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23 February 2018

Professor Robert Mortimer  
Dean of the School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences  
The Nottingham Trent University  
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Dear Professor Mortimer

### **Short inspection of The Nottingham Trent University**

Following the short inspection on 23 January 2018 and 24 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in March 2014.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

You and your senior leaders have remained fully committed to further education programmes at the university, and maintained your focus on their quality. Because of this, your students benefit from good learning experiences, achieve qualifications and progress to relevant further learning and employment.

You have introduced three new programmes since the last inspection: a level 2 diploma in animal management; a level 3 diploma in land and wildlife management; and a level 3 food technologist apprenticeship. Your senior leaders have planned both of these programmes carefully, and they provide good opportunities for students and apprentices. The level 2 diploma programme provides an appropriate route to employment and further study for those who do not meet the entry requirements of the level 3 programmes. You have introduced the apprenticeship programme in response to employer demand, and although the first apprentices have only just commenced their studies, indications are that this apprenticeship will be at least as good as the other programmes you offer.

The university has excellent resources at its Brackenhurst campus for courses in agriculture, animal care, land and wildlife management, and food technology. Lecturers use these resources well to provide lively and interesting learning activities. Students value the opportunities these activities provide. Their attendance is good and they arrive punctually. They behave very well and are often extremely enthusiastic about their experiences. Food technology apprentices, who have recently attended their first block-release week at the university, are rightly effusive

in their praise for the teaching and the facilities. They are clearly excited at the prospects opening up before them.

However, not all of the learning activities are of an equally high standard. In a small number of practical sessions, activities do not align with industry's expectations and are not challenging enough. The effectiveness of the small amount of specialist English and mathematics teaching observed was limited.

Current students make good progress in developing their vocational knowledge and competences. They also develop a range of broader skills that they will need in employment. The large majority of students are currently on course to meet or exceed their target grades. Historically, the proportion of students who successfully completed their qualifications has been above the national rate, but this was not consistent across all programmes. Lecturers and managers now use effective systems for monitoring the progress of students, and have successfully eliminated much of this variability. The very large majority of students progress from the first to the second year of their programmes.

You and your senior leaders have ensured that students have access to highly effective careers information advice and guidance that begins before they enrol. Tutors provide continuing advice to individual students, and a dedicated team of advisers provides high-quality, impartial guidance. Students have frequent contact with employers through visits, guest speakers, work-related projects and work experience. As a result, they are well motivated, have a clear idea of their next steps, and almost all progress to positive destinations related to their studies. About half of all level 3 students progress to higher education, a significant increase from the time of the last inspection.

Your managers have acted to improve the support offered to students who have special needs. A lower proportion of such students successfully achieved their qualifications in 2016/17, but in the current year, these students are progressing as well as their peers. Your staff quickly identify any additional needs these students have and support them promptly and effectively.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Managers check on the backgrounds of staff before they join the university. New members of staff receive suitable training, including in the 'Prevent' duty, when they take up their posts. They undertake regular update training that your managers supplement through weekly team briefings. As a result, members of staff have a good knowledge of these themes. They understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty, and how they can incorporate British values into their lessons to help prevent students from becoming radicalised.

Students at the university benefit from tutorials that focus on a range of safeguarding themes and as a result, they are familiar with a number of potential safeguarding risks. They are able to describe potential signs of abuse, neglect or

radicalisation. However, they are less familiar with some of the specific forms of extremism associated with their industries, such as animal rights extremism and hunt sabotage.

Your leadership team has maintained the strong culture of safety that is necessary in the potentially hazardous land-based environment. The importance placed on health and safety is evident in practical lessons. Students feel safe and are safe.

## **Inspection findings**

- Students benefit from a range of very effective services that help them to plan and prepare for their future careers. Pre-course advice and guidance are very good and help to ensure that students join appropriate courses. University staff provide excellent ongoing impartial advice and guidance. Students benefit from frequent exposure to employers through guest speakers, recruitment fairs, visits, and well-planned work experience. As a result, almost all students progress to suitable further study or employment.
- Most students develop their English and mathematical skills well. Managers have placed increasing focus on these subjects. Staff from the Skills Development Centre work with students at frequent intervals to establish their needs, provide guidance and support, and set targets for improvement. Vocational lecturers incorporate mathematics topics within their lessons, evaluate the quality of students' writing, and provide constructive feedback on assessed work. However, lecturers do not do enough to help the most able students improve their English skills to a more sophisticated level, and a small amount of English and mathematics teaching is not fully effective.
- Most current students make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. They improve their knowledge and understanding well, and most develop sound practical skills that provide a good preparation for work in their chosen industry. Yard and animal unit duties help them to gain an appreciation of the daily routines of the workplace, and this further prepares them for employment. However, a small number of practical sessions are not challenging enough and activities do not accurately reflect industry's practices.
- Staff provide good support that enables students who have special needs to fulfil their potential. Staff work with students to identify any extra help they might need and arrange this promptly. All current students with an identified additional need have support plans in place, and as a result, individual lecturers know what additional help each student needs, and are able to provide it. Current students who have special needs are progressing as well as their peers.
- Students attend well and almost all arrive punctually to lessons. When students do arrive late, lecturers challenge them appropriately. Students behave well in lessons and almost all engage enthusiastically in learning activities. They have very good attitudes to work that work experience providers comment extremely positively on.
- Since the last inspection, the university has introduced a level 3 food technologist apprenticeship and a level 2 diploma in animal care. Managers have introduced

the apprenticeship programme in response to employers' demand and have planned it carefully. They have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that they meet fully the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. Although the programme is in its very early stages, apprentices are extremely enthusiastic about their experiences so far. The level 2 diploma programme provides a route into work or higher-level study for young people with lower GCSE attainment. These students attend well. The theory and practical aspects of their programme match the quality of other study programmes on offer at the university.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- lecturers help students to develop a greater understanding of the types of extremism related to their occupational area
- they develop the relationships between the Skills Development Centre staff and vocational lecturers so that the English and mathematics skills of all students, especially the most able, are improved
- discrete English and mathematics lessons are very effective in preparing students for GCSE examinations
- all lecturers provide practical lessons that challenge students and reflect current industry practices
- managers review the new apprenticeship programme, in particular to ensure that all apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Russ Henry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the head of further education, as nominee. We met with your management team, lecturers and students. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed students' and apprentices' work. We reviewed a range of documents and data, including those related to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding.