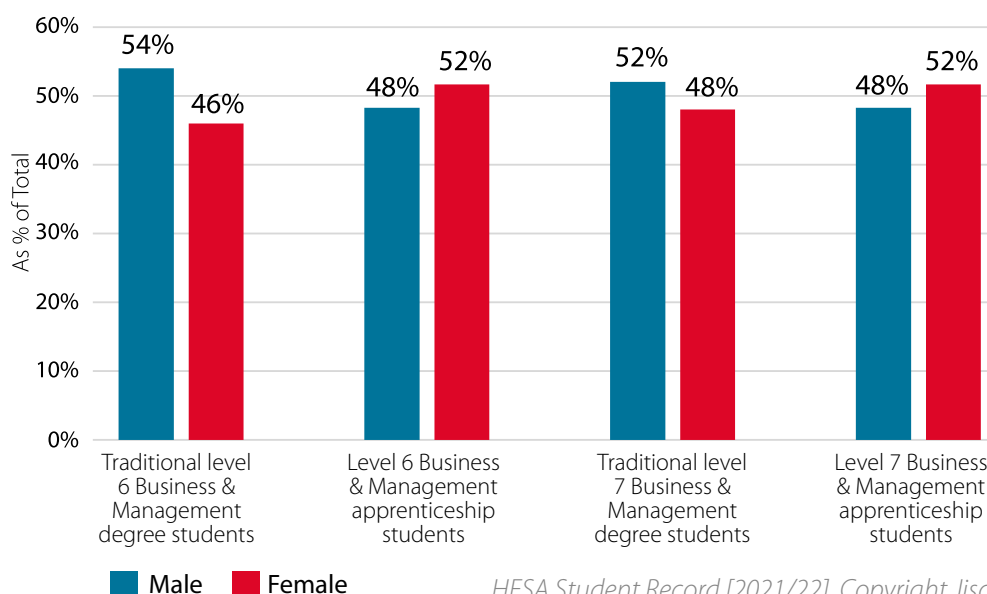


**Figure 12 – Gender breakdown for level 7 Business & Management apprentices by standard (2021/22)**



- For both level 6 and level 7 Business & Management apprenticeships, women form 52% of the cohorts, slightly higher than the general UK population (51% female), but lagging behind the overall university student population (57% female) according to the publicly available HESA Student Data.
- As shown in figure 13 below, the gender split for Business & Management apprentices at levels 6 and 7 is the reverse to that for traditional Business & Management undergraduate and postgraduate programmes where male students comprise a slight majority.
- For traditional Business & Management undergraduate programmes, male students represent 54% of the population, relative to 48% for level 6 Business & Management apprentices. At postgraduate level 52% of students are male whereas for level 7 Business & Management apprenticeship courses they comprise 48% of the population.

**Figure 13 – Gender breakdown for Business & Management undergraduates and postgraduates compared to Business & Management apprentices (2021/22)**



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**Table 12 - DfE data on gender of apprentices at levels 6 and 7 by apprenticeship standard**

Sector Subject Area Tier 1 (all provider types)	Female %	Male %
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	45%	55%
Arts, Media and Publishing	58%	42%
Business, Administration and Law	50%	50%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	31%	69%
Education and Training	74%	26%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	23%	77%
Health, Public Services and Care	64%	36%
Information and Communication Technology	27%	73%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	30%	70%
Science and Mathematics	62%	38%
Social Sciences	38%	62%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	67%	33%
Average - all level 6 and 7 apprentices	51%	49%

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**Table 13 - HESA data on gender of apprentices at levels 6 and 7 by apprenticeship standard**

Female	Male
52%	48%

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Note: based on higher education providers in England, mostly business schools

- The DfE data on the gender of levels 6 and 7 apprentices shows that Business, Administration and Law is split equally between female and male learners. This is approximately in line with the average gender breakdown seen in other apprenticeship standards. In comparison, the HESA data (table 13) shows a narrow female majority.
- The DfE data differs from HESA as it includes degree apprenticeships delivered through all types of providers (including FE colleges and private providers), whereas the HESA data is for higher education institutions only.

