DQB

Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment Against the Sector-Recognised Standards

Multiverse Group Limited

Review Report

April 2022

Contents

Executive summary

Requirement	Judgements
Whether the higher education courses that the provider delivers, or intends to deliver, are consistent with the sector-recognised standards	The DQB team concludes that the higher education courses delivered by the provider are consistent with the sector-recognised standards

1   The DQB was commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS) to conduct a bespoke assessment of standards in relation to Multiverse Group Limited (the provider). The provider delivers higher education programmes in partnership with an awarding body, and is seeking registration with the Office for Students (OfS).

2   The OfS specified in its commission that no visit to the provider was required as part of the assessment. The judgement of the DQB-appointed team of assessors (the team) is based on the team's assessment of evidence submitted by the provider in relation to the requirement outlined above.

3   The assessment was conducted against the sector-recognised standards applicable at the time of the commission from the OfS: that is, the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework (2018)[1] subsequently referred to in this document as 'the SRS'.

4   The overall judgement of the DQB team is that the higher education courses that the provider delivers are consistent with the SRS.

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[1] www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/

Purpose of this report

The Assessment

5   The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has been designated by the Secretary of State as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) and is commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS) to conduct assessments of providers to inform its regulatory decisions.

6   The DQB was commissioned by the OfS on 15 February 2022 to conduct an assessment of the academic standards of higher education courses at the provider against the SRS, as articulated in the OfS regulatory framework.

7   The purpose of the assessment was to enable the DQB to provide evidence to the OfS that allows it to make regulatory decisions. This report is structured to outline the team's judgements, linking the evidence considered to those judgements and outlining the process by which that evidence was considered. The findings relating to the Level 4 and Level 6 higher education courses are presented separately in this report due to the differences in the nature of the provision.

8   The scope of the assessment included all higher education courses delivered at the provider, namely the Level 6 degree apprenticeship course and the Level 4 apprenticeships. Although the Level 4 apprenticeships do not lead to an academic qualification, the OfS requested that the assessment include consideration of the extent of alignment to SRS as the apprenticeships fall within the definitions set out in Schedule 6 of the Education Reform Act 1988 in terms of a higher education course.

9   Details of the assessment process are included in Annex 1 and the evidence considered by the team is detailed in Annex 3 of this report.

Provider details

Key details about the provider and its higher education courses are outlined in the table below. Further information is supplied in Annex 2.

Legal name	Multiverse Group Limited
Trading name	Multiverse
UKPRN	10055902
Higher education courses	BSc (Hons) in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics)
	DipHE in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics)
	CertHE in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics)
	Level 4 Apprenticeship Project Management
	Level 4 Apprenticeship Software Engineer
	Level 4 Apprenticeship Data Fellowship
Awarding bodies/organisations and/or partnerships	New College of the Humanities (NCH): awarding body for BSc (Hons), DipHE and CertHE qualifications in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics)
	Chartered Management Institute (CMI): End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) for Level 4 Apprenticeship Project Management
	Accelerate People: End Point Assessment Organisation for Level 4 Apprenticeships Data Fellowship and Software Engineer
Site(s) of delivery	Delivery takes place online. The provider's management and administrative office is based in central London.
Provider on the OfS register	Yes ☐ No ☒

Assessment against sector-recognised standards

Requirement

The team was asked to consider whether the higher education courses that the provider delivers, or intends to deliver, are/are not consistent with the sector-recognised standards (SRS).

Judgement

10   Based on the evidence provided, the team concludes that the higher education courses that the provider delivers are consistent with the SRS.

Reasoning

Level 6 Degree Course

Typical higher education qualifications at levels of the FHEQ

11   The assessment team considered the degree course in relation to typical qualifications at the relevant academic levels as set out in Table 1 of the SRS. As specified in the programme specification,[2] three qualifications are offered: at Level 6, the Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree with honours; at Level 5, an exit qualification of Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE); and at Level 4, a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE).

12   Although a CertHE is outlined in the programme specification as part of the degree course, it is not delivered by the provider or awarded by NCH. This is because all students are admitted directly to Level 5 of the degree on the basis of recognition of prior learning (RPL) which is awarded against the modules of the CertHE for students who have completed the Level 4 Data Analytics apprenticeship. No awards of CertHE are made to students who are admitted with advanced standing to Level 5 through RPL as this is contrary to the NCH's academic regulations[3] which state that no more than 60 credits of the required credits for a CertHE can be granted through RPL. The degree course is therefore being delivered as a progression from the Level 4 apprenticeship to enable apprentices to progress through the academic levels to achieve a degree-level apprenticeship and Level 6 qualification. The approach to RPL is discussed in more detail in Annex 2.

13   The team compared the qualifications presented in the programme specification to the titles of the qualifications in the SRS and concluded that the provider conveys appropriate and accurate information about the level of the qualifications. This is because the programme specification provides clear information on the terminal and intermediate qualification titles which is consistent with the terminology and academic levels of typical higher education qualifications as set out in Table 1 referenced within paragraph 342 of the OfS Regulatory Framework.

