LAUNCH YOUR CAREER WITH A HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP

> "I feel like apprenticeships open a lot of doors and give you the opportunity to gain a qualification and work experience at the same time."
>
> **Olivia Read, Apprentice**

INTRO

Do you know what the future holds? No? Well, neither do we but we know the ingredients needed to make our business thrive and your career too if you will let us.

Making a decision about the pathway to your future career is a tough choice. There are so many options and it is hard to be confident of choosing the right one.

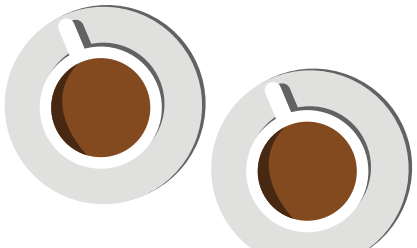
Joining our higher apprenticeship programme will give you the opportunity to realise your capabilities, provide you with work experience and give you access to gaining professional business qualifications. It will provide you with a firm foundation to exceed your earning and career expectations in the working years ahead of you. This journey is fully funded, with study leave, soft skills training, team support and client exposure.

If you like the sound of what we are describing here, read on and discover more about the opportunities that exist for apprentices at Mercer & Hole.

WHO ARE WE?

We are a top 40 accountancy firm, with offices in London, St Albans, Rickmansworth and Milton Keynes. Fundamentally, we want to make a meaningful difference to our clients by providing accountancy and tax advice to help their businesses grow. We support individuals and families so they can realise their financial and personal objectives, and help charities and trustees to manage their finances and comply with their obligations. We are trusted business advisors.

At Mercer & Hole, our people are our most valuable asset, we have 24 partners and over 240 employees. We bring our life experiences, knowledge, creativity and talents together at Mercer & Hole making it a unique place to work where all can thrive. Mercer & Hole is committed to cultivating and preserving a culture of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI).



Mercer & Hole...

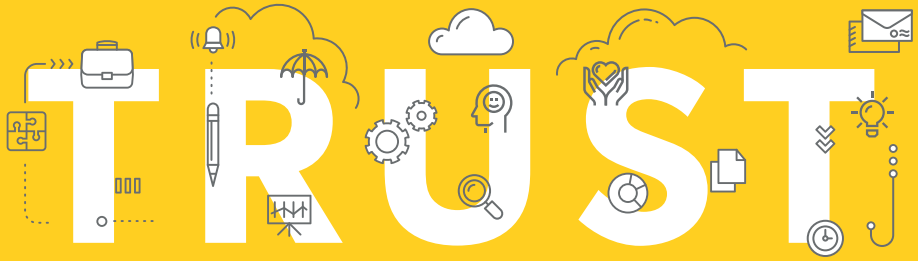
is committed to cultivating and preserving a culture of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI).

OUR PURPOSE IS...

To make a meaningful difference to our people, our clients and the world around us.

It is what we have been doing for over a century which is why we grow from strength to strength and are now one of the UK's Top 40 accountancy firms.

The values that underpin our purpose form the word TRUST, as this is at the core of what we do.



Together

The firm with a family feel.
Express gratitude.
Smile.
Be humble and confident.
Have fun.

Resilience

Change is imminent, and business is imperfect.
We aim to be open minded and agile.
Assume positive intent and exercise the power of positive thinking.

Understanding

Each individual matters, and will be heard and respected.
Honesty, integrity and empathy are fundamental.

Supportive

We support what is important to you and show kindness in our behaviour to each other.
We encourage each other to realise our potential.

Thrive

We strive to be the best, innovate and always do exceptional work.
That's who we are and what our people and clients deserve.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We strongly believe that diversity, equity and inclusion are critical to our success. A diverse workforce widens the approaches we can take to support our clients and enables us to make a meaningful difference to them, our people and the world around us. We want to particularly encourage diversity of thought to open our minds to opportunities.

We are committed to ensuring that we are all heard, included and treated fairly at work. Part of that commitment is focusing on the physiological and psychological health and wellbeing of our employees. In doing so, we encourage each other to realise our full potential.

Together, we bring our life experiences, knowledge, creativity, perspectives, capabilities and talents which makes Mercer & Hole a unique place to work where all can safely thrive. Some actions we have already taken to improve DE&I are:

Education: Through focus groups and looking at allyships across the firm we encourage DEI participation to celebrate the backgrounds and interests of our diverse workforce.

DEI Working Party (DEIWP): We have an active group looking at where to focus our DEI initiatives in any one year to enhance our inclusive culture. We encourage all our employees to get involved in contributing to the firm's culture in a way that is important to them. Whether it is joining the DEIWP or playing/organising football matches or any of our other initiatives.