**In summary, business school apprenticeships offer routes to level the playing field in terms of gender.**

- Gender equity in both undergraduate and postgraduate apprenticeships, with women comprising 52% of the cohorts, shows promising progress towards greater female representation in traditionally male-dominated fields.
- Some programmes demonstrate notably high levels of gender diversity, such as Senior People Professional at level 6 (80% female). Of note is the split for the Financial Services Professional standard at level 6 (54% female) - historically a male-dominated industry, but the gender composition of these apprenticeships programmes shows progress in attracting and retaining female talent, contributing to the financial sector's diversity.
- More broadly, the dominance of women in the Chartered Manager standard (55% female), and the equal split in the Senior Leaders standard show that these programmes make a significant contribution to the growing number of women entering management roles and acquiring professional qualifications, and thereby overcoming the glass ceiling.

# ETHNICITY

**Table 14 – Breakdown by ethnicity – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management postgraduates<sup>8</sup>**

Level 6 apprenticeships	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White
Business to Business Sales Professional	9%	9%	4%	2%	77%
Chartered Manager	5%	2%	2%	1%	90%
Digital Marketer	10%	3%	2%	0%	84%
Financial Services Professional	12%	6%	3%	1%	78%
Project Manager	3%	6%	5%	1%	85%
Retail Leadership	8%	2%	3%	0%	87%
Senior and Head of Facilities Management	9%	3%	0%	0%	88%
Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	5%	1%	3%	0%	91%
<b>Total - Level 6 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional undergraduates (Level 6)</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>64%</b>

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- Of those with a known ethnicity, approximately 88% of level 6 Business & Management apprentices are from the white ethnicity, compared to 64% of traditional Business & Management undergraduates. There is some variation by standard, with some seeing higher representation from the BAME ethnicity.
- The Business to Business Sales Professional standard has lower representation from apprentices belonging to the white ethnicity (77%) and higher representation from the Asian (9%) and Black (9%) ethnicities relative to other level 6 Business & Management apprenticeship standards. The Financial Services Professional standard also has higher proportions of those from the Asian and Black ethnicities than the average for level 6 apprentices.

<sup>8</sup>Students with an 'unknown' or 'not applicable' ethnicity have been excluded from the figures in tables 14 and 15.

**Table 15 – Breakdown by ethnicity – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management postgraduates**

Level 7 apprenticeships	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White
Audit	11%	5%	8%	0%	76%
Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	12%	4%	2%	0%	82%
Senior Leaders	10%	4%	3%	1%	83%
Senior People Professional	9%	3%	4%	0%	84%
Sustainability Business Specialist	3%	3%	5%	0%	90%
Systems Thinking	3%	0%	0%	3%	94%
<b>Total - Level 7 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional postgraduates (Level 7)</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>68%</b>

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- Similarly, 83% of level 7 Business & Management apprentices are from the white ethnic background, in comparison to two-thirds of traditional Business & Management postgraduate students. The Audit apprenticeship standard has higher than average representation from the Asian, Black, and Mixed ethnic groups compared to the average for level 7 Business & Management standards.

**Table 16 - DfE data on ethnicity of apprentices at levels 6 and 7 by apprenticeship standard**

Sector Subject Area Tier 1 (all provider types)	% White ethnicity	% Unknown ethnicity	% Ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities)
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	91%	0%	9%
Arts, Media and Publishing	92%	0%	8%
Business, Administration and Law	74%	2%	24%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	82%	2%	16%
Education and Training	77%	3%	19%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	85%	1%	14%
Health, Public Services and Care	85%	1%	14%
Information and Communication Technology	65%	3%	32%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	100%	0%	0%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	91%	0%	9%
Science and Mathematics	78%	4%	19%
Social Sciences	67%	0%	33%
Average - all level 6 and 7 apprentices	78%	2%	20%

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## Bridging the gap

How business schools are building pathways to success with degree apprenticeships

**Table 17 - HESA data on ethnicity of apprentices at levels 6 and 7 by apprenticeship standard**

Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White
8%	4%	2%	1%	85%

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*Note: based on higher education providers in England, mostly business schools*

- The DfE data on the ethnicity of levels 6 and 7 apprentices in table 16 shows that Business, Administration and Law has higher representation of ethnic minorities (24%) than shown by the HESA data in table 17 (15%). The DfE data shows that Business & Management has the third highest proportion of apprentices from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to other degree apprenticeship standards.
- The DfE data differs from HESA as it includes degree apprenticeships delivered through all types of providers (including FE colleges and private providers), whereas the HESA data is for higher education institutions only.

