

S & B Automotive Academy Employer Engagement Policy

2019

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1 Purpose

To provide S&B Academy with a wide strategic approach to employer engagement which outlines the way in which we develop enterprise and innovation for our learners. We recognise the important role employers play in helping us develop the skills for the future workforce and preparing our learners, whilst following an Apprenticeship programme, to be work ready for their subsequent and ongoing careers in our sector.

1.1 Focus

Employer engagement will take many forms, but focuses on:

- Providing opportunities for consultancy services to business, typically as part of a collaborative and partnership arrangement, meeting their training and development needs
- Creating opportunities for the development of the workforce through access to skills development opportunities
- Providing opportunities for business to engage in a partnership approach to talent development through helping us co-design, create and deliver curriculum that is current, and prepare people for future work skills and attributes whilst in learning
- Providing opportunities to shape the talent pipeline through joint activity such as work experience and Traineeships
- Developing long term relationships with employers to enable them to see the benefits of an active partnership with S&B Automotive Academy
- Growing the number of bespoke programmes and services provided to business

2 Executive Summary

The Employer Engagement (EE) policy sets out how the Academy intends to maintain clear and existing links with business and to enhance and develop new partnerships and collaborations. This policy aims to build on these as part of the design and delivery of our curriculum, enhancing student employability and teaching and learning through supporting the creation of learners with the appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise required by employers.

The Academy aims to build a strong network of partnerships with business through employer engagement. Each employer is assigned a dedicated Account Manager to provide a “hub and spoke” liaison model for each learner. This provides a common structure involving both virtual and face to face reviews of learner progress across the Apprenticeship journey. In the case of our national programmes, group as well as individual progress can be reviewed and additionality introduced on request to meet specific requirements. This approach will make a significant contribution to preparing learners to be work-ready and have the skills, abilities, aptitude and behaviours required by business.

The policy sets out the approach to employer engagement, the benefits to both businesses and to the Academy, its staff and learners and to the wider business and sectorial community.

The Academy is constantly looking to invest in its facilities and learning materials, portfolio of services and the highly specialised offer it is able to make to its sector, both directly and via its subcontractors.

3 Benefits to Employers

- Establishing a fast track approach to the talent pipeline needs of businesses
- A partnership which enhances employers’ understanding of how their business needs can be best met through engaging in the workforce development system, and through the college
- Enabling employers/business to address current and workforce skills needs through an active work based project programme design to add value to work issues and challenges e.g. project work through work experience to solve a work challenge or issue
- Providing a workforce pipeline from the local and regional population – contributing to a sustainable workforce plan
- Enabling employers to understand the Government skills education development system, through partnership working and greater opportunities for business that can be obtained from that shared understanding approach

4 Employer Engagement Through Partnership

- S&B AA has a long history of working across the sector to actively promote Apprenticeships both with and to employers. We have active engagement with several hundred employers across the UK at any one time and regularly reach out through a variety of media to encourage the take up of Apprenticeship learning. The Motor Industry has a strong tradition of using Apprentices as a key source of new talent development and this often results in proactive contact from employers who wish to use S&B AA to recruit and train Apprentices. All vacancies are placed on the NAS website and this is, where necessary, supplemented with advertising on other recruitment websites and in many instances the employers own website as well as our own. In addition to this we actively work with other referral agencies (schools, UBOs, etc.) to create a pool of applicants who can then be placed with employers once vacancies become known.
- Specifically the Standards (or frameworks where these still apply) being offered to employers are the complete range of automotive disciplines including Heavy Vehicle, Bus and Coach, Light Vehicle, Parts, Body Repair, Paint, Multidiscipline and Auto-Electrical. We also offer apprenticeships in Business Administration, Customer Service and leadership & Management. All delivery is at our Bristol training centre, supported by regular monitoring in the workplace and online learning materials and records of progress.
- Employer engagement remains constant throughout the duration of the Apprenticeship. In the case of Apprenticeship Standards, each learner has a work place Mentor through whom we maintain contact. Each employer is assigned an S&B Account Manager who makes a phone call to them every two weeks and visits in person every 17 weeks (a more regular visiting cycle remains in place for Apprentices who follow Frameworks, where no Standard is yet available). In addition the Apprentice and their mentor are required to regularly update an electronic log book which is reviewed remotely by the Account Manager to ensure that proper progress is being made. In this way any apparent lack of progress can be detected and addressed immediately. Further to workplace visits/contact and remote monitoring, all Apprentices attend the Bristol training centre for block release, classroom based training. In this way the centre based teaching staff also closely monitor and review learner progress and ensure that this is communicated to the employer via the Account Manager. These teaching staff are also available to discuss progress directly with employers and offer individual solutions to issues should this be necessary. Therefore a comprehensive and thorough record of all training undertaken both on and off the job is kept via the Log Book. The Log Book contains a Progress Bar feature which shows all users an immediate, real time report on how the learner is progressing against targets and expectations.
- In instances when our process of continual engagement identifies areas of concern, any necessary action is coordinated by the dedicated Account Manager. A note of any such concerns and the action taken will be fully documented on the learners file. Where the resolution required is of such a nature that more senior colleagues need to be involved the Account Manager will escalate the matter to their line manager (Team Leader). If this person is unable to resolve the matter then it will be further escalated to Director level and beyond as necessary.
- Overall responsibility for relationships with employers rests with the Business Development Director. This is delegated on an operational basis to individual Account Managers who each have a case load of Apprentices and their employers. In the case of a national employer sending multiple Apprentices to S&B there will also be a dedicated Account Manager to oversee our wider relationship with that

employer, typically at a Head Office level. Such Account Managers are empowered to act independently and take decisions with regard to learners and employers. In this role they are supported by colleagues across the organisation who will assist as required. If necessary the Account Manager will escalate any unresolved issues to increasingly senior levels of management until a satisfactory conclusion is achieved.

