

University of Sheffield

Further education in higher education

Inspection dates

12–15 February 2019

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for learners	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have successfully created an inclusive culture of high expectations throughout the apprenticeship provision. They ensure that the large majority of apprentices fulfil their potential.
- Leaders and managers work well with employers and other external partners to provide a curriculum that is well aligned to the needs of employers in engineering and healthcare.
- Leaders and managers carefully plan the development of apprenticeship provision in areas where the university has existing expertise and high-quality resources. Apprentices benefit from very well-equipped training facilities, high-quality resources and knowledgeable teachers with strong industry experience.
- Teachers and employers work well together to sequence the curriculum content logically. Most apprentices consolidate and extend their understanding of complex concepts well through frequent opportunities to apply theory to practical tasks.
- The large majority of apprentices make good progress and achieve their qualifications. A high proportion gain high grades in examinations.
- Most apprentices acquire valuable knowledge and skills that meet and sometimes exceed the needs of their employers.
- Almost all apprentices who complete their programmes remain in employment, often in positions of greater responsibility. A high proportion also progress to further study at a higher level.
- Most apprentices develop good English, mathematical and digital skills, which prepare them well for work and future study.
- Apprentices demonstrate the exemplary standards of behaviour expected of successful employees. They are courteous and helpful, attend well and work to deadlines effectively.
- A small minority of apprentices do not make all the progress of which they are capable, owing to occasional weaknesses in the planning of their learning.
- In a few cases, leaders and managers of trainee nursing associate apprenticeships do not take sufficiently well-focused actions or set precise enough targets to drive rapid quality improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The University of Sheffield has delivered engineering apprenticeships at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) in Rotherham since 2013. In 2018, the School of Nursing and Midwifery began providing trainee nursing associate apprenticeships, which account for around one seventh of apprentices. The large majority of apprentices are on advanced apprenticeships in engineering. The vast majority of apprentices work within the Sheffield City Region.
- In the Sheffield City Region, the proportion of economically active people is lower than the national average. Residents aged 16 to 24 are more likely to be unemployed than those aged 25 or over. The proportion of people who hold qualifications at level 4 is in line with the national average while the proportion with qualifications at levels lower than level 4 is higher than the national average. There is a significant need for skilled engineers and healthcare workers in the region.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and managers of trainee nursing associate apprenticeships use sufficiently precise quality assurance procedures to aid the swift resolution of the few areas for improvement.
- Work closely with employers to plan useful tasks that enable all first-year engineering apprentices to benefit as much as possible from their time spent in the workplace.
- Ensure that teachers support all apprentices to make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - routinely checking that all apprentices have thoroughly understood theoretical concepts before moving on to the next topic, and providing further help for those who have not
 - using information about all apprentices' skills and behaviours at the start of their programmes to set and communicate challenging targets.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have successfully addressed all the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of education that apprentices receive. Apprentices now benefit from effective teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, the large majority complete their apprenticeships successfully within the planned timescales.
- Senior leaders place a high priority on apprenticeship provision. They have invested in state-of-the-art engineering facilities at the AMRC and well-equipped, simulated wards in nursing. Apprentices benefit from these impressive facilities that help them to develop the useful knowledge and skills that employers require.
- Leaders and managers have successfully developed an inclusive culture of high expectations. Apprentices from all backgrounds are welcomed and valued. They are challenged and supported to fulfil their potential and embark upon demanding careers in engineering and nursing.
- Leaders and managers work closely with employers and external agencies, including Health Education England and the Nursing and Midwifery Council, to plan and provide a high-quality curriculum that addresses local, regional and national skills gaps in engineering and nursing.
- Managers have used their strong partnerships with multinational engineering companies and National Health Service trusts to introduce well-planned standards-based apprenticeships. They provide programmes that fully meet the principles of apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers work closely with employers and the university's careers service to provide high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance to potential apprentices. This ensures that apprentices are placed on the right programmes and in the most suitable companies. On the very rare occasions when placements are not successful, apprentices are moved quickly to a more appropriate employer. Consequently, a large majority of apprentices complete their training.
- Leaders and managers use robust performance management procedures well to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Less effective staff leave the university if, after thorough support and training, they do not improve their performance.
- In engineering, leaders and managers design effective staff development activities that address areas for improvement identified during lesson observations and professional development reviews. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. Managers in nursing have plans to assess formally the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on trainee nursing associate apprenticeships. It is too early to see the full impact of these plans.
- Leaders and managers in engineering understand most of the provision's strengths and areas for improvement well. This enables them to plan and implement effective actions to improve the quality of their apprenticeship programmes. Leaders and managers in nursing are beginning to adopt similar quality assurance procedures. However, in a few cases, they do not take sufficiently well-focused actions or set precise enough targets to

drive rapid quality improvement.

