

RSM AND THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Summary

RSM were commissioned by the University of Exeter to review its Apprenticeship provision for compliance with the funding rules specified by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Introduction

The University of Exeter is a large Russell Group HE institution that has been developing its Apprenticeship offer following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and the increase in the number of level 5 to 7 Apprenticeships available to employers.

Challenges

The University wanted assurance that the systems and processes it had implemented would meet the ESFA funding rules. If the University was subject to an ESFA funding audit and found to be non-compliant with the funding rules there was a risk that funding would be recovered, which in turn may also have an adverse impact on the University's reputation, especially as it has a large Apprenticeship provision in comparison to other HE institutions.

Partnering with RSM

RSM were selected for the assignment as we have a track record of delivering similar reviews across a wide range of public, private and 3rd sector organisations. Additionally, the University commissioning team were aware of the work of our Apprenticeship funding specialist from previous experience and attendance at related training seminars.

As RSM are one of the few audit firms under contract to the ESFA, and the only one to have been continuously so since 2001, the University was confident it would get the support and advice it needed from an organisation that was technically up to date, pragmatic and in tune with the ESFA's thinking.

Results

Our solution, of following the ESFA prescribed approach, enabled us to identify where the University was non-compliant with the ESFA funding rules. We were then able to offer also advice and guidance on solutions and improvements to the University's systems that would help it remain compliant with the funding rules. Such advice and guidance is ongoing.



We have been working with RSM since 2017/18, having an annual "friendly" audit of our compliance with ESFA rules as well as in-house training events. Various members of the team have shadowed the auditor and this has raised the understanding of ESFA rules and interpretations considerably. The combination of practical advice and deep technical knowledge has been invaluable to the team at Exeter, where we are on track to have 1000+ Degree Apprenticeships in 2020/21.

Adele Dawson, Head of Degree Apprenticeships