Wellbeing: Our team of Wellbeing Champions run a rolling programme of events to create space and focus for us all to consider the importance of our wellbeing. We have professional wellbeing support such as with our Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and all our Wellbeing Champions are trained Mental Health First Aiders.

Communication: We send regular firmwide updates to ensure all employees have information about what is going on in the firm and to share internal news.

Realising your full potential: We provide excellent professional training to our employees. Our training offering has been highly rated by our regulators including Platinum status by ACCA. Your development continues after qualifying/throughout your career at Mercer & Hole, focusing on four specific areas of personal growth aligned with your career aspirations.

Volunteering: We encourage and provide opportunities to employees to volunteer for charity and community activities.

Recruitment: We seek to work with recruitment agencies who are actively pursuing candidates in areas of the market in order to attract a wider, more diverse pool of candidates.

Agile working: We recognise we all need to find the right balance of working in the office and working at home. We know that there are benefits from being able to work in this way. We support a trust-based approach towards agile working, in which we all take responsibility to work together in the most practical way to meet the needs of our people and our clients.

Flexi-time working: Within any working week ad hoc commitments or constraints crop up. To support employees in meeting these differing demands, contracted hours can be worked across long or short days.

Flexible working: Additionally, we recognise that some of us may have ongoing regular commitments outside of work; whether that is caring for family members or other responsibilities. A significant proportion of our employees currently work on a flexible basis, which is a contractual change to their hours, enabling them to balance different aspects of their lives.

Design of office space: We are in the middle of a program to remodel our four offices to introduce more collaborative space and a more relaxed environment for our employees.

We recognise that we're on a continuous journey for improvement. As part of the Mercer & Hole family, we would love to hear your ideas on how we can do better.

SUSTAINABILITY

As our purpose states we intend to make a meaningful difference to the world around us and so encourage all staff to contribute their ideas!

Each office has a Sustainability Action Group, 'The Green Team', whose purpose is to consider and introduce green initiatives in their office. Recently we had a 'Big Plastic Count' and each office had the challenge of recycling as much plastic as they could – we'd love to hear more ideas like this from our employees! We are also increasing our reach as to how to support the climate crisis, for example we have had the help of sustainability expert and author, Mike Berners-Lee.

CHARITY CHAMPIONS

We have Charity Champions in each office who work to a Charity Schedule to raise money for their charities. At the start of each calendar year we have a vote to see who we wish to support that year and these are our choices this year.

THE HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME AT MERCER & HOLE

WHY CHOOSE AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships are a great way to gain work experience and to obtain a qualification whilst earning, without incurring the debt that you might accumulate if you were to go to university. That is not to say an apprenticeship is the right choice for everyone, neither is it an easy option.

A higher apprenticeship is hard work as you will be working a 37.5-hour week and studying alongside that. You will be well supported and you may achieve a professional qualification earlier than if you were to choose the graduate pathway.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Our higher apprenticeship programme offers an exciting opportunity to work in a busy office environment whilst studying towards a professional qualification. Initially, this is a two-year programme in one of the following disciplines.

- Audit
- Tax and Trusts
- Outsourcing
- Financial Planning
- Corporate Advisory

During this time, we commit time to helping you build your knowledge, skills and practical experiences, providing genuine development opportunities to enable you to become a future leader.

The training programme includes time off to study, attend college and complete online classes in preparation for exams. We also provide soft skills training and regular 1:1 meetings with your training manager to ensure you have all the support you need.

There are no limits for our apprentices. Once you have completed the programme, you can progress onto further qualifications, for example, the ACA or ACCA qualification to become a chartered accountant, the ACA/CTA or ATT/CTA to become a qualified tax professional, or whatever is the best choice for you.

WHAT WILL MY RESPONSIBILITIES BE?

The variety of clients we work with will provide you with well-rounded experience. You will benefit too from the structure of our teams, enabling you to gain knowledge from and exposure to senior managers and partners throughout your training and beyond. As your experience grows, so do your responsibilities, ensuring you get the most out of your training with us and are able to apply the knowledge you are learning along the way.

Responsibilities may include:

- Supporting the delivery of client-facing activities.
- Assisting in day-to-day technical back up to support colleagues in solving problems for our clients.
- Balancing the ability to learn quickly whilst on the job and studying at the same time.
- Working with a team to deliver a smooth, high quality service to our clients.

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

Our clients rely on our expertise, which is why we put a focus on ensuring our team are more knowledgeable than our competitors.

