

University of Kent

Higher education institution

Inspection dates

25 to 27 March 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		Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Apprentices on the laboratory scientist programme rapidly develop an extensive range of skills and knowledge that meet the high standards of employers.
- The number of apprentices who remain on programmes is very high. Most apprentices on framework apprenticeships achieve their qualifications within the planned time and continue into sustained employment or move on to higher-level degrees.
- Advisers and workplace mentors monitor apprentices' skills development effectively. As a result, apprentices make very good progress.
- Apprentices benefit from a wide range of very good support provided by university staff, and they receive good-quality impartial advice and guidance that help them to make well-informed career choices.
- Senior leaders and managers have forged extremely effective partnerships with employers involved in the pharmaceutical industry. As a result, many apprentices are involved in research and development activities.
- Senior leaders and managers use their expertise and skills very effectively to design and implement individually planned workplace activities that stimulate and motivate apprentices.
- Leaders and managers have fully implemented arrangements for end-point assessment for apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships. Apprentices and employers are fully aware of the arrangements.
- Governance is strong. Governors are fully committed to apprenticeship training as part of their commitment to supporting employers locally and nationally to meet current and future skills needs.
- Leaders and managers of the apprenticeship provision do not use self-evaluation well enough to show fully the strengths and areas for improvement in the apprenticeship provision. Links between self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are insufficiently clear to ensure that improvements are made.
- A small minority of apprentices are not sufficiently aware of the potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism and the impact on the local community where they live and/or work.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The University of Kent is the United Kingdom's (UK's) European University with substantive campuses in Canterbury and Medway, and centres in Tonbridge, Paris, Brussels, Rome and Athens. The university values education and research equally, believing that one enhances the other. The University of Kent offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate awards, as well as higher- and degree-level apprenticeships in health & science, business & administration, digital and care services, at levels 5 to 7. Apprenticeship provision is through the dedicated Centre for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (CHDA).
- Apprenticeships above level 5 were not in scope for this inspection. At the time of inspection, the university had 171 apprentices at level 5 on technician scientist and laboratory scientist standards-based apprenticeships. Approximately one third of provision is to non-levy paying employers. All provision is delivered via a blended learning approach, primarily distance learning, permitting multiple start dates throughout the year.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the self-evaluation process to ensure that key strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified and better linked to planning to improve the quality of provision.
- Ensure that all apprentices are more aware of the potential dangers of radicalisation and extremism and how it affects everyday life in the communities where they live and/or work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and managers of the apprentice provision are based in the university's CHDA and they have forged extremely effective partnerships with national and multinational employers specialising in the pharmaceutical industry. Partners ensure that these strong working relationships provide apprenticeship programmes that meet employers' needs and provide apprentices with the skills and knowledge needed to address current and future skills needs.
- Managers provide a programme with flexible enrolment and that offers a well-structured foundation degree to supplement the range of vocational qualifications. Many apprentices, after completing their programme, move on to higher-level degree programmes and gain membership of the Royal Society of Chemistry and/or the Royal Society of Biology. This progression is highly valued by employers and apprentices.
- Senior managers have strengthened the governance arrangements, ensuring that the apprenticeship provision is now linked more closely to the university governance structure. Governors, senior leaders and managers have a very good focus on apprentices' overall progress, achievements, retention and destination. Managers keep a constant and close watch on the amount of time apprentices receive for off-the-job training, which in all cases meets the requirements of the standards-based apprenticeship.
- University staff use the university's well-developed and established quality systems and processes effectively to monitor the quality of academic programmes and make improvements. However, in the apprenticeship provision, managers have recently developed their own self-evaluation, but they do not use it well enough to identify fully the strengths and areas for improvement in the apprenticeship provision. Links to the quality improvement planning processes are unclear and do not always specify targets for improvement.
- Managers manage the performance of staff well. Staff use continuing professional development effectively to ensure that apprentice and academic advisers' skills base reflects industry standards, including research and development into new drugs and pharmaceutical practice. Academic advisers frequently visit workplace mentors and apprentices to help them to understand the requirements of assignments and their relevance to the qualifications.
- University staff provide a wide range of excellent support for apprentices with additional learning support needs. Staff ensure that all apprentices can access the university support network. This is particularly valued by those apprentices working a considerable distance from the university sites.
- Managers and employers work well to promote an ethos of equality and of valuing others' beliefs and attitudes that reflects British values well.

The governance of the provider

- Senior leaders and governors set a very clear direction and place a strong emphasis on working with local, national and multinational employers in the pharmaceutical industry.

Strong collaborative working has resulted in well-structured, flexible training that meets current and emerging employer skills needs very well.

- Senior leaders work closely with employers to ensure that research and development work is helping the university staff to develop future programmes and meet the future needs of the pharmaceutical industry, for example advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs), which are linked to stem cell research.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Arrangements for safeguarding ensure that all apprentices benefit from the overall arrangements to support university students.
- All apprenticeship staff receive frequent and appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Staff and most apprentices access and value the online support services, and apprentice advisers ensure that safeguarding is discussed during progress reviews.
- All apprentices interviewed and consulted during the inspection confirmed that they feel safe and state that employers provide sufficient information to help them stay safe and protected in the workplace, particularly where dangerous chemicals are involved.
- Leaders and managers are fully aware of their responsibilities for reinforcing the 'Prevent' duty. Managers maintain very productive links with external agencies and benefit from counter-terrorism local profiles to maintain a close awareness of local and national concerns. Most apprentices are able to talk about the 'Prevent' duty, but more work is needed to reinforce and extend apprentices' knowledge and the impact on their life and work in the various communities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Apprentices benefit from an effective induction to their academic work and the expectations of their employer. They demonstrate a good understanding of their apprenticeship programme, the planned end-point assessment arrangements and long-term career opportunities. As a result, they are clear about what is expected from them and manage their study time effectively, which enables them to complete their assignments to scheduled timescales. All apprentices interviewed during the inspection confirmed that they get the appropriate time for off-the-job training as required by the apprenticeship. Many stated that they get more if needed.
- Highly qualified and experienced advisers and workplace mentors have very high expectations of their apprentices. They inspire and motivate apprentices and challenge them effectively to deepen their knowledge and improve their academic and vocational skills, ensuring that they have a good learning experience. Apprentices quickly develop high levels of competency and skills that benefit their employers' businesses.
- Advisers assess apprentices frequently and comprehensively. Assessments include a good range of workplace assessments and assignments. Skilled university staff provide a high standard of online lectures and summer schools. These enhance apprentices' understanding of the complexities of pharmaceutical work. Apprentices value this flexible approach to learning as many are in workplaces across the UK and are unable to access