**In summary, business school apprenticeships have representation from ethnic minority learners but more could be done to increase diversity and inclusivity.**

- 15% of business school apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 are of ethnic minority origin. At both level 6 and 7, the representation of ethnic minority groups lags the equivalent proportions for traditional business school undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- There are notable variations across standards, with some programmes, such as Business to Business Sales Professional, Financial Services Professional, Digital Marketer, and Audit Professional, showing greater diversity in their apprentice population.
- However, the overall underrepresentation of non-white individuals in comparison to the working population presents a concerning trend, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in these programmes. The DfE data on ethnicity shows much higher representation of ethnic minority learners in Business, Administration and Law, possibly reflecting the different student population amongst the non-HE providers of apprenticeships included in the DfE data.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The socio-economic background of level 6 and 7 Business & Management apprentices was identified using the POLAR4 quintiles. POLAR4 classifies local areas in the UK based on the participation rate of young people in higher education.

**Table 18 – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by POLAR4 quintiles (2021/22)<sup>9</sup>**

Level 6 apprenticeships	1	2	3	4	5
Business to Business Sales Professional	6%	20%	18%	24%	31%
Chartered Manager	13%	20%	21%	22%	24%
Digital Marketer	13%	15%	19%	24%	30%
Financial Services Professional	6%	12%	19%	30%	33%
Project Manager	18%	14%	17%	26%	24%
Retail Leadership	23%	27%	22%	15%	13%
Senior and Head of Facilities Management	13%	28%	25%	16%	19%
Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	17%	13%	25%	23%	23%
<b>Total - Level 6 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional undergraduates (Level 6)</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>29%</b>

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- Across all level 6 Business & Management apprenticeships an average of 32% of participants originate from the lowest two-fifths of neighbourhoods in terms of participation in higher education (quintiles 1 and 2), which is ahead of the average for traditional Business & Management undergraduates (28%).
- Apprenticeship standards with above average proportions of participants from quintiles 1 and 2 are Retail Leadership (50%), Senior and Head of Facilities Management (41%), and Chartered Manager (33%).

<sup>9</sup> Students with an 'unknown' or 'not applicable' response have been excluded from tables 18 to 23.

## Bridging the gap

How business schools are building pathways to success with degree apprenticeships

**Table 19 – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices by POLAR4 quintiles (2021/22)**

Level 7 apprenticeships	1	2	3	4	5
Audit	8%	14%	20%	23%	34%
Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	9%	9%	15%	25%	42%
Senior Leaders	10%	15%	18%	24%	34%
Senior People Professional	19%	15%	15%	12%	39%
Sustainability Business Specialist	8%	20%	8%	10%	55%
Systems Thinking	13%	19%	35%	10%	23%
<b>Total - Level 7 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional postgraduates (Level 7)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>36%</b>

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- For level 7 Business & Management apprentices, an average of 25% are from the lowest two-fifths of neighbourhoods in terms of participation in higher education (quintiles 1 and 2), which is ahead of the average of 22% for traditional Business & Management postgraduate students.
- The following standards have higher proportions of those from quintiles 1 and 2 than the average for Business & Management level 7 apprenticeships: Senior People Professional (34%), Systems Thinking (32%), and Sustainability Business Specialist (28%).

**Table 20 – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by POLAR4 quintiles and age range (2021/22)**

Age ranges	1	2	3	4	5
18-21	18%	22%	27%	33%	37%
22-24	10%	9%	13%	11%	12%
25-30	19%	17%	15%	14%	12%
31-40	31%	30%	26%	23%	20%
41-50	17%	17%	15%	15%	15%
51-60	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%
61-70	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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- Table 20 displays the split by POLAR4 quintiles and age for level 6 Business & Management apprentices and table 21 shows the equivalent data for traditional Business & Management undergraduates. In relation to the lowest two-fifths of neighbourhoods in terms of participation in higher education (quintiles 1 and 2), 72% and 69%, respectively, of level 6 apprentices are mature as defined as being 25 or older. In comparison, quintiles 4 and 5, which have higher participation rates in higher education, have lower proportions of mature level 6 apprentices, at 56% and 51%, respectively.



