

Inspection of The Business Portfolio (UK) Limited

Inspection dates:

21–23 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Apprenticeships	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Business Portfolio (UK) Limited (TBP) was formed in 2007. It provides consultancy services to businesses to help them develop their staff and improve their organisational efficiency. TBP started to receive public funds to deliver apprenticeship training in November 2017. It currently has 30 apprentices, all of whom are working towards a standards-based leadership and management programme at level 5. All the apprentices are science graduates. Apprentices are employed by a government-owned and operated scientific organisation.

TBP received a new provider monitoring visit in January 2019. Inspectors identified that leaders had made insufficient progress on all three themes. As a result, TBP received a further monitoring visit for safeguarding in June 2019. At this visit, inspectors found that leaders had made reasonable progress in ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements were in place.

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

Apprentices do not develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship. Many apprentices state that they do not feel that the apprenticeship programme is appropriate, as it is not linked to the work that they do at their employer. Most apprentices work in technical departments and do not manage people.

Apprentices state that they do not receive sufficient feedback to help them to learn more, remember more and improve their work.

Apprentices feel frustrated about the poor communication between TBP and their employer. They feel that this has an adverse effect on the progress that they make on their apprenticeship.

Apprentices have a poor understanding of what they need to learn throughout their apprenticeship or when they need to complete their work. They are frustrated that they have had no guidance on the requirements of end-point assessment, an integral aspect of them completing their apprenticeship.

Apprentices are unaware that although they are being assessed against an industry recognised qualification they are not registered on this qualification. They will not gain this qualification as part of their apprenticeship.

Apprentices are committed to their learning. Attendance and punctuality at training sessions are good. Apprentices produce work promptly and consistently, working to deadlines.

Apprentices improve their confidence throughout their apprenticeship when they take part in sector-related competitions, for example. They enter the 'Spark' competition, where they compete against other young people from the UK and France who have an interest in low-carbon energy. Apprentices who take part are rightly proud to participate in this prestigious competition.

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

Leaders, managers and assessors do not ensure that the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship are met. They do not make sure that apprentices receive high-quality training on their programme. The new knowledge that apprentices learn and the skills that they acquire are not substantive enough to classify the programme as an apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have failed to make the necessary improvements identified at the previous monitoring visit in January 2019. The resource that they have allocated to improve the provision is negligible. This has resulted in most of the poor areas identified at the previous monitoring visit still being stubbornly present.

There is no supervisory body in place. Consequently, there is no challenge or scrutiny of leadership and no support for leaders to improve the provision. This has adversely affected apprentices' learning. Just over half of current apprentices have failed to complete their apprenticeship on time due to poor-quality training.

Assessors do not use the results of apprentices' assessments completed at the start and throughout their programme. This restricts assessors' ability to plan an individualised programme of learning for apprentices. Too often, assessors merely accredit the skills that apprentices have already acquired. For example, a few apprentices identified that they had already learned key concepts of operational management throughout their engineering degree. They did not see the point of repeating this learning.

Assessors do not challenge these high-calibre apprentices. Many have achieved postgraduate masters degrees and doctoral degrees in technical fields such as astrophysics, chemistry, engineering and physics. Apprentices state that they only develop basic skills such as how to be a better communicator or how to be more self-aware of their organisation's procedures. This does not meet the funding requirements of an apprenticeship.

Too often assessors provide cursory and unhelpful feedback which does not support apprentices to improve the standard of their work. Assessors' comments include 'good work' and 'well done' when there are key components of work that apprentices need to improve to achieve the required standard.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that the curriculum is broad enough. It focuses too much on the modules of a management qualification for which apprentices are not registered. Apprentices do not develop the wider skills, beyond the apprenticeship standard, that they need to be productive in the workplace. Assessors' strategies to develop apprentices' long-term memory throughout the programme are ineffective. A few apprentices state they have forgotten what they have learned due to the delays in the end-point assessment.

Too many apprentices make slow progress on their apprenticeships. Many have not completed their portfolio in preparation to enter the gateway for the end-point assessment.

Too many apprentices do not see the point in doing the apprenticeship. They do not see how it contributes to their work. They are confused as to why they complete an apprenticeship alongside a graduate development programme. Technical graduates do not see how the topics that they are learning on the apprenticeship will contribute to their technical career in the nuclear sector. They have no aspirations to move into managing people, for which the apprenticeship is designed.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that apprentices receive high-quality careers advice and guidance throughout their apprenticeship. The provider's staff do not possess the knowledge to give advice in this highly technical area. The employer has

recently appointed an early career coach, but apprentices have been without any support for around eight months.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff use these procedures appropriately to provide apprentices with swift support when needed. The safeguarding lead and other staff have received appropriate training to allow them to execute their role appropriately.

The safeguarding lead does not liaise with external agencies and local authorities across the country to inform training on the risks and threats of radicalisation and extremism that apprentices may encounter in their locality. Leaders rightly acknowledge that this is an aspect of safeguarding that needs to be improved further.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Carry out a systematic review of the apprenticeship programme to ensure that apprentices are enrolled on the most appropriate apprenticeship for their job role.
- Ensure that assessments are fit for purpose and that staff use the results to plan learning that develops apprentices' skills and knowledge.
- Identify and provide support to develop staff and leadership expertise to improve the quality of education quickly.
- Rapidly help apprentices to catch up in their studies so that they are in a position to enter the gateway for end-point assessment.
- Improve apprentices' understanding of end-point assessment and ensure that they are suitably prepared for these assessments.
- Improve the quality of careers advice and guidance so that apprentices can make appropriate decisions about their future progression opportunities.
- Identify the local risks of radicalisation and extremism in the areas around the country where apprentices work. Assessors should use this information to provide training to apprentices of the risks that are prevalent in their locality.

Provider details

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Provider type Independent learning provider

Date of previous inspection Not previously inspected

Main subcontractors Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Ofsted Specialist, 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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