KENT BUSINESS COLLEGE

COLLEGE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Strategy and Leadership

LEVEL 7 DIPLOMA ROUTE

Strategic judgement and organisational leadership

A connected executive learning experience in strategy, leadership, people, finance, marketing and research. KBC learning route to the OTHM Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership, with an additional applied integration studio.

PROGRAMME BOOK / 2026

A GUIDE TO YOUR CATALOGUE

Contents

Explore the programme, picture how it could fit your working life, and return to the questions that matter to you. Select a section below to move through the catalogue.

A GUIDE TO YOUR CATALOGUE

Contents continued

A GUIDE TO YOUR CATALOGUE

Contents continued

A GUIDE TO YOUR CATALOGUE

Contents continued

A GUIDE TO YOUR CATALOGUE

Contents continued

Programme enquiries · office@kentbusinesscollege.org

LIFE AT KENT BUSINESS COLLEGE

Experience becomes richer when it is shared

College community in London · June 2026

A useful learning conversation begins with something real: a decision you are weighing, an assumption you want to test, or a task that did not go as expected. Bring that experience into your study. It gives the ideas a context and makes the discussion worth having.

You will arrive with strengths as well as questions. Other people will notice things you have missed, and you will do the same for them. Listening carefully, explaining your thinking and being willing to revise it are part of becoming more confident in your work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional learning and recognition

The external qualification route is the OTHM Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership. Six qualification units contribute to the 120-credit diploma. The KBC Applied Strategy and Leadership Studio brings the learning together through an executive challenge and carries no additional regulated credits.

Qualification registration, assessment and quality assurance follow the awarding body's requirements. University progression is a separate application. Your written offer confirms the college's delivery arrangement, the applicable specification and the scope of the additional studio.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which professional achievement would make the most useful difference to your work, and what would you need to demonstrate to earn it?*

CHAPTER 01

Bring your experience and your questions

Leadership often begins with a question whose answer takes time and thought. You may need to balance growth with capacity, support a team through change or explain a decision that affects people’s lives. This chapter makes room for that responsibility and for the experience you bring. It introduces the programme, its purpose and the support around your learning. You are invited to examine assumptions with curiosity, listen to other perspectives and develop a view of what responsible leadership can mean.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which responsibility has most changed the way you think about leadership?*

KENT BUSINESS COLLEGE

The college and its purpose

Professional education should change what you can do at work. Kent Business College brings academic ideas into the decisions, projects and conversations that shape organisations. Our programmes connect specialist teaching with practice, mentoring and employer partnership, so that knowledge becomes a capability you can explain, demonstrate and continue to develop.

Our vision. We aim to earn international recognition for education and consultancy that turns research into useful action, strengthens professional practice and supports sustainable growth. The ambition is a continuing learning community in which individuals and organisations develop together. [C3]

Our mission. We connect rigorous thinking with real organisational challenges. Through apprenticeships, vocational learning and professional development, we work with employers to build relevant skills and prepare people for greater responsibility. Research matters here because it helps learners question assumptions, assess evidence and choose proportionate action. [C3]

Our values in practice. Empowering Futures means helping people recognise their potential and develop the means to act on it. Reducing Footprint means considering environmental consequences in how we learn and work. Strengthen Partnerships means involving employers and communities in meaningful development. Safeguarding and inclusiveness support all three: learners should be able to participate safely, respectfully and with appropriate support. [C1-C3]

The horse and the ibis. The horse connects the college with Kent and represents confidence, strength and forward movement. The ibis expresses the value of knowledge, careful thought and learning. Together they reflect the balance these programmes seek: the judgement to choose well and the capability to act. These symbols express a shared commitment to thoughtful progress: learning that gives people both the confidence to move forward and the judgement to choose their direction.

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Lead the whole organisation

When an organisation asks you to lead, it is asking for more than a well-managed task list. You must choose where to compete, explain why the direction matters, decide how resources should be used and support people through the consequences. The quality of those decisions shapes customers’ experiences, colleagues’ confidence and the organisation’s ability to remain useful and financially sustainable. This programme develops that wider perspective through a connected study of strategy, leadership, people, finance, marketing and research.

The College of Executive Leadership brings these disciplines together around a practical question: what would you recommend, and what evidence would justify the recommendation? You will examine assumptions, compare alternatives and defend a reasoned position. You will also practise translating analysis into a plan that someone can implement. The emphasis is on disciplined judgement, ethical responsibility and credible organisational improvement.

For a marketing professional, this means connecting customer insight with investment choices and organisational capability. For a project or project controls professional, it means understanding how portfolios, benefits and delivery decisions contribute to the organisation’s strategy. For an experienced manager, it offers space to reconsider established habits and develop a more deliberate leadership approach.

The seven-module KBC learning experience includes six diploma subject units and an applied integration studio. It combines academic enquiry with practical executive work, while keeping the boundaries between the external qualification, KBC enrichment and any later university study clear. Your experience becomes the starting point for learning; it does not remove the requirement to demonstrate rigorous, well-supported analysis.

ENTRY AND READINESS

Is this the right next step?

This route is designed for people who can bring a substantial organisational question to their studies. You might manage a team, influence a programme, support investment decisions or prepare to take on wider responsibility. You do not need to know every answer before joining. You do need sufficient experience, intellectual curiosity and access to an appropriate context in which to test ideas.

OTHM publishes a related honours degree, UK Level 6 diploma or equivalent as the usual academic route, with an experience-based route for mature managers considered by the centre. Its published entry conditions include a minimum age of 21 and appropriate evidence of English proficiency.

Admissions should assess the individual application against the requirements current at registration. [L1]

The readiness discussion should explore the decisions you actually make, the information you can ethically use and the study time available alongside work and family life. An experienced professional may be comfortable with operational responsibility but unfamiliar with academic referencing or research design. Those are development needs to plan for, rather than reasons to avoid asking for support.

Existing KBC apprentices are eligible to apply for the KBC funding opportunity described in this catalogue. Apprenticeship participation does not automatically demonstrate Level 7 entry readiness or secure the maximum scholarship. If you study both programmes, the additional workload should be discussed before you commit, with a clear understanding of who will pay any remaining fee.

- Bring a current CV and evidence of relevant qualifications or managerial experience.
- Identify an organisational challenge that is suitably complex and ethically accessible.
- Discuss academic writing, digital access and any adjustment needs early.
- Agree a realistic study plan and obtain a written funding decision before accepting an offer.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What part of leadership currently feels most demanding? Which experience can you build on, and where would guidance or another perspective help?

THE KBC EXPERIENCE

People and support around your learning

A demanding programme is easier to sustain when you know who to approach. Tutors explain the subject and give feedback on learning. Coaches help apprentices connect study to their role, review evidence and agree achievable next steps. Your line manager creates opportunities to practise. The college office can direct questions about enrolment, funding, learning access and support to the appropriate team. [C1-C2]

Discuss barriers early. You do not need a diagnosis to ask for help with reading, concentration, technology, language, participation, physical access or assessment preparation. Explain what is difficult in the learning task and what has helped before. KBC can discuss accessible formats, tutoring, one-to-one support and appropriate adjustments, then review whether they are helping. External assessment bodies make their own adjustment decisions under their published arrangements. [C1]

Keep learning sustainable. Agree realistic time with your manager, protect recovery time and raise competing demands before they become missed submissions. The public charter describes optional Benenden Health support under its membership terms, professional communities, workshops and graduation arrangements. The written offer confirms the particular benefits, availability and conditions for your intake; the catalogue does not add a separate cash entitlement. [C1]

A safe professional community. Respectful discussion, inclusion and responsible online behaviour are part of learning. Raise concerns about bullying, harassment, discrimination, exploitation or unsafe behaviour with your coach or the safeguarding team. Contact safeguarding@kentbusinesscollege.com or call 01622 958955 and ask for safeguarding. In immediate danger, call 999. Only share personal information where it is needed to obtain support or protect someone. [C1]

Your voice matters. Use teaching sessions, coaching and learner feedback to explain what is working and what needs attention. If a concern remains unresolved, use the published complaints process. A complaint about delivery, an appeal against an assessment decision and an employment issue may follow different routes; the college can help you find the correct one.