- Although learners on level 6 Business & Management apprenticeships are more likely to be older than on traditional degree programmes, there is still substantial representation of young learners from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education. Within quintile 1 (neighbourhoods with lowest participation rates), 18% of apprentices were aged 18-21, and within quintile 2 (second lowest) 22% of apprentices were aged 18-21.

**Table 21 – Traditional Business & Management undergraduate students by POLAR4 quintiles and age range (2021/22)**

Age ranges	1	2	3	4	5
18-21	46%	50%	52%	53%	64%
22-24	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%
25-30	14%	13%	12%	11%	9%
31-40	19%	17%	15%	14%	11%
41-50	8%	7%	8%	8%	5%
51-60	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%
61-70	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
71-80	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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- In comparison, the data for traditional Business & Management undergraduate students shows much less variation across the POLAR4 quintiles in terms of age of student. This reflects the fact that mature learners at undergraduate level tend to be a minority of the student population.

**Table 22 – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices by POLAR4 quintiles and age range (2021/22)**

Age ranges	1	2	3	4	5
18-21	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
22-24	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
25-30	11%	12%	11%	10%	10%
31-40	45%	41%	40%	41%	39%
41-50	34%	35%	38%	38%	37%
51-60	9%	10%	10%	9%	11%
61-70	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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## Bridging the gap

How business schools are building pathways to success with degree apprenticeships

- As displayed in table 22, at level 7 the age profile of Business & Management apprentices does not vary substantially by the POLAR4 quintiles. Across each of the five quintiles, at least 98% are mature (defined as being aged 25 or over), and at least 87% are mature if defined as aged 31 or over.

**Table 23 – Traditional Business & Management postgraduate students by POLAR4 quintiles and age range (2021/22)**

Age ranges	1	2	3	4	5
18-21	8%	7%	7%	7%	10%
22-24	21%	21%	20%	20%	21%
25-30	21%	20%	20%	20%	18%
31-40	28%	27%	28%	26%	25%
41-50	17%	18%	18%	18%	18%
51-60	5%	6%	7%	8%	7%
61-70	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
71-80	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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- The pattern observed for traditional undergraduate Business & Management students is also observed for traditional postgraduate students, with little difference in the age profile of students from each POLAR4 quintile.

### **In summary, business school apprenticeships have greater impact on low participation neighbourhoods than traditional programmes.**

- Level 6 apprenticeships exhibit higher participation (32% compared to 28%) from individuals residing in the lowest two-fifths of neighbourhoods in terms of participation in higher education (quintiles 1 and 2) compared to their traditional Business & Management undergraduate counterparts. Notably, standards such as Retail Leadership outperform this, with 50% of entrants coming from quintiles 1 and 2, and in this, mature entrants are the dominant proportion.
- At level 7, Business & Management apprenticeships demonstrate similar outperformance relative to traditional postgraduate programmes in relation to the proportion of learners from the lowest two-fifths of neighbourhoods in terms of participation in higher education (quintiles 1 and 2) (25% compared to 22%).
- These findings underscore the potential for apprenticeships to bridge socio-economic disparities and offer opportunities to individuals from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly at the undergraduate level, while also highlighting the importance of addressing such disparities in postgraduate apprenticeships.

# STATE SCHOOL MARKERS

**Table 24 – Breakdown by state school marker – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management undergraduates<sup>10</sup>**

Level 6 apprenticeships	Privately funded school	State-funded school or college
Business to Business Sales Professional	6%	94%
Chartered Manager	2%	98%
Digital Marketer	2%	98%
Financial Services Professional	6%	94%
Project Manager	1%	99%
Retail Leadership	5%	95%
Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	7%	93%
<b>Total - Level 6 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional undergraduates (Level 6)</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>91%</b>

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- Business & Management apprenticeships at level 6 have a lower representation of individuals who attended a privately funded school compared to the average for traditional Business & Management undergraduate students. 3% of level 6 apprentices attended private schools compared to an average of 9% for traditional Business & Management undergraduates.
- For the Senior and Head of Facilities Management standard, 100% of participants are from a state-funded school or college, and several of the other level 6 standards have close to 100% representation from state-funded schools or colleges. The Business to Business Sales Professional, Financial Services Professional, and Senior Procurement and Supply Chain standards have slightly higher proportions of learners who attended a privately funded school but none of these exceed 7%.

