

## **Robert Marriott**

### **Designing and Rebuilding Complex Learning Programmes at Scale**

I specialise in designing, rescuing and scaling complex Learning & Development programmes in environments where credibility has been lost, stakeholders are fragmented, and failure carries reputational and commercial risk.

My work typically begins where programmes are already under strain: weak design, low trust, competing agendas, and limited or no budget. I lead end-to-end programme redesigns using a consultative, evidence-led approach—integrating stakeholder engagement, data analytics, governance, and benefits realisation to create learning systems that are sustainable and adopted.

I have rebuilt national professional development programmes spanning multiple disciplines, regions and professional institutions, aligning learning pathways to chartership, organisational strategy and operational reality. These programmes required balancing time, cost, scope, quality and risk while coordinating senior leaders, subject-matter experts and operational teams across the business.

In addition, I have built many large professional development programmes from scratch utilising a consultative, project/programme management approach.

The outcomes have been tangible and board-level: materially improved professional pass rates, restored engagement and confidence, scalable programme architectures, and increased investment in people development. Directors work with me when programme complexity, risk and visibility demand senior L&D leadership—not just delivery.

## **Portfolio**

This document presents a comprehensive overview of my competencies and professional capabilities, demonstrating clear alignment to Level 7 standards. The framework draws principally on the requirements of the Association for Project Management (APM) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), and is further underpinned by the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy at Master's level.

The portfolio contains detailed evidence and examples that illustrate how each competency is met in practice. Given the breadth and depth of the content, readers can navigate directly to the relevant evidence through the embedded links within the competency matrix provided below.

## Level 7 standards:

**Instructions:** to see examples of each standard quickly, simply click on the ‘click here’ links provided below. This will provide you with examples on where I have demonstrated capability with each standard.

To take you back to this page, simply click on any heading within the body of the document. (anything in blue).

<p><b>Strategic Leadership</b></p> <p>Provide strategic direction for complex organisational initiatives, translating long-term vision into coherent strategies that align people, processes and resources. Influence corporate decision making through critical insight, challenge assumptions constructively and shape organisational culture and performance through evidence-based leadership</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Programme and Project Management</b></p> <p>Lead complex, multi-phase programmes using advanced project management methodologies. Define scope, governance, resource strategies and delivery models that balance cost, time, risk, quality and benefits. Proactively navigate ambiguity, interdependencies and constraints, enabling successful delivery of high-risk organisational programmes.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Organisational Development</b></p> <p>Diagnose organisational performance, culture, capability, and system issues through rigorous analysis and consultation. Design and embed OD interventions that enhance organisational effectiveness, transform behaviours and enable long-term workforce capability. Evaluate OD outcomes at structural, cultural and strategic levels.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>
<p><b>Learning and Development Expertise</b></p> <p>Design, govern and evaluate enterprise-wide learning strategies that build organisational capability and professional competence. You create integrated development pathways aligned to professional standards, business objectives and talent strategies. Use data and organisational intelligence to drive continuous improvement and demonstrate impact on business performance.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Consultancy Skills</b></p> <p>Operate as a senior consultant, using diagnostic tools, critical inquiry, and stakeholder insights to identify root causes and recommend high-value solutions. Challenge constructively, present strategic options, and influence decisions at executive level. Facilitate complex problem-solving and co-create solutions with diverse stakeholders.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Change Management</b></p> <p>Lead complex organisational change across multi-stakeholder environments using structured change frameworks. Plan and manage the strategic, people and process dimensions of change, anticipating resistance, shaping engagement strategies, and designing interventions that align culture, systems and behaviours to the desired future state.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>
<p><b>Stakeholder Engagement</b></p> <p>You map and manage diverse stakeholder groups with competing priorities, building strong coalitions to enable organisational progress. You use influence, coaching and negotiation to align interests, gain commitment, and address conflict. You create psychologically safe environments that encourage transparency, inclusion and collaboration.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Data and Analytics</b></p> <p>Design and interpret complex data sets to inform strategic decisions. Integrate qualitative and quantitative data, turning insights into actionable recommendations. Build evaluation frameworks that measure impact, demonstrate ROI, and drive evidence-based organisational improvement at scale.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>	<p><b>Operational Excellence</b></p> <p>Optimise systems, processes and workflows to improve efficiency, quality and performance. Design operational structures to reduce waste, strengthen accountability and improve the user experience. Apply continuous improvement and systems-thinking to embed sustainable operational capability across the organisation.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>  <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a></p>
<p><b>Leadership and People Skills</b></p> <p>Role-model emotionally intelligent, values-driven leadership that enables people to perform at their best. Inspire</p>	<p><b>Communication and Influence</b></p> <p>Craft and deliver high-impact communication for executive audiences, translating complex</p>	<p><b>Risk and Issue Management</b></p> <p>Identify, evaluate and mitigate strategic and operational risks across complex programmes. You analyse</p>

<p>trust, create belonging, coach for growth, and handle complex interpersonal dynamics with fairness, empathy and authority. Enable high performance and psychological safety simultaneously.</p>	<p>information into compelling narratives. Use influence, reasoning and negotiation to secure alignment, shape decision-making and build momentum behind major initiatives. Adapt your communication style strategically to different audiences and environments.</p>	<p>interdependencies, emerging threats, and organisational vulnerabilities, developing proactive strategies to prevent failure. You manage high-stakes issues calmly, with clarity, transparency and robust decision-making.</p>
<a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>	<a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>	<a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a> <a href="#">Click here</a>
<p><b>Governance and Quality Management</b></p> <p>Establish governance frameworks that clarify roles, responsibilities, control mechanisms and decision pathways. Implement assurance and quality management processes that safeguard standards, strengthen accountability and ensure compliance. Review and refine governance continually to support organisational performance and integrity.</p>		

## Major Projects/Programmes

[APC Programme](#)

[Technical Curriculum](#)

[Graduate Programme](#)

[Apprenticeship Programme](#)

[Appendices \(evidence\)](#)

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## The APC programme

In 2015, the APC (Assessment of Professional Competence) programme was seriously failing. The programme is approximately three to four years and focuses on a structured training and developmental approach to ensuring grads, apprentices and seniors are fully prepared for chartership within the following disciplines:

- QS (quantity surveying)
- PM (project management)
- BS (building surveying)
- Engineering (civil engineers)

The programme was on its knees due to weak design, leadership and management. My four predecessors resigned due to stress owing to the complexity and the challenge of managing multiple stakeholders with competing agendas.