- Specific questions from employers will in the first instance be directed towards the dedicated Account Manger. The Account Manager will then provide an answer using their existing knowledge or seek further information from colleagues. All employers have the option of directing questions to alternative contacts across the Academy up to and including the Chief Executive Officer.
- All of our engagement with employers is subject to continuous monitoring and review as part of our quality cycle and scheduled monitoring of learner progress. Any interaction with an employer is seen as an opportunity to collect feedback as to our performance. This is then reviewed so that strengths may be built upon and any areas of concern can be addressed and corrected. All employers with whom we have Apprentices in learning are invited to participate in an annual review of overall progress and performance. Where we have arrangements with larger employers over several locations then a regular (at least quarterly) review of the whole programme will also be undertaken with a suitable representative on both sides. Such meetings are minuted with actions noted for all attendees. All formal complaints made by employers about any aspect of delivery are acknowledged, recorded in writing and passed to a suitable senior member of staff to review and action. Where the complaint is upheld and the reasons for it provide an opportunity for improvement, this will be authorised and implemented accordingly. All complaints are regularly reviewed by a senior member of staff to ascertain if any trends are emerging. If so corrective action will be taken to address such aspects of our delivery. Looking to the future, we are currently reviewing our website to make it more accessible to employers and learners. Part of this review is to include a Frequently Asked Questions section which will enable any regularly occurring issues to be addressed in advance.

5 Benefits of a Partnership Approach between S&B AA and Employers

Employers:

- Talent pipeline
- Access to excellent facilities and expert staff
- Commercial advantage from skilled and qualified workforce
- Access to a responsive provision which provides entry level talent as well as up skilling/re-skilling existing workers

Learners:

- Equipped with current and relevant knowledge, skills and aptitude
- Increased employability
- Placed with an employer who is best able to develop them as their career progresses
- Trained in a state of the art facility using resources which mirror those of the workplace
- Support from staff with specific areas of expertise
- Following a curriculum which is supported, shaped and endorsed by employers

S&B AA:

- The development of a sustainable business model which facilitates investment in premises and equipment to further enhance the learning experience
- The delivery of a current and relevant curriculum which has the endorsement of employers
- The ability to offer a responsive provision which meets the needs of our sector, now and in the future
- A reputation for credible and relevant delivery with an unerring focus on quality and attainment

6 Strategic Partnership working

Through collaboration Academy staff and employer partners will aim to:

- ✓ Be supported to understand the workforce skills system (funding, contractual requirements, etc.) which can be complex
- ✓ Develop an understanding of workforce programmes and how the partnership approach will work - addressing their needs
- ✓ Be action orientated and agree key objectives to achieve and complete.
- ✓ Provide a range of collaborative services for employers to use e.g. meeting facilities
- ✓ Share information regularly for mutual benefit
- ✓ Work together to provide solutions to skills needs with the wider sectorial priorities in mind
- ✓ Develop a strategic approach to employer engagement and ensure the mechanisms are effective and sustainable over time, consistent and co-ordinated approach across the organisation

7 SMART Partnership Working

Academy staff and employer partners will aim to:

- ✓ Define the key employer objectives to be addressed within the context of the partnership
- ✓ Define the role employers can make in the co-design / delivery model linked to workplace objectives
- ✓ Identify what key activities with agreed timelines
- ✓ Agree protocols for working and agreed actions
- ✓ Develop a shared understanding of how the work based learning system works and how to benefit from it to meet employer and learner needs
- ✓ Build relationships based on understood benefits to both sides

8 Examples of Opportunities of Engagement

- ✓ Identification of demand and needs
- ✓ Design curriculum
- ✓ Programme approval and validation
- ✓ Review and monitoring
- ✓ Contribution to development of real work projects and assignments
- ✓ Feedback on course development
- ✓ Feedback on student work
- ✓ Contribution to delivery of teaching and learning
- ✓ Work based learning opportunities
- ✓ Mentoring
- ✓ Careers advice and guidance
- ✓ Evaluation of quality
- ✓ Sponsorship of learners
- ✓ Entrepreneurship opportunities
- ✓ Research, innovation and knowledge exchange
- ✓ Volunteering

9 Intended Outcomes

S&B AA is focused on the development of work ready learners. This will ensure that we are able to meet employer's skills needs and that Apprentices are equipped with the skills, experience, qualifications and behaviours required for the modern workplace.

The development of this strategic approach, of effective and sustainable engagement with employers – embedded into practice and devolved to each member of staff, supported by the appropriate structures and resources – is to provide S&B AA with a sustainable plan for partnerships that benefits the whole sector which we serve.

This enhanced understanding of demand and needs for skills, experience and knowledge will come from:

- Market appraisal
- Discussions with employers
- The strategic and operational employer meetings
- The commitment and contribution of staff across the Academy
- Programmes co-designed and delivered
- Strategic partnerships
- Business involvement in assessments and assignments
- Equality of opportunity of access for work-based learning
- Learner awareness of industry 'real time' standards and change
- Continuous professional development opportunities for staff, access to updating knowledge and skills – through professional practice
- Improved understanding by employers of what support is available via S&B AA
- Opportunities for employers to feed back on performance, support, attainment and achievement and to inform review and monitoring activities
- Increase career guidance
- Monitoring employability and access to jobs