<sup>10</sup> Students with an 'unknown' or 'not applicable' response have been excluded from table 24. State School Marker data for level 7 apprentices is not shown due to small population sizes.

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### **In summary, business school apprenticeships deliver opportunities to state school leavers.**

- Business school apprentices are almost entirely state school leavers (of those where data on educational background is available). At level 6, the proportion of learners who attended a state school or college is noticeably higher than for traditional undergraduates.
- These findings overturn damaging narratives that these programmes are being used to fund degrees for financially privileged learners. Given that private school learners are more than twice as likely to achieve higher A-level grades, and therefore have easier access to higher education, routes such as apprenticeships clearly support action towards an egalitarian higher education system.

# PARENTAL EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Whilst 'first-in-family' is recognised as a poor measure of widening participation generally<sup>11</sup>, it is recognised that having non-graduate parents can form a barrier to higher education, even when other forms of disadvantage are taken into account<sup>12</sup>. Analysis of this data in apprenticeships is complicated by the tendency of apprentices to be more mature, as first-in-family is frequently viewed as being where the respondent achieves a first degree before the age of 25<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 25 – Breakdown by parental education – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices by standard and comparison with Business & Management undergraduates<sup>14</sup>**

Level 6 apprenticeships	Yes - parents hold HE qualifications	No - parents do not hold HE qualifications
Business to Business Sales Professional	45%	55%
Chartered Manager	38%	62%
Digital Marketer	45%	55%
Financial Services Professional	54%	46%
Project Manager	41%	59%
Retail Leadership	34%	66%
Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	43%	57%
<b>Total - Level 6 Business &amp; Management apprentices</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Business &amp; Management - traditional undergraduates (Level 6)</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>57%</b>

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- Table 25 displays the proportion of Business & Management level 6 apprentices by their parents' education background and whether either or both hold a higher education qualification. The share of level 6 apprentices who reported that their parents do not hold a higher education qualification (60%) was slightly higher than the overall average for traditional Business & Management undergraduates (57%). However, it is important to note that the data for apprentices has a higher share of those whose parental education background was recorded as unknown and these have been excluded from table 25.

<sup>11</sup> HEPI (2022) First in family students (HEPI report 146) <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2022/01/06/first-in-family-students>

<sup>12</sup> Adamecz-Volgyi, A., Henderson, M., and Shure, N. (2021) 'First in family: Higher education choices and labour market outcomes', University College London Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Students with an 'unknown' parental education background or whom responded 'don't know' have been excluded from table 25. Parental Education Background data for level 7 apprentices is not shown due to small population sizes.

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- The level 6 Business & Management apprenticeship standards with a higher proportion of individuals whose parents did not attain a higher education qualification are Retail Leadership (66%) and Chartered Manager (62%).

**In summary, business school apprenticeships provide the first route into higher education for many families.**

- In comparison to the wider business school, first-in-family data suggests that undergraduate level 6 business apprenticeships are more effective than traditional business school programmes in overcoming this measure of disadvantage. At level 6, 60% of learners are the first in their family to attend higher education.
- This is particularly important as it further emphasises that such apprenticeships offer novel and effective widening participation routes into higher education at an advanced level.

# CALL TO ACTION

This report offers new insights into the socio-economic impact that apprenticeships within business subjects, and in particular leadership and management, have within the higher education sector, and in turn productivity and inclusion ambitions within England which they support. Degree and higher level apprenticeships were intended to respond to economic and employer imperatives, address skills shortages, improve social mobility and create access to professions. However, apprenticeships are under ongoing scrutiny on their progress towards achieving social mobility aims, leading to calls for a reconfirmation of this<sup>15</sup>.

Higher education institutions, and employers, can address these challenges together, and the data in this report provides the evidence to meet this challenge.

Undergraduate business apprenticeships, despite forming only a small fraction of the overall level 6 business entrants, support mature entrants, those without prior higher education qualifications and, in particular, mature entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods. In doing so, undergraduate apprenticeships play a crucial role in widening access to higher education and supporting lifelong learning across a range of age cohorts.

Postgraduate business apprenticeships form a bigger segment of the level 7 market, are the most significant contributors to the impact of level 7 apprenticeships overall, yet in no way dominate the provisions of level 7 business and management qualifications, such as MBAs. These apprenticeship programmes play an important role in access to level 7 for those without any prior higher education engagement or indeed any qualifications beyond level 2. Combine this with impact on gender equity, and higher engagement within low higher education participation neighbourhoods, it is clear that apprenticeships enable social mobility through education at the highest levels and beyond the scope of the lifelong learning entitlement model.