CHAPTER 02

Create the conditions for deeper study

Deeper study needs more than a place in the diary. It needs a purpose, expectations and room to think before reaching a conclusion. The next pages explain the relationship between the diploma, the studio and the commitments that support the learning. They also help you plan around work and responsibilities. Consider where your experience gives you confidence and where you would welcome guidance. Thoughtful preparation allows you to engage with demanding ideas without having to carry the commitment alone.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *What space and support would help you think more deeply?*

QUALIFICATION ARCHITECTURE

The award, the credits and the seventh module

The diploma qualification is the OTHM Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership, qualification number 603/2181/7. The published structure comprises four mandatory units and two selected options: 120 credits in total, with 1,200 hours of Total Qualification Time and 600 Guided Learning Hours. These qualification planning measures reflect the depth of study required; six short workshops would not complete the programme. Your offer must confirm the registration and delivery arrangements. [L1, L2]

The six diploma subjects are brought together with a seventh KBC module, the KBC Applied Strategy and Leadership Studio. The studio connects the subjects through an executive case and an improvement portfolio. It carries zero additional regulated credits; the six OTHM units retain their total of 120 credits. The studio has its own KBC learning outcomes and assessment, separate from the requirements for the diploma award.

Your enrolment offer identifies the approved-centre delivery arrangement, awarding-body registration route and studio schedule. The seven commercial module fees describe the KBC learning package; they do not change the external qualification's credit rules. Any change to the option selection must meet the requirements of the diploma award and progression route.

KBC module	Award relationship
01 Strategic Management	Mandatory unit • 20 credits

KBC module	Award relationship
02 Strategic Leadership	Mandatory unit • 20 credits
03 Strategic Human Resource Management	Mandatory unit • 20 credits
04 Strategic Financial Management	Selected optional unit • 20 credits
05 Strategic Marketing	Selected optional unit • 20 credits
06 Advanced Business Research Methods	Mandatory unit • 20 credits
KBC Applied Strategy and Leadership Studio	KBC enrichment • zero additional regulated credits

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Study with depth, at a sustainable pace

Executive study works best when there is time to read, test a proposition, discuss it and revise your judgement. The KBC delivery model combines live seminars, facilitated discussion, focused reading, practical exercises and individual assignment development. A live session should advance your thinking through challenge and application; preparation and follow-up are where much of the deeper learning takes place.

For a working professional, a part-time plan of approximately 18–24 months is a sensible starting point for discussion, rather than a fixed completion promise. Against the published 1,200-

hour diploma workload, an 18-month pattern averages approximately 15 hours a week and a 24-month pattern approximately 12 hours a week, before any additional studio activity. These illustrations use continuous calendar weeks; holidays and assessment peaks require extra planning. Your enrolment documentation sets out the detailed timetable and contact-hour plan.

A typical learning cycle begins with a short diagnostic task, followed by research and a seminar. You then apply the topic to your chosen organisation, receive formative feedback and strengthen the final submission. Peer discussion introduces alternative sectors and perspectives, but your assessed work must remain your own.

Your offer should specify delivery mode, session times, access to recordings where provided, tutor support, submission dates and the process for requesting an extension. Check the timetable for your own intake before making work or caring arrangements. Learners combining this diploma with an apprenticeship should agree a realistic combined schedule; additional study must not silently replace the apprenticeship's planned learning.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *When do you do your clearest thinking? What arrangement at work or at home would help you protect enough time for reading, reflection and careful writing?*

LEARNER AND SPONSOR COMMITMENTS

A professional learning partnership

For this standalone Level 7 programme, agree a clear development goal, study time and access to appropriate organisational examples. Learners should understand the academic demands, assessment calendar and funding decision before accepting a place. An employer sponsor can support application at work, but is not required to release statutory apprenticeship training time for a separate private qualification merely because the learner is also an apprentice. [C2,C7]

KBC's role is to explain the programme, provide teaching and feedback, discuss learning support and make the assessment expectations clear. The learner's role is to participate, read critically, meet agreed deadlines and submit authentic work. A sponsor's role is to help the learner apply ideas responsibly, provide a realistic organisational context and respond to emerging demands on time.

Protect the main apprenticeship. Where you are already a KBC apprentice, this optional diploma has a separate study plan and funding arrangement. It must not displace the training, assignments or assessment needed for the apprenticeship. Plan the additional workload with your coach and manager and resolve competing deadlines early.

Use evidence responsibly. Obtain permission for organisational data, remove identifying details where appropriate and distinguish personal opinion from research evidence. Explain how you used AI assistance and verify any sources it suggests. The learner remains responsible for the reasoning, references and submitted work. A polished report is valuable only when its conclusions can be defended.

Agree the commercial terms. Your latest programme offer is seven modules at £1,000 each. KBC scholarship support may cover up to 70%, following a case-by-case school decision. Being a KBC apprentice makes you eligible to be considered under the stated offer; it does not establish an automatic 70% award or a free place. Written acceptance should specify the award, remaining balance and payment arrangements. [C7]

The employer and learner charters are useful preparation, alongside the qualification specification and signed study agreement. They do not turn this privately funded diploma into an apprenticeship or replace the awarding body’s entry, assessment and award requirements.

CHAPTER 03

Connect direction with people

A strategy becomes real through the people who interpret it, act on it and live with its consequences. Deciding a direction therefore calls for more than confidence. It asks you to understand culture, capability, trust and the effect of your own leadership. These three subjects bring choices into conversation with the organisation's reality. As you read, think about a decision you have found difficult: whose perspective helped, what remained uncertain, and how you might approach the conversation differently with understanding.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Whose perspective would deepen your understanding of a strategic decision?*

CHOICES, IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTROL

01 | Strategic Management

Strategy begins with choice. A leadership team may want growth, improved service, lower cost and greater resilience at the same time, yet its resources are finite. This module develops your ability to define the strategic problem, evaluate the external environment and understand the capabilities that give an organisation a credible basis for action. You will move beyond producing a list of factors to explaining which factors matter, how they interact and what decisions they imply.

Using your own organisation or a suitable case, you will compare alternative directions against purpose, stakeholder expectations, feasibility and risk. A persuasive recommendation considers both the attractiveness of an option and the conditions required to deliver it. You will examine implementation responsibilities, resource implications, dependencies, resistance and the measures needed to identify whether the strategy is working.

The subject places particular emphasis on organisational change and the monitoring of strategic plans. KBC's applied work therefore connects strategic analysis with an implementation map: named responsibilities, a sequence of decisions, assumptions to test and criteria for adapting the plan. You should be able to explain what evidence would cause you to reconsider your preferred option.

An illustrative learning assignment is an executive strategy paper supported by a concise board presentation and a reflective commentary. Your issued assignment brief determines the evidence and assessment criteria; this catalogue describes the learning experience. A strong submission makes a defensible choice and acknowledges uncertainty, rather than treating every strategic framework as equally relevant.

- Evaluate the organisation's external pressures, internal capability and strategic position.
- Compare options with explicit criteria, evidence and practical trade-offs.
- Design implementation and change arrangements with meaningful performance measures.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K01, EL-K07; EL-S01, EL-S07; EL-B01, EL-B03.

DIRECTION, CULTURE AND RESPONSIBILITY

02 | Strategic Leadership

A strategic decision becomes consequential when people interpret it and act. This module examines how leaders create direction, exercise authority, shape culture and influence performance. You will explore different leadership approaches without assuming that one style suits every situation. The central task is to explain which approach is appropriate in a particular context and how you would recognise its effects on people and organisational outcomes.

Leadership includes difficult conversations. A team may need clarity when priorities conflict, reassurance when a change is uncertain or challenge when accepted practice has become ineffective. You will consider how to communicate honestly, invite dissent and use power responsibly. Reflection will connect your intentions with the experience of those affected by your decisions.

Ethical decision-making and organisational values are central to the subject. KBC’s learning activities place these within practical dilemmas: whether to present an optimistic forecast, how to respond to an influential colleague’s conduct, or how to handle pressure for rapid results when controls are weak. The aim is to develop a transparent decision process that can withstand scrutiny, including when the financially attractive choice creates wider harm.

An illustrative learning assignment combines a critical leadership analysis with a presentation and an evidence-informed personal development plan. You may use a real episode, appropriately anonymised, to evaluate what happened and what you would change. Good reflection goes beyond self-description: it tests your interpretation against theory, feedback and consequences, then specifies a behaviour you will practise and a way to evaluate improvement.

- Compare leadership perspectives in relation to organisational purpose and context.
- Evaluate how leadership affects teams, culture and performance.
- Make and explain ethical decisions, including tensions between stakeholder interests.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K02, EL-K07; EL-S02, EL-S08; EL-B01, EL-B02, EL-B06.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Recall a decision you communicated under pressure. How might someone with less authority have experienced it, and what could you ask them now?*

PEOPLE CAPABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

03 | Strategic Human Resource Management

An organisation's strategy depends on the people who can deliver it. This module connects workforce choices with strategic priorities, considering the capabilities needed now and the capacity to adapt in the future. You will examine how recruitment, development, work design, performance management and retention contribute to an organisation's effectiveness, rather than treating them as separate administrative processes.