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[2] 011 Programme specification
[3] 048 NCH Academic Regulations

Titling conventions

14   To assess whether titles are used transparently and consistently, the team considered NCH's report of the course approval[4] and the programme specification, which is the formal approved documentation for the course, to ascertain the approved titles. The report of the approval process indicates that the degree title approved at validation is BSc (Hons) in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics) and this is confirmed by the Collaborative Agreement with NCH.[5]

15   The team identified some differences across the documentation in relation to the titling conventions for the BSc course, however this is a reflection of the fact that the programme is both an apprenticeship and an academic award and the provider therefore uses terminology that reflects this. The programme specification has the overall title 'BSc (Hons) in Digital and Technology Solutions Professional Programme Specification' although the team identified that the course is sometimes referred to in the programme specification as BSc (Honours) Digital and Technology Solutions Professional (Data Analytics), which is the title given to the apprenticeship.[6] The programme specification uses the word 'professional' in its overall title and also refers in one place to 'Digital and Technology Solutions Professional (Integrated Degree)', although in this case it is clearly indicated that this refers to the title for the apprenticeship standard. Although there are minor differences in how the qualification is referred to, where the alternative title is used this refers to the apprenticeship aspect as the BSc course is delivered as part of a degree apprenticeship. The team was able to confirm that the section on 'Awards' in the programme specification has clear and accurate reference to the titles for the BSc (Hons), DipHE and CertHE and these fully align to the titles approved at validation. The programme specification also states the titles of the two interim qualifications - DipHE Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics) at Level 5 and CertHE in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics) at Level 4. The definitive section of the programme specification that lists the titles therefore aligns appropriately with the approved title for the full qualification.

16   To assess whether the course title accurately reflects the field of study and is not misleading, the team considered the definitive documentation consisting of the programme specification and course (module) descriptors.[7] The team found that the qualification title reflects the field of study in digital and technology solutions with a focus on data analytics. As indicated in the programme specification and module descriptors, the majority of the modules relate to digital and technology solutions in information management including modules in topics fundamental to the discipline such as digital platforms, database management, and data engineering including machine learning. There are also several modules that relate to the focus on data analytics including modules in Data Analytics Fundamentals, Data Science Fundamentals and Big Data. While the curriculum also contains some management modules in Technical Project Management and Business Organisation, the team considered that the number of modules with management-specific content is limited and that exclusion of management from the title was therefore justified. The team concluded that the qualification title is therefore an accurate reflection of the field of study and does not mislead regarding the subject matter or content of the course.

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[4] 043 Report of approval event
[5] 026 Collaborative agreement with NCH
[6] 000 Provider submission
[7] 022a Course (module) Descriptors

Typical credit values

17   The team considered course documentation to assess whether the credit values for the degree and the interim qualifications are aligned with the typical credit values set out in the illustrative table of credit (Table in Annex C of the 'The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies' published in October 2014 (FHEQ as referenced in paragraph 342 of the OfS Regulatory Framework)) that forms part of the SRS. The programme specification outlines the credit values for the BSc, DipHE and CertHE qualifications. The module descriptors outline the module learning outcomes and the credit values, content and volume of the modules.

18   As stated in the programme specification, the BSc honours degree consists of 360 credits with 120 credits at each of the academic Levels 4, 5 and 6. The credit value of the honours degree is therefore aligned with the SRS in which a typical bachelor's degree with honours consists of 360 credits with at least 90 credits at Level 6. The programme specification also outlines that the DipHE qualification is awarded if students achieve 240 credits including 120 at Level 5 and the CertHE qualification requires 120 credits at Level 4. All qualifications are therefore aligned with the typical credit values set out in the SRS, as these qualifications require more than 90 credits to be achieved at the highest level of the qualification.

Volume of study

19   To assess alignment to expectations in relation to volumes of study referenced in paragraphs 6.15-6.16 of the SRS, the team considered the provider submission, the programme specification and the module specifications. The team also looked at assessed student work[8] in order to assess the volume of assessment.

20   The provider submission sets out the volumes of study, and the documentation for the BSc course (programme and module specifications) clearly identifies the volume of study and the study time required for students to achieve the relevant learning outcomes, including the volumes of study for modules, which are appropriate for the modules and qualifications. The programme specification indicates that the BSc qualification is designed to take three years to complete, with a year dedicated to each level of study. On a weekly basis, students are expected to spend one day per week on their studies and two days per week on work directly related to course content, mapped and recorded against learning objectives. Each level consists of 120 credits or 1,200 notional learning hours. As set out in the programme specification and course specifications, the majority of individual modules have a value of 15 credits, with a small number having a value of 30 credits and the final project at Level 6 carrying the value of 60 credits.

21   The provider indicates in its submission and the programme specification that one credit is equivalent to 10 hours of learning and the 15-credit modules correspond to 150 hours. The composition of the notional 150 learning hours for modules is further broken down as: teaching 27.5 hours (15 hours for seminars, 7.5 hours for applied seminar learning, one hour for one-to-one meetings with coaches and four hours of academic drop-in sessions); reading and assessments 32.5 hours (10.5 hours of self-directed reading and 22 hours completing assessments); and on the job training 90 hours. Module descriptors indicate that 15-credit modules have two or three summative assessments. Role-focused activity (on the job training) is allocated 90 hours. These volumes of study are indicated in module descriptors. The final 60-credit module consists of a dissertation and an oral

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[8] S1 Assessed student work degree programme

presentation, with four supervisory sessions with a coach, and it is expected that the dissertation will take six months to complete.