However, universities, employers, and regulators need to make greater efforts to ensure that the potential benefits of apprenticeships are accessible to individuals, in particular those from ethnic minority heritages. Universities must work with employers and regulators to ensure that the existing under representation of ethnic minority communities in apprenticeships is addressed, thereby ensuring the social aims of upskilling are appropriately distributed.

The apprenticeship system must change to support universities and business schools to focus on these key issues, rather than on burdensome and duplicative regulatory processes. Universities are the part of the provider landscape under the most scrutiny, under both Ofsted and OfS inspection, monitoring and reporting

<sup>15</sup> Lester, S. & Bravenboer, D. (2020) *Sustainable Degree Apprenticeships*. Centre for Degree Apprenticeships

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systems, and are the most likely type of provider to also face EQA regulation and inspection, as EPAOs for integrated Degree Apprenticeships. Yet, looking at Ofsted inspection outcomes, financial standing, achievement rates, longevity, or almost any other indicator, would place universities low on the list of concerns for any risk-based approach. There is significant risk, further accentuated by wider sector pressures, not least financial sustainability, of making apprenticeships unworkable for many universities, especially those with small scale provision.

What has not been readily visible before now is the significant work apprenticeships achieve towards the lifelong learning agenda at the same time as offering important, accessible and secure routes into higher education for school leavers. While this data helps shed light on this, it is difficult to see within these statistics the cumulative impact across the demographic classifications. Overwhelming anecdotal evidence from those delivering programmes speak of the intersection of mature entrants without prior higher education experience, of first in family engagement in areas of economic deprivation, and of women across all demographic sectors stepping into higher education. Further light can be shed on this, making visible the nuanced impact levy funding has on complex disadvantage.

Given the underspend in the apprenticeship levy it is clear that there is scope for greater economic investment in apprenticeships, and through this the potential to leverage significant change in socio-economic impact and productivity. Enabling business schools to harness these opportunities to support more apprenticeships, and to target that activity towards SMEs, in the manner in which Help to Grow: Management has supported these key sectors, would be one step. Leadership and management apprenticeships will play a key role in this across every industry, and as such should remain at the heart of apprenticeship delivery.



# APPENDIX

**Table 26 – Highest qualification on entry – Level 6 Business & Management apprentices (by detailed qualification type)**

Qualification	Level	Business to Business Sales Professional	Chartered Manager	Digital Marketer	Financial Services Professional	Project Manager	Retail Leadership	Senior and Head of Facilities Management	Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	Total - Level 6 B&M
Non-UK doctorate degree	8	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UK doctorate degree	8	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Certificate at level M	7	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Diploma at level M	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Integrated undergraduate/postgraduate taught masters degree on the enhanced/extended pattern	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-UK masters degree	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level H	7	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Other taught qualification at level M	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Postgraduate Certificate in Education or Professional Graduate Diploma in Education	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Taught work at level M for provider credit	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UK masters degree	7	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	3%	0%	2%
First degree with honours leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/registration with a General Teaching Council (GTC)	6	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-UK first degree	6	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%
UK first degree with honours	6	7%	8%	8%	3%	14%	8%	0%	9%	8%
UK ordinary (non-honours) first degree	6	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Certificate in Education (CertEd) or Diploma in Education (DipEd) (i.e. non-graduate initial teacher training qualification)	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)	5	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Foundation course at level J	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Foundation degree	5	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Higher National Diploma (HND)	5	0%	3%	0%	4%	4%	1%	0%	0%	3%
Other qualification at level D	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level J	5	0%	3%	1%	0%	2%	0%	6%	1%	3%
Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)	4	0%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%	2%
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	4	4%	5%	1%	5%	6%	0%	13%	1%	4%
Higher Apprenticeship (level 4)	4	0%	1%	2%	6%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%