The then Talent Lead (TL) set me an objective to rebuild the programme, restore trust across the organisation (as it is the flagship programme) and to ‘put L&D back on the map’.

To add to the challenge, the TL also advised me that I had no budget and needed to rely on the generosity of the expertise across the organisation to provide the time and work to collaborate with me to build the training courses and help me assess the candidates in prep for the final assessment.

Needless to say, this was a huge undertaking and a very complex project to lead. I spent a few days researching, came up with a strategy and presented it to my TL.

## My strategy

Firstly, I needed to persuade my TL to allow me to take approximately one year to ensure that this re-build will be successful. At first my TL was very concerned about the time taken as she expected a three-month turnaround.

I explained that in order to ensure I succeeded where so many had failed is to learn lessons from the previous attempts and to follow a **consultative approach**, then to follow best practice project management principles aligned to the APM (association of project management).

I presented the project management ‘trilemma’ which actually consisted of five concepts rather than three.

These conceptual priorities are:

- Cost
- Time
- Quality
- Risk
- Scope

I explained the importance of establishing an equilibrium between all five areas. If we prioritise one area, for example ‘time’ the cost goes up, quality may drop, scope may change and leads to heightened risk of failure. To add foundation to my thinking, I asked “why is there never enough time to get it right first time, but always enough time to rework it afterwards?”

At this point, my TL was slightly warming to my thinking. I then asked if she could take the time to look at the slides, I prepared to help her understand. Some may refer to it as a the executive summary of a business case. The summary consisted of the following:

- The vision
- How the vision aligns to the vision and strategy of the organisation
- The benefits
- The high-level plan

Note: this segment only covers the concept phase, which may be referred to as a hybrid project lifecycle for governance purposes.

## **The consultative and project management approach (phases)**

## Phase 1 (identify all of my stakeholders and present high-level vision and intent)

The discussions are likely to support phase two as there are likely to be observations identified to support qualitative data.

## Phase 2 (deep investigation – data analytics)

Look at the current survey results. Are they asking the right questions? Do I need to change the wording? Do I need to ask more focused questions? Does the assessment criteria align to the vision? Do the metrics align to the assessment criteria? How do I arrive to the qualitative and quantitative data? What's my approach to analysing the data and how would my stakeholders like it shared/presented?

Create dashboard once all data elements are agreed

## Phase 3 (rebuild trust and share the vision)

Travel to all offices across the UK inviting all stakeholders, candidates and any colleagues interested.

Started with Leeds as a pilot.

Introduce myself as the new APC Lead and apologise for the experiences over the past few years. Highlight that my intent is to change it from a failing programme to the most successful in the entire organisation.

Start by providing a safe space for directors and candidates to share every frustration and grievance. Record the themes and patterns. Remind them that this is just qualitative and I will be sending out surveys.

Ask if there any colleagues who want involvement in helping me rebuild.

Now they have been provided with the opportunity to get any negativities off their chest, now its time for constructive discussions and ideas, suggestions, and thinking.

## Phase 4 (ensure all offices are aligned to the vision, new org structure and RACI)

As the pilot above worked very well in Leeds, and I have support from the most influential leads and directors, use this momentum to gently persuade leadership and candidates across the other offices in the UK. Aligns to good stakeholder analysis (Power-Interest Grid)

Covered offices

- Leeds
- Birmingham
- Bristol

- London (head office)
- Manchester
- Liverpool
- Glasgow
- Belfast

Present the vision, new org structure and to ask for support. “For this to succeed, I need support from all levels across the organisation”. I aligned my message to the organisation’s values with one including ‘collaboration’.

I asked for a leadership sponsor (director) to make any strategic decisions, and a coordinator to work with my coordinator to schedule training representing each office.

Confirm Org structure and RACI

This received overwhelming support.

#### Phase 5 (share results of analytics, patterns, themes, and trends)

At this point, I now have:

- The vision agreed, supported and advocated for via leads and candidates
- The new org structure agreed and communicated
- The RACI agreed and communicated
- The trust of 90% of the organisation

I shared the results of the data, shared observations, patterns, trends and themes. Based on the data, I shared five options to the high-level stakeholders (the capability leads representing each capability across the UK org).

They agreed with two recommended solutions, and I communicated this down to all stakeholders for feedback.

Once agreed and understood, and agreed, I communicated the approach to all candidates.

This approach is likely to create issues and debate, though I believe quite strongly that from a change management perspective, you build more momentum trust and support if you bring people with you along the journey. **Transparency, honesty and clarity.**

At this point, I had already identified 90% of the blockers and used the influencers and convince the potential blockers.

#### Phase 6 (develop business case)

Cover all of the above and present to the UK leadership team

Once signed off, establish the PMP

Main areas covered within the business case:

- Strategic context – the case for change
- Economic analysis – ROI, based on investment appraisal
- Commercial approach – procurement strategies
- Financial case – affordability within the agreed timeframe (budget management)
- Management approach – governance, roles and responsibilities etc.

*Biggest challenge:*

The Manchester office (mainly the directors and candidates) felt quite disillusioned, jaded and frustrated with the lack of support from HR/L&D over the years. I showed complete understanding and advised that they are more than welcome to continue with their own approach. I also welcomed them to join our programme if they wished.

At this time, I had the buy-in from the board, the CEO, the COO, and all of the other offices. As a result, I could have used this as authority to pressure the office into aligning to the vision and new structure. Instead, I used a very empathetic, inspirational, influential and soft approach. This resulted in alignment within six months inside the transition phase.