22   The course descriptors and assessed work indicate that an example module assessment strategy consists of two written assignments of 2,000 words. From the review of the sample of assessed student work (written set exercises, examinations) for modules in Advanced Databases, Cloud Computing and Digital Platforms, Cybersecurity, and Information Systems and Ethics, and consideration of the assessment criteria and marking rubric, the team found that the volume of assessed work was appropriate to the level and size of modules and enabled students to demonstrate achievement against the learning outcomes.

23   The team found that there is clear reference made to volumes of study and information which indicates that the time expected to achieve the relevant learning outcomes is appropriate to the qualifications. The team considers that the expectations regarding volume of study are appropriate to the qualifications and in line with the expectation of the SRS that volume of study can be used as an indicator of the range and depth of the learning outcomes.

24   The volume of learning for qualifications corresponds to the qualification level. As set out in the programme specification, the bachelor's degree with honours consists of 360 credits or 3,600 notional learning hours. In alignment with sector standards, the DipHE involves 2,400 notional learning hours and therefore a smaller volume of notional learning hours than the bachelor's with honours degree. Similarly, the CertHE consists of 1,200 learning hours and therefore a smaller volume of learning hours than the Diploma. In all cases the volume of learning is proportionate to the amount of credit required for the qualification. Module-level learning outcomes (as set out in the course descriptors) indicate that the level of study progresses from Level 4 through Level 5 to Level 6 in alignment with SRS.

25   The team found that the degree course and its constituent CertHE and DipHE qualifications are clearly differentiated in terms of the requirements for appropriate volumes of learning and that the volumes of credit are appropriate to the levels and volume of study for each qualification.

Descriptors for higher education qualifications at each level on the FHEQ

26   In order to assess whether the degree course is aligned to the relevant qualification descriptors in paragraphs 4.10, 4.12 and 4.15 referenced within the SRS, the learning outcomes included in the programme specification and course (module) specifications were compared to the descriptors of the SRS at Levels 4 to 6. In addition, a document showing the provider's mapping of the module-level outcomes against course-level outcomes[9] was reviewed by the team alongside its own assessment of the alignment of the descriptors used in the definitive course documentation.

27   The programme specification includes a mapping of the course learning outcomes to both the NCH CertHE and the level descriptors in the SRS[10] at Levels 4 to 6, and there is also a mapping of module descriptors to the overall course learning outcomes. The team found that the mapping demonstrated alignment of learning outcomes with the descriptors for higher education qualifications for Levels 4, 5 and 6. The degree course learning

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[9] 045 Mapping of degree programme and module learning outcomes
[10] 046 Mapping of programme learning outcomes against FHEQ

outcomes, and the learning outcomes for the CertHE and DipHE qualifications, are set out in the programme specification around three areas: knowledge and understanding; subject-specific skills; and transferable and professional skills. The team's own analysis found that the learning outcomes are aligned to the qualification descriptors at Levels 4, 5 and 6 and the module descriptors indicate the development of learning outcomes from Level 4 to Level 6 which support the development of knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, and transferable and professional skills from Level 4 to Level 5 and to Level 6.

28   The learning outcomes applicable to the intermediate qualifications are clearly set out and align to the relevant descriptors. As non-exhaustive examples, several learning outcomes for the CertHE align to the Level 4 descriptor in respect of 'knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study'. On completion of the CertHE, students are expected to be able to 'Describe the impact of data and analytics on an organisation's performance' and 'Explain the data analytics lifecycle and data storage in the context of specific analyses' among other outcomes. For the DipHE, as a further non-exhaustive example, several learning outcomes align to the FHEQ Level 5 descriptor in terms of 'knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed'. On completion of the DipHE, for example, students are expected to demonstrate an ability to 'Evaluate the impact of data quality, security, ethics on business organisations' and 'Evaluate data management approaches, and design or propose solutions based on the business requirements and demonstrate awareness of security and data quality issues'. The team therefore found that the CertHE and DipHE are aligned to the Level 4 and Level 5 descriptors respectively.

29   From consideration of the learning outcomes for the degree course overall, as set out in the programme specification, the team was initially not able to identify where some of the aspects of the Level 6 descriptor in the SRS were reflected in the course. However, from additional consideration of the module learning outcomes, the team was able to confirm coverage of the majority of these across course and module learning outcomes. For example, when the module descriptor for the Level 6 project was reviewed, several learning outcomes related to the descriptor at Level 6 were addressed at module level. For example, the descriptor requirements 'to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials)' and 'to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline' are both addressed in the outcomes for the project module through the learning outcomes 'Critically assess relevant literature associated with the chosen project' and 'Use literature and other media to conduct effective research and critically appraise your approach'.