You will develop human resource plans and consider the legal and ethical context of policy. The KBC learning approach starts with a practical capability gap: a growing service may need new expertise, a project organisation may depend on scarce specialists, or a business may need to develop managers who can lead through change. You will analyse the gap, compare responses and justify a coherent people strategy.

A credible workforce plan considers cost, inclusion, employee voice, succession and the quality of work. It also recognises that performance measures can influence behaviour in unintended ways. You will ask whether an incentive encourages the result the organisation wants, whether access to development is equitable and whether workload expectations are sustainable. Current legal requirements should be checked against authoritative guidance when a policy recommendation depends on them.

An illustrative learning assignment is a workforce strategy report accompanied by a management briefing. It should define the evidence used, the options considered, implementation responsibilities and the measures for reviewing impact. A practical recommendation might combine targeted recruitment with better onboarding, internal development and changes to work design, rather than assuming that every capability problem requires more headcount.

- Link workforce capability and resourcing choices to strategic objectives.
- Develop and evaluate a human resource plan with ethical and practical justification.
- Assess how people practices influence organisational performance and experience.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K03, EL-K07; EL-S03, EL-S07; EL-B02, EL-B03, EL-B05.

THE VALUE OF A CONVERSATION

Make your thinking clear to others

College community in London · June 2026

A concept often becomes clearer when you have to explain it to someone else. Try describing the choice you face, the evidence behind it and what remains uncertain. Invite a question before you rush to defend an answer.

Use teaching, coaching and workplace conversations to make those connections. Keep a brief note of the idea that changed your thinking, the action you will try and how you will judge whether it helped. That small habit can make learning easier to carry back into a busy working week.

CHAPTER 04

Ask what the evidence can support

A recommendation can be persuasive long before its assumptions have been tested. Financial understanding, marketing insight and research methods give you ways to examine what sits beneath it. Together, they help you ask whether a choice is affordable, relevant and supported by evidence. This chapter encourages a relationship with uncertainty. You do not need to remove unknowns; you need to recognise the limits, explain their significance and identify what should be learnt before the organisation commits resources or makes promises.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which assumption would most change your recommendation if it proved wrong?*

MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE

04 | Strategic Financial Management

Financial understanding allows a leader to ask better questions. Revenue growth may conceal a cash problem; an apparently inexpensive option may carry significant delivery risk; and a strong investment proposal may depend on assumptions that require careful testing. This module develops the ability to interpret financial performance, understand cost behaviour and use financial information in strategic decisions.

The subject covers costing, business performance, budgeting, funding and investment appraisal. KBC's learning sequence applies these topics to a connected business case. You will examine the assumptions behind forecasts, compare funding choices and consider both short-term liquidity and longer-term value. Calculations are important, but their usefulness depends on a clear explanation of what they mean for the decision.

You will practise working with scenarios rather than treating a single forecast as certainty. What happens if demand is lower, implementation takes longer or savings arrive later than expected? Which costs are avoidable, which commitments remain and what would trigger a change of course? The answer should connect financial analysis with operational reality and the interests of those who provide or depend on the organisation's resources.

An illustrative learning assignment is an investment appraisal and management report with transparent workings, a funding recommendation and a briefing for non-financial colleagues.

The purpose is to demonstrate judgement as well as numerical accuracy. You should be able to explain why the preferred option remains reasonable, where the decision is sensitive and what additional evidence is needed before approval.

- Interpret financial performance, cost information and cash implications.
- Evaluate budgeting arrangements and suitable funding alternatives.
- Appraise investment options, test assumptions and explain a justified recommendation.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K04, EL-K07; EL-S04, EL-S07; EL-B01, EL-B03, EL-B05.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which assumption makes an investment proposal look most attractive? What would change if that assumption were weaker, and who should understand the sensitivity?*

CUSTOMERS, POSITIONING AND VALUE

05 | Strategic Marketing

Strategic marketing asks whom the organisation should serve, what value it should create and why customers should choose it. This module connects market understanding with strategic direction and the organisation's ability to deliver its promise. It is relevant to executives across functions because customer expectations influence investment, operations, people development and the sustainability of revenue.

The subject covers environmental analysis, segmentation, targeting, positioning, the marketing mix, brands and digital technologies. The KBC learning approach brings these topics together through a strategic market choice. You will evaluate the attractiveness of a segment, the strength of the organisation's capabilities and the evidence supporting a differentiated proposition. A clear position should guide decisions about product or service design, communication, channels and the customer experience.

Digital activity should be considered in relation to strategic purpose. You will examine whether the selected channels reach the right audience, whether the information collected supports meaningful decisions and whether the organisation can fulfil the expectations it creates. Marketing measures should connect activity to outcomes, while recognising uncertainty in attribution and the limits of the available evidence.

An illustrative learning assignment is a strategic marketing plan supported by a brand and market analysis. You will justify a target audience, propose a coherent value proposition and set out the resources, measures and review points needed for implementation. A persuasive plan explains what the organisation will prioritise and what it will deliberately avoid, making the consequences of the strategic choice visible.

- Analyse markets and stakeholder expectations to identify strategic opportunities.
- Justify segmentation, targeting, positioning and an integrated marketing approach.
- Evaluate brand decisions, digital opportunities and performance measures.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K05, EL-K01; EL-S05, EL-S01; EL-B01, EL-B02, EL-B05.

ASK QUESTIONS WORTH ANSWERING

06 | Advanced Business Research Methods

Good research begins with a question that matters and a method capable of answering it. This module develops your ability to turn a business concern into a focused enquiry, review relevant literature and design a credible research proposal. It supports better executive judgement by making the quality, relevance and limitations of evidence explicit.

The learning centres on developing a research proposal. You will explore how different approaches shape the claims you can make, compare possible methods and justify a practical design. For example, interviews may reveal how employees interpret a change, while operational data may reveal variation in performance. Combining evidence can be useful, but collecting more data does not automatically produce a stronger answer.

You will consider sampling, access, research ethics, consent, confidentiality and the position of the researcher. A manager investigating their own team must think carefully about power and the possibility that colleagues may feel obliged to participate. The proposal should explain how information will be handled and how participants and organisational interests will be protected.

An illustrative learning assignment is a research proposal with a critical literature review, a justified methodology and a feasible work plan. It must distinguish what is already known from what the proposed enquiry could establish. Completion of the diploma research unit does not itself mean that a university dissertation has been completed. The research capability you develop can support a later application for further study, subject to that institution's requirements.

- Frame a research question with clear organisational relevance and boundaries.
- Critically evaluate literature and justify an appropriate research design.
- Plan ethical access, analysis, limitations and a realistic research timetable.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K06, EL-K08; EL-S06, EL-S08; EL-B01, EL-B04, EL-B06.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *What organisational question matters enough to study carefully? How would you avoid asking only the people, or selecting only the evidence, likely to confirm your first view?*

CHAPTER 05

Bring judgement into the room

Executive work rarely arrives divided into subjects. A growth decision may involve customers, cash, people, culture and the courage to question a preferred answer. The studio and the developmental framework help you bring those perspectives together. The boardroom case offers a place to practise before applying the thinking in your own setting. Pay attention to how you explain uncertainty, respond to challenge and include affected people. A recommendation carries both a reasoned choice and responsibility for what happens next.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *How would you respond if the evidence challenged the option you preferred?*

KBC APPLIED INTEGRATION MODULE

KBC Applied Strategy and Leadership Studio

The seventh module, the KBC Applied Strategy and Leadership Studio, connects the six diploma subjects in a substantial executive exercise. It provides additional educational enrichment with zero additional regulated credits. The studio is a KBC module, separate from the six regulated OTHM units and any later university dissertation. Its learning activities, timetable and assessment sit within your seven-module enrolment plan.

The studio asks you to work through an organisational challenge from diagnosis to an executable recommendation. You might examine whether to enter a new market, redesign a service, improve a portfolio of investments or develop a workforce capability that constrains growth. The question should require a combination of strategic, financial, people and customer perspectives, with a realistic appreciation of risk and implementation capacity.

Your learning output is an executive decision pack: a concise strategy paper, a financial and resource model, an implementation roadmap, a benefits and risk review, and a reflective leadership statement. You will explain how the evidence supports your recommendation and identify where the organisation should test an assumption before committing further resources. A board-style discussion provides an opportunity to practise answering challenge clearly and constructively.