This was a new approach for me, and I realised that keeping an open door and welcoming, supporting and guiding a frustrated group really helps build back trust. I also offered to join their APC sessions to provide personal presentations, offer extra support and guidance. This was a huge success and secured the trust I intended to build back.

## Phase 7 (develop PMP)

The Project Management Plan consisted of the following:

**Benefits** – covering why the redesign was crucial for Arcadis' reputation and offering a people-first and consistent service to the organisation. Time saved for the operational elements.

**Scope** – covering the work breakdown structure. The training courses, the new preparation structure (training sessions six months before the expected final assessment) and the new approach to operations (the coordinator's new responsibilities made more efficient)

**Time** – high level Gantt chart

**Resources** – RACI (who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed. Including the new org structure agreed within the earlier phases.

**Delivery logistics** – where work is likely to take place

**Management** – who covers communications, risks, issues, change control mechanism, and how quality will be managed and measured.

## Phase 8 (deployment)

### Training courses

The leads who agreed to support within the earlier phases provided me with SME's (subject matter experts for each main areas inside the capabilities of:

- Quantity surveying
- Project Management
- Engineering (civil)
- Building surveying
- Covering all capabilities, there were approximately 50 training courses to build.

### Preparation sessions

Through the generosity of various leaders and directors (stakeholders) across the organisation, I had access to approximately 5k to procure the services of fellows of the RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors). This enabled me to schedule pre-qualification interviews for candidates getting ready for the Final Assessment via the RICS.

I used the yearly 5k to develop the following structured training sessions for candidates preparing for the Final Assessment:

- Documents checking session
- Presentation training
- Pre-qualification interview (consisted of a lead, myself and the fellow of the RICS)
- For those who pass – a mock interview session with the RICS fellow

### Operational structure

Given the potential complexity created for the coordinators to resource the leads to support in delivering the training courses and Final Assessment preparation sessions, I worked hard to ensure that coordinators were motivated and happy with what I proposed.

My proposal was to empower them to decide on what the operational process would look like. I therefore proposed that I would work as their consultant to build whatever they wanted.

#### Approach:

Their vision – efficient, easy, simple, fast, supportive

Once I understood exactly what they wanted, I used MS Visio to build a cross-functional process flow. This helped them understand the dependencies and provided them with the connected hyperlinks leading them to drafted meeting requests and emails. I advised the coordinators that they can write whatever they saw as appropriate, I just wanted to save their time.

This new approach saved approximately two days per week, per person which enabled them to collaborate with me on the more strategic elements. Less admin, more thought and recommendation.

I received excellent feedback from the coordinators which led to an incredible amount of trust. Aligns nicely to Hersey and Blanchard and Herzberg leadership models.

#### Phase 9 (transition)

After going through various reviews and check-ups. The deployment phase was completed slightly before the intended time. This enabled me to roll it out within nine months rather than the expected year.

Quality assessments and metrics were completed, and the dashboard was excepted.

The transition to BAU (Business as Usual) was welcomed and excepted by all stakeholders and candidates.

#### Phase 10 (Benefits realisation)

The major benefit requested by the CEO was to ensure that (given the work and changes) the pass rate for Arcadis vis the RICS went from around 60% to above 80%. Within a year, the average pass rate went up to 90%. A huge win this side.

In addition, the board required an improvement on engagement and satisfaction from the leads and candidates across the UK business. [Click here](#) to see feedback from the then COO Peter Madden.

This went up exponentially. To such a degree that it resulted in my being awarded a 1.5 million budget to build a wider technical curriculum for the UK business. This was due to the organisation merging with an engineering firm called ‘Hyder’.

This was a very challenging undertaking which led to my next objective.

## The Technical Curriculum

Whilst my first programme focused primarily on approximately 500 candidates becoming chartered via the RICS, my new task was to build a technical curriculum that captured all UK colleagues which amounted to 5000. Essentially the entire UK business.

This meant that I needed to help Arcadis become accredited with the institutions detailed in bold below:

The capabilities were:

Project Management – infrastructure (**APM**)

Engineering – Electrical, Water, Mechanical, Civil, Chemical (**ICE, ImechE, CIWEM, IChemE, EIT**)

With a merge with Hyder, I needed to consider that approx. 50% of the organisation will be taking a different route towards chartership. Given the connected industry, the RICS is more built environment focused, whereas the PMs and Engineers from legacy Hyder are more infrastructure which means the commercial interest shifts from RICS to institutions detailed in bold above.

## The strategy

My approach was much like the strategy I followed for the APC programme except that I needed to firstly take the following actions:

Learn about the following industries and demonstrate a strategic understanding of:

- Buildings (which I already knew based on the APC programme)
- Infrastructure
- Industrial Manufacturing
- Transport
- Energy

Given that Arcadis are a matrix style organisation, I also needed to appreciate the capabilities that cross-over all industry sectors detailed above.

I created a high level matrix based on my understanding and presented to the board.

Once fully understood, I shared my recommended approach to building the new technical curriculum.

Given my success with the APC programme, I already had strong and trusting relationships with the capability leads who were more than happy to provide resources and personal support (stakeholder buy-in).

With the above firmly in mind, I presented my recommended approach:

**Note:** my stakeholders have already been identified, and I already have a budget and top-level support and buy-in.

### Recommended vision

To build a technical curriculum that (whatever your capability) every colleague will have a specifically designed development programme that provides a detailed pathway towards the gold standards professional qualification or chartership. This will demonstrate that Arcadis is a people-first organisation that prioritises professional development leading to commercial success.

### Phase 1 (discovery)

Given the success of the consultative approach with the last programme, I decided to follow it again to ensure that I could identify past issues and root causes. In addition, how the users and stakeholders feel about what is currently in place.

Some questions I felt the need to ask were:

- What do we have and Hyder have in place already and how can we leverage on what has already been developed?
- Are there any cross-over training courses we have created that might support those within the other industry sectors?
- How do the directors, leaders and candidates feel about when is in place do date?
- How will I ensure I have healthy and transparent data ensuring it has integrity?