30   The team was not initially able to identify explicit alignment to the Level 6 descriptor in relation to 'an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge' or 'decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts'. The team found, however, that even though these outcomes are not addressed in an explicit way in degree or module-level learning outcomes, a detailed scrutiny of module specifications shows that the descriptor is met in an indirect way across modules included in the degree. For example, the Information Systems and Ethics module has learning outcomes that relate to improving established data solutions and to 'train learners to evaluate information systems and their effectiveness in business', which demonstrates that the outcome 'an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge' from the SRS is addressed; and the module also implies that the limits of knowledge are considered in that there are learning outcomes about

improving established data solutions. Therefore, the team found that, overall, the course and module outcomes collectively address all the outcomes of the Level 6 descriptor in the SRS. The team found that apprentices are demonstrating what is required at Level 6 at module level (therefore standards are appropriate) but that in a small number of cases the summary of this knowledge and skills in the overall course outcomes is not as explicit as in others.

31   The team found that there was clear mapping of the Level 4 learning outcomes on the degree course with the Level 4 Data Analyst apprenticeship for RPL purposes[11] and that the process for admitting students who have completed the apprenticeship to Level 5 is therefore based on alignment between learning outcomes and is appropriate to the volume and level of study completed on the apprenticeship as demonstrated by evidence of the RPL process.[12] The provider also offers students from another provider's Data Analyst apprenticeship the opportunity to apply for admission to Level 5 with advanced standing, although applicants through this route are required to apply on an individual basis.[13]

32   The team reviewed samples of assessed work which included the assessment criteria, marking rubric, and feedback from the assessor to the student on the assessed work (see Annex 1 for more details of the sample reviewed). The team's review of the assessed work indicated that the volume of work was appropriate (as outlined in 22 above) and that assessments were marked appropriately. This is because assessment criteria used for marking were appropriate to level and consistently applied so as to be fair and transparent. The team also found that the assessments are appropriately designed to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes at the applicable level and that feedback on assessed work enables students to understand how they can achieve above the threshold in future assessments.

33   For example, the team considered assessed work from the Advanced Databases module. The assessment requirements for the module consisted of two written exercises (weighted at 50%) and an exam. The team found that the module specification clearly sets out the topics to be covered, the assignment briefs and assessment criteria map to the learning outcomes for the module, and the assessments fully cover all the learning outcomes. Therefore the design of the assessments allows students to demonstrate whether they meet the learning outcomes for the module; and the alignment of marking criteria to the learning outcomes ensures that student achievement of the module outcomes is assessed consistently. In a further example, the assessment requirement for the Cyber Security module is an examination and an oral test (weighted at 60% and 40% respectively). The team found that the mark scheme for the oral exam outlines the allocation of marks across the marking spectrum for each required area, and corresponds to the assessment brief. The written exam comprised three questions with a clear breakdown of mark allocation for each question. The marked papers indicate how the marks were allocated corresponding to the mark scheme for the exam. The assessment briefs are comprehensive and outline what is expected for each focus area of the assessments and the use of mark schemes to allocate marks supports fairness and transparency in assessment.

34   The team concluded from course and module specifications and assessed work that the degree course is aligned to the expectations set out in the descriptors for Levels 4 to 6.

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[11] 049 Mapping of Level 4 apprenticeship to degree
[12] 064-066 Completed RPL forms
[13] 086 Mapping of external provider's apprenticeship

Level 4 Apprenticeships

Typical higher education qualifications at levels of the FHEQ

35   The provider explained in its submission that it delivers three Level 4 apprenticeships with the programme titles Project Management, Data Fellowship and Software Engineer. The qualification titles are Level 4 Associate Project Manager, Level 4 Software Developer and Level 4 Data Analyst. These are not integrated higher apprenticeships and therefore the provision does not lead to any academic award.

36   Typical Level 4 qualifications outlined in Table 1 referenced within the SRS are Certificates in Higher Education or Higher National Certificates. The apprenticeships delivered by the provider do not lead to the award of academic credits at Level 4 or to typical qualifications named in the SRS at Level 4. One of the apprenticeship courses - the Data Fellowship Apprenticeship - has been mapped by the provider and awarding body to the Level 4 descriptors in the SRS for RPL purposes in order to acknowledge achievement on the apprenticeship course as equivalent to the CertHE of the BSc course (and hence suitable as prior learning for the Level 5 and Level 6 qualification). However, as noted above, no CertHE qualification is awarded for completion of the Data Fellowship course as NCH Academic Regulations allow a maximum of 60 credits from prior learning to be used for a CertHE qualification.

37   The qualification titles of the apprenticeships are, however, appropriately aligned to the titles used for the relevant Apprenticeship Standards for Level 4 apprenticeships www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/. The qualification titles also clearly indicate the level of the apprenticeship.

38   As the apprenticeship courses do not lead to a qualification, the team concluded that this part of the SRS could not be considered applicable because no academic award is made and the titles of the apprenticeships would not be expected to be aligned to typical higher qualification titles at Level 4 of the FHEQ. Nevertheless, the titles clearly and correctly indicate the apprenticeship standards to which the programmes are aligned.

Titling conventions

39   As set out in the provider submission, each apprenticeship has a programme title and a qualification title, the programmes being Project Management, Data Fellowship and Software Engineering; and the qualification titles being Level 4 Associate Project Manager, Level 4 Data Analyst and Level 4 Software Developer.