The studio is designed to reward integration. A strong finance model should match the workforce plan; the marketing promise should match delivery capacity; and the change approach should reflect the culture and interests of those affected. Success is demonstrated through a coherent line of reasoning and a responsible implementation proposal, rather than the size of the presentation.

- Studio study allowance: approximately 40–60 additional hours, scheduled in your individual delivery plan.
- Studio assessment: executive decision pack and a facilitated challenge discussion.
- Regulated credit contribution: none additional; the diploma remains 120 credits.
- KBC outcome links: EL-K01–EL-K08; EL-S01–EL-S08; EL-B01–EL-B06.

KBC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Knowledge that supports executive judgement

The following Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours framework is a KBC educational design for this privately funded programme. It is not an apprenticeship occupational standard, an external accreditation claim or a replacement for the OTHM unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Its purpose is to make development visible across the programme and to help you connect learning with the work you want to undertake.

Knowledge means more than recognising a model’s name. You should be able to explain its assumptions, identify when it is useful and recognise its limitations. A strategic framework may clarify a decision in one setting yet obscure important factors in another. The programme therefore encourages comparison, justified selection and critical reflection.

Use these codes when planning your learning and reviewing your executive portfolio. A reference to a code indicates where an activity contributes to development; it does not certify that you have demonstrated competence. The strongest evidence shows how your understanding changed the quality of a decision or helped you challenge an unsupported assumption.

Code	By the end of the learning route, you can explain and critically evaluate…
EL-K01	Strategic position, competitive choices, capability and implementation.
EL-K02	Leadership approaches, organisational culture, influence and performance.
EL-K03	Workforce planning, people development and strategic human resource choices.
EL-K04	Financial performance, costing, budgeting, funding and investment appraisal.
EL-K05	Market selection, customer value, positioning, brands and digital opportunities.
EL-K06	Research questions, literature, methods and the limits of evidence.
EL-K07	Governance, ethics, risk, stakeholder interests and responsible change.
EL-K08	Evidence quality, information stewardship and reflective professional learning.

KBC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Skills that turn analysis into action

A leader’s analysis becomes valuable when it helps others make a decision or deliver an improvement. The KBC skill outcomes focus on the work products and conversations through which that happens. You will practise shaping a problem, comparing choices, explaining assumptions and developing an implementation proposal that colleagues can use.

The same capability can appear in more than one module. A financial recommendation may require persuasive communication; a people strategy may depend on research; and a marketing plan may expose a governance issue. The framework therefore encourages you to develop a connected portfolio rather than treating each assessment as an isolated document.

At the beginning of the programme, choose two or three skills that would make the greatest difference to your current role. Identify a practical opportunity to use them, request feedback and record what changes. Review this evidence alongside academic feedback. This approach supports purposeful development without implying that completing an assignment automatically confers professional status or a promotion.

Code	Demonstrable skill
EL-S01	Diagnose a strategic problem and compare options using explicit criteria.

Code	Demonstrable skill
EL-S02	Communicate direction, handle challenge and adapt leadership to context.
EL-S03	Develop a justified workforce and people capability plan.
EL-S04	Build and explain a financial appraisal with transparent assumptions.
EL-S05	Create a coherent market strategy and customer value proposition.
EL-S06	Design a feasible, ethical research enquiry and interpret evidence critically.
EL-S07	Translate recommendations into accountable implementation and review arrangements.
EL-S08	Reflect on feedback, explain limitations and improve professional judgement.

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE PRACTICE

Behaviours that earn confidence

Confidence in leadership grows when colleagues see consistency between the decisions you defend and the way you work. The KBC behaviours focus on integrity, inclusion, accountability, curiosity and responsible judgement. They are intended as prompts for development and reflection; they are not personality labels or a substitute for observing behaviour in context.

In a seminar, intellectual honesty may mean changing your view when a stronger explanation appears. In an assignment, it means distinguishing evidence from inference and acknowledging the limits of the data. In the workplace, it may mean explaining a difficult trade-off, listening to those with less authority or escalating a concern before it becomes a larger problem.

Behavioural development requires evidence over time. A reflective account can identify an intention, but feedback, an observed discussion or a documented decision can show how that intention became action. Where colleagues contribute feedback, explain the purpose and handle their information appropriately. The programme should help you develop a more reliable approach to leadership, while recognising that improvement is an ongoing professional commitment.

Code	Behaviour	Evidence to discuss
EL-B01	Integrity and transparency	State assumptions, acknowledge uncertainty and represent evidence accurately.
EL-B02	Inclusion and respect	Seek relevant perspectives and consider the effects of decisions on others.
EL-B03	Accountability	Accept responsibility for decisions, actions and follow-through.
EL-B04	Curiosity and critical enquiry	Ask constructive questions and test initial explanations.
EL-B05	Stewardship	Consider long-term value, responsible resource use and wider consequences.
EL-B06	Reflective adaptability	Use feedback, revise an approach and explain what has been learnt.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTEGRATED LEARNING

The boardroom case: growth with consequences

Imagine a fictional professional services organisation, Northbridge Advisory. Demand has grown, but its delivery teams are stretched and customer renewal is beginning to fall. The board is considering an ambitious expansion into a new region. A sales forecast suggests attractive returns, while a workforce review shows that the organisation lacks enough experienced managers to support another office. The chief executive wants a recommendation within six weeks.

Your task is to resist the temptation to answer too quickly. Strategic analysis asks whether regional expansion is the right response to the organisation’s position. Marketing analysis tests the proposed customer segment and value proposition. Financial analysis examines cash requirements, the timing of benefits and sensitivity to slower sales. The people analysis considers recruitment, development, leadership capacity and the effect on existing teams.

The research question might be narrower than the board’s initial request: which factors are driving customer renewal, and how would expansion affect them? A justified enquiry could compare service data with carefully designed interviews, recognising the limitations of each source. Leadership analysis considers how to handle pressure for a positive answer and how to communicate evidence that challenges the preferred narrative.

The final recommendation could be expansion, a phased pilot or a different investment in the existing operation. What matters is the quality of the reasoning and the conditions attached to the decision. Your executive pack should show the options, the assumptions, the implementation responsibilities and the indicators that would trigger review. This fictional case is a learning illustration, not a claim about a KBC learner or an employer's achieved results.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

If the fictional board preferred expansion but your evidence supported a pause, how would you explain your recommendation respectfully and identify a useful next decision?

YOUR DEVELOPMENT

Leave space to reconsider

College community in London · June 2026

Progress is not always dramatic. Sometimes it is a more precise question, a clearer recommendation, an honest account of what you do not yet know, or the confidence to ask for support before a difficulty grows.

Look back at the work you brought into the programme. What can you now explain, improve or approach more thoughtfully? Keep the evidence of that change. It can help you recognise your development and decide what you want to learn next.

CHAPTER 06

Make an informed commitment to what follows

The value of a programme should be clear enough to discuss: the work it asks of you, the support available and the financial commitment involved. This closing chapter brings those questions together with assessment and progression. It also returns to your reason for studying. Consider what you want to understand deeply and how you hope your decisions will improve. A careful choice now can create the conditions for purposeful learning, while leaving space for your ambitions to develop with experience.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *What would make this the right next step at this point in your life?*

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Assessment with a clear line of evidence

This diploma route is assessed through coursework. The published OTHM model uses centre assessment with external verification, and achievement depends on meeting the required outcomes and criteria. It does not use an apprenticeship End-Point Assessment. The KBC studio has a separate educational purpose and cannot replace a required diploma assessment. [L2]

Your current assignment brief is the authoritative guide to the task, evidence requirements and submission conditions. Learning may involve reports, presentations, reflective work and a research proposal; check the required format and word count for each approved assessment. Before beginning, identify each criterion and decide which evidence will address it. This helps you produce a clear, purposeful submission that answers the actual question.

At Level 7, a strong response normally needs more than a description of practice. Explain competing interpretations, evaluate the evidence and justify your conclusion in context. Where you recommend action, discuss feasibility, risk and likely consequences. Show enough reasoning for the assessor to understand how you reached your judgement, and use an appropriate, consistent referencing approach.

Academic integrity includes the responsible use of digital and AI tools. Follow the published assessment policy, acknowledge permitted assistance and verify factual claims and references. Do not submit invented evidence, fabricated citations or confidential workplace information without appropriate permission. Formative discussion and feedback can help you improve your work, but the assessed analysis must be your own.

- Read the assessment criteria before drafting the submission.
- Use evidence that is relevant, traceable and proportionate to the claim.
- Respond to feedback with a specific revision plan.
- Check current rules on resubmission, appeals, extensions and adjustments at induction.