### Qualitative data

For the qualitative, I schedule many meetings with the directors from legacy Hyder to gather how they feel about the merge and how they feel about Arcadis. I also wanted to understand what they wanted from a people-development perspective.

## Quantitative data

This helped me form a set of questions that aligned to the vision I took from the board. This set of questions were added to a new survey I sent out to all colleagues across the UK business which received around 70% engagement. A great result which helped me establish a set of recommendations.

## Phase 2 (present recommendations to the board)

Given the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, I was able to start forming a set of recommendations.

Given the discussions I had with the leads across the UK business, I found that the organisation didn't have a strong competency framework that covered all disciplines and that was analysable.

### **My first recommendation**

Build a new competency framework that will enable me to analyse the competency, skills and knowledge gaps across the organisation. This will help the board with the portfolio management elements (which projects and programmes to prioritise).

### **My second recommendation**

Build a specific Design and Engineering Academy which helps the new leads feel prioritised and not like they are just piggybacking into an already designed programme. I persuaded the board to allow me to create something specific as there was a general perception that Arcadis was not prioritising our new colleagues from the legacy Hyder organisation. I highlighted the importance of making the leads and candidates feel that they belong with us and they were truly heard.

### **My third recommendation**

Build PM Academy for the same reasons above. Naturally they would all fall under the technical curriculum, though from a terms of reference and linguistic perspective, it went a long way towards helping our new colleagues feel that their requirements have been prioritised.

This approach received very positive feedback from the board and my leadership thinking was commended.

## Phase 3 (the business case)

Note: whilst writing the business case, I had already drafted the new competency framework which generated very positive feedback. This enabled me to quickly prioritise which helped form a more detailed business case.

This business case was written in nearly the same format as the business case for the APC programme, though there were more benefits to the organisation. It detailed the outputs which lead to outcomes, and the outcomes which lead to tangible benefits.

The business contained the following areas of focus:

- Strategic context – the case for change
- Economic analysis – ROI, based on investment appraisal
- Commercial approach – procurement strategies (this was a much more detailed area)
- Financial case – affordability within the agreed timeframe (budget management) – this was a much bigger area given the 1.5mil budget
- Management approach – governance, roles and responsibilities etc.

## Phase 4 (PMP)

The Project Management Plan (PMP) was essentially written in the same format as the PMP for the APC programme, though it contained more on the procurement, and budgeting areas. I even provided an earned value piece.

Main areas of focus:

**Benefits** – Covering why specific programmes should be created and the value it will add to the wider business. Connected to retention of valuable colleagues, especially within the engineering capability.

**Scope** – covering the work breakdown structure. The training courses, how most will be procured (high level) the build of the competency framework (which was already mostly completed) and PM courses that need building.

**Time** – high level Gantt chart

**Resources** – RACI (who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed).

**Delivery logistics** – where work is likely to take place (in this case, I was required to travel much more often due to the many different capabilities I needed to draw upon).

**Management** – who covers communications, risks, issues, change control mechanism, and how quality will be managed and measured. In addition, I needed to build a very detailed procurement structure that reassured the CFO and the procurement lead that I was spending very strategically and in alignment with the business case.

## Phase 5 (deployment)

At this point the competency framework was completed. This enabled me to go straight into collaborating with various SMEs, leads and directors to build and roll out training courses.

This phase also enabled me to build a structure that emulated the structure built to help those on the APC programme prepare for their final assessments. This consisted of:

- Documents checking session
- Presentation training
- Pre-qualification interview (consisted of a lead, myself and the fellow of the relevant institution (CIWEM, ICE, ImechE, IChemE, etc.)
- For those who pass – a mock interview session with the relevant fellow detailed above

## Operational changes:

Whilst this created more work for the coordinators with regards to scheduling sessions, I was able to employ a new coordinator to handle the additional work. This was built into the overall budget within the business case and didn't affect the budget hugely. The board saw this as a great investment.

## Procurement approach

Given the number of training courses that needed designing, the board agreed with my recommendation on outsourcing much of the engineering training. Again, I wanted the legacy Hyder directors to appreciate the investment in the professional development of their (our) people. This was highly appreciated and served to help the new directors feel that they belong with us.

With regards to ensuring best practice, I followed the recommended procurement approach outlined by the APM.

## Phase 6 (transition and benefits realisation)

This phase was followed in a 'hybrid' fashion as I wanted to make a start deploying the training courses and the new structure in helping the engineers and other capabilities prepare for chartership asap. Some people see it as a soft launch.

In terms of adoption and benefits realisation, there were no issues at, Just huge appreciation from the capability leads and the candidates.

Received very positive feedback.

## Graduate programme re-design and delivery

When 90% of the programmes that comprised of the technical curriculum were completed, I was asked by the Talent Lead (TL) to rebuild the Graduate Training Programme. This was due to the recent three-day Graduate Induction resulting in many complaints from the graduates.

Given my already positive relationship with most of the Graduates owing to the redesign of the APC Programme, I felt that I had an upper hand with regards to trust.

I agreed on two conditions:

1. I was given full autonomy (with the obvious caveat that my approach and design align to the needs of the capability leads)
2. I work with a colleague who is an expert at opening and closing (as this was a weakness of mine)

My TL violently agreed with the above and was already familiar with my consultative approach to the re-design.

### Strategy

With the consultative approach being so successful with the previous programme, my TL requested that I use the same approach.

However, this challenge was slightly different given that the next three-day programme was due to take place within a week. This called for a very agile approach.

Given the requirement of an incredibly quick turnaround, my colleague and I got to work straight away.

Before any work started I needed to highlight various risks and provide the risk analysis to my TL. Given the obvious risks due to prioritising time, my TL understood how this might pull on cost, scope, and quality.

Note: the project management trilemma detailed discussed within the first programme:

- Time
- Cost
- Risk
- Scope
- Quality

Given the risk register and analysis I presented to my TL, she continued to support the week I had to redesign the three-day graduate induction.

My TL also agreed to an Agile/iterative approach to the build.