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Qualification	Level	Business to Business Sales Professional	Chartered Manager	Digital Marketer	Financial Services Professional	Project Manager	Retail Leadership	Senior and Head of Facilities Management	Senior Procurement and Supply Chain	Total - Level 6 B&M
Other qualification at level C	4	1%	3%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Undergraduate credits	4	1%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	19%	0%	1%
A/AS level	3	37%	17%	35%	47%	10%	29%	9%	30%	22%
AQA Baccalaureate (Bacc)	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Award at level 3	3	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%
14-19 Advanced Diploma (level 3)	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Certificate at level 3	3	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Diploma at level 3	3	1%	3%	12%	0%	6%	11%	9%	7%	4%
Higher education (HE) access course, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) recognised	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
International Baccalaureate (IB) Certificate	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Level 3 qualifications of which none are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	7%	6%	6%	1%	7%	7%	3%	3%	6%
Level 3 qualifications of which all are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	15%	6%	14%	8%	10%	12%	3%	20%	8%
Level 3 qualifications of which some are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	4%	1%	3%	2%	5%	11%	0%	0%	2%
Other qualification at level 3	3	0%	2%	3%	0%	1%	0%	3%	5%	2%
Scottish Highers/Advanced Highers	3	0%	3%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
14-19 Higher Diploma (level 2)	2	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level 2	2	14%	6%	1%	4%	6%	4%	9%	13%	6%
14-19 Foundation Diploma (level 1)	1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level 1	1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Higher education (HE) access course, not Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) recognised	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mature student admitted on basis of previous experience and/or admissions test	0	4%	8%	2%	0%	5%	3%	16%	2%	6%
Not known	0	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Other qualification level not known	0	1%	3%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Student has no formal qualification	0	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%

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**Table 27 – Highest qualification on entry – Level 7 Business & Management apprentices (by detailed qualification type)**

Qualification	Level	Audit	Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	Senior Leaders	Senior People Professional	Sustainability Business Specialist	Systems Thinking	Total - Level 7 B&M
Non-UK doctorate degree	8	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UK doctorate degree	8	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	9%	2%
Certificate at level M	7	0%	2%	3%	1%	8%	0%	3%
Diploma at level M	7	1%	0%	4%	2%	0%	6%	4%
Integrated undergraduate/postgraduate taught masters degree on the enhanced/extended pattern	7	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Non-UK masters degree	7	0%	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	1%
Other taught qualification at level M	7	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Other qualification at level H	7	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Postgraduate Certificate in Education or Professional Graduate Diploma in Education	7	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	7	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Taught work at level M for provider credit	7	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UK masters degree	7	10%	11%	13%	10%	26%	22%	13%
First degree with honours leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/registration with a General Teaching Council (GTC)	6	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-UK first degree	6	6%	8%	3%	1%	5%	0%	3%
UK first degree with honours	6	43%	45%	42%	49%	59%	38%	43%
UK ordinary (non-honours) first degree	6	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Certificate in Education (CertEd) or Diploma in Education (DipEd) (i.e. non-graduate initial teacher training qualification)	5	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%
Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)	5	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	3%	2%
Foundation degree	5	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Foundation course at level J	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Higher National Diploma (HND)	5	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other qualification at level D	5	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level J	5	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)	4	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Higher Apprenticeship (level 4)	4	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	4	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Other qualification at level C	4	6%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Undergraduate credits	4	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
A/AS level	3	7%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%
AQA Baccalaureate (Bacc)	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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Qualification	Level	Audit	Senior Investment & Commercial Banking	Senior Leaders	Senior People Professional	Sustainability Business Specialist	Systems Thinking	Total - Level 7 B&M
Award at level 3	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
14-19 Advanced Diploma (level 3)	3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Certificate at level 3	3	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Diploma at level 3	3	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Higher education (HE) access course, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) recognised	3	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Level 3 qualifications of which none are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Level 3 qualifications of which all are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Level 3 qualifications of which some are subject to UCAS Tariff	3	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other qualification at level 3	3	0%	3%	1%	0%	3%	3%	1%
Other qualification at level 2	2	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Other qualification at level 1	1	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mature student admitted on basis of previous experience and/or admissions test	0	0%	2%	4%	19%	0%	0%	4%
Not known	0	2%	10%	3%	0%	0%	6%	3%
Other qualification level not known	0	0%	6%	2%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Student has no formal qualification	0	0%	10%	1%	0%	0%	6%	1%

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40 Queen Street  
London  
EC4R 1DD  
Tel: 020 7236 7678  
[charteredabs.org](http://charteredabs.org)