Our apprenticeship programme will give you broad-based business acumen as well as a solid foundation of knowledge that will continue to develop through:

- Hands-on learning: this will give you the compliance and regulatory knowledge that you can put into practice to help clients receive exceptional advice and service
- Industry recognised professional qualifications which will help you to develop technical expertise and add real value to our clients
- In house and external training sessions that offer access to experienced individuals to provide you with up to date technical knowledge and soft skills to excel in your role and develop further

JACK'S STORY

Mercer & Hole were absolutely delighted to announce that Jack Pinchin, Mercer & Hole's Audit Apprentice, won the 2022 Business & Law Apprentice of the year award. You can read more about Jack's apprenticeship journey here

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING FOR MERCER & HOLE?

Recognising Employee Contribution

- 25 days' holiday (depending on role) - these increase after 5 years to 28 days
- Office closure to be with our families over the Christmas period
- Death in Service Provision - 4 x your salary
- Salary sacrifice pension up to 5%
- Season ticket loan or car parking loan
- Agile working once qualified – details set out in our policy, but many staff can mix working at home or in the office
- Flexi time working – working your contracted hours flexibly across the week
- Candidate referral scheme – it is nice working with friends!
- Dress for the Day Policy – what's in your diary?
- Social events throughout the year
- Enhanced maternity and paternity pay
- Cycle to work scheme
- Long service awards
- Star Awards – vouchers given to staff quarterly who have gone above and beyond with a colleague or client
- Employee Assistance Programme, on hand counsellors to support you whatever your need.
- Support with making your gas and electricity bills as efficient as possible.
- Group Income Protection should you find yourself unable to work due to illness or incapacity for an extended period.
- Health cash plan to support common medical requirements
- Virtual GP Service
- Mercer & Hole Perks – save on your shopping!
- You can access many more benefits of your choosing such as discounted gym membership, cancer screening, holiday exchange, interest free loans to purchase your preferred technology, voluntary critical illness.

Learning and Development

We support lifelong learning and development in a structure we call our PEOPLE PASSPORT. You secure the knowledge and support to gain a clear 'visa' path to where you want your career to go. From having this mapped out the support will be in the form of:

- Learning and Development pathways
- Study support
- Performance Development Reviews
- Trainee away days
- Provision of appropriate technology i.e. an iPad on joining

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

You will start by studying the AAT Level 4 qualification, which will provide you with a solid foundation to build knowledge and provides exposure to a variety of modules to help you decide where you want your career to take you next. In your regular 1:1 meetings, you will discuss your career aspirations and development opportunities open to you, including further fully funded studies upon completion of the AAT.

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES?

Perhaps you think this could be for you. Well, that is great as it is likely that you recognise and share some of the character traits we look for. You will, however, need the exam results or qualifications too. As we have already mentioned, studying and working is hard work so we need to know you are cut out for joining us on this journey. That is why we ask for a minimum of 112 UCAS Tariff points.

THE APPLICATION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

We want you to experience how friendly and approachable we are as you engage with us throughout the recruitment process. That is why we offer you a personal approach, where you will speak to one of the HR team to get a better feel of the business and so we can also get to know you as an individual.

STEP 1: COMPLETE AN ONLINE APPLICATION

Visit our website www.mercerhole.co.uk to look at our current vacancies and to start the process of applying online. We will be looking for you to show us why you are interested in this career path, and to demonstrate that you share our values throughout the recruitment process. Follow the instructions carefully and answer all of the questions.

STEP 2: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Our shortlisted candidates will have a telephone interview with a member of the HR team. This interview will explore your experiences, aspirations, awareness of the industry and your knowledge of Mercer & Hole. Plus, we will get to know a bit more about what makes you tick.

STEP 3: VERBAL AND NUMERICAL TESTS

These are short, online tests which you can complete at home. We use these as we find that candidates who do well in these tests go on to be successful in the training scheme.

STEP 4: INTERVIEW

You will be invited to the office, where you will hopefully be able to picture yourself working in the future! You will meet one of the line managers for a face-to-face interview, as well as doing some short exercises which include a personality test and data accuracy test. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you may be seeking answers to.

STEP 5: OFFER

We will always call you to let you know the outcome of the interview and aim to make the decision as quickly as possible. Upon acceptance, your new starter pack will be emailed to you.