### Phase 1 (very quick analysis and high-level root cause identification)

Whilst the assessment criteria was seen to be quite weak, I agreed and took the following approach:

Analise the data that we already have and come to high-level inferences. Some were:

- The materials being weak
- Lessons chaotic with no firm learning outcomes
- Not engaging
- Not challenging enough

After a discussion with the TL, I recommended that I would continue using the current assessment criteria to demonstrated improvement. Once improvement had been demonstrated, I would write a more targeted and deeper set of assessment criteria to ensure that we are providing the wider business with what they require. My TL and the board agreed.

### Phase 2 (course design)

Given the quick analysis, I developed a set of governing principles I should follow while building the new three-day induction.

These principles were:

- Engaging
- Challenging
- Transparent with stated learning objectives
- Aligned to the vision and strategy of the organisation
- Aligned to what the capability leads require

### Phase 3 (deliver the grad induction)

From a structural perspective, I designed the following:

**Day 1:** Introductions, vision and strategy, very high-level three-year structure (as this was likely to change). Three-day agenda, physical activity based on project management principles. Presentation based on career paths and development.

**Day 2:** Half day with a service provider to lead fun activities that resulted in a firm lesson on collaboration and project management. Second, I delivered consultancy training to

the grads. Despite me expecting this to be the boring part of the day, most grads preferred my course (my personal design). [Click here](#) to see the feedback.

**Day three:** Review days one and two, facilitated by myself to help the audience understand why I designed it this way. This discussion went such a long way and seemed to really engage the audience.

Before the induction: I came up with the idea to ask one capability lead to come up with a challenge they are experiencing from a strategic perspective. I turned this into a client brief and presented this brief to the grads. Put them into 10 groups of five and advised that they now have three months to leverage on what I taught them (management consultancy) and use these skills to present their recommendations to the CEO. The winners get to have lunch with the CEO.

This challenge was welcomed by the grads.

My colleague, Tom closed the three day induction for me which resulted in a standing ovation.

### Result

Our TL was incredibly impressed and proud of us both (my colleague Tom and I). My TL asked if we could deliver all grad inductions for the foreseeable future.

My TL was particularly impressed with the consultancy course I designed and asked I could deliver it to seniors across the organisation.

The consultancy course mainly consisted of:

- Data analytics
- How to organise and manage data (MECE)
- Once organised, present the bottom-up approach
- The Pyramid Principle (top-down approach)
- Inductive, deductive, and abductive logical reasoning
- How to build and maintain trust
- The finished product (teams present to the audience)

### Phase 4 (redesign three-year programme)

After slightly longer analysis, I found that this didn't need much change. Just change with who delivers, demonstrating more contextual understanding which comprises mainly of commercial, technical, and professional know-how and experience.

## Leadership

Despite the very fast and Agile approach, this was a very challenging undertaking. After reflection, I put this to it being very difficult to impress graduates given their expectations when they complete university. After much study, I found that the new generations expect a very high standard.

## How did I build their trust?

I treated the graduates like very smart and intelligent adults. Whilst they had high expectations of me, I had high expectations of them too. I felt that honest, transparency, and creating a very safe environment went a very long way regarding trust. I tried hard not to pass judgement and listen to everything they had to say. If I didn't agree, I would question them with genuine inquiry utilising a coaching approach. I felt that I needed to be very careful about going into mentoring territory given the difficulty of building a graduate's trust. Around 90% need to see credibility, knowledge and experience before they trust you. Rank within the organisation didn't seem to mean much to them.

## Phase 4 (transition to BAU)

Due to the wider programme not requiring much change, I was able to roll out the new programme without too much 'shock' to the organisation. The only major changes were focused primarily on the three-day grad induction.

Other changes were based on the monthly training sessions which only required some tweaking.

## Challenges:

Only real challenge was around two trainers who were required to take over some of the delivery aspects as I was not required to re-design the apprenticeship programme.

The two trainers in the team who I asked to take over 50% of the delivery unfortunately received negative feedback. In my opinion, this was owing more to the change rather than incompetence from the trainers.

My approach was to coach the trainers and work incredibly hard to build back their confidence. I also discussed this with various graduates who had complained and asked if they could show some understanding and look at it from the trainer's perspective. I also tried to highlight how difficult the job is and if they could give the two trainers another opportunity to win back their trust. They agreed.

## Apprenticeship programme re-design and delivery

With the apprenticeship programme, I simply copied as much as I could from the three-day graduate induction programme.

### Interesting observation:

After the fifth time delivering both grad and apprenticeship three-day inductions, I realised that the apprentices seemed to perform better with the second day event essentially being designed to have them fail, learn to deal with failure and collaborate with potential competitors (as a lesson learned). With the likelihood of failure in mind, most of the apprenticeship groups succeeded. This led to much debate and discussion amongst my peers and sponsors.

### Biggest challenge

Given that Arcadis were partnering with a university to get the Apprentices through their Level 6 degree and then through to chartership (Level 7) within five years, I was quite shocked that the organisation saw this as realistic. In addition, my Line Manager who wanted to hand over the apprenticeship programme to me was not happy with the university and asked me to end the contract and look for another university to partner with. I could understand his frustration.

### As a result of my discovery phase, there were two main issues to solve:

#### 1. The issue around Line Manager engagement for the 300 apprentices

The relationship manager representing the university give me an ultimatum and advised that if 100% of the apprenticeship Line Managers do not sign the apprentice's coaching reviews within a week, they will withdraw all candidates. Given the behaviours reported to me via my Line Manager (who previously ran the apprenticeship programme) I wasn't surprised by the rather aggressive approach. I apologised and explained that our Line Managers are working approximately 60/70 hours per week and are incredibly stressed. Whilst this is not an excuse, I asked for understanding and a compromise. From a negotiation perspective, I had planned my BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) and ZOPA (zone of potential agreement). With this in mind, I already built the ChPP (chartered project professional – APM) which was ready to take on the apprentices if negotiations broke down.

I offered a compromise of getting 70% of manager signatures within a week and then 100% within a month. The relationship manager did not accept and advised he would withdraw the apprentices.

