

University College of Estate Management

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was first announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

University College of Estate Management (UCEM) specialises in vocational education and training. Courses are provided mainly through supported online learning for people in the real estate and construction sector throughout the world. UCEM has worked as a subcontractor to other providers since the introduction of the surveying technician apprenticeship standard in 2015. In addition, the new direct contract began in May 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 100 apprentices under the new contract were just completing their first year of the two-and-a-half-year advanced apprenticeship programme.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Trustees have invested heavily in ensuring that UCEM's advanced apprenticeship programme is successful. This financial investment is matched by senior leaders' success in developing existing staff. They have also appointed managers and teaching staff with extensive further education experience to manage, deliver and improve the apprenticeship programme continually.

Staff assess all new apprentices carefully to decide if the surveying technician advanced apprenticeship is appropriate for them and their employers. When a potential apprentice has existing knowledge and skills which make an advanced apprenticeship insufficiently developmental, managers work with the employer to help prepare the employee for a higher-level apprenticeship. Employers are involved fully at every stage of their apprentices' selection process.

Apprentices benefit from extensive off-the-job and workplace training to help them develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to work effectively. They typically have four days each month to complete their online learning during working hours. It also includes attendance at induction and off-the-job workshops at the end of each stage of learning. Apprentices also keep a useful record of related off-the-job learning, which includes workplace shadowing and mentoring.

Employers say that apprentices develop very good knowledge, skills and behaviours that have contributed to their business. Apprentices recognise the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they develop and how these enable them to improve their workplace effectiveness and efficiency. For example, they have enhanced their understanding of aspects of law, which they can now apply successfully in their work.

Apprentices' understanding of British values is good. Tutors and apprenticeship coordinators achieve this very effectively by introducing each value in learning resources. These link the values in an appropriately challenging way to apprentices' professional duties.

Arrangements for apprentices' end-point assessments are now established. However, apprentices receive insufficient information about what they need to do to obtain a pass, merit or a distinction in the diploma element of the apprenticeship. Tutors do not yet inspire and challenge them to achieve the highest possible grades in each unit and overall.

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

Trustees and leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to quality assurance and improvement. Senior leaders have put in place a good range of effective processes to make sure that the apprenticeship meets stringent industrial requirements. The qualification provides apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they require for employment and successful careers. Trustees' support for developing and improving the quality of the apprenticeship is good. As a result, nearly all apprentices have remained on the programme and achievement rates for the first three units of the diploma are high.

Most apprentices' off-the-job learning takes place online. The virtual learning environment provides a wide range of very high-quality resources. Online learning activities are varied and planned carefully to develop good vocational knowledge and skills. The support for independent learning is very good. Apprentices have good access to a wide range of learning resources held in an extensive and efficiently organised online library. A small number of tutors respond too slowly to apprentices' online queries and comments despite a requirement that queries receive a response within two days.

Leaders are working hard to improve the quality of study workshops. These still require improvement. Several tutors have received good developmental support. A number of tutors have improved their practices and others have left UCEM. Managers have improved the arrangements for observing teaching, learning and

assessment for the next academic year. It is too soon to assess the impact of these improvements.

UCEM senior managers work effectively with further education partners with whom they hold subcontracts to improve the quality of progress reviews and workshops. Managers have only carried out a small number of formal observations of progress reviews, although all apprenticeship coordinators have been observed informally. The targets set by coordinators during progress reviews do not focus closely enough on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop or refine. Observers do not pay enough attention to what apprentices learn during reviews. They do not make sure that apprentices know how to fill any knowledge and skills gaps identified during the progress review.

Leaders' and managers' measures to assess the quality of on-the-job learning and skills development are strong. Managers check carefully employers' commitment to, and involvement in, the apprenticeship programme. They also make sure that apprenticeship coordinators involve employers fully in progress reviews. They provide employers with a very useful form to enable them to capture, in advance of the review meeting, the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices have developed since the previous review. Apprenticeship coordinators make good use of this form to engage with employers and enable them to support the needs of the apprentices. Apprenticeship coordinators and apprenticeship managers monitor off-the-job training hours carefully. They also check the accuracy of apprentices' diary entries and the quality of progress reviews routinely.

Managers have not ensured that the small minority of apprentices who need to pass functional skills examinations begin improving their knowledge and skills early enough in the programme. Managers have arranged for subcontractor support to be provided. They have also given attention recently to the importance of improving the English and mathematical knowledge and skills for those apprentices who are exempt from functional skills.

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

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers have developed very thorough safeguarding policies and arrangements.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe. They receive particularly effective guidance about staying safe online, dealing with harassment and bullying and healthy and safe working practices. Apprentices feel safe and are safe at work and in off-the-job training workshops. They have a detailed apprenticeship handbook which provides them with clear guidance on the full range of potential safeguarding issues and the details of who to contact should a concern arise.

Appropriately qualified staff check the health and safety arrangements of each apprentice's employer before agreeing to work with that employer. This provides managers with assurance that apprentices are safe in their working environments.

The designated safeguarding lead is well trained and qualified. In addition, a range of senior leaders are trained to the same high standard. All teaching and other staff who have regular contact with apprentices are trained annually to the appropriate standard.

Staff in human resources follow safer recruitment practices diligently. They also ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all teaching staff and managers who have contact with advanced apprentices, of whom a small minority are under the age of 18. A human resources manager maintains and frequently reviews the comprehensive single central register.

The safeguarding team takes appropriate action to keep the apprenticeship team fully informed. Although no referrals have yet been made, staff have a good awareness of the referral process.

Apprentices have a reasonable awareness of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism and know who to contact if they have any concerns. Managers have recently improved the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan to include the specific dangers that apprentices might face in the areas in which they live and work. This enables apprenticeship coordinators to extend apprentices' understanding of these dangers even more effectively during progress reviews.

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