

IBM United Kingdom Ltd

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.

International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) is an American multinational information technology company, with operations in over 170 countries. Since May 2017, IBM UK Ltd. has become an employer provider for levy-paid apprenticeship training. At the time of the monitoring visit, 74 apprentices were on levels 3 and 4 standards-based programmes in four specialist areas: associate project manager, software tester, junior management consultancy and information technology technical sales. Over half are studying the junior management consultancy programme.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a clear strategy to expand and develop new apprenticeships in digital and technical skills subjects to meet national skills shortages. They are developing the skills of their apprentices well. As a result, apprentices make a positive contribution to the industries they work in.

Leaders and managers have created a well-organised training programme that meets the requirements of an apprenticeship. They make sure that apprentices and their task managers understand the content of the programme before they start. Apprentices are selected carefully and with integrity and are assessed before they begin the programme. As a result, almost all apprentices are making good progress and are on track to complete by their planned end-date.

Apprentices benefit from well-planned and extensive off-the-job training. They have the opportunity to complete additional qualifications linked to their job roles, for example on ethical hacking and project management fundamentals. Early professional managers (EPM) are highly qualified and experienced professionals who use their expertise to support apprentices throughout their training. They meet with them frequently to review their progress, set targets and prepare them for end-point

assessment (EPA). For example, one EPM coaches learners skilfully on how to prepare for the presentation required for the EPA.

Leaders and managers check the progress that apprentices are making through monthly review meetings. Where apprentices are falling behind or not completing tasks, interventions are introduced to get them back on track quickly.

The governance board provides challenge to managers and monitors the performance of the apprenticeship programme effectively. Senior leaders have clear and realistic plans for the future growth of apprenticeships.

Managers observe training sessions, but their evaluations and feedback do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and the progress that apprentices make. This means that trainers do not have clear guidance on how to improve their teaching.

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 benefit from a thorough induction at the start of their apprenticeship programmes. They learn about working for IBM, its culture and values, and the range of career opportunities available to them. During induction, managers and trainers make sure that apprentices understand apprenticeship standards and basic technical principles. Apprentices form strong friendships with those they start with, which leads to effective networking and mutual support throughout their apprenticeships and careers.

Apprentices develop high levels of knowledge, skills and behaviours that are beneficial in the workplace. They swiftly undertake complex projects with high levels of responsibility.

Apprentices benefit from a wide range of knowledge and skills development workshops, online training, one-to-one training sessions and additional qualifications. In addition to mandatory training modules, many apprentices undertake additional courses. They are badged for technical knowledge or developing their personal and professional skills. Badges are recognised internally and also valued by IBM's global suppliers and customers.

Junior management consultant apprentices benefit from regular action-learning groups, where they share their experiences on different types of projects across different sectors and businesses. Through working on a variety of projects in different business groups, apprentices gain a good appreciation of which skill areas and where they would like to specialise in.

EPMs have developed effective relationships with the apprentices' task managers, who are closely involved in their training. As a result, task managers support apprentices to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Apprentices produce work to a high standard. They benefit from detailed feedback on assessed work, which helps them improve.

Leaders and managers do not check the quality of subcontracted provision effectively. They rely too heavily on feedback from apprentices and do not have a process in place to understand the strengths and weaknesses of this small part of their apprenticeship delivery. Consequently, they are not able to make improvements.

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

Leaders and managers place a strong emphasis on safeguarding learners and, as a result, apprentices are safe and feel safe.

Leaders and managers have appropriate procedures in place, and their staff understand and use these effectively. Staff have received extensive training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to improve their understanding. EPMs have completed mental health first-aid training and use this to monitor the health and welfare of apprentices. They report concerns or incidents promptly and provide advice on healthy eating and safety when travelling.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and recall their training on these matters. They receive training during their induction that is reinforced during their apprenticeship. Apprentices recognise how the dangers of radicalisation and extremism might apply to them. They complete cyber-crime training to make sure they know how to protect themselves and others from potential threats online.

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