40   The team found that the provider uses both these terms in its documentation, but that they are used consistently, and can be considered transparent as the qualification titles are aligned to the titling conventions used in the relevant apprenticeship standards www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/.

41   The team found that the titles reflect the subject areas covered in the programmes and the relevant apprenticeship standards. Titles accurately reflect the fields of study and are not misleading. The content of the Level 4 Project Management Apprenticeship[14] includes topics relating to project management and planning such as Managing Risk and Managing Budget and Resources. The Data Fellowship apprenticeship[15] includes modules

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[14] 076 Project Management programme structure
[15] 049 Data Analyst mapping to CertHE, 050 Data Analyst programme structure
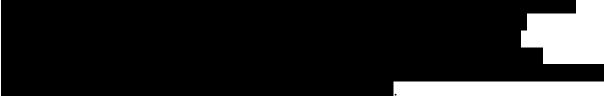
in related topics such as Data Analysis, Data Tools and Data Science. The Software Engineer apprenticeship[16] covers topics relating to Software Engineering such as User Interfaces and Web Application Security. The team found that programme and qualification titles are used transparently and consistently. The team also concluded that the qualification titles accurately reflect the fields of study and are therefore not misleading regarding subject matter and content. The team concludes that the provider's apprenticeship programmes are aligned to the SRS in relation to titling conventions.
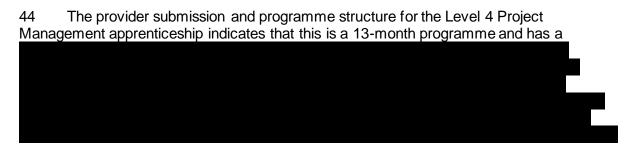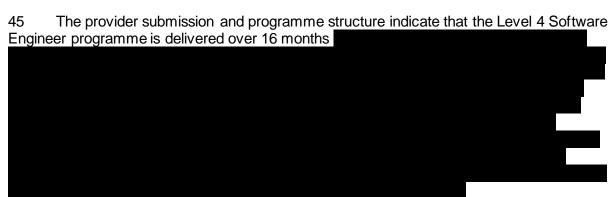
Typical credit values

42   The provider explained in its submission that the Level 4 apprenticeship programmes are not assigned academic credit values as they do not lead to higher education academic qualifications. Therefore the team concluded that this aspect of the SRS is not directly applicable to the apprenticeship programmes offered by the provider.

Volume of study

43   Volumes of study for the apprenticeships vary slightly but all are broadly comparable. For example, the provider submission and the programme structure document for the Level 4 Data Fellowship apprenticeship indicate that it is designed to take 14 months to complete,

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44   The provider submission and programme structure for the Level 4 Project Management apprenticeship indicates that this is a 13-month programme and has a

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45   The provider submission and programme structure indicate that the Level 4 Software Engineer programme is delivered over 16 months ██████████████████████████████

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46   From scrutiny of assessed work from the three apprenticeship programmes, the team considered that assessment requirements reflect the range and depth of learning outcomes

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[16] 088,089 Programme structure Software Engineer

required for a Level 4 qualification (see paragraphs 53-54 for further detail on the team's consideration of the Level 4 assessments).

47   The volumes of study for the apprenticeship programmes are clearly set out in programme documentation, enabling applicants and apprentices to understand the timescales involved in completing a programme. For each individual apprentice, a formal document - a Commitment Statement[17] - is drawn up between Multiverse and the apprentice and their employer and this sets out the expectations on the apprentice and their employer in terms of ensuring that appropriate and sufficient opportunities are provided for structured and workplace learning and that the student is able to complete the required learning hours applicable to their apprenticeship. The team therefore found that information on volumes of study and expectations of the time commitment involved in completing an apprenticeship are clearly set out for the apprentice and their employer.

48   The team found that volumes of study are appropriate for the level of the apprenticeships at Level 4. Although the volumes of study may differ from other Level 4 programmes (for example, the Data Fellowship apprenticeship, which has been mapped to the CertHE of the degree programme, takes longer than a typical CertHE and has fewer learning hours), taking account of the nature of apprenticeship programmes (in combining structured learning with workplace and applied learning), the team concluded that the volumes of study are within reasonable parameters. The team therefore found that the provider's Level 4 apprenticeship programmes are aligned to sector-recognised standards in relation to volume of study.

Descriptors for higher education qualifications at each level on the FHEQ

49   The provider explains in its submission that for Level 4 apprenticeships it is required to use the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) and learning outcomes which are set out in the applicable apprenticeship standards. The provider does not develop its own programme learning outcomes and does not produce programme specifications for its Level 4 apprenticeship programmes. As set out in its programme design process,[18] the provider uses the applicable KSBs to inform programme content and learning materials and, as explained in paragraph 47, there is a commitment statement which sets out for each individual apprentice how they will be supported to demonstrate and achieve the required KSBs.

