

# University of Essex

Higher education institution

**Inspection dates**

6–8 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>		<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>	Apprenticeships <b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>	
Outcomes for learners	<b>Good</b>	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Senior leaders have worked closely with staff in NHS trust hospitals to develop an apprenticeship programme that meets fully the needs of their employees.
- Almost all apprentices, many of whom have been out of education for long periods of time, complete their apprenticeship and achieve their qualification.
- As a result of effective support from university staff, apprentices develop the skills they need for their next steps in their health service careers.
- Senior leaders support university staff very effectively to help them to improve their professional skills and knowledge. Staff develop high levels of expertise in health and social care.
- Employers value the skills that apprentices develop during their course. Apprentices become skilled and caring practitioners, to the benefit of their patients.
- Leaders and managers analyse achievement information in detail. They plan carefully and successfully to reduce the differences in achievement between different groups.
- Apprentices benefit from thorough and useful feedback from lecturers. They understand how to improve their work.
- Apprentices receive comprehensive careers advice and guidance from staff at the university. This helps them to plan their next steps very effectively.
- University staff do not set clear enough actions and targets to quickly improve the attendance of apprentices.
- Teaching in off-the-job training is not consistently good.
- Apprentices do not have enough time in their busy workplaces to allow them to reflect fully on their learning. As a result, they lack confidence to apply their learning to their practice.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The University of Essex has campuses in Colchester, Southend and Loughton and provides courses for over 15,000 students, including a large number of international students. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, as well as a small number of higher and degree-level apprenticeships. Degree apprenticeships are available in the areas of technology, electronic engineering and registered nursing. The level 5 healthcare assistant practitioner apprenticeship is the only higher level apprenticeship currently offered by the university and was the only course in scope for this inspection.
- University staff have designed the level 5 healthcare assistant practitioner apprenticeship for those already in employment in the health service. All current apprentices are employed at either Colchester Hospital or The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. The apprenticeship has been designed to improve participation in further and higher education by those who have not been in education for some time.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should develop ways to give apprentices more time to reflect on how to apply their learning to their practical tasks.
- Managers should improve the clarity and frequency of the targets that staff set to improve apprentices' attendance, and check that targets are having a positive impact.
- Managers should improve the quality of teaching in off-the-job training, by:
  - making sure that all staff check carefully what apprentices understand
  - making sure that all lecturers use apprentices' starting points to plan learning that engages and enthuses them, helping more to gain high-grade passes.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders and staff have high ambitions for their apprentices. They have developed a comprehensive, effective and successful apprenticeship programme which meets the needs of local NHS trusts very well. NHS staff and patients benefit from apprentices' increased levels of professional skill.
- Leaders and managers have planned their apprenticeship course carefully. They work closely with employers in local NHS trust hospitals to help improve the skills of their employees. Employees develop their practical and theoretical skills successfully through the apprenticeship. This motivates them, makes them more effective in the workplace and encourages them to move to higher levels of study.
- Senior leaders review their course frequently to make sure that it meets the skills requirements of apprentices and employers. They make sure that staff understand the requirements of apprenticeship standards. They discuss in detail the progress of current apprentices. Managers and assessors make sure that their programme meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of their apprenticeship provision. They identify accurately most weaknesses and plan carefully and successfully for improvement. They review progress against actions frequently. They know how effectively their apprenticeship course supports employers.
- Managers use appraisals to set clear targets for improvement for staff. They link these precisely to university objectives to make sure that all staff understand what they need to improve. Managers relate targets clearly to professional development. Staff update their skills frequently and appreciate the clarity of their targets.
- Senior leaders support managers and lecturers very effectively to improve their own subject skills and knowledge. Staff engage in research which improves their understanding of current health practice. They access effective online learning resources on topics such as handling difficult conversations, health and safety, and risk assessment. Staff value these opportunities and feel effectively supported by senior managers at the university. They appreciate the new skills that they develop and are proud to work in the school of health and social care.
- Leaders make sure that apprentices study in a diverse, harmonious and calm atmosphere. They have created a welcoming environment where apprentices who have been away from education for long periods of time settle quickly into their learning. Staff motivate apprentices very effectively to achieve their goals.
- Leaders and managers do not make sure that lecturers improve their teaching skills. As a result, a few lecturers concentrate on updating their professional knowledge rather than improving the basic teaching skills of questioning apprentices effectively and motivating them well.
- University staff work closely with NHS trust staff to manage apprentices' time and work demands. However, apprentices do not have enough time to reflect fully on their learning and sometimes struggle to practise their new skills in their busy day-to-day work environments. This impacts on the motivation of a few apprentices and their ability to

