

# The Business Portfolio (UK) Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

The Business Portfolio (UK) Limited (TBP) was formed in 2007. It provides consultancy services to businesses to help them develop their staff and improve their organisational efficiency. In November 2017 TBP started receiving public funding to deliver apprenticeship training. It currently has 32 apprentices, all of whom are working towards a standards-based leadership and management programme at level 5. All the apprentices are science graduates. Apprentices are employed by a government-owned and operated scientific organisation.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?**

#### **Insufficient progress**

Directors do not use the apprenticeship funding appropriately. They do not deliver a full, flexible and high-quality individualised apprenticeship programme with integrated on- and off-the-job learning. Directors are aware that the apprenticeship is only a subsidiary part of the employer's graduate training scheme. The employer acknowledges correctly that the apprenticeship is broadly aligned to courses which TBP previously delivered commercially and which can now be funded through the apprenticeship levy.

Directors do not ensure that the programme is planned to meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. They do not ensure that apprentices receive their full entitlement to frequent and high-quality off-the-job training for the apprenticeship part of the graduate training scheme.

Directors' curriculum planning is poor. They give insufficient attention to apprentices' previous training and career aspirations when designing the curriculum. Directors do not design the curriculum to ensure that apprentices develop substantial new vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours. All apprentices study the same topics despite their previously acquired knowledge and skills. As a consequence, too many

apprentices do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable. A few apprentices rightly acknowledge that learning is not at a high enough level for their job role.

Directors do not have a clearly defined strategy to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. They assume, incorrectly, that because the apprentices are highly qualified graduates no further training is needed. Apprentices' ongoing development in these subjects is poor.

Governance arrangements are inadequate. The directors are not held to account for the relevance of the curriculum and its impact on apprentices. They do not receive any supervisory oversight for the quality of the training, apprentices' progress or apprentices' achievements. Directors' effectiveness in improving the relevance and quality of the programme for apprentices is poor.

Directors and tutors have not yet made the necessary arrangements for apprentices to complete the end-point assessment. They have not made any arrangements for discussing apprentices' readiness for assessment with the employer. Apprentices have insufficient information about what they need to do to obtain pass, merit or distinction grades.

Directors do not have an accurate oversight of the progress that individual apprentices make. Although tutors track unit completion, they do not monitor and record the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices develop.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?      Insufficient progress**

Tutors do not use the results of the assessments that apprentices complete at the start of their programme to plan individual learning. Apprentices study the same generic units despite their varying starting points. Apprentices' on- and off-the-job learning are not coordinated effectively.

Tutors do not set apprentices challenging individual targets to guide their learning and against which to measure their progress. Apprentices are not challenged sufficiently and encouraged to excel. Too many apprentices make slow progress, despite their high achievements at university.

Apprentices do not receive off-the-job training frequently enough, which impedes the progress they make on their programme. Furthermore, tutors do not liaise sufficiently with apprentices' line managers and apprentices to ensure that new knowledge, skills and behaviours are integrated into apprentices' working practices.

Apprentices are not aware of all the ways in which they will be assessed at the end of their programme. Tutors have not yet discussed the substantive work project that is used for assessment with the employer.

Tutors' comments in progress reviews are cursory and unhelpful. They place a disproportionate focus on the completion of units as opposed to the development of substantial new vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Tutors provide useful feedback to apprentices on the work they submit for assessment. Apprentices are very appreciative of this support as it helps them to improve the standard of the work they produce. However, tutors take too long to provide feedback. A few apprentices wait over two months for feedback after they submit their work. This limits their vocational and personal development.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?      Insufficient progress**

Directors, managers and tutors do not take sufficient responsibility for ensuring that all apprentices are safeguarded. They do not ensure that all apprentices know how, and to whom, they should report a safeguarding concern.

A director at TBP is the designated safeguarding officer (DSO) but apprentices are unaware of this. When the DSO is absent, there is no other named person to deal with a safeguarding or safeguarding-related issue if one arises.

The employer carries out risk assessments of apprentices' work areas and provides security training to them. However, TBP staff do not check the rigour and accuracy of the risk assessments or the relevance and quality of the security training. They do not check apprentices' safety in the workplace and their knowledge of what to do if a problem arises.

Apprentices do not receive safeguarding training from TBP staff. Apprentices' knowledge of safeguarding and safeguarding-related topics is poor. Apprentices are unaware of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Their knowledge about safe use of the internet and digital devices, data protection, and the General Data Protection Regulation is limited.

Directors and consultants receive appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service at three-yearly intervals. The provider has a range of relevant safeguarding and safeguarding-related policies and procedures. However, directors and managers do not implement these rigorously enough and this is a cause for concern.

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