50   In its submission the provider explained how it has used the FHEQ to map the programme learning outcomes for the degree to the relevant academic level, and how the Level 4 Data Fellowship apprenticeship is also mapped to the IfATE apprenticeship standards for KSBs.[19] The Level 4 Data Fellowship apprenticeship programme has also been mapped to the Level 4 CertHE qualification to provide a baseline for the degree programme to enable RPL of the Level 4 apprenticeship and entry onto the 'top-up' degree pathway. The team was able to confirm from its own analysis that there was direct alignment of the Level 4 learning outcomes on the degree programme with the Level 4 Data Fellowship apprenticeship for RPL purposes. Furthermore, completed examples of the RPL process in operation confirmed appropriate mapping of the Level 4 apprenticeship to Level 4 of the degree in order to allow students to be admitted directly to Level 5.

51   The Level 4 descriptor of the SRS is met as outlined in the Data Fellowship

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[17] 078 Commitment Statement template
[18] 002 Programme design, development and approval process
[19] 003 Apprenticeship Progress (Data Fellowship mapping to KSBs)

Apprenticeship Progress document and evidenced by the content and quality of assessed work seen by the team. The mapping of the programme content against the KSBs in the Apprenticeship Progress document outlines how the competency groups and the associated KSBs for the Level 4 apprenticeship standard are addressed in the modules, and the outcomes align with the descriptor for higher education qualifications at Level 4. As non-exhaustive examples, the descriptor criteria of being able to 'evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work' is met in several modules including Module 2 which supports the acquisition of the KSBs that require that apprentices 'identify and escalate quality risks in data analysis with suggested mitigation or resolutions as appropriate' and in Module 3 in which apprentices are supported to 'analyse data sets taking account of different data structures and database designs'.

52   In relation to the other two apprenticeships, Software Engineer and Project Management, these have not been mapped to the SRS by the provider as there is no requirement to do so because they do not result in a Level 4 academic award. The programme design, development and approval process indicates that the provider aligns its apprenticeships to the IfATE standards for the relevant apprenticeships. In addition, the Project Management apprenticeship has received Association of Project Management (APM) Training Provider Accreditation and the Project Management apprenticeship is also mapped[20] to the APM criteria with the KSBs of the apprenticeship programme[21] and to the assessments for the APM exam and the portfolio.[22] The Software Engineer apprenticeship has been mapped to the KSBs.[23] These mappings indicate where the associated KSBs for the Level 4 apprenticeship standard are addressed in the programmes delivered by the provider. In relation to Software Engineering the mapping indicates, for example, that the descriptor criteria of being able to demonstrate 'knowledge of the underlying concepts of the area of study and ability to evaluate and interpret these in the context of their area of study' is covered in several modules which support the acquisition of knowledge and skills to demonstrate the KSBs such as 'apply structured techniques to problem solving, debug code and understand the structure of programmes in order to identify and resolve issues', 'create simple data models and software design to effectively communicate understanding of the programme, following best practices and standards' and demonstrate that they 'can operate at all stages of the software development lifecycle with increasing depth and breadth over time'. Similarly, the Project Management mapping indicates the descriptor criteria 'knowledge of the underlying concepts of the area of study and ability to evaluate and interpret these in the context of their area of study' is covered in a module which supports students to acquire the knowledge and skills to demonstrate the KSBs, such as 'Understand and have knowledge of different types of organisational structures and responsibilities, functions and project phases on different types of project' and 'Understand and have knowledge of phases within projects and key review points across the project lifecycle'.

53   The summative assessments for the Level 4 apprenticeships require a range of assessments including submission of projects, portfolios, interviews and presentations, and an employer reference is also required. The team considered a sample[24] of 50 pieces of summative assessed work from the three Level 4 apprenticeship programmes. However, the team was not able to see the full range of assessed work for Level 4 as the synoptic projects are only available to the end-point assessment organisation (EPAO). The team considered that the assessments for the apprenticeships support the achievement of the knowledge,

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[20] 071 Mapping of Project Management programme to KSBs and APM criteria
[21] 073 Mapping of Project Management assessments to APM criteria
[22] 074 Assessments for APM
[23] 078,079 Mapping Software Engineer programme to KSBs
[24] S2 Assessed student work Level 4

skills and behaviours for the apprenticeship standard. For example, the portfolio for the End Point Assessment (EPA) enables the apprentice to demonstrate competencies developed in the workplace, through developing and modifying small software artefacts and completing mini projects that demonstrate the KSBs as evidence for the EPA. The employer reference[25] outlines the employer's feedback for each competency area of the standard and confirms the apprentice's achievement of the competencies as identified for the standard in the workplace.

54   The review of the Level 4 assessed work by the team indicated that the assessments are appropriately designed to demonstrate the achievement of the KSBs expected for the relevant apprenticeship standards. Marking and feedback is carried out using a form that ensures assessment is conducted in a consistent format with the work of each student being assessed against the same criteria linked to the KSBs. The use of standard marking and feedback templates across all the portfolio projects ensures that assessments are marked against the relevant assessment criteria in a systematic way. From the assessments seen, the team found that the assessed work demonstrated that assessments are appropriate to the level of the qualification as students are assessed against requirements that align to Level 4. For example, for the Software Engineering apprenticeship the final assessment consists of a project which involves researching and developing a software solution, a presentation on their work and an interview in which the apprentice must discuss and answer questions on their project. The apprentice also submits a portfolio in which they are required to provide evidence of how they meet each of the KSBs. For Project Management, students submit a portfolio, are required to give a presentation and attend an interview, as well as passing an APM examination.