A TRANSPARENT PRIVATE FUNDING ROUTE

Fees and the Kent Business College Fund

The KBC programme price is £7,000, comprising seven commercial modules at £1,000 each. The funding route for this offer is Kent Business College support, subject to a school decision on the individual application. KBC may award support of up to 70% of the programme price. The maximum illustrated award is therefore £4,900, leaving £2,100 to be paid by the learner, employer or another agreed payer.

Existing KBC apprentices are eligible to apply. Participation in an apprenticeship does not make the diploma automatically free and does not guarantee a particular scholarship percentage. The written decision should identify the amount of KBC support, any conditions, the remaining balance and the payment arrangements before the applicant accepts a place.

This offer is not funded by the Department for Education and is not presented as an apprenticeship levy or co-investment purchase. An IPC Fund award is not included in this route. Support described in another programme catalogue should not be assumed to transfer to this diploma. Any additional sponsorship must be separately confirmed in writing.

The school's formal quotation sets out the complete price, VAT treatment where applicable, awarding-body registration and assessment fees, resubmission charges if any, and the cancellation and refund terms. A later MBA or other university course is a separate purchase unless expressly included in a written offer.

Illustrative KBC award	KBC contribution	Remaining total	Average per module
No award	£0	£7,000	£1,000
20%	£1,400	£5,600	£800
50%	£3,500	£3,500	£500
70% maximum	£4,900	£2,100	£300

YOUR NEXT PROFESSIONAL CHAPTER

Progression with the right expectations

The value of executive education begins with the work you can do more effectively. You may become more confident in a strategy discussion, more precise when assessing an investment or more capable of translating a recommendation into a plan. The programme can support development towards broader managerial responsibility, but a qualification does not guarantee a role, salary increase or professional designation.

Level 7 describes the level of study; the diploma is not itself an MBA or a full master's degree. A university may consider the completed award for advanced entry, but admission, any further study and the final degree award remain the university's decisions. The KBC integration studio does not supply the university dissertation requirement. [L1]

Cardiff Metropolitan University currently lists the relevant OTHM diploma among qualifications considered for its MBA Advanced Entry route, including Strategic Financial Management and Strategic Marketing, awarded within the preceding five years. Its application requirements include the qualification evidence, a CV, supporting statements and references, with an interview. Applicants must check all current conditions, including English requirements where relevant, directly with the university. [L3]

Progression remains a possible option, subject to a separate university decision. Before committing to any further course, obtain a written offer, confirm the delivery provider and awarding university, and review the full fees, timetable and assessment requirements. No fixed university top-up price or completion period is included in this programme offer. KBC's diploma scholarship should not be assumed to fund subsequent university study.

APPLICATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Make the programme work for you and your organisation

Begin with the change you want to make. An application is stronger when it explains the responsibilities you hold, the questions you want to investigate and the benefit of developing a broader leadership perspective. The school can then assess academic readiness, discuss your study route and consider whether the programme is a suitable investment of your time.

If your employer is involved, agree a practical partnership. Identify a sponsor or line manager who understands the learning goals, discuss suitable access to information and establish when you can apply new ideas. Employer support should encourage independent thinking; it should not require you to produce a predetermined conclusion in assessed work. Where a live project is unsuitable or sensitive, an appropriately designed case can provide an alternative context.

Before enrolment, you should receive the confirmed award and module structure, delivery schedule, assessment arrangements, support contacts and full financial offer. If you are also a KBC apprentice, discuss the combined workload and keep the two learning plans and funding arrangements clear. The private diploma should complement your development without creating an unmanageable commitment.

The school's decision should leave you able to answer four questions confidently: what will I study, what will I be expected to produce, what support can I use and what will I pay? Once those points are clear, the programme becomes an opportunity to build something substantial: a stronger professional perspective, a portfolio of reasoned executive work and a more thoughtful approach to the responsibilities of leadership.

- Prepare your CV, qualification evidence and a short statement of development goals.
- Discuss entry readiness, study capacity and the proposed research or organisational context.
- Request a written KBC funding decision and full fee quotation.
- Review and accept the confirmed learning and contractual arrangements before starting.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

At the end of the programme, what would you like to do with greater clarity or care? What evidence would help you recognise that change in your own leadership?

CHAPTER 07

Choose a direction worth pursuing

The following fictional cases invite you into the uncertain space before an executive decision becomes a plan. Work through the competing interpretations, the people affected and the information that would change your mind. The aim is a recommendation that deserves confidence because its reasoning can withstand challenge.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which strategic choice in your organisation deserves a more careful examination of its assumptions?*

YOUR PROGRAMME

Begin with the decision, not the framework

In this fictional case, Northmere Services maintains equipment for regional business customers. Its board describes the strategic problem as insufficient growth. The operations director sees a different problem: experienced technicians are repeatedly diverted to urgent faults, leaving preventive visits late and customers uncertain. Sales colleagues want a new territory; service managers want a more reliable existing operation. Before commissioning a large strategy exercise, the leadership team must establish what decision is actually required. Is it choosing a market, repairing the delivery model or deciding the order in which those ambitions should be pursued? Each interpretation implies different evidence and different consequences.

A useful executive paper begins with a decision statement and a bounded time horizon. It distinguishes the symptoms that prompted attention from the explanation being proposed. Northmere could examine retention by customer type, the causes of repeat visits and the availability of technical capacity before treating expansion as the answer. Its leaders should also define a credible continuation option: what happens if they retain the current approach for another year? That comparison exposes the cost of delay without manufacturing urgency. Your task is to explain why the proposed question matters, what is excluded and which evidence could reveal that the initial diagnosis was mistaken.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Make purpose useful when priorities collide

The fictional Northmere board agrees that reliable service matters, but disagreement returns when a profitable emergency contract appears. Accepting it would require moving technicians away from smaller customers already promised preventive visits. One director sees commercial opportunity; another sees damage to trust. A purpose statement becomes useful at this point only if it helps the organisation make a difficult choice. Broad commitments to customers, colleagues and growth do not resolve the conflict by themselves. Leaders need to explain which obligations are already established, which risks are negotiable and whose interests may otherwise disappear from the discussion.

Northmere can turn its stated purpose into decision criteria without pretending every stakeholder preference has equal weight. Existing service commitments, technical safety, available capacity and the proposed customer's payment reliability deserve explicit consideration. The board might accept a smaller contract, negotiate a later start or decline work it cannot deliver responsibly. A weighted comparison can organise discussion, but its scores should not conceal a judgement that must be explained. Ask who selected the criteria, whether a serious harm can be offset by a high commercial score and what account would be given to affected customers. Responsible strategy makes its trade-offs visible enough to challenge.

YOUR PROGRAMME

See the market through a customer's problem

In this fictional continuation, Northmere interviews customers who recently renewed, reduced or ended their contracts. Its sales team initially expects price to dominate. Instead, several customers describe the difficulty of arranging access when arrival times change, while others value rapid emergency response above scheduled reliability. These comments suggest different needs, but a handful of interviews cannot establish how common each need is. The strategic marketing task is to connect the language customers use with evidence about purchasing decisions, service costs and the organisation's ability to deliver a credible promise consistently over time.

A useful segmentation proposal explains why a difference matters commercially and operationally. Northmere might distinguish customers who need predictable planned attendance from those who require specialist emergency availability, rather than dividing the market only by size. It should then test whether those groups are identifiable, reachable and sufficiently different in their needs. A proposed premium service needs evidence of willingness to pay as well as enthusiasm in conversation. Complaints, renewal records and direct enquiries can challenge an attractive interpretation. Your recommendation should connect a specific customer problem with a service promise, the capability required to fulfil it and the evidence that would justify further investment.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Compare genuine strategic alternatives

The fictional Northmere leadership team develops three options: enter a neighbouring territory, specialise in a narrower technical market or strengthen its existing service before expanding. A weak comparison would describe the preferred option generously and the others as obviously unattractive. A stronger comparison gives each alternative its best credible form. Expansion might use a partnership instead of an immediate branch; specialisation might retain existing customers during transition; consolidation might include selective growth where spare capacity already exists. These variations reveal that the real choice concerns the organisation's pattern of commitments, rather than a simple opposition between ambition and caution.