- Leaders and managers have successfully managed the termination of the subcontracted provision that was in place at the previous inspection, with no negative impact upon the quality of education or outcomes for apprentices.

The governance of the provider

- Members of learning and teaching committees at departmental, faculty and senate levels provide robust and effective academic oversight of apprenticeship provision. Committee members include senior academics with very significant expertise in engineering and nursing. They receive useful reports about engineering apprenticeships that enable them to identify areas for improvement promptly.
- Members provide significant support and challenge to senior leaders and managers in engineering so that most improvements happen quickly. Leaders and managers on trainee associate nursing apprenticeships, which started relatively recently, are beginning to use the effective quality assurance templates put in place in engineering, so that committee members receive a consistently high quality of reports to help them to plan and implement improvements.
- The university's apprenticeship education committee and industry advisory board ensure that programmes meet the principles of apprenticeship provision, including the requirements for off-the-job training and English and mathematics provision. These boards include significant representation from engineering employers, who help to inform the strategic direction and quality assurance of engineering apprenticeships. There are sensible plans in place to strengthen representation from clinical nursing practitioners on the apprenticeship education committee.
- Those exercising the functions of governance at all levels set high expectations for performance and quality. They successfully plan the sustainable development of the apprenticeship curriculum to match areas where the university already has considerable expertise and effective infrastructure. As a result of this strategy, apprentices benefit from a very high standard of resources that successfully support their academic and vocational progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff at all levels place a high priority on safeguarding. This culture of safeguarding is well communicated to employers. Thorough records show that appropriate and effective actions are taken in response to any safeguarding concerns and incidents.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have appropriate training in safeguarding, which is updated regularly. Designated safeguarding officers receive suitable training for their roles. Staff are alert to the signs of abuse and other dangers. They closely monitor any apprentices considered to be at risk and provide effective support when necessary to keep apprentices safe and engaged in learning.
- Leaders and managers undertake appropriate safety checks at employers' premises and ensure that there are clear and appropriate risk assessments in place for all machines

within the AMRC and at employers' premises.

- Leaders and managers maintain a comprehensive risk register and action plan in relation to the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They provide appropriate training to ensure that staff are aware of these risks and how to mitigate them. However, too many apprentices do not understand fully the local risks of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and trainers use their considerable academic and industrial experience well to help apprentices develop up-to-date knowledge and skills that effectively prepare them for their careers and future study at a higher level.
- Apprentices benefit from very high-quality resources that help them to develop quickly the specialist skills they need at work. For example, trainee nursing associate apprentices hone their skills on anatomically correct training manikins in simulated ward environments.
- Apprentices use high-quality digital resources effectively to continue their learning between sessions, develop good independent study skills and consolidate their learning before examinations. For example, they make good use of the presentations and videos that nursing staff upload to the course's virtual learning environment (VLE). Apprentices also use online academic journals and databases to explore their research and career interests in depth.
- Teachers and trainers provide effective support, such as specialist software and coloured overlays, for apprentices who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, these apprentices make as much progress as other apprentices.
- Teachers and trainers use reliable and valid assessments to measure apprentices' progress and inform helpful feedback. Apprentices take pride in their work and use this feedback well to make improvements.
- Most teachers and trainers make good use of information about apprentices' previous knowledge and experience to plan and deliver sessions that challenge apprentices to make good progress from their starting points. Consequently, most apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding well. However, in a small minority of cases, staff do not capture sufficient detail about the progress that apprentices are making in developing their skills and behaviours. As a result, a small minority of apprentices are not fully clear about what they need to do to make good progress in these areas.
- In most cases, staff and employers coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. They sequence the development of knowledge and practical skills well so that apprentices can apply complex concepts at work. Apprentices reflect deeply on the theoretical underpinnings of the practical tasks that they undertake. As a result, they develop useful knowledge and skills that prepare them for work in a wide range of settings. For example, engineering apprentices understand the application of Fourier series in acoustics, regardless of their particular field of engineering. However, in a small minority of cases, on-the-job training for first-year engineering apprentices is not carefully planned to ensure that all apprentices make the best use of their time to reach their full potential at work as quickly as they could.
- In theory lessons, most teachers use a good range of activities that maintain apprentices'