university sites.

- Advisers and university staff provide clear and helpful feedback on apprentices' written work and practical assessments quickly so that apprentices know how to improve their work. Apprentices demonstrate consistent improvements in the quality of their academic writing over time. Employers and workplace mentors provide apprentices with supportive feedback on their workplace skills development.
- Academic advisers are respected by, and work very well with, employers. Many visit apprentices in the workplace to check their progress and offer support. They are well qualified and use their expert academic and commercial experience well to enliven learning. They make good use of questioning to check and deepen apprentices' understanding. Advisers are particularly skilful in coaching apprentices to reflect on the range of evidence required to meet the assessment criteria for their programme. Staff have developed a good range of online resources to ensure that apprentices can access learning materials as and when they require them. This includes material to help apprentices successfully develop their English and mathematical skills.
- Apprentices develop a wide range of technical skills. They learn about antibody engineering, how to analyse formulations and achieve products' longer shelf life, and various laboratory work skills, such as how to handle micro-organisms and DNA. Apprentices develop additional competences in sectors where there are skills gaps, such as pathology and clinical trials. In a large multinational company, apprentices learn techniques for energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy and using infra-red.
- Apprentices develop advanced digital skills that prepare them very well for their careers. For example, laboratory technician apprentices undertake baseline assessment of new test equipment to inform standard operation processes. Apprentices working in pharmaceutical development carry out complex calculations. For example, in drug trials apprentices analyse the impact of test and placebo drugs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices have high aspirations to achieve. They develop good behaviours and a wide range of personal skills. They enjoy their learning, take pride in their work, become self-confident and self-assured. Many welcome, and are given, more responsible job roles in the workplace and rise to the challenges. Apprentices enhance their team-working skills when working with colleagues in laboratory research projects.
- Apprentices use their increased competence and confidence in undertaking projects that have measurable business benefits. They make a good contribution to their businesses. For example, one apprentice has made a significant contribution in a large company project, ensuring that new batches of bacteria were of good quality and dispatched to customers on time.
- Apprentices benefit from effective training in leading pharmaceutical companies that work at the cutting edge of science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) research. Many employers make sure that apprentices experience work in different departments such as research and development departments, and this helps them to gain a good insight into the business, and to experience different job roles and responsibilities.
- Apprentices undertake valuable enrichment and extra-curricular activity to develop work

and academic skills and knowledge. For example, apprentices take part in university trips, such as cycling in Sardinia, and they participate in summer schools as residential students, where they deepen their academic knowledge alongside university students. Some apprentices become STEM ambassadors.

- Apprentices benefit from a wide range of additional training that develops their key skills, and provides highly valued employability skills. They complete short courses such as fire safety and first aid training to help them to undertake additional responsibilities such as the role of fire warden and first aider. Others complete short courses on fermentation and analytical techniques.
- University staff provide an inclusive learning environment and effective and timely academic and pastoral support. Apprentices with specific learning difficulty support needs are referred for assessment and receive additional help to develop strategies and improve their written work. This enables apprentices to make good progress through their programmes.
- Good partnerships between employers and university staff mean that apprentices are given good initial information, advice and guidance to ensure that the right employees are recruited and retained. This is reflected in the high retention rates. Apprenticeship staff have recently introduced a comprehensive and useful series of online employability modules, but this has yet to be fully accessed by all apprentices.
- Apprentices work in high-quality, safe working environments and demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety and how to work safely with chemicals. They have a sound understanding of safeguarding. Apprentices have a good understanding of safe working procedures and the special requirements in the event of all emergency procedures. For example, apprentices are trained to deal with suspect phone calls, and shut-down procedures in the event of an emergency shut-down.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The number of apprentices staying on their programme continues to be very high. Those on framework apprenticeships complete within planned timescales and gain foundation degree qualifications, most with distinctions. The vast majority gain sustained employment and move on to higher-level degree programmes.
- Most of the apprentices on standard-based apprenticeships have only recently started. However, they are making good progress through their apprenticeship. They develop strong occupational and employability skills in challenging work environments. As laboratory scientists, many apprentices are involved in research and development and quickly develop higher-level thinking and analytical skills.
- Most apprentices who have passed qualifications in English and mathematics before joining the apprenticeship programme develop and extend their academic writing skills through writing comprehensive and high-level assignments. They also develop their mathematical skills well by completing assignments such as calculating percentages of substances in concentrates, calculating the quantity of a pre-packaged liquid products and converting fluid strengths from percentages to quantities.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133807
Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	89
Principal/CEO	Professor Karen Cox, Vice-Chancellor and President
Telephone number	01227 823 201
Website	http://www.Kent.ac.uk/apprenticeships

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+		
	-	-	-	-	88	83		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	none							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	none							
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 Director of the Centre for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers, and these views are reflected within the report. They observed online learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Bob Cowdrey, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector

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