The team should compare purpose, customer value, financial exposure, implementation capacity and reversibility using the same evidence standard. Some information will remain uncertain, so a single total score should not be treated as an answer produced by mathematics. Discuss the assumptions that determine the ranking and whether plausible changes would reverse it. Northmere may discover that specialisation is attractive only if it can recruit a scarce technical lead, while a partnership reduces initial exposure but weakens control over service. A persuasive recommendation explains the preferred option's weaknesses, the conditions attached to proceeding and why the rejected alternatives remain less suitable in the present context.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Test the capability behind the promise

Northmere's fictional board chooses to investigate a specialist service, and the conversation quickly turns to equipment and recruitment. Those visible resources matter, but they do not establish organisational capability on their own. A customer experiences the combined effect of diagnosis, scheduling, technical work, documentation and follow-up. Buying a new diagnostic tool will add little value if staff cannot interpret its output or the scheduling system allocates insufficient time. The leadership task is to understand how people, routines, information and authority work together to produce the service being promised in everyday operating conditions.

A capability map should therefore follow the work from enquiry to resolution. At each point, identify the competence required, the information available, the decisions permitted and the dependency on another team. Distinguish a missing resource from an unreliable process and from a disagreement about priorities. Northmere might need supervised practice and revised allocation rules before it needs a larger sales campaign. Consider also the fragility created when one experienced colleague holds essential knowledge. Your analysis should connect each proposed investment with a specific capability gap, a way to observe improvement and a realistic owner. This makes development purposeful and reduces the temptation to label every operational difficulty as a training problem.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Sequence commitment and learning

In this fictional exercise, Northmere could commit immediately to a specialist branch, but several important assumptions remain unsettled. Customer demand may be seasonal, the recruitment market is uncertain and the existing scheduling process is already under strain. A sequence of smaller decisions can create useful learning before larger commitments become difficult to reverse. This does not mean postponing every decision until uncertainty disappears. It means distinguishing what must be committed now from what can be tested, and recognising that a delayed decision also has costs when customers or skilled colleagues may move elsewhere.

Northmere might begin with a limited service trial for suitable existing customers, using a defined team and a clear capacity limit. Before starting, leaders should specify what the trial can establish, what it cannot and how its results will be interpreted. A successful trial with unusually supportive customers may not predict a wider launch. Continue, adapt and stop criteria should consider service quality, actual resource use and customer behaviour alongside revenue. The next decision should have an owner and a date, with explicit authority to change direction. In your recommendation, explain the relationship between learning and commitment so that a pilot becomes a disciplined strategic step rather than an initiative that quietly continues forever.

CHAPTER 08

Build the organisation the strategy needs

A structure can be drawn in an afternoon; the relationships that make it work take longer. These fictional leadership situations examine authority, culture, capability and trust. Consider what people experience when a strategy arrives in their working lives, and what responsible leadership asks you to notice, explain and change.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Where does the organisation's everyday experience differ from the intentions expressed by its leaders?*

YOUR PROGRAMME

Design authority around the work

In this fictional organisational design case, Alder Community Services operates several local centres. A new strategy promises a more consistent customer experience, and senior leaders propose centralising decisions. Local managers worry that a single process will ignore differences in demand and community needs. Both positions contain useful concerns. Central authority may improve consistency and purchasing decisions, while local discretion may support timely responses. The design question is therefore more precise than whether the organisation should become centralised: which decisions need a common standard, which benefit from local knowledge and how will disagreements be resolved?

Follow a real service decision through the proposed structure. Establish who gathers information, who recommends action, who can approve it and who remains accountable for the result. Alder could centralise minimum service expectations while allowing local managers to adapt appointment patterns within agreed capacity and cost boundaries. The design also needs an escalation route for exceptions that do not fit the normal rules. A responsibility table is useful only when people understand how to use it under pressure. Evaluate the proposed structure through likely delays, conflicting incentives and information gaps, then test whether the changes improve the work itself rather than merely produce a tidier organisational chart.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Read culture through everyday signals

At fictional Alder Community Services, leaders encourage colleagues to raise problems early. Yet managers who deliver favourable monthly figures receive public recognition, while teams reporting difficulties are asked to defend themselves in increasingly detailed meetings. Staff soon learn that good news travels more comfortably than uncertainty. This is a culture issue because the repeated experience shapes what people consider safe, valued and sensible. A staff survey may reveal discomfort, but it will not explain the mechanism by itself. Leaders need to examine the routines, rewards and reactions that make the formal message credible or undermine it.

A useful enquiry follows specific moments: a missed target, a customer complaint, an unsuccessful experiment or a junior colleague questioning a decision. Ask what happened, how people interpreted the response and what they did afterwards. Avoid treating one vivid story as a complete description of the organisation; compare experiences across teams and roles. Alder's leaders could begin by distinguishing honest reporting from avoidable inaction and by recognising early escalation that prevents greater harm. Your analysis should identify the behaviour being reinforced, the organisational consequence and a practical change to leadership practice. Culture becomes more manageable when the discussion moves from broad labels to repeated actions that people can observe.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Plan the workforce the strategy requires

In this fictional case, Alder plans to extend evening services. The initial workforce proposal simply adds more staff using the current mix of roles. A closer examination shows that demand varies by day, experienced supervisors are scarce and several existing colleagues want different working patterns. Strategic human resource management begins by connecting the service ambition with the capabilities, availability and conditions needed to deliver it sustainably. The question is not only how many people are required. It is which work must be done, when, at what level of judgement and with what support.

Alder should compare development, recruitment, redesign and partnership options before assuming that every gap requires a new appointment. A supervised development route may strengthen retention but needs protected coaching capacity; external recruitment may bring experience but still requires induction into local practice. Examine the consequences for workload, fairness and continuity, including the less visible burden placed on capable colleagues who repeatedly cover gaps. A sound workforce plan identifies critical capabilities, realistic lead times, succession exposure and measures that show whether the arrangement is sustainable. Explain how the plan would change if demand grows more slowly than expected or if a key recruitment assumption fails. That makes workforce planning part of strategic judgement rather than a headcount exercise.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Lead a difficult conversation with clarity

A fictional Alder manager must discuss a valued colleague's repeated failure to complete service records. The colleague is knowledgeable and well liked, and the manager has previously accepted unfinished records because the team was busy. A conversation framed only as individual failure would ignore that history; avoiding the issue would leave customers and colleagues exposed to unreliable information. Strategic leadership includes the ability to hold both responsibilities together. The manager needs to state the concern clearly, recognise the context and invite an explanation without deciding in advance that pressure either excuses everything or explains nothing.

Prepare with specific examples, the effect on the work and the standard that needs to be met. Separate observations from assumptions about attitude or motivation. The discussion may reveal an unclear process, inadequate system access, a capability gap or an expectation that was never reinforced consistently. Agree actions that match the cause, including what the manager must change, and establish when progress will be discussed. The colleague should leave understanding the expectation, the support available and the consequences of continued difficulty. Reflect afterwards on your own use of authority: did you listen carefully, remain clear and create a realistic route to improvement, or did discomfort lead you to soften the issue until the agreement became ambiguous?

YOUR PROGRAMME

Make change credible in people's working lives

In this fictional change case, Alder introduces a shared scheduling system intended to reduce duplicated work. The launch presentation explains the benefits convincingly, but local teams still keep private spreadsheets because the new system does not show an important service exception. Leaders describe this as resistance. Staff describe it as keeping the service functioning. Either account may be incomplete. Change leadership requires attention to the workarounds people use, the problems those workarounds solve and the risks they create. A visible launch is only the beginning of implementation; adoption depends on whether the new arrangement can support real work.

Alder can investigate a small number of complete scheduling journeys with colleagues who use the system daily. It should distinguish concerns that require design changes from those that require practice, clearer decisions or the retirement of an old process. Identify local champions for their credibility and willingness to challenge, rather than asking them merely to repeat the launch message. Track whether tasks can be completed accurately and whether exceptions are handled, alongside attendance at training. A practical change plan makes ownership, support and escalation clear after the launch team has moved on. Your analysis should explain how leaders will learn from experience without allowing every local preference to prevent a necessary common improvement.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Exercise power with an account of its consequences

The fictional Alder leadership team is considering reducing opening hours at a small centre. The centre has low utilisation, but some users have few practical alternatives. Financial pressure is real, and so is the effect of withdrawal. An ethical discussion should examine both rather than presenting the decision as a contest between commercial realism and compassion. Leaders must understand who benefits, who carries the burden, what obligations already exist and which alternatives have received serious consideration. The voices easiest to obtain may not represent people whose circumstances make participation difficult.

Alder could compare reduced hours, shared provision, different appointment arrangements and complete closure, including the operational and financial consequences of each. Consultation should explain what is open to influence and what constraints are already fixed. It should not invite people to invest time in a process whose conclusion has secretly been settled. Record the reasons for the final decision, the uncertainty that remains and the support offered to affected people. A responsible account also considers how the decision will be monitored after implementation. Your task is to make a defensible recommendation while showing that the organisation has understood the human consequences and has not used a favourable average to conceal a serious burden on a smaller group.

