

University of Gloucestershire

Monitoring visit report

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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.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 61 apprentices studying on three standards-based, higher level apprenticeships at the university. These apprenticeships take approximately two years to complete. Around two thirds of apprentices were in the first year of a nursing associate apprenticeship at level 5. The remaining apprentices were either in the final few months of a healthcare practitioner apprenticeship at level 5, or at the start of a newly introduced financial adviser apprenticeship at level 4.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have made apprenticeships a vital part of the university's strategy to develop knowledge and skills in the county of Gloucestershire and the wider UK. They are increasing the number and type of apprenticeships on offer in accordance with the expertise available to them and the requirements of employers. Staff work closely with providers, such as local further education colleges and external organisations such as local enterprise partnerships. They collaborate well with employers to recruit appropriate apprentices who have the potential to develop their careers through higher level apprenticeships. As a result, current apprentices develop the new knowledge, skills and behaviours needed by employers such as local NHS trusts.

Leaders have clear processes and procedures that ensure a strategic level of oversight of apprenticeships. For example, the higher apprenticeship board, responsible for monitoring targets for recruitment, funding and compliance with apprenticeships, is chaired by the vice-chancellor. However, the board is not yet fully effective in monitoring quality. Managers on this board are insufficiently critical of the quality of their apprenticeship programmes. Consequently, their plans for improvement are not developed fully enough.

Managers of each apprenticeship course use a range of useful information to monitor the quality of their apprenticeships, such as course assessment boards, very clear assessment strategies and feedback from employers and apprentices. A recently instated operational board is focused on improving the experience of apprentices, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this informal board on quality.

Since leaders implemented an apprenticeship coordination team earlier this academic year, the understanding of apprenticeship requirements by university staff has improved greatly. Leaders have rectified effectively a number of errors they made when they initially set up the apprenticeship programme. Managers have implemented improvements, such as online availability of learning materials for apprentices, checking apprentices' prior attainments more effectively and monitoring the progress of apprentices towards their qualifications more closely.

Staff are working well to support the small minority of apprentices who are due to complete their final assessments soon. However, at times, the workload required of these apprentices creates unnecessary burdens on them.

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 develop substantial new knowledge and skills early in their apprenticeships. For example, financial adviser apprentices prepare detailed inheritance tax briefings for colleagues. They do this to a high standard as a result of the off-the-job training university staff give them and the high-quality resources for learning that are available for them. University lecturers are highly knowledgeable experts in their sectors and most apprentices enjoy their off-the-job sessions on campus. Apprentices' employers are strongly committed to the apprenticeship and ensure that apprentices have the time they need to attend their weekly university days.

University staff have designed well-structured apprenticeship programmes that are linked well to detailed assessment strategies. Nursing associate apprentices benefit from a highly structured programme on which they rotate through different ward placements every six months. As a result, they gain valuable insight into different aspects of nursing. For example, mental health nurse associates learn about effective wound management and cancer treatments. A high proportion of healthcare assistant practitioners completed their apprenticeships in 2017/18 and most were promoted into the roles for which they were being trained.

Lecturers assess and monitor apprentices' progress effectively using an appropriate range of methods that check apprentices have developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need. The standard of apprentices' academic written work is high,

and they receive very detailed feedback from lecturers that helps them improve their work further.

University staff provide a range of effective vocational, academic and pastoral support to apprentices. Apprentices also receive support from workplace mentors to ensure that they gain the experience they need in the workplace. Healthcare apprentices benefit from the additional support of university coaches who visit them at work to review their progress and assess their medical practice. However, in too many cases, reviews do not place sufficient emphasis on the progress apprentices are making. Therefore, many do not always know what they do well and what they need to do to improve further.

Not all healthcare apprentices and employers are fully aware of how they are going to be assessed at the end of the apprenticeship or the grades they could achieve because university staff have not informed them. Consequently, these apprentices do not know if they are working towards the highest grades of which they are capable.

University staff do not provide enough teaching and support for the very small number of apprentices who need to achieve a level 2 qualification in English and/or mathematics. Apprentices were left to complete independent study to attain these qualifications. Managers have recognised that this was not appropriate and have plans in place to provide support for new apprentices requiring teaching in English and/or mathematics.

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

Managers have implemented a range of clear and comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures. They have considered carefully how to meet the 'Prevent' duty and implemented appropriate measures such as monitoring of external speakers. Relevant information is freely available in student handbooks, and staff have improved online training for apprentices. Staff and apprentices know how to report concerns and apprentices feel safe. However, university staff do not develop apprentices' deeper awareness of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty sufficiently well.

The designated officer for safeguarding is well informed and maintains close relationships with local external agencies. University staff complete regular safeguarding training and four additional safeguarding officers have recently been appointed. Managers follow safe recruitment practices. However, senior leaders' monitoring of safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism, health and safety and apprentices' well-being is underdeveloped.

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