

Short inspection of University of Bolton

Inspection dates:

29–30 January 2020

Outcome

University of Bolton continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

The University of Bolton (the university) is located in Bolton in the north-west of England. It delivers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses at higher education level. The university offers higher-level apprenticeships including four health-related apprenticeships at level 5 which are the focus of this inspection. It delivers apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7, which are not in scope. The university no longer offers access to higher education programmes.

At the time of the inspection, there were 405 apprentices, most of whom are on nursing associate apprenticeships. The rest study healthcare assistant practitioner or dental technician apprenticeships. All apprentices are adults. Most apprentices are north-west based, and a few are located in Yorkshire, Devon and the Midlands. At their previous inspection in March 2017, the University of Bolton was judged to be good.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices develop and learn new skills in safe and supportive environments. They gain confidence and develop professionally because of the support they receive at university and in work. Nursing associates swiftly recognise and respond to patients' needs. They take responsibility for decisions about their care.

Apprentices are very proud of how quickly they put into practice at work what they have learned at university. Dental technicians use appropriate terminology when speaking to dentists. They discuss technical requirements confidently and competently.

Apprentices benefit from the support they receive from each other. They extend their knowledge of different practices. For example, dental technicians share their experiences of working with ceramic teeth. They discuss using different filling materials including acrylics, composites and pressed ceramics.

Apprentices across all sites feel safe. They know who to contact if they have any concerns at the university or in work. Apprentices have a basic understanding of the

risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Most do not know enough about any potential dangers in the workplace.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

The University of Bolton is a good provider. Leaders work with local and regional partners to devise an ambitious curriculum. Apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to become successful employees in the health sector. For example, dental technicians develop skills across a range of disciplines including making implants, dentures and invisible braces.

Lecturers are highly qualified and experienced in their specialist areas. They plan and organise the curriculum well and in a logical order. Apprentices build their skills and knowledge over time and learn to carry out complex procedures. For example, nursing associates repeatedly practise and improve taking blood, administering injections and inserting catheters in the university's well-resourced simulation suites. When they are competent at carrying out these procedures, they use and further develop these skills at work on patients.

Lecturers draw out skilfully what apprentices know and can do. They use discussion well to reinforce learning. As a result, apprentices embed new knowledge and skills into their long-term memory. For example, lecturers used reflective cycle theories, in the nursing associates' off-the-job training sessions, to discuss how they could improve their professional practice. During discussions, apprentices drew on what they had already learned and could do. They evaluated their current practice and planned what they could do better.

Most apprentices are on track to achieve their apprenticeships. They understand what they need to do to achieve their best. This is not the case for a minority of Greater Manchester Trust nursing associate apprentices. The cohort which are due to finish soon do not feel confident that they will complete their apprenticeship on time. They are unclear about what they need to do to prepare for their upcoming end-point assessment.

Apprentices who have already completed their apprenticeship increase their responsibilities at work. For example, dental technicians moved into managerial roles and took over the running of dental laboratories. Some received pay increases when they moved to higher standard laboratories.

The quality of careers advice and guidance is good. Staff work with employers so that apprentices know what to expect before they start. Apprentices know how to do their jobs better and are prepared for their next steps. They are clear about the opportunities for continued and promoted employment when they finish their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff. Lecturers keep up to date in their specialist knowledge through research activities and training. They share new

techniques and knowledge with apprentices, which employers benefit from. For example, dental technicians learn about new digital technologies in dental restoration.

Governors, leaders and managers work together to develop an ambitious strategy for apprenticeships. Current programmes are aligned to local and regional health sector needs where there is a shortage of workers. Further growth in the delivery of apprenticeships is planned. Leaders recognise that they have work to do to ensure that appropriate staff are in place to effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training to meet this expansion.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have in place appropriate arrangements for safeguarding their apprentices. They have identified mental health as a key area where apprentices require support. Leaders have invested in a range of mental health support initiatives. For example, at the university's 'life lounge', apprentices receive support from mental health professionals. Apprentices remain on their programme and on target to achieve because of the help they get.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Put in place appropriate staffing arrangements to meet the plans for growth so that on- and off-the-job training is effectively coordinated.
- Swiftly put in place support to ensure that the nursing associate apprentices who are due to complete soon are well prepared for their end-point assessment and complete their apprenticeship on time.
- Provide training for apprentices about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism they may encounter in the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133794
Address	Deane Road Bolton BL3 5AB Greater Manchester
Contact number	01204 900600
Website	www.bolton.ac.uk
Vice Chancellor	Professor George Holmes
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	28–29 March 2017
Main subcontractors	–

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since the University of Bolton was judged to be good in February 2014.

The inspection team was assisted by the group director of apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising apprentices' work, seeking the views of apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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