CHAPTER 09

Commit resources with clear judgement

Resources turn ambition into consequences. The fictional exercises in this chapter connect investment, cash, customers, uncertainty and organisational capacity. Follow the assumptions behind the numbers and ask who benefits, who carries the risk and what evidence would justify continuing, adapting or stopping an initiative.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *Which number in an attractive proposal conceals the most consequential judgement?*

YOUR PROGRAMME

Distinguish an attractive return from an affordable decision

In this fictional financial exercise, Rowan Learning Services considers a platform costing £180,000 at the outset. The proposal estimates annual cost savings of £80,000, additional contribution of £40,000 and continuing platform costs of £30,000. That produces an illustrative net annual benefit of £90,000 before considering timing, tax or other adjustments. The simple payback is two years if those benefits arise evenly as assumed. The arithmetic is straightforward; the judgement lies in whether savings are cash releasing, whether additional contribution is genuinely incremental and whether the organisation can fund the initial commitment without weakening essential operations.

Rowan should separate the investment appraisal from its cash planning. Staff time released by automation may improve service without reducing payroll expenditure, so it should not automatically be presented as cash available to pay suppliers. Additional sales may also require working capital and implementation support. A useful proposal shows the assumptions behind each benefit, the person responsible for achieving it and the conditions required. It compares the proposed platform with realistic alternatives, including a smaller improvement to the existing process. Your recommendation should explain both the economic case and the practical funding implications, rather than allowing a favourable payback figure to stand in for a complete investment decision.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Follow the cash through the operating cycle

In this fictional continuation, Rowan's management accounts show improving profitability, yet the finance team is concerned about cash. Several customers pay after delivery, while tutors and suppliers must be paid earlier. A growing order book therefore increases the resources needed to support work before cash is collected. The leadership team cannot assess resilience from profit alone. It needs to understand when obligations fall due, how dependable expected receipts are and what happens if a customer disputes an invoice or a planned delivery is delayed. Growth can place pressure on liquidity even when the underlying work appears commercially attractive.

A short rolling cash forecast should distinguish confirmed commitments from estimates and make the timing assumptions visible. Rowan can examine deposits, invoice accuracy, collection delays, supplier terms and the resources tied up in unfinished work. Improvements should be evaluated for their effect on customer relationships and delivery quality, as well as the immediate cash balance. The forecast needs regular updating because a precise spreadsheet can become misleading when the underlying schedule changes. Your analysis should identify the periods of greatest pressure, the actions available before those periods arrive and the authority required to take them. Financial judgement includes recognising a potential constraint early enough for the organisation to retain meaningful choices.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Use sensitivity to expose the fragile assumption

The fictional Rowan platform proposal assumes an annual net benefit of £90,000. If the expected £40,000 contribution from additional sales does not arise, the annual net benefit falls to £50,000, assuming the other figures remain unchanged. Simple payback then extends from two years to 3.6 years. This illustration shows why the decision depends on more than the most likely estimate. Sensitivity analysis asks how the result changes when a particular assumption changes; a scenario combines several changes into a coherent possible situation. Neither approach removes uncertainty, but both can make its significance clearer.

Rowan should avoid choosing optimistic and pessimistic numbers simply to create a reassuring range. Connect each variation to a plausible cause: slower adoption, delayed implementation, lower demand or greater support needs. Some assumptions move together, so testing them independently may understate exposure. A weak launch could reduce revenue while increasing service costs. Identify the assumptions that most affect the recommendation, then consider whether research, contract terms or staged implementation can reduce the uncertainty. Your executive conclusion should state what remains acceptable under pressure and what would require a different decision. A proposal is stronger when leaders understand its vulnerability before committing, rather than discovering afterwards that the attractive result depended on every assumption being favourable.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Connect risk appetite with practical decisions

In this fictional governance case, Rowan's board says it has a moderate appetite for risk, but the phrase offers little help when a project manager must decide whether to launch with unresolved service defects. Different risks have different consequences, and a broad label does not explain the boundaries of acceptable action. The organisation may accept uncertainty in customer demand while taking a much more cautious position on confidential information or the reliability of essential services. Useful risk governance connects these distinctions with decisions that managers can recognise, discuss and escalate before consequences become difficult to contain.

Start with the objective at risk, the possible event and its consequences. Identify the controls already operating, the remaining exposure and the person with authority to accept it. Rowan could define launch conditions, a limited pilot population and an escalation trigger for unresolved defects. A risk register should support this reasoning rather than become a list maintained mainly for reporting. Challenge whether a reassuring status reflects evidence or simply the absence of a reported incident. In your recommendation, explain how leaders will know that controls are working and what action follows when conditions change. This turns risk appetite from a declaration into a practical basis for proportionate judgement.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Treat marketing investment as a strategic commitment

In this fictional case, Rowan plans a campaign to attract a new business customer segment. The marketing team can measure enquiries easily, but the board needs to understand whether those enquiries support a worthwhile and deliverable market position. A high response rate may conceal poor fit, costly sales conversations or demand for services the organisation cannot yet provide. Strategic marketing connects the target customer's problem with the offer, the delivery model and the economics of serving that customer. Communication matters, but it cannot compensate indefinitely for a promise that the organisation is poorly equipped to fulfil.

Rowan should agree what the campaign is intended to establish before it starts. A small test might examine whether suitable customers understand the offer and progress to a meaningful conversation, while a later stage might test conversion and delivery experience. Compare customer quality, contribution and capacity implications alongside reach and response. Attribution will often remain imperfect because several interactions influence a decision; explain that limitation instead of claiming every subsequent sale as a campaign result. Your analysis should connect marketing evidence with a resource decision: continue, refine the offer, change the audience or stop. The aim is learning that improves strategic choice, supported by measures whose meaning the leadership team can defend.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Prioritise a portfolio that people can deliver

The fictional Rowan board has approved a new platform, a market expansion and a revised operating model. Each initiative has a persuasive individual case, but all depend on the same small group of experienced managers. Assessing proposals separately has concealed a shared capacity constraint. Strategic financial management and leadership need to meet at this point: the question is no longer whether each initiative appears worthwhile, but which combination can be delivered without undermining current services. An approved budget does not create the attention, knowledge or decision capacity required to make every commitment successful at once.

A portfolio discussion should identify dependencies, scarce capabilities, timing conflicts and the cost of switching between demands. Rowan might sequence the operating model before expansion, reduce the first platform release or stop a lower priority initiative. Compare these choices against strategic contribution, exposure and the effect on existing customers and colleagues. Avoid assuming that money already spent justifies further expenditure; the relevant question concerns the future value and cost of continuing. Your recommendation should make the resource constraint explicit and identify what will be deferred or discontinued. Credible prioritisation gives teams a manageable set of commitments, with a clear account of the opportunities the organisation has consciously chosen not to pursue now.

CHAPTER 10

Turn enquiry into an executive recommendation

An executive recommendation is stronger when its evidence has been gathered thoughtfully and its limitations are visible. These fictional research and integration exercises follow a question from its first expression to a board decision. They connect enquiry with ethical responsibility, practical implementation and an honest account of what remains uncertain.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

> *What would make your recommendation both intellectually defensible and useful to the people expected to act on it?*

YOUR PROGRAMME

Ask a research question that can change a decision

In this fictional research case, Eastbank Professional Services wants to understand why experienced colleagues leave. Its first proposed question asks whether a new mentoring scheme will improve retention. That wording assumes a solution before the causes have been investigated. A more useful enquiry might examine how experienced colleagues understand their development opportunities and how those experiences influence their intention to remain. The revised question does not promise a complete explanation of turnover. It defines a manageable part of a wider organisational issue and makes room for findings that challenge the preferred intervention.

A sound question connects the organisational decision with a feasible enquiry, a defined population and an appropriate period. Eastbank should clarify what it means by experienced colleagues, development opportunity and retention, because vague terms can produce evidence that is difficult to interpret. Review relevant literature to understand competing explanations and identify where the local investigation can contribute. Consider access, time and ethical limits before choosing a method. Your proposal should explain what a useful answer would enable leaders to decide and what the study will leave unresolved. This creates a proportionate research project whose value lies in improving judgement, rather than an ambitious title that the available evidence cannot support.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Match the method to the claim

For fictional Eastbank, interviews could explore how colleagues experience development, while a questionnaire could examine the distribution of clearly defined views across a larger group. Existing employment records might reveal patterns in departures, but those patterns would not explain individual decisions by themselves. Choosing a method because it is convenient can produce an answer to a different question. The research design should explain what kind of evidence is needed, why the proposed method can produce it and what limitations will remain. Combining methods is useful only when their relationship strengthens the enquiry rather than merely increases the volume of material.