The capability lead was in the room when we were negotiating and entrusted me to push back as I had already advised him of their approach to negotiation. I advised that they

were likely to bluff and I would call it. **Note:** I ensured there was not risk to the organisation as I had a contingency planned.

I advised the relationship manager that we (Arcadis) are a people-first organisation, and I wasn't willing to put our Line Manager's psychological safety at risk. If they will not compromise, then to withdraw the candidates.

The relationship manager agreed to the compromise.

### 2. [The five-year structure that aimed to have the apprentices chartered](#)

During negotiations, I presented the likely timeframe that the grads follow when preparing for chartership. I had a concern that the university didn't quite understand how consultancy organisations work and how resourcing works.

Given my experience working with leaders to ensure that as many grads and apprentices are given the opportunity to do 'Level 7 work' I needed to advise of the commercial challenge. Essentially, I needed to provide a distinction between ideology and reality.

Needless to say, it didn't land too well, though I had full support from my capability lead (the programme sponsor).

The university quickly agreed to change structure from five to seven years.

### 3. [To re-build the relationship between Arcadis and the university](#)

Throughout my discussions with the relationship manager, he soon realised that I was working hard for the apprentices and line managers across Arcadis. I believe this led to respect and trust given my transparent and honest approach. I also felt the need to reassure him that I was committed to rebuilding the relationship for both Arcadis and the university.

Approximately six months later, I won the respect of the relationship manager and was invited to Westminster for lunch with the then Earl of Lytton. [Click here](#) to see the invite.

## Executive and skills coaching

### Skills coaching

Given my experience in consulting, project and programme management, I thought I would spend some time tutoring and coaching candidates from various industries achieve their Level 6 degree.

This was an amazing experience, and I feel honoured to have been part of their journey. I was also honoured and surprised to receive such positive feedback. [Click here](#) to see the feedback.

Within four years, I coached approximately 200 candidates. Given my experience, most of my cohort were managers and leaders within various organisational types.

Despite the above, approximately 20% of my learners were at the starting point of their careers.

Through my tenure at QA (Northumbria University) I found myself facilitating level 7 discussions with the most of my learners as they advised they wanted to score a distinction. This meant that they needed to demonstrate level 7 competencies across the Project Management Standards. As a result, approximately 90% of my learners scored a distinction after their assessments.

In addition, my learner's Line Managers were very impressed with my approach.

### [My development](#)

In terms of how I developed in this role, it helped me understand much more about how different organisations operate from a culture, climate, and best practice perspective. Much of these organisations were:

- NHS
- Borough Councils
- MOD
- Home Office
- Management and asset consultancy organisations
- Severn Trent
- Retail organisations
- Other professional services

### [Executive coaching](#)

During my time at Arcadis, I coached many directors and associates, helping them discover their true potential and aligning to the vision and strategy of Arcadis. I received very positive feedback with one director advising that I 'changed his life'.

The approach was through:

- Discovery phase
- Mind mapping
- Identifying their coalition of support across the organisation
- Identifying their market strengths

- If required, build bespoke training

## Appendices (evidence)

### Appendix 1 (feedback from learners and colleagues)



Emma Clark

External

Your ability to convey information in a way I'll understand and (more importantly) remember is so helpful.

You have a skill of relating theory back to tangible practice which I've found difficult to find throughout this degree apprenticeship, it's always greatly appreciated!

I've found the way you use questions to shape my thinking really useful, something I'm trying to do myself now.

Finally, I appreciate you always having time to rationalize my thinking, help with any issues and giving me as much direction as possible :)

*Feedback requested:*

"Anything :)"

20 Mar 2024 16:30



Jill Burke

External

The only area where improvement could be considered is in the availability of his time, his guidance has been so valuable, and I've found myself wishing for more opportunities to engage with him.

This is a reflection of how beneficial his support has been rather than a critique of his performance.

In short, Rob has proven himself to be an incredible asset. I feel fortunate to have worked with him, and I genuinely believe I'm a better employee and individual for having had the opportunity.

*Feedback requested:*

"Approach to how I help you develop as a PM, and anything you like"

18 Jun 2025 8:35



Jill Burke

External

My experience working with Rob has been outstanding. He has consistently demonstrated exceptional availability, support, and insight. His coaching has been instrumental in my development, in terms of personal growth and my understanding of project management.

He has a unique ability to help me reframe questions and challenges, offering perspectives that I hadn't previously considered. His willingness to share his own experiences has made complex concepts relatable and easier to grasp, and he has helped me connect my own experiences to the project management standards in a meaningful and practical way.

Rob has shown an unbelievable commitment to my success and learning journey. His guidance has not only enhanced my confidence but has genuinely made me feel more capable and effective in my role.

I can honestly say I'm not sure how I would have progressed this far in the course without his ongoing support and coaching.

*Feedback requested:*

"Approach to how I help you develop as a PM, and anything you like"

18 Jun 2025 8:35



Amy Julian External

Other learners could benefit from some of the tools Rob has passed on to me, I feel like I have a bit of an advantage in some ways.

Rob's approach is brilliant, nothing is too much trouble and he is extremely responsive should I need help in between sessions. I am so grateful that Rob is my skills coach and for that reason, I can't think of any improvements I would make, only others learning from his approach to his role.

*Feedback requested:*

*"Approach to developing you as a project professional, and anything you like. :)"*

09 Jun 2025 13:38



Amy Julian External

Rob has been brilliant in helping me to understand the standards and what is required of me. The ways he has explained how to approach the EPA has been brilliant and tailored to suit me. He has been able to explain things in a way that relates to how I learn and work as well as the projects I am involved with. Not only has he helped me with my degree apprenticeship, but he has also helped me when deciding which qualification to take and how to prepare for the study involved in the APM PMQ.

Having spoken to other learners in my cohort, he appears to be one of the better skills coaches within the organisation. He is helpful, patient and extremely knowledgeable on this and many other subjects and meeting with him is something I look forward to. There have been times where I have felt like I wanted to quit, but a pep talk and encouragement from Rob has kept me going and now the end is almost in sight.

