

# Ultima Skills Ltd

## Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1278606

**Name of lead inspector:** Ken Fisher OI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Enterprise House  
Wigan Enterprise Park  
Seaman Way  
Ince  
Wigan  
Lancashire  
WN2 2LE



# 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 three themes set out below.

Ultima Skills Ltd (Ultima) was registered as a training company in 2011. It specialises in training for the logistics industry. In November 2017, Ultima started training apprentices funded through the apprenticeship levy. Previously, Ultima trained apprentices as a subcontractor for other organisations. The company currently has 21 levy-funded apprentices.

Sixteen apprentices are enrolled on the new standards-based apprenticeship in large goods vehicle (LGV) driver training at level 2. One apprentice is enrolled on a business administration standards apprenticeship at level 3. Two apprentices are enrolled on a logistic operations framework apprenticeship at level 2 and one at level 3. One apprentice is enrolled on a supply chain warehouse operator standards apprenticeship at level 2.

## 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 developed good relationships with employers who are heavily involved in transportation and logistics operations. The senior leader has many years' experience in the logistics industry as a driver and transport manager. He has a very good understanding of the industry and the need for highly trained drivers and logistics personnel. As a result, he has developed apprenticeship provision to meet the needs of employers in the industry.

Leaders are very concerned about the acute shortage of trained LGV drivers. They aim to reduce the shortage by delivering the LGV apprenticeship at level 2. Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices, through the training they receive, carry out their role efficiently. Leaders know that apprentices have good career prospects.

Leaders have made reasonable progress in ensuring that the provision is fulfilling the

requirements of successful apprenticeship provision. However, they agree with inspectors that ongoing improvements are needed. For example, they need to check and record routinely that all apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job learning during working hours. They also need to ensure that all apprentices and employers have detailed information about end-point assessment.

Leaders ensure that potential apprentices have a good awareness of the transportation and logistics industry before they are recruited onto an apprenticeship programme. Consequently, all apprentices have remained on the programme. Apprentices are on the correct course at an appropriate level to meet their immediate job requirements and career aspirations.

As leaders are aware, apprentices and employers value the LGV licence highly. Most apprentices have now passed the theory and practical tests. Their value to employers increases immediately they obtain the LGV licence. Employers often reward apprentices with a pay increase when they qualify as LGV drivers and take on additional driving and logistics responsibilities.

Leaders have a good understanding of the progress the apprentices make. They send regular progress reports to employers. However, several apprentices' line managers do not receive the reports. As a result, they do not have an overall view of apprentices' progress. Not all apprentices are clear about the progress they make on every aspect of their apprenticeship. Apprentices' 'driver-training plan and record' does not monitor how well apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours across all aspects of their programme.

Employers speak positively about the training their apprentices receive. A number of employers are recruiting additional LGV apprentices and they intend to engage Ultima as their preferred training provider. They say the knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours that apprentices gain as a result of their training benefit their businesses.

Leaders are knowledgeable about each of the apprentices currently on programme. However, as they readily acknowledge, their record-keeping is an area for improvement. With a relatively small number of apprentices, they are inclined to commit too much to memory.

Leaders discuss on- and off-the-job training with employers at the start of the apprenticeship. They are responsive to employers' preferences for the way in which off-the-job training is delivered. However, leaders do not work closely enough with all employers to plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job learning. As they readily acknowledge, they need to ensure that all aspects of on- and off-the-job learning are documented in detail for every apprentice.

Leaders and managers have been slow to implement their plans for English, mathematics and digital skills training. They identify clearly at the start of the apprenticeship programme those apprentices who need to obtain qualifications in

English and mathematics. However, they do not implement training at a sufficiently early stage. For example, LGV and logistics apprentices who have been on programme for some months have not yet had sufficient preparation for the functional skills English and mathematics examinations at levels 1 and 2.