Eastbank should examine whose perspectives the sample includes and whose may be missing. Current colleagues may describe conditions differently from those who have already left, while volunteers may have particularly strong experiences. A small qualitative sample can provide detailed understanding without supporting numerical claims about the entire workforce. A larger survey still needs careful questions, accessible participation and an account of non-response. Your analysis should distinguish description, interpretation and causal explanation. If the design cannot establish that mentoring causes retention, do not allow the conclusion to imply it. A credible method makes the boundaries of the eventual claim visible from the beginning.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Protect the people who make enquiry possible

In this fictional case, Eastbank's researcher also manages some potential participants. Colleagues may feel unable to decline an interview or may worry that an honest account will affect how they are treated. A polite invitation does not remove the influence of that relationship. Ethical planning needs to consider the practical experience of participation, including how invitations are issued, what people understand about the use of their information and whether refusal is genuinely possible. The researcher should also recognise that combining apparently harmless details can make a person identifiable within a small organisation.

Eastbank could use an appropriate independent invitation process, explain the purpose and limits of confidentiality, and collect only information needed for the enquiry. The research plan should specify access, storage, retention and the form in which findings will be shared, following the relevant institutional arrangements. Avoid promising absolute anonymity when role details or distinctive events could reveal identity. If a quotation adds little analytical value but creates identification risk, paraphrasing or omission may be more appropriate. Your account should explain the choices made and their implications for the evidence. Ethical research is part of the quality of the study: people deserve respectful treatment, and conclusions are weakened when participation depends on pressure or misleading assurances.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Analyse disagreement rather than tidying it away

The fictional Eastbank interviews produce an uneven picture. Some colleagues value informal access to senior people; others experience the same arrangement as dependent on personal connections. A superficial report might combine both views under a broad theme of communication. A stronger analysis examines the difference: who experiences access, under what circumstances and with what effect on development? Contradictory evidence is not necessarily a flaw to remove. It may reveal that the organisation's arrangements work differently across roles, locations or working patterns, and that a single organisation-wide intervention would miss an important distinction.

Build an analytical record that connects interpretations with the material supporting them. Compare accounts systematically, examine exceptions and consider alternative explanations before settling on a theme. Where numbers are used, make the denominator and missing responses clear; where quotations are used, avoid selecting only the most vivid lines that support your preferred argument. Eastbank should distinguish what participants reported from what the researcher infers about organisational causes. Your conclusion can remain useful while acknowledging that some explanations require further investigation. Show how the evidence changes the initial understanding of the problem, and explain where confidence is stronger or weaker. This makes analysis an accountable process rather than a polished narrative assembled after the decision has already been made.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Integrate the subjects in an executive recommendation

In this fictional integration exercise, Eastbank must decide how to strengthen the development of experienced colleagues. The research suggests that opportunities exist but access is uneven, managers have limited coaching capacity and the organisation has no consistent way to connect development with future capability needs. A recommendation for mentoring alone would address only part of the problem. Strategic management, leadership, human resource planning and financial judgement now need to work together. The proposed response must fit the organisation's direction, recognise the people affected and remain deliverable within the time and resources available.

An executive recommendation could compare a formal mentoring scheme, manager development with clearer opportunity allocation, and a staged combination. Explain the evidence supporting each option, the assumptions requiring further testing and the practical consequences of implementation. Include ownership, resource implications, risks and measures that indicate whether access and capability are improving. Distinguish early signals, such as participation, from the longer-term outcomes the organisation hopes to achieve. Your paper should also identify what is being requested from the decision-maker: approval to investigate, permission to pilot or commitment to wider implementation. Integration becomes visible when the recommendation holds the disciplines together in a coherent decision, rather than presenting separate subject sections that never resolve their competing implications.

YOUR PROGRAMME

Defend the recommendation and remain willing to learn

At the fictional Eastbank board meeting, a director asks whether the proposed development approach will reduce departures within six months. The evidence does not justify a firm promise. A responsible response explains what the study supports, why the proposal is reasonable and which outcomes may take longer to observe. This is neither evasiveness nor a lack of confidence. It is an accurate account of the relationship between evidence and action. Executive credibility depends partly on resisting the pressure to turn a plausible recommendation into a certainty that the organisation cannot responsibly offer.

Prepare for challenge by examining the strongest alternative interpretation, the most fragile assumption and the consequences if the recommendation fails. Agree how implementation will generate learning and when leaders will reconsider the approach. Eastbank might monitor access to opportunities, manager capacity and participant experience before drawing conclusions about retention. After the decision, reflect on your own contribution: where did evidence change your view, whose perspective improved the work and which limitation remained unresolved? A useful final reflection identifies a concrete change to future practice. The purpose of the integrated learning experience is a stronger capacity to make, explain and revisit consequential decisions with intellectual discipline and care for the people who live with the results.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

Sources and further reading

L0 KBC Level 7 programme orientation

Programme orientation covering the qualification structure and subjects.

L1 OTHM Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership

Official qualification overview: four mandatory plus two optional units; 120 credits; entry, delivery and progression. Retrieved 13 September 2026.

othm.org.uk/qualification/othm-level-7-diploma-in-strategic-management-and-leadership

L2 OTHM qualification specification — Strategic Management and Leadership

Official specification: qualification number 603/2181/7; structure, hours, assessment and verification. Published file is labelled May 2020; registration version must be checked.

othm.org.uk/doc/specification-2022/OTHM_Level_7_Diploma_in_Strategic_Management_and_Leadership_spec_2020_05.pdf

Sources consulted September 2026. Apply published standards and funding rules to the learner's start date. The written offer confirms delivery, fees, support and the professional awards included.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

Sources and further reading continued

L3 Cardiff Metropolitan University — MBA Advanced Entry (Top-up)

Official current entry requirements identify qualifying OTHM award including finance and marketing units, within five years; separate university admission and interview. Retrieved 13 September 2026.

www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/mba---advanced-entry-top-up/

L4 Kent Business College programme and funding information

Seven modules × £1,000; £7,000 total; KBC support up to 70% subject to school case-by-case decision; no DfE funding.

C1 KBC learner charter and learning journey

KBC public charter, consulted in September 2026.

kentbusinesscollege.com/learners/apprentice-charter/

Sources consulted September 2026. Apply published standards and funding rules to the learner's start date. The written offer confirms delivery, fees, support and the professional awards included.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

Sources and further reading continued

C2 KBC employer and line manager charter

Shared commitments and programme guide downloads.

kentbusinesscollege.com/employers/employer-charter/

C3 Kent Business College vision mission and values

Institutional identity, mission, vision and horse and ibis symbolism.

kentbusinesscollege.com/who-we-are/

C4 Government apprenticeship funding policy

Updated 29 July 2026; new starts from 1 August 2026.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding/apprenticeship-funding

Sources consulted September 2026. Apply published standards and funding rules to the learner’s start date. The written offer confirms delivery, fees, support and the professional awards included.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

Sources and further reading continued

C5 Funding rules for apprenticeships

Current start-date rules; responsibility moved to DWP on 1 April 2026.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/funding-rules-for-apprenticeships

C6 KBC programme enrolment

Programme selection and next steps; online reading is not contractual acceptance.

kentbusinesscollege.com/enrol/

C7 Kent Business College programme and funding information

KBC programme information, including the seven-module Level 7 offer, tuition fees and discretionary scholarship terms.

Sources consulted September 2026. Apply published standards and funding rules to the learner's start date. The written offer confirms delivery, fees, support and the professional awards included.

LEARNER EXPERIENCES

Learner voices

Stephen shared this comment about Charl's teaching during additional weekend Level 7 study. The award and progression routes for this diploma are explained in the qualification section.

> “I am also enrolled on the MBA level 7 at the weekends with Charl, again he is a great teacher.”
>
> **Stephen Gutteridge**
>
> Weekend Level 7 study · July 2025

LEARNING THROUGH WORK

Employers supporting further study

FRP has approved use of its logo. College feedback records an employee undertaking additional weekend Level 7 study, illustrating the connection between employment and continuing professional development.

FRP

Employer partner

COLLEGE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Your next step

Bring your experience, ambitions and questions into a conversation with Kent Business College. We will help you consider how this programme fits your role and the professional contribution you want to make.

Read the programme, assessment and funding sections together. Your personal learning plan and written offer confirm the route, support and commitments agreed for you.

kentbusinesscollege.com

office@kentbusinesscollege.org