interest well. For example, in nursing, apprentices learn about anatomy and physiology through lectures, interactive digital resources and sessions with 'patient educators'. However, in a small number of cases, teachers in theory lessons do not check sufficiently that all apprentices have understood a topic before moving on to the next concept. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not consolidate their knowledge and understanding as well as they could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Most apprentices develop useful English skills that prepare them well for employment and further study at a higher level. For example, trainee nursing associate apprentices develop effective academic writing and presentation skills early in their programmes by completing a literature review of an area of clinical practice and presenting their findings to their peers. Apprentices develop a good understanding of technical vocabulary and use specialist terminology fluently.
- Most apprentices develop good mathematical skills that are useful in their jobs and helpful for those who progress to further study. For example, a significant proportion of engineering apprentices study a well-designed 'mathematics for engineers' curriculum alongside undergraduates. Trainee nursing associate apprentices undertake rigorous mathematical training early in their programmes so that they can accurately calculate doses of medication for their patients.
- Apprentices develop advanced digital skills that prepare them very well for their careers. For example, engineering apprentices learn to use industrial three-dimensional printers, computer numerical control machines and the latest robotics equipment.
- Apprentices attend their training sessions well. They arrive punctually and are ready to learn. On the rare occasions when apprentices miss a session, they very quickly catch up on the material they have missed. Trainee nursing associate apprentices, for instance, review the whole week's learning materials on the VLE and write a detailed reflective review of the missed content and its application to their workplace. Hardly any fall behind.
- Apprentices' behaviour is exemplary and professional. Apprentices demonstrate very high levels of respect and courtesy to peers, teachers, employers and visitors.
- Apprentices make good use of high-quality careers information, advice and guidance to make well-informed choices about their careers. Trainee nursing associate apprentices experience a range of settings, from hospices to emergency departments and care homes, that prepare them well for a wide variety of future career choices.
- A high proportion of apprentices gain valuable additional qualifications at work that develop their employability skills beyond the requirements of their apprenticeships. For example, many engineering apprentices enhance their career prospects by gaining qualifications in first aid, manual handling and working at height.
- Apprentices benefit from effective pastoral sessions that cover topics connected with fundamental British values. They have an appropriate awareness of these topics and the way they may affect their everyday lives. For example, apprentices in engineering are aware of legislation relevant to their employment rights. Trainee nursing associate apprentices treat patients from all backgrounds with respect and tolerance for their beliefs.

- Apprentices know how to keep themselves and others safe at work. They wear appropriate personal protective equipment and demonstrate safe working practices. For example, trainee nursing associate apprentices very quickly gain an understanding of the safe storage and administration of medicines.
- Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They understand how to stay safe online. However, although they have a reasonable awareness of the broad risks of radicalisation and extremism, most have only a basic knowledge of any such local risks.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The large majority of engineering apprentices remain on their programmes and successfully complete their apprenticeships within planned timescales. Although trainee nursing associate apprenticeships have not been running long enough for any apprentices to have completed their programmes, current apprentices passed the first units of their programme on schedule. Almost all passed at the first attempt.
- The large majority of current apprentices make rapid progress from their starting points and meet challenging targets. A large proportion achieve high grades in their examinations. They produce work of a good standard that meets, and sometimes exceeds, the requirements of their employers and their qualifications.
- Most apprentices develop their theoretical knowledge to a high standard and consolidate it through frequent practical applications. For instance, most engineering apprentices acquire a firm understanding of trigonometry that they then apply to practical scenarios in aerospace engineering and mechanics. However, in a small minority of cases, apprentices do not consolidate their understanding of key concepts as quickly as they could because teachers move on to the next topic too quickly.
- Balanced, comprehensive curricula ensure that most apprentices develop broad and valuable vocational skills. For example, most trainee nursing associate apprentices experience a wide range of clinical settings and develop a corresponding range of skills. They are well prepared for changes in employment and promotions later in their careers. However, in a small minority of cases, apprentices do not develop their skills and behaviours to their fullest extent because they are unsure of what they need to do to improve or because on-the-job training is not planned sufficiently well.
- Almost all engineering apprentices who complete their programmes remain in employment, often in promoted positions with increased responsibilities. Around one third also undertake further study at a higher level. No trainee nursing associate apprentices have yet completed their programmes, so it is not possible to determine the proportion of these apprentices who move on to successful careers and/or further study. Leaders and managers have recently made plans to check whether apprentices' positive steps have been sustained over time. It is too early to see the impact of these plans.
- Leaders and managers have taken successful action to improve retention of the very small number of female engineering apprentices. For example, managers introduced well-attended 'women in engineering' events. Staff ensure that female apprentices are placed with supportive employers where there is strong female representation at all levels of the workforce. As a result, most current female engineering apprentices are committed to their programmes. The proportion of female engineering apprentices who have

successfully completed their apprenticeships has improved and is now closer to that of their male peers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133872
Type of provider	Other further education and skills
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	689
Vice-Chancellor	Professor Koen Lamberts
Telephone number	0114 222 2000
Website	www.shef.ac.uk

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)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	18	9	346	140	1	82		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the AMRC quality manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. 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, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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