55   The team considers that the provider's Level 4 apprenticeship programme is aligned to the descriptor for Level 4 qualifications.

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[25] 094 Employer reference examples

Annex 1 - Assessment details

The assessment was conducted according to the specification and method developed particularly for this assessment as outlined in the document 'Assessment against the Sector Recognised Standards - Multiverse Group Limited, February 2022'. To undertake this assessment the DQB appointed expert assessors to a team who assessed evidence submitted by the provider and made judgements based on that evidence.

Assessment team

The DQB team who undertook this assessment were:

Name	Professor Shushma Patel
Organisation	De Montfort University
Role in assessment team	Institutional and Subject assessor
Scope of involvement	Desk-based assessment

Name	Professor Nina Seppala
Organisation	University College London
Role in assessment team	Institutional and Subject assessor
Scope of involvement	Desk-based assessment

The DQB Officer coordinating this assessment was Julia Baylie.

Collectively, the team included assessors with sufficient expertise to conduct the assessment, including academics qualified to doctoral level, who hold senior academic leadership roles in higher education providers and subject experts in the subject area(s) delivered by the provider. As part of the DQB's conflict of interest procedure, details of team members were shared with the provider. No conflicts of interest were raised during this assessment. The size of the team was determined by the limited complexity of the provision as the provider offers a single degree course and three Level 4 apprenticeships.

Assessment process

It was determined by OfS, as outlined in the commission, that the assessment should not include a visit to the provider. The assessment was therefore conducted as a desk-based activity.

As part of the assessment, the team considered all the documentation that was submitted by the provider (Annex 2). The initial documentary evidence was submitted on 4 March 2022, the agreed date for submission. The evidence requirements for the assessment were any relevant written, final or draft course documentation (such as course specifications, module outlines, marking schemes or equivalents).

Some of the documents submitted by the provider arguably fell outside of this scope. The team considered each piece of evidence carefully to determine what, if any, relevant material

existed within the documents provided. It considered the evidence as a whole and used the provider submission document to guide it in its assessment.

The assessment process included a review of a random sample of 38 pieces of assessed student work from all the available module assessments from the degree course, from across the modules and different forms of assessment. Given that the course has not had students studying at Levels 4 or 6, all the assessments seen related to students studying at Level 5. The sample included assessed work (including written set exercises and examinations) from several modules including Advanced Databases, Cloud Computing and Digital Platforms, Cybersecurity, and Information Systems and Ethics. The team also reviewed 50 portfolios from across the three Level 4 apprenticeship courses. The samples were selected using data from the provider on all assessments taken by apprentices over the last year. This data was then used to randomly select the samples of assessed work that was statistically valid, which the provider was asked to make available to the team.

Following consideration of the initial documentary submission, the team held an internal meeting on 22 March 2022 to discuss findings and determine whether further evidence was required in order to form judgements. At that meeting the team identified a small number of questions on which some clarification and further information was required. Some requests for additional evidence were also made, resulting in the submission of responses to a small number of queries (three) and a small number of additional evidence items (seven). The additional evidence was submitted on 29 March 2022.

Following consideration of the additional evidence, the team members updated their desk-based analyses and a final internal meeting was held on 8 April 2022 to agree the judgement.

No further specialist expertise was required to supplement the expertise of the team.

Annex 2 - Provider details

Multiverse is an apprenticeship training provider that has been in operation since 2016. Its mission is to 'create a diverse group of future leaders to fill the world's biggest skill gaps'. The provider delivers apprenticeship programmes that combine work, training and broader skills development opportunities.

The provider offers training programmes leading to UK qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 as well as a Level 6 degree apprenticeship. The degree apprenticeship - the Advanced Data Fellowship Apprenticeship - includes an academic qualification of BSc Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analysis). The degree is awarded by New College of the Humanities (NCH) through a partnership which was established in 2020. The degree course was validated by NCH in 2021. The programme was developed using the relevant Level 4 apprenticeship as its starting point, with the aim to build on the features of an apprenticeship such as formative assessment and application of skills in the workspace which would support inclusivity for those who may have been less successful in traditional education.

Apprenticeships in England are regulated and funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in conjunction with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). IfATE works with employer groups to produce apprenticeship standards which are delivered by apprenticeship providers for particular occupations. The apprenticeship standards set out expectations of competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs). Apprenticeships involve an independent End Point Assessment (EPA) at the completion of the programme to confirm that apprentices have achieved the required KSBs for their apprenticeship programme. For the Level 4 apprenticeships these assessments are carried out by independent end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs). The provider is, therefore, only responsible for formative assessment (assessment and feedback which is intended to enable students to understand how they are progressing, and which does not contribute to any qualification made) on its Level 4 apprenticeships, not the summative assessment of the programme (the formal marked assessments which establish whether the student has met the requirements of their apprenticeship) which is the responsibility of the EPAOs.

The provider currently delivers three Level 4 apprenticeship qualifications - Associate Project Manager, for which the EPAO is the Chartered Management Institute, and Data Analyst and Software Developer, for which the EPAO is Accelerate People.

