

The University of Wolverhampton

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 133912

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Inspection dates: 10–11 April 2019

Type of provider: Higher education institution

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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 ESFA 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 themes set out below.

The University of Wolverhampton is a provider of higher education and training with a long history of developing the skills of the workforce within the regions it serves. The university offers a wide range of apprenticeships at level 6 and above which are not in scope for this visit.

The university became a registered apprenticeship training provider in May 2017. Currently, 182 apprentices are enrolled on apprenticeship programmes at levels 4 and 5. Of these, 176 are from levy-paying employers and six are from non-levy employers. One hundred and fifty-eight are registered on the nursing associate standards-based apprenticeship. Twenty-four apprentices are enrolled on the higher-level apprenticeship framework in construction management.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a clear vision and rationale for the apprenticeship programme. The apprenticeship strategy aligns well to the university's strategic plan. The programme meets the skills needs identified by regional bodies and employers. It also addresses the low numbers of regional residents with higher education qualifications. The programme provides a valuable alternative route to degree-level study for local employees. Leaders have invested considerably in new posts and resources which support the development and growth of the apprenticeship programme.

Apprenticeship managers have established strong links with employers. Staff work with employers to understand how they want to develop their workforce. They then design the structure and content of the programme to match employers' requirements. They ensure that the course complements the training employers provide for their employees. In a few instances they have responded to employers' requests by providing apprentices with additional qualifications. Managers ensure

that all learners receive their full entitlement of off-the-job training. They monitor this closely.

For governance, senior leaders have set up an apprenticeship board which reports through the corporate governance structure. One of the board's subcommittees has a link to the academic governance structure within the university. The two apprenticeship programmes send an annual report to an academic committee. As a result, those in a governance role have an appropriate overview of the quality of provision of the apprenticeship programme. Leaders are continuing to review how to improve reporting on the apprenticeship programme within the current governance structure of the university.

All apprentices receive good initial advice and guidance before starting the programme. During the programme all apprentices have access to the university's careers advice and guidance. Those apprentices on construction programmes benefit from a particularly well-planned set of events and activities that gives them an objective view of their career possibilities.

The apprenticeship programmes are managed through faculties and undergo the same quality assurance processes as other programmes in the university. The two apprenticeship programmes produce annual reports, including action plans, which feed into an overall quality report which is received at Academic Board. The action plans are not detailed or specific enough to support a sufficiently focused drive for improvement. The plans do not indicate how leaders and managers will monitor them for impact.

Managers have produced their first self-assessment report for the apprenticeship programme. Managers acknowledge that it requires attention, particularly in ensuring that it involves all key stakeholders, that it identifies strengths and weaknesses clearly, and that it provides a more detailed evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Managers are working with a new subcontractor who delivers English and mathematics functional skills for a few apprentices. They have regular meetings arranged to monitor the progress of learners. It is too early to gauge the effectiveness of this arrangement.

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

Reasonable progress

Apprentices on nursing associates and construction management programmes benefit from a well-planned curriculum that is closely linked to the knowledge and skills required by Health Education England and the construction industry. Many

apprentices join the programmes with considerable experience of work but with low academic or vocational achievements.

Apprentices develop good practical skills. They speak confidently about the new skills they have gained and how they have applied them in the workplace. For example, nursing apprentices feel more confident when they discuss care plans with patients' families. They skilfully provide after-care guidance for patients when preparing them for discharge.

Staff coordinate the learning of most on-and off-the-job training effectively. They link theory to practice skilfully. Apprentices apply recently learned skills and techniques in the workplace effectively, including the new behaviours and attitudes they have developed. For nursing apprentices, they show these when dealing with patients in distress and their families. Construction apprentices show their skills when consulting on new construction projects. As a result of the carefully planned and organised off-the-job training, most apprentices make good progress.

Mentors in nursing programmes provide good on-the-job support to apprentices. They meet with them frequently to help them achieve the specialist elements of the programme. Skills coaches work closely with apprentices, their workplace supervisors and mentors to help apprentices make good progress.

Teachers and apprentice-coaches are highly qualified and have appropriate subject expertise. Most use their experience effectively to provide clear developmental feedback that helps apprentices develop their skills and behaviours to a good standard in the workplace. Most apprentices are achieving high pass rates in their assignments and tests. They are also on track to achieve their programme within the planned duration.

Apprentices benefit from a good range of resources on the university's virtual learning environment. They access academic writing style courses and lecture notes that help them come to lessons well-prepared.

Apprentices benefit from effective pastoral support. Staff support apprentices with additional needs, such as dyslexia, effectively. When required, staff signpost apprentices to specialist support such as specialist counselling.

A few teachers on the nursing programme do not make good enough use of the information they have on apprentices' starting points. They do not tailor lessons to ensure that all apprentices fulfil their potential. In a few instances, teachers do not provide enough challenge for those apprentices who join with considerable health care experience. As a result, these apprentices do not make the progress they are capable of in lessons.

Teaching in too many lessons is uninspiring. In a few instances, teachers overuse computerised presentations and do not check learning over lengthy periods. As a result, apprentices lose interest and teachers are not able to assess learning fully.

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

The university has appropriate safeguarding policies in place including for the 'Prevent' duty. All staff undergo regular mandatory training.

Apprentices receive information on how to keep themselves safe at induction. For apprentices undertaking nursing this is reinforced effectively through required course content, leading them to have a good understanding. However, a few construction apprentices are not able to recall British values or how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism.

Apprentices feel safe and work safely with patients, service users and customers. Nursing apprentices are conscious of their responsibilities, when administering drugs, of getting the drugs to the right patient, in the right dose at the right time.

The university has an appropriate register to record safeguarding incidents. To date no incidents have been reported. The university adheres to the guidelines for the safer recruitment of staff and has effective links to external bodies. The apprenticeship programme board does not currently receive a regular or annual report on safeguarding.

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