

## **VQ Solutions Ltd**

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	58570
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

VQ Solutions Ltd was inspected in December 2017. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Since the previous inspection, the provider has ceased the delivery of apprenticeships in customer services.

### Themes

**Have leaders improved their use of management information and data to evaluate accurately the quality of provision and bring about improvements, and do they now have a clear view about the progress that apprentices make?**

**Significant progress**

Since the inspection in December 2017, leaders have invested significantly in the development of a comprehensive management information system. Leaders and assessors now use a wide range of accurate and up-to-date information about apprentices' progress through one reliable platform. This is a significant improvement on previous arrangements, which involved the use of a variety of unrelated processes which often provided contradictory information and did not provide leaders with an accurate picture of apprentices' progress.

The revised management information system includes a wide range of reports which reflect accurately the progress that apprentices make against their apprenticeship milestones. Leaders and assessors use these reports well to monitor apprentices' progress and identify those who are behind target in aspects of their programme and at risk of not achieving within planned timescales. They use this information to implement timely actions to support apprentices who are at risk of falling behind to make better progress and achieve. Leaders' regular interrogation of information about apprentices' progress and achievements provides them with a more accurate understanding of aspects of provision that require improvement than was the case at the previous inspection.

The managing director, who led the design and development of the new management information system, has plans to make other improvements. For example, although apprentices and assessors record hours engaged in off-the-job learning activities, leaders recognise that they cannot currently maintain an accurate oversight of apprentices who do not receive their full entitlement.

**What steps have leaders taken to improve the proportion of apprentices who complete their apprenticeships within the planned time, and what has been the impact?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and assessors maintain an accurate overview of the progress that apprentices make as a result of the development and implementation of the new management information system. They quickly identify apprentices at risk of falling behind schedule, investigate the reasons for this, and plan and implement a range of specific actions based on apprentices' individual circumstances. The majority of apprentices and their employers respond well. As a result of the timely individual support and challenge that assessors provide, the proportion of apprentices who complete within the planned time has increased markedly. However, although the number has reduced, a few apprentices still make slow progress.

**Is the performance management of assessors now effective in challenging and enabling them to improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment, and has this resulted in their effective use of information about apprentices' starting points to provide work which is sufficiently challenging?**

**Reasonable progress**

Following the inspection in December 2017, leaders reviewed the arrangements for the performance management of staff and recognised that these arrangements were too informal. The managing director prioritised the development of a robust management information system, recognising that the information that this would provide about apprentices' progress and achievements would be a necessary component of a more formal performance management framework.

Leaders introduced more robust performance management arrangements in July 2018. They restructured the assessor team to create an operations manager role. This clarifies the line management responsibilities and creates a clear accountability framework for the organisation. Over the summer, all assessors agreed formal performance objectives with targets linked specifically to the quality of their delivery and the outcomes that their apprentices achieve. Leaders accurately identified individual and whole-organisation training and development needs that focus on enabling assessors to improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment.

Assessors have responded well to the higher expectations of the new performance management arrangements. They consider carefully how they plan training and set work that challenges apprentices to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours and make good progress. For example, apprentices on level 3 business administration programmes learn how to take accurate minutes, which they put into practice well at work. Telecommunications apprentices receive effective challenges to gain new skills in installing fibre-optic cables. They also develop their theoretical knowledge about conductivity and resistance in copper installations and the practical

implications when carrying out installations or repairs. However, assessors do not routinely set high expectations for telecommunications apprentices. As a result, a few apprentices lack motivation and do not recognise or appreciate the new skills and knowledge they gain through their apprenticeship.

Because the new performance management arrangements have only been in place for a short time, the first planned quarterly review of assessors' performance against their objectives has not taken place. As a result, leaders have yet to gather evidence to enable them to evaluate effectively the extent to which these new arrangements challenge and support assessors to improve the quality of their delivery.

**What steps have leaders taken to ensure that assessors plan training and assessment activities and provide specific training and support so that apprentices make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills to a sufficiently high level?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have supported assessors effectively to review learning and assessment activities and materials and ensure that these include, where appropriate, activities that enable apprentices to develop their skills in English and mathematics. They have used this review to ensure that apprentices receive support and challenge to improve their skills in using information and communication technologies.

Assessors challenge the majority of apprentices effectively to improve their English and mathematics skills through well-designed activities that complement apprentices' vocational learning. For example, level 3 business administration apprentices learn the importance of good written English skills when they prepare professional presentations about business improvement. Assessors provide apprentices with helpful feedback that guides them to extension tasks so that they can develop their skills to a higher standard. Assessors track effectively the progress that apprentices make in developing their skills in English and mathematics.

A minority of apprentices on telecommunications programmes do not appreciate or value the new skills they develop in English and mathematics. They do not see the need to develop good English skills as a necessary or valuable part of their job.

**Have leaders and assessors taken effective steps to ensure that apprentices now gain a good understanding about the risks of radicalisation and extremism?**

**Significant progress**

Since the last inspection, leaders prioritised very effectively the review of existing learning and assessment materials. They ensured that these embed and highlight opportunities to raise apprentices' awareness about safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Assessors received extensive training to increase their

own awareness of these topics and their confidence to incorporate them into training, assessment and reviews.

Assessors discuss the risks and dangers of radicalisation and extremism at every opportunity with their apprentices. As a result, apprentices have a very good understanding of these risks. Apprentices can explain dangers in the local areas where they live and work very well. They have a good understanding of the reasons why certain people might be attracted to extremist groups. Apprentices have a good understanding about how to keep others safe at work, and what to do if they have any concerns.

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