*Feedback requested:*

*"Approach to developing you as a project professional, and anything you like. :)"*

09 Jun 2025 13:38

#### FW: Rob Marriott EPA Support and Feedback



Moore, Clayton <Clayton.Moore@atkinsrealis.com>

To Marriott, Rob

Fri 31/01/2025 13:04

Start your reply all with:

I hope this email finds you well.

I am writing to share my positive experience with Rob and how really, he has turned this experience around in the last few weeks.

Rob has been exceptionally supportive, especially during this gateway process. His dedication, guidance and candid approach have significantly improved my overall experience.

As you know from my previous email, my experience with Anthony was somewhat challenging and inconsistent which left me feeling anxious and unsupported. However, Rob has completely turned this around. He has been patient, understanding, and always been available to address my concerns and provide valuable feedback.

Thanks to Rob's efforts, I now feel more confident and prepared. His support has made a profound difference, and I am grateful for his assistance in his short tenure as my skills coach.

Thank you for having such a dedicated and brilliant team member. He's an asset to QA.

I have told my line manager, Jimmy Highton, who I'm sure will echo so of my feedback.

Best regards,

**Clayton Moore**  
Sub Project Manager  
Decommissioning & Waste Services  
AtkinsRéalis

Tel: +44 1946 521841 Mob:  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place, Manchester,  
M1 3BN

RE: James Mark's Exit Review - 29th Jan



Maluga, Joanna  
To: Mariott, Rob; Collins, Suzanne  
Cc: Carless, Danny

(i) You forwarded this message on 23/01/2025 17:17.

Reply Reply All Forward Print ...

Thu 16/01/2025 10:07

This is incredible Rob – thank you for sharing , me and Danny will be sure to pass the feedback on to my senior contact too as this is such a success story after the turbulent time some of the learners have had recently- so well done for going above and beyond for Atkin learners and encouraging them to reach as high as possible with their grades ! You're such a pleasure to work with and make such a difference to these learners experience on QA programmes!

@Collins, Suzanne- we are slowly re-building trust with Atkins and the below are the things that help us do exactly that ! Rob is an asset to your team 😊

Thank you,

Joanna

**Joanna Maluga** | Service Delivery Manager- Apprenticeships  
m: +44 (0) 07918277083  
Central: [servicemanagement@qa.com](mailto:servicemanagement@qa.com)  
Your feedback matters to me : <https://qacompass.clearreview.com/a32abeb989>



Laura Frankland

External

I don't think there's anything that needs to be improved on in terms of Robs performance as a Skills Coach. He's approachable, responsive and engaging. My only wish is that we could have more people like Rob across QA.

*Feedback requested:*

"My approach to helping you develop"

16 Dec 2024 10:05



Laura Frankland

External

I cannot thank Rob enough for supporting me through my Degree apprenticeship, it's because of him and his support that I've made it as far as I have. Rob has taken the time to listen to me, put in extra sessions for support if/when needed and goes above and beyond every time.

I often joke with Rob that the sessions are like therapy for me and I come out feeling a lot more positive about moving forward.

He shows a true caring nature wanting to know how things are going and how he can support me in the workplace. He challenges me to think outside of the box and pushes for answers offering alternative options which I wouldn't have always thought about. He's supported me the most in my degree apprenticeship and has highlighted my strengths which I don't always see.

I like his realistic approach, he doesn't sugar coat things, but explains in detail what needs to happen and how it can be achieved.

*Feedback requested:*

"My approach to helping you develop"

16 Dec 2024 10:05



Callum Lewis External

Rob is a very motivational skills coach who is also very engaging. During our catch-ups, we will usually have a long chat and discussion rather than just reading through questions. However, the conversations we have also answer all of the required questions from the way Rob words them. This method really changes the meetings and makes it a lot more interesting than just working through the sheets. Rob is also very professional but also very approachable and I feel comfortable talking to him about any concerns or queries I may have. Additionally, Rob is always available to contact and will usually respond very quickly to any messages or emails and is more than willing to set up additional meetings when I am encountering any issues. Due to my military background, I struggled a lot with transferring over skills into project management and identifying what skills and knowledge I already have. However, Rob has used different methods to help identify these and transfer them over. Rob has also recommended a wide variety of different courses and bits of information to look at to help with my personal development and to understand different aspects of self development and learning. After Rob took over from my previous skills coach, I believe Rob is more dedicated to the role and will go that extra mile to help out any of the students that need it.

*Feedback requested:*

"Anything...."

19 Mar 2024 10:22



Patrik Smihula · 1st

Agile Delivery Manager

November 27, 2025, Patrik was Robert's client

Rob has been an exceptional skills coach throughout my university degree apprenticeship and continues to offer support even after its completion. His guidance, encouragement, and consistent presence have played a huge role in my development. He takes the time to understand challenges, provides practical and thoughtful advice, and creates a motivating environment that builds both confidence and capability. Rob's approachable nature and genuine commitment to helping others succeed truly set him apart. I'm incredibly grateful for his mentorship during the degree and beyond, and I couldn't have asked for a better coach.

[LinkedIn link](#)



Lisa Humphries

I wanted to highlight the support that Rob has given to me as a relatively new Service Delivery Manager at QA! He looks after learners on my Atkins and THG accounts. Both of these employers have been challenging in different ways but Rob has made my new relationship with them very easy. He is responsive to my requests and takes care and time to ensure that I understand any issues that are going on and what the possible solutions could be. There has been some amazing feedback from one learner in particular at THG who has recently raised a number of issues that she is unhappy about on her programme, but she described Rob as "the best part of this course so far and has given me tools and recommendations to try and help me through. I just want to raise this with you because he's truly been the silver lining". My interactions with Rob have given me immense confidence in his desire to support the learners and make their experience the best it can be. I am so pleased that I have Rob looking after some of my learners as he has been pro-active and solution focussed whenever I have had dealings with him. Rob, you are a great asset to QA!