CONTACT US

If you are curious and want to ask us any questions about the apprenticeship programme, please email us at recruit@mercerhole.co.uk

OLIVIA READ

AAT Apprentice

> *Mercer & Hole are extremely supportive when it comes to time for exams & studying. You are allocated study days and it is split into 20% apprenticeship study and 80% work – with one day at college and four days at work."*

A debt-free alternative to university

After completing my A-Levels in Economics, Law and Spanish, I knew that I did not want to go to university unlike most of my friends. Instead, I wanted to be able to gain experience working in full time employment and earn my own money whilst gaining a qualification. One of the main reasons why I decided to apply for an apprenticeship was that I did not want to finish education in debt from university.

I started out my career working in the retail industry, but because of the pandemic, I needed to find a new career path. I was looking at apprenticeships online and I found the Accounting Apprenticeship at Mercer & Hole. I always knew that I wanted to work in accountancy as I loved maths at school, so I looked into the firm, the benefits and the pathway that they offered and decided to apply.

> *One thing that appealed to me about the apprenticeship was that I'd qualify as an accountant one year quicker compared to if I had gone to university."*

The hard work pays off!

It is a fantastic apprenticeship scheme and I really do enjoy working at Mercer & Hole. I am lucky to work with such a supportive and fun team.

Doing an apprenticeship can be difficult at times – especially as I am the only one of my friends that decided not to go to university – but the hard work does pay off! People sometimes think that by not going to university, you have it easier, but with an apprenticeship there is a lot of work involved with essays, assignments and exams.

The application process was very simple and not at all stressful. All I had to do was apply online, complete some online tests and have an interview at their offices in London. They also did not keep me waiting to find out if I had successfully got the job; I found out within a week of the interview which was great.

Be aware of all the options open to you

The best advice I can give anyone is to go into a career path of something that you like doing; if you enjoy maths and numbers, then go into accountancy!

I would encourage people to look at the different options out there, before jumping straight into university. I know so many people who went to university as they were not aware of all the options open to them and thought it was the only way to gain the qualifications they needed.

> *I feel like apprenticeships open a lot of doors and give you the opportunity to gain a qualification and work experience at the same time."*

My path to becoming a successful accountant

When I first joined the firm, I started at Level 2. After two years, I have now completed Level 2 and 3 in accountancy and I'm now working on my AAT Level 4 Professional Certification.

I would encourage people to look at the different options available to them. There are so many apprenticeships out there, so I would encourage people to look around and research thoroughly.

> *I see myself working as a successful accountant and building my career at the firm. I am looking forward to seeing what the future might hold!"*

MARCEL UPTON

Outsourcing Apprentice

"I am really enjoying my apprenticeship at Mercer & Hole; everyone at the firm is really friendly and welcoming."

Inspiration from an open day

I started my apprenticeship journey with a Level 3 Accountancy Apprenticeship, at an accountancy firm in Watford called JSA. When I was at school, there was an apprenticeship open day where people from different organisations and businesses came to the event to talk about what apprenticeships they offered. At the open day, I was particularly impressed by a Management Accountant who spoke about how he had also gone down the apprenticeship route and he explained about the pathway he took within his career.

"From that conversation, I was dead set on what I wanted to do within my career – I knew I wanted to work in accountancy."

I knew that I did not want to go to university as I did not feel it would have been the right option for me, so I looked for a Level 3 Accountancy Apprenticeship. After I had completed my Level 3 Accountancy Apprenticeship, I applied for a Level 4 Outsourcing Apprenticeship at Mercer & Hole.

The apprenticeship has given me so many opportunities

I am really enjoying my apprenticeship at Mercer & Hole; everyone at the firm is really friendly and welcoming.

You never feel stupid not knowing something, because everyone is always there to help. The work is more challenging than anything that I have done before, and I have been given the opportunity to work and learn about different areas in accountancy including Payroll, Management Accounting and Financial Accounting.

"You are allowed to ask questions – lots of them!"

A great work environment

I wanted to join Mercer & Hole as my dad had previously worked in partnership with Mercer & Hole and visited the London office. He recommended Mercer & Hole to me, as there was a great work environment with friendly staff and the firm was well established within the accountancy world. The application process was really easy, I just filled out a form, submitted my CV and applied for the role. I was then invited for an interview and was successful in my application for an Outsourcing Apprenticeship.

Do not be afraid to ask questions!

My advice would be to not be afraid of not knowing the right information or not having the right background knowledge. Accountancy was not a subject I was able to study at school, so when I started my Level 3 Apprenticeship, I was starting from scratch.

"When you first join a firm, you always think people might judge you if you do not understand or know something, but you quickly learn that apprenticeships are about learning on the job. You are not meant to know everything when you first start, so do not be afraid of the unknown!"