The degree programme started in March 2021 and no qualifications have been made yet. The Level 4 apprenticeships all have several admission points each year and, at the time of the assessment, there were around 2,225 students participating in these programmes while the degree course had a single cohort of 20 degree apprenticeship students studying at Level 5. All degree apprenticeship students have been admitted to Level 5 with advanced standing as the provider has agreed an arrangement with its awarding body through which students who complete the Level 4 Data Analyst apprenticeship can be admitted directly to Level 5 of the degree course. A mapping of the learning achieved on the Level 4 apprenticeship against the learning outcomes of Level 4 of the degree was undertaken and NCH agreed that students completing the apprenticeship at the provider could be admitted to Level 5 through a recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangement. There are currently no degree apprenticeship students studying at Levels 4 or 6.

All of the provision is delivered online. The provider has office premises, for administration and management purposes, in central London.

Awarding body/organisation details

The Level 6 apprenticeship leads to a BSc (Hons) in Digital and Technology Solutions (Data Analytics) qualification from the New College of the Humanities (NCH). The partnership with NCH is a validation arrangement, with the course being developed by the provider and required to operate within the academic regulations of NCH.

The provider is responsible for delivery, teaching and assessment for the degree course. The assessment boards, which agree assessment outcomes and confer qualifications, are chaired by a member of staff of NCH and the course is subject to monitoring and periodic review processes as required by NCH. The provider has responsibility for managing admissions and enrolment, although admission to the Level 6 course with advanced standing is subject to the operation of the process for recognition of prior learning which requires approval by NCH.

Annex 3 - Evidence considered

All the evidence submitted was considered by the team. Where specific evidence was key to the team reaching a judgement, this is highlighted in the main body of this report.

The list below is included to allow cross-referencing between the evidence provided and the key pieces of evidence mentioned in the text above. The list is organised based on reference numbers indicated by the provider. It also highlights at which point of the assessment the evidence was provided.

Initial evidence submission

000_Multiverse QSR against Sector Recognised Standards.pdf

001_AnonymisedAssessmentList.xlsx

002_L4ProgDesign.pdf

003_DFMapping.docx.pdf

004_CoachTraining.pdf

005_CoachObvs.xlsx

006_CoachObvsTraining.docx.pdf

007_APMGuidance.pdf

008_StandardUpdate.pdf

009_EPATracking.pdf

010_PRSTOR.docx.pdf

011_ProgSpec.docx.pdf

012_LOMap.xlsx

013_NPP2.docx

014_EEFeedback.docx.pdf

015_DAMBTOR.docx.pdf

016_AssignmentExample.docx.pdf

017_EPAReadiness.pdf

018_AssmtMapping.xlsx

019_KnowledgeTracker.xlsx

020_PRExample.pdf

021_NCHMOA.pdf

022_CourseDescriptors.pdf

022a_CourseDescriptorsCombined.pdf

023_CriticalRead - Criteria Checklist.pdf

024_EPAOSelection.pdf

025_AssessmentOrganogram.pdf

026_NCHMVContract.pdf

027_CABTOR.pdf

028_PABTOR.pdf

029_SOPAD.pdf

030_SOPLA.pdf

031_NCHMonitoring.docx.pdf

032_RPLBrief.pdf

033_RPLTemplate.xlsx

034_MVSAR.pdf

035_TutorGuidance.pdf

036_ADFCS.pdf

037_ADFS.pdf

038_MVAssessment.docx.pdf

039_AsssmentBriefs.pdf

040_MarkingRubric.pdf

041_EEApplication.docx.pdf

042_ECEvidence.docx.pdf

043_ApprEvent.pdf

044_AdmissionsPlaybook.xlsx

045_PLONCH.xlsx

046_PLOFHEQ.xlsx

047_NCHRPL.pdf

048_NCHAR.pdf

049_L4 Mapping.xlsx

050_DFStructure.pdf

061_RoleFit.xlsx

062_ClientSuccess.pdf

064_Cohort1.pdf

065_Cohort2.pdf

066_Cohort3.pdf

067_CAB1.xlsx

068_CAB2.xlsx

069_MVCompetencies.pdf

070_Attainment.pdf

071_APMMap.xlsx

072_APMReport.pdf

073_APMEvidence.pdf

074_APMAssessments.xlsx

075_PMKSB.pdf

076_PMInfo.pdf

077_SWEInfo.pdf

078_SWE0Mapping.pdf

079_SWE1Mapping.xlsx

082_ADFProgHandbook.pdf

083_RPLGuidance.pdf

084_RPLTemplate.pdf

086_DecodedRPL.xlsx

087_CommitmentStatement.pdf

088_SWE0Modules.pdf

089_SWE1Modules.pdf

090_MVStudentSubmission.pdf

Sampling evidence

S1 Random sample of assessed student work from the degree course

S2 Random sample of student portfolios from the three Level 4 Apprenticeships

Evidence provided after additional requests made by the team (submitted 29 March 2022)

000b Response to evidence requests

091_PMFeedback

092_DFFeedback

093_SWEFeedback

094_EmployerReference

095_GuidetoPM assignments

096_SWEassignments

097_DFAssessmentBriefs

01452 557020
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