carry out higher level tasks independently.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Governance for the level 5 apprenticeship provision is informed by the university higher and degree apprenticeships steering group. Members of this group, all of whom have experience of apprenticeships, hold managers to account effectively for the performance of apprentices. They know the apprenticeship provision well.
- Steering group members are fully committed to the development of apprenticeships. They see this as an integral and complementary part of the university's curriculum offer. They make sure that all staff employed in the apprenticeship programme have the relevant expertise and prior experience of apprenticeships. They receive frequent and detailed reports on the quality of the apprenticeship programme and report progress to higher level governance bodies in the university.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Numerous well-trained safeguarding officers use their comprehensive links with local safeguarding agencies, the police and 'Prevent' duty coordinators to stay up to date with safeguarding topics. They know about local safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding staff meet frequently to discuss concerns and improve safeguarding procedures.
- University staff receive frequent and detailed safeguarding training to make sure they understand the implications of safeguarding for apprentices. Managers make sure that they carry out all necessary security checks when appointing new staff. All staff and apprentices have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks in place.
- Apprentices are safe in their off-the-job training and at work. They know how to report concerns. They develop their knowledge of how safeguarding informs their job roles comprehensively.
- Apprentices learn about safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty during their induction. However, lecturers are not yet confident enough to discuss in detail the dangers of radicalisation and extremism with apprentices during their training. As a result, apprentices have an underdeveloped knowledge of the implications of the 'Prevent' duty for their everyday lives.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Apprentices greatly improve their skills during their apprenticeship and develop a passion for learning. They apply what they have learned at university effectively in their workplaces. For example, apprentices develop a good understanding of the impact of patients' histories on their health. They learn the skills needed to take blood, including by using a cannula, and improve their specialist knowledge on discharging patients safely.
- Apprentices benefit from off-the-job training which helps them to learn the theory which supports their practical work. Once they understand the theoretical background to their practical tasks, they become more confident in their abilities. Apprentices question

hospital practice more, increasing patient safety. For example, one apprentice noticed that two surgeons were approaching an operation in different ways. After researching the procedure, the apprentice discussed the findings with surgeons. This led to the adoption of a different and more successful operating technique.

- Apprentices develop good skills during their training that build their confidence and resilience in the workplace. They become accomplished at giving staff and patients difficult messages sensitively. Apprentices learn how best to review and teach other staff. For example, second-year apprentices learn how to teach nursing recruits to introduce an intravenous line and to take blood for testing.
- Standards of apprentices' work are high. Lecturers give apprentices clear, helpful and detailed feedback that tells them what they have done well and how to improve their work. Lecturers identify common errors and explain in detail how to correct them. They identify when apprentices are struggling with specific concepts and arrange meetings to help them to understand fully.
- Apprentices use well-designed and useful skills handbooks to document and understand the progress that they are making. Lecturers work closely with apprentices to record their learning and their developing behaviours. Lecturers set clear targets for improvement and comment comprehensively on apprentices' progress. Apprentices use these comments to reflect on ways to improve their professional practice.
- Employers value the practical and theoretical skills that apprentices develop during their courses. They appreciate the improved knowledge that apprentices bring to support the daily operational running of the wards. Patients benefit from higher levels of care, giving them a more positive experience of the health service.
- Managers and lecturers are extremely well qualified and are specialists in their subject. They encourage apprentices to discuss current health and care topics they hear about on radio and television. This helps apprentices to stay up to date and develops their understanding of current healthcare concerns.
- A few lecturers do not use effective strategies to check and test learning and understanding. They do not involve all apprentices in learning or question them effectively enough to check what they know. Consequently, they are unclear how much apprentices understand about the topics discussed in the lesson.
- Lecturers do not encourage apprentices to develop effective study skills in lectures. Few apprentices have previous experience of higher levels of study and lecturers do not remind them to take notes during their off-the-job training. Most apprentices do not capture information arising spontaneously in the lesson that will help to inform their future learning.
- Lecturers do not take enough note of apprentices' starting points when planning learning. They do not challenge them effectively enough so that more can achieve higher grades. As a result, a few apprentices are passive in lessons and make slow progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- University staff support apprentices effectively to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to move on in their chosen career paths in the health service. Staff have designed the university-based training carefully to concentrate initially on

apprentices' personal development and goals. Lecturers identify quickly any skills gaps apprentices have. They make sure that apprentices benefit from the personal and online support available from the university talent development team. Apprentices value the help and support they receive.