[We make a difference](#)

09 Nov 2022 12:40

[Show reply](#)

I am delighted to share my positive experience working with Rob. Throughout our time together, Rob has been incredibly supportive and positive, always ready to lend a helping hand and offer encouragement. During some of my lowest personal times, Rob's unwavering support and positivity significantly boosted my confidence and morale.

Rob's ability to explain complex project management concepts within our organisation has been invaluable. His clear and concise explanations have not only helped me understand these concepts better but also enabled me to apply them effectively in my work. This has been instrumental in helping me move forward in my degree, and I am truly grateful for his guidance and mentorship.

Rob's dedication to fostering a positive and supportive environment has made a significant impact on my professional and personal growth. I highly recommend Rob for his exceptional support, positivity, and expertise in project management and dedication to learning and development.

Cher Moore  
Project and Change Associate  
Severn Trent Water

## Appendix 2 (feedback connected to APC Programme)

Received      Given

---



Peter Madden BA (Hons) MSc (Oxon) FRICS · 1st

Executive Global Program Director at Arcadis

December 2, 2025, Peter was senior to Robert but didn't manage Robert directly

I would like to recommend Robert because of his consultative approach to building and re-building training programmes that result in professional (charterhip) qualifications in the UK.

Whilst at Arcadis, Robert supported and encouraged many of our young people on their journey towards the attainment of their professional qualifications and did so in an empathetic and collaborative way, recognising the demands placed on young professionals as they balance the needs of their academic progress with the demands of their clients.

[LinkedIn link](#)

## Appendix 3 (feedback from Grad Programme)



STATED OBJECTIVES: how well were they met?

1	2	3	4	5
Not met				Fully met

Supporting Comments to the above:

Bob's Section in particular was fantastic. Excellent information & got the group thinking.

Realising Potential section was also useful. Supporting Stories made it believable.

The best feature of the Course was:

Using Logic when Presenting & writing. Brilliantly delivered.

The best feature of the course was:

The presentation on arguments  
Presentation on personality types

i) What was your biggest take away?	ii) What action will you take as a result of the session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to Structure an argument</li> <li>- Paired with random person to discuss career path was good - everyone's the same really</li> </ul>	
iii) What could be improved?	iv) What support would you like now to build on this
Some repetition from regional induction	Find the role profile of the job I want to get to so I can work towards & get there sooner.

If necessary, please turn over and continue with your feedback.  
Should you have any further thoughts after the course, please contact Learning and Development.  
THANK YOU: YOUR FEEDBACK IS APPRECIATED

The best feature of the course was:

Learning about logic & reasoning

i) What was your biggest take away?

How to 'disarm' a manipulative arguer e.g. "Soy you feel that way"

ii) What action will you take as a result of the session

Understanding why I have the behavior I do and trying to branch out of my 'box'

iii) What could be improved?

The sailor activity session was quite intense, I appreciate their learning objective but I came away feeling quite stressed.

iv) What support would you like now to build on this

Opportunity to take up different roles in a team. Pretty simple really.

STYLE OF DELIVERY	1	2	3	4	5
KNOWLEDGE	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting comments to the above:					
HOW DO YOU RATE THE AFTERNOON GASP (VOYAGER) ACTIVITY?	1	2	3	4	5
	Low				High
<b><u>Overall Day; Open Feedback:</u></b>					
The best feature of the day was: <i>Logic &amp; Persuasion skills</i>					
What was your biggest takeaway of the day? <i>Importance of how an argument is structured.</i>	What action will you take as a result of the sessions today? <i>-Take more care in communication -Be aware of big picture &amp; reduce competition</i>				
What could be improved? <i>N/A</i>	What support would you like now to build on this? <i>Make available the slides for all sessions.</i>				

<u>Overall Day; Open Feedback:</u>	
The best feature of the day was:  logic + Presentation skills	
What was your biggest takeaway of the day?	What action will you take as a result of the sessions today?  Continue networking. Find out more about chartership.
What could be improved?  Set up for failure with GASP. The guy running it was very inappropriate and didn't explain the first open feedback.	What support would you like now to build on this?

**Trainer Evaluation**

STYLE OF DELIVERY	1	2	3	4	5	KNOWLEDGE	1	2	3	4	5
-------------------	---	---	---	---	---	-----------	---	---	---	---	---

Supporting Comments to the above:

The inductive/deductive argument workshop was really enjoyable. I thought that it was really well put together.

Emerging Talent  
\*\*\*\*The Appraisal\*\*\*\*

Course Appraisal

The best feature of the course was:

Deductive/Inductive reasoning

The best feature of the course was:

Nice atmosphere where everyone felt free to speak their mind.

i) What was your biggest take away?  Ethos, logos, pathos	ii) What action will you take as a result of the session  Consciousness in my style of delivery or when presenting.
iii) What could be improved?  More breaks	iv) What support would you like now to build on this  N/A

If necessary, please turn over and continue with your feedback.  
Should you have any further thoughts after the course, please contact Learning and Development.  
THANK YOU: YOUR FEEDBACK IS APPRECIATED

Emerging Talent  
\*\*\*\*The Appraisal\*\*\*\*

The best feature of the course was:

*The mixture of presentations but also engaging activities*

i) What was your biggest take away? <i>Presentation skills</i>	ii) What action will you take as a result of the session <i>Try to have good involvement in training opportunities to make the most of what's offered.</i>
iii) What could be improved?	iv) What support would you like now to build on this

If necessary, please turn over and continue with your feedback.  
Should you have any further thoughts after the course, please contact Learning and Development.  
THANK YOU: YOUR FEEDBACK IS APPRECIATED



### **Overall Day; Open Feedback:**

The best feature of the day was:

The logic and reasoning session

What was your biggest takeaway of the day?

How to put across an argument successfully.

What action will you take as a result of the sessions today?

What could be improved?

What support would you like now to build on this?

Supporting Comments to the above:

ENJOYED PRESENTATION TRAINING WITH ROB

Course Appraisal

Emerging Talent  
\*\*\*\*The Appraisal\*\*\*\*

The best feature of the course was:

PRESENTATION TRAINING

## Appendix 4 (Apprenticeship Programme evidence)

