

University of Northampton

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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

The University of Northampton is a public university based in Northampton. It was formed in 1999 by the amalgamation of a number of training colleges and gained full university status in 2005. It gained a government-funded contract to deliver higher-level apprenticeships in May 2018. In June 2018, the first group of apprentices began the nursing associate standards-based level 5 programme. At the time of the monitoring visit, 65 apprentices work at hospitals and medical centres in Northampton and Kettering. Staff based in the university's faculty of health, education and society deliver the 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 have a clear rationale for delivering the nursing associate apprenticeship training programme. This level 5 programme is responsive to regional and national staff shortages in high-quality nursing care in the public and the private sectors.

Leaders have very high aspirations for their apprentices. The programme represents a significant stepping stone towards a career in nursing for mature entrants to the profession. Most of these have not participated in formal education since they left school.

Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of healthcare employers and they provide a flexible curriculum to meet their needs. Employers are closely involved in the design and delivery of the curriculum. They provide apprentices with opportunities to participate in a wide range of nursing associate care specialisms that prepare apprentices well for their next steps.

Leaders employ well-qualified lecturers who have significant vocational experience and knowledge of up-to-date nursing and subjects allied to medical professions.

Many hold postgraduate qualifications and all have an appropriate specialist qualification in teaching in the nursing sector.

Leaders implement an effective recruitment process to ensure that applicants can study successfully at higher apprenticeship level. University staff and employers discuss with potential apprentices the demands of a career in nursing. This ensures that apprentices receive a good preparation for study and work at this level.

Leaders have a suitably clear grasp of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not have a formal or comprehensive process for self-assessing the overall quality of provision. They do not have a system for identifying, setting and monitoring challenging targets for the apprenticeship programme.

Leaders have implemented several initiatives to improve the provision. These include the purchase of software to help managers monitor and record apprentices' progress more effectively and a review of the procedures for apprentice recruitment. However, leaders rightly acknowledge that it is too soon to judge the impact of these measures.

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

Lecturers have high expectations of apprentices, most of whom were previously employed as healthcare assistants with few opportunities for career progression. They identify apprentices' starting points accurately. They use this information effectively to plan training so that apprentices make good progress in developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Lecturers provide apprentices with their entitlement to high-quality off-the-job training which supports their learning. Apprentices enjoy learning new skills such as taking blood samples and using an ECG monitor. They attend high-quality university lectures and learn how to use state-of-the-art virtual reality simulation equipment to practise their nursing skills.

Lecturers know their apprentices well and monitor their progress effectively. They meet each apprentice frequently to set targets and review progress. Employers support apprentices well and participate in meetings with lecturers and apprentices to discuss progress and to deal with any concerns. Lecturers, supported by employers, provide additional support to apprentices when they fall behind.

Lecturers ensure that apprentices develop their mathematical skills through well-delivered topics on the application of mathematics to essential nursing skills. These include calculating volumes, weights and ratios when dealing with patients' medications. Apprentices receive good support to improve their skills in English, including their use of academic referencing and research.

Apprentices receive good-quality feedback on their written assignments. In a few cases though, lecturers do not check whether apprentices learn from the feedback given for previous assignments. As a result, a few apprentices do not improve their work sufficiently rapidly.

Apprentices do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of their end-point assessment methodology. They are often confused about the difference between the assessment methods used in their foundation degree and those in their apprenticeship end-point assessment process. Apprentices are unaware that they can achieve merit and distinction grades and consequently are unclear about how they can work towards achieving the highest grades.

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

Leaders implement suitable safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty procedures to keep apprentices safe. They make sure that the recruitment of new staff is suitable and meets safeguarding requirements.

Apprentices receive safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training at induction. They apply this understanding well to their job roles as apprentice nursing associates. Apprentices have a particularly good understanding of how to ensure the safety and welfare of patients in their care. They understand British values and the terms associated with the 'Prevent' duty, including the risks posed by extremist ideologies, and articulate the main concepts well.

Leaders ensure that the designated safeguarding lead has appropriate training and knowledge to be effective. Apprentices know how and to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns, including when online when at work. However, few apprentices are aware that they can also report any concerns to the university's designated safeguarding lead for apprentices.

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