- Apprentices gain the skills they need to be successful in their apprenticeship as well as in their workplaces. University staff help apprentices develop a good standard of academic writing. Apprentices learn how to use referencing in their studies and written assignments. This prepares them thoroughly for the requirements of their qualification and for future progression to degree-level apprenticeships.
- Apprentices work collaboratively together at university. They respect each other's views in lessons and in discussions. They benefit from opportunities to share their experiences or concerns with lecturers and each other. They become more self-assured and take pride in their work.
- Staff help apprentices to develop increased levels of confidence because of their training. Apprentices learn to explain in detail to patients what blood pressure test results mean. They improve their understanding of what is being discussed in handover meetings on their wards. They demonstrate their newly acquired skills confidently to their peers and show new nursing recruits the correct procedures to use.
- Apprentices receive good careers advice and guidance from university staff. They are clear about their career goals and how to achieve them. Lecturers prepare apprentices well for their next steps. They help them to write CVs and to develop their interview technique. Apprentices welcome the quality of the guidance they receive and consider new pathways they were previously unaware of, such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy.
- Apprentices produce written work of a high standard. Lecturers make sure that apprentices develop very effective written English skills. Staff assess apprentices' starting points in detail during their induction. They test how successfully apprentices can construct coherent sentences, access and evaluate reading materials, and incorporate evidence in their writing. Staff support them very well to develop these skills throughout their training. University literacy and numeracy tutors help those apprentices needing further support with English or mathematics.
- Apprentices improve their online research skills during their time at university. Lecturers teach apprentices how to carry out advanced data searches to inform their studies. Staff help apprentices to develop the mathematical skills that they will need for their next steps. This prepares those who want to move on to a degree-level apprenticeship very effectively.
- The attendance of second-year apprentices is low. While around half attend frequently, the attendance of others is intermittent and low. Staff do not routinely set and record clear targets to improve attendance. As a result, apprentices who attend poorly do not develop strategies to improve their attendance quickly. Leaders have developed new processes to improve target-setting, particularly for attendance, but it is too early to judge the impact of these processes.
- Apprentices feel safe at university and in their workplaces. They know whom to report concerns to. They complete mandatory training about NHS values, personal safety and security, and safeguarding adults and children in the workplace at the start of their

apprenticeship. Apprentices embrace these values fully. This helps them to understand better their job roles in the health service.

- Apprentices have only a rudimentary knowledge of topics such as staying safe online and coping with pressure in the workplace. University staff do not routinely check and develop apprentices' knowledge of the wider aspects of personal safeguarding during their off-the-job training or in visits to the workplace.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Almost all apprentices on the level 5 healthcare assistant programme stay on their courses, pass their qualifications and complete their apprenticeship. Very few current apprentices have left their programme early.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning. They value the theoretical knowledge that they gain from their off-the-job lessons that helps them to understand in more detail their practical day-to-day roles. Current apprentices are making good progress with their learning.
- During their courses, apprentices develop the skills they need to progress to higher learning. Just under a third of apprentices move directly to degree-level apprenticeships after completing their level 5 apprenticeship. Other apprentices move on to higher levels of learning when their hospitals can release them. Apprentices welcome the enhanced status that learning at a university gives them.
- Employers value the improved skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices develop during their course. They give apprentices increased levels of responsibility as a result of their apprenticeship. Most apprentices receive pay rises on completing their apprenticeship.
- Senior leaders analyse differences in achievement between specific groups in detail and plan successfully to close these. For example, managers identified lower achievement by Black and minority ethnic apprentices in 2017. They introduced focus groups and worked with employers to improve employees' understanding of unconscious bias. They arranged for members of the students' union to attend pre-placement briefings to support apprentices at work. They organised high-profile speakers to talk to students and apprentices to raise their aspirations.
- Managers and lecturers do not always encourage apprentices to achieve high-grade passes. In 2018, only a very small number of apprentices gained a distinction grade overall, with too many gaining just a pass. Progress of current apprentices suggests that a greater proportion of apprentices will gain higher grades in 2019.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	133805
Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	52
Principal	Professor Anthony Forster
Telephone number	01206 873333
Website	<a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk">www.essex.ac.uk</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	20		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeships' manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent course reviews and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Andy Fitt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paula Heaney	Ofsted Inspector
Linnia Khemdoudi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Herbert	Ofsted Inspector

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