

## The Open University and KPMG launch joint apprenticeship services

Wednesday 17 August, 2016

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*Partnership will deliver apprenticeship programmes as employers prepare for introduction of Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017*

KPMG and The Open University (OU) are joining forces to launch an apprenticeship service that enables employers to identify and fulfil their future training needs, following the Government's plan to introduce the Apprenticeship Levy.

The partnership has been designed to offer employers a high quality, scalable and accessible service and includes three initial higher level apprenticeships programmes. It will bring together KPMG's expertise in workforce analysis and the OU's track record in delivering apprenticeships and high quality online learning supported by expert tutors.

The full-service scheme will help organisations to understand their future workforce needs, identify skills gaps and provide and manage training programmes through apprenticeships. A central feature of the service is the extensive use of online learning, which will encourage greater access and opportunity to expand the scheme across businesses.

KPMG is the first of the 'Big Four' to make this move, following demand from organisations for advice on how to deliver large scale apprenticeship training to employees.

The announcement follows the Government's plan to introduce the Apprenticeship Levy in its efforts to boost UK productivity with a target of encouraging three million people to take up apprenticeships by 2020. From April 2017, large employers – with a pay bill over £3million each year – will be required to contribute to the new levy to help fund apprenticeship training for UK businesses.

The Open University and KPMG intend to expand the model, to work with other universities and registered training providers, which will enable the delivery of a wide range of apprenticeship programmes across the UK. Ian Howell, Director, Business Development Unit at The Open University said "More than ever, it is vital that UK businesses develop their staff to ensure our country has the skills it needs to compete on the world stage. The OU has a strong track record of working with employers to train and develop their workforce – including through higher level apprenticeships. By working together with KPMG, we can not only help organisations tap into unlocked potential of their people, but help increase the confidence and skills of individuals in key sectors for the benefit of our national economy."

Mark Williamson, Partner, KPMG, said "The new levy has the potential to help organisations unlock productivity in their workforce by up-skilling employees in areas which align to their overall commercial objectives. This will enable them not only to plug current skills gaps, but reshape their workforce to meet the future demands of their business."

Adding, "Under the new rules, apprenticeships can be applied to almost any job role. Employers can use the levy to deliver training to every layer of their organisation, from school leavers to executives, and truly embed the skills needed to meet their commercial ambitions."

Initially, three higher level apprenticeships will be provided:

- Healthcare Practitioner Assistant Higher Apprenticeship
- Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship
- Digital and Technical Solutions Degree Apprenticeship

The first of these programmes will be delivered in October 2016, with the partnership expanding into new areas in the future, with other universities and training providers.

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