My hopes for the future

I hope to stay at Mercer & Hole after my Apprenticeship and become a Chartered Accountant by completing my ACCA Certification with the firm.

WILLIAM BEARDS

AAT Apprentice

> *The overall experience of the apprenticeship; I cannot recommend it highly enough. The opportunity to go straight into a paid job without incurring any debt, and at the same time as working towards a qualification has been perfect."*

The university lifestyle is not for everyone

I completed my A-Levels at Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe. We were really encouraged to apply for university, and I found myself filling out my UCAS applications alongside everyone else as this was what was expected of us. I was accepted onto a Finance and Business Degree at Loughborough University, but once I started the course, I realised quite quickly that university wasn't for me. Although I enjoyed the course, I did not enjoy the university lifestyle and after about three weeks I decided to leave the course and move back home.

I wanted a different option instead of university, where I was able to start work straightaway whilst gaining qualifications. I knew I always wanted to work in finance and so I started looking into apprenticeships.

An apprenticeship at Mercer & Hole has provided practical experience alongside study

I am thoroughly enjoying my time at Mercer & Hole, and I have learnt a lot. I think the experience of working within a professional environment has enhanced my individual development and complemented my study time at college. The structure is great, as you have time for college days and work, with support from the firm. Taking on exams and working full time can be quite challenging, but there is an understanding that this is a first job, and everyone is so supportive in helping you with the transition from leaving school and going into a full-time job.

> *You can go to university and learn the technical skills, but you do not gain the experience of working in the industry. I have had the opportunity to go to client meetings with my manager and work with fully qualified seniors on a variety of jobs. Recently I have been given an allocation of private clients to complete tax returns for as a case handler which has enabled me to work independently and demonstrate what I have learnt."*

Despite taking on the responsibility of your day-to-day job and the pressures that accompany this, Mercer & Hole place a significant level of importance on your learning and study time which is extremely beneficial in developing your knowledge as an apprentice. Overall, it is a challenge but a good one.

Throughout varying points within my apprenticeship I have felt a real sense of achievement, whether that be from performing well at work or achieving great exam results. The most crucial aspect that factored into my decision was ensuring I would still be able to gain a respected professional qualification without going to university, which is very much the case.

The apprenticeship has provided me with the opportunity to gain practical experience of working at a firm in an environment surrounded by other professionals.

The application process was really straightforward at Mercer & Hole

After deciding university was not the right choice for me, I knew that I wanted to complete an apprenticeship in the finance sector. I started researching and looking for apprenticeships online and found the job advert for Mercer & Hole, on an apprenticeship job advertising site.

> *I went onto the Mercer & Hole website and I read all about the firm. I really liked the look of the work environment and what the firm stood for. I was also really impressed with their apprenticeship pathway."*

Continued overleaf >

The application process was straightforward. I submitted my CV for the position and then completed some questions and online tests. My results were sent to Mercer & Hole who then interviewed me over the phone and then via Zoom (as opposed to a face-to-face meeting because this was during the pandemic).

Consider your options and do not be afraid of going against the grain!

> ***My advice to anyone finishing school is to look at the different options out there. Definitely investigate different apprenticeships, look at the benefits and really consider applying for one."***

It is very common not to know what you want to do when you finish school.

A lot of schools will encourage you to go to university but that is not the only option. Take your time and look into what an apprenticeship really is – you can earn a qualification whilst gaining the experience of working full time and earning money.

The Accounting Apprenticeship here at Mercer & Hole offers a great pathway into a successful career within the industry.

At Mercer & Hole everyone understands that you are joining the firm as an apprentice, you are not going to know everything, and it is your first time in a professional environment. Everyone is there to help, whether that's Directors, Managers, Trainees or other Apprentices. You will always receive the guidance you need to help develop within your role and into a well-rounded individual.

Next steps

I have recently passed the personal tax paper, which leaves me with the final AAT Level 4 case study exam to complete. Once this has been achieved, I am looking to move onto either the ACA/CTA or ATT/CTA exam pathway. I will have a discussion with my manager and consider which route will work best both for myself and the firm.

YOUR PEOPLE PASSPORT

Our clients trust us and we also want to build trust with all our team which is why we are committing to a People Passport - developing you in four aspects of your career.

SUMMARY

We hope you now have a clear insight into who we are, what our apprenticeship programme is, what it could offer you and whether it appeals. If you have any further questions, we welcome you to contact us at recruit@mercerhole.co.uk

If you decide that this could be the right pathway for you we wish you success with your application. If not, we hope you are celebrating being another step closer to making a choice that is right for you.

Good luck!

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Mercer & Hole

ICAEW CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

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