**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**

Most apprentices receive a good induction to the apprenticeship programme. They are keen to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours related to LGV driving, logistics operations and warehousing. Apprentices receive relevant information about the apprenticeship requirements. Leaders and trainers place considerable importance on ensuring that apprentices comply with healthy and safe working practices.

At the beginning of the LGV and logistics apprenticeship programmes, leaders and managers identify apprentices' starting points. They clarify which tasks apprentices perform and how frequently. They also evaluate appropriately apprentices' driving skills. Leaders and managers make good use of this information for deciding much of the content of apprentices' training. Trainers ensure that the curriculum equips apprentices with the knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviours they require. However, they do not provide sufficient support and challenge for the most able apprentices because they do not adapt the training sufficiently to match their abilities.

Apprentices complete relevant assessments in English and mathematics. Apprentices' strengths and weaknesses are apparent immediately. However, managers make insufficient use of the results to plan and deliver individualised training in English and mathematics. As leaders and managers acknowledge, tuition starts too late. The development of apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills is not integrated sufficiently throughout their programme.

Most apprentices develop new vocationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours related to LGV driving and warehousing. For example, LGV apprentices learn how to plan the most economical routes for journeys and how to manoeuvre large goods vehicles safely in restricted spaces. They prepare the vehicles for driving and protect the loads they carry. Apprentices become increasingly competent at developing good rapport with colleagues and customers. Their oral communication skills improve and they learn how to communicate effectively.

The small number of apprentices on the logistics operations framework apprenticeship do not develop sufficient new occupationally specific knowledge, skills and understanding. Employers are insufficiently involved in developing their

apprenticeship programme so that the most appropriate optional units are completed. These are aspects that leaders and managers realise they need to rectify.

Trainers provide good support that helps LGV apprentices to prepare for, and complete successfully, the theory test and practical assessment. When they become qualified LGV drivers, their job prospects and career possibilities improve considerably. A few apprentices gain good experience of working in their employer's office. They learn about, and process, relevant documents that relate to road transport and haulage.

Most apprentices receive the required amount of off-the-job training. Almost all apprentices 'shadow' knowledgeable, skilled and experienced drivers. This is an important part of their off-the-job training programme. Additionally, they assist the drivers with non-driving tasks, which gives them a good 'rounded' view of the job for which they are preparing. Apprentices use relevant online learning resources to effectively improve the knowledge they require to be an effective driver. Trainers monitor regularly apprentices' use of these resources and the completion of the assessment tasks.

Trainers' planning of most theory lessons is good. However, trainers' questioning to check and extend apprentices' knowledge and understanding requires improvement. Apprentices receive insufficient feedback on the quality of their written work.

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

Leaders have failed to prioritise the safeguarding of apprentices. They have not developed and implemented appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. The procedures for reporting and dealing with safeguarding incidents are poor.

The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) has not had suitable training to perform this role. As a result, the DSO is not sufficiently clear about the action to take if an apprentice reports a safeguarding concern. The DSO has not established links with the local adult safeguarding board for Wigan and the multi-agency safeguarding hub for Greater Manchester.

Leaders' 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan do not include all the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism that apprentices may encounter in their work and life. Leaders have not identified the significant risks in the regions that are priority 'Prevent' duty areas where apprentices are based, such as Leicestershire.

Where leaders have identified actions to improve safeguarding, they have not implemented them. Six months ago, leaders identified correctly the need for suitable training for staff who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the 'Prevent' duty. However, the staff have not yet been trained.

Apprentices have a good understanding of healthy and safe working practices. For example, many apprentices know what action to take if they find someone in their vehicle. However, apprentices' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism is poor. Apprentices receive a detailed self-study safeguarding handbook at induction but they do not use it effectively to improve their knowledge and understanding.

Staff are recruited appropriately. Leaders follow safe recruitment practices. These include checking the background and suitability of applicants to work with adults. All staff who train apprentices receive suitable Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Staff training focuses on keeping apprentices safe, including from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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