

QDOS Training Limited

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	58397
Name of lead inspector:	Saul Pope, HMI
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Byron House Commercial Street Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG18 1EE

Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Information about the provider

QDOS Training Limited is based in Mansfield. It offers apprenticeships, programmes for adult learners and traineeships. At the time of the visit, just over 100 apprentices were enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2 to 5. The biggest areas of provision were teaching and lecturing, and building and construction. Around 120 adult learners studied at level 1 and level 2, including courses in hairdressing and beauty, health and social care, and functional skills. A few adults used advanced learner loans to fund adult care or beauty therapy programmes at levels 3 and 5. A small number of young people were on traineeships in beauty or business administration.

QDOS Training Limited also works with a subcontractor to provide employment-focused programmes for adults.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Since the start of COVID-19 restrictions, leaders and managers have focused on ensuring that learners and apprentices can continue learning. Online teaching started early on in the national restrictions, alongside emergency support plans for learners and apprentices. Lessons and support sessions continue to take place online. Despite the turmoil that COVID-19 has caused, there has been very little disruption to learning.

A few learners have recently returned to face-to-face lessons, including adult learners studying mathematics and English at their workplaces and those in

subcontracted provision. Managers are working on plans to adjust these courses in case tighter COVID-19 restrictions prevent face-to-face teaching.

Leaders and managers ensure that adjustments are in place for learners and apprentices to continue with their practical assessments. Hairdressing and beauty learners complete course work on family members when client contact is not possible. When assessors cannot visit apprentices in person, expert witnesses carry out recorded observations.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the jobs market, leaders and managers have refined careers advice and guidance. This is to ensure that they are better supporting learners – in particular the long-term unemployed – into sectors where there are job opportunities. Tutors frequently check that new learners' career plans have not changed.

Employers report that communication with assessors has been frequent and useful. Employees continue to make expected progress. A few employers would prefer more onsite support, for example with observation activities. Leaders are currently reviewing their approach to this.

Leaders and managers recognise the negative impact of COVID-19 on their staff. They contact them frequently to check on their mental well-being, including those staff teaching late in the evening.

Leaders have adjusted how they check the quality of tutors' work. As well as observing live online lessons, they watch recordings of teaching and support sessions to monitor quality.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?

Tutors and assessors received training on remote teaching early in the national COVID-19 restrictions. Although this change was initially daunting, training and support from managers and peers means they can now teach confidently online.

Tutors and assessors use a variety of approaches in their teaching, such as online breakout groups for discussion activities and editing tools to annotate resources. They alter their teaching methods to support those less confident with technology or those with special educational needs.

Teaching staff identify a number of positive changes as a result of online teaching. Assessors now spend more time with apprentices due to reduced travel time and report that one-to-one support sessions are more focused. Tutors find it easier to provide learners with instant feedback on their work. Learners can also better support one another during online sessions. For example, health and social care learners working in different care homes take part in remote peer-to-peer support.

Tutors and assessors have adjusted courses where changes at learners' and apprentices' workplaces have made this necessary. Learners and apprentices on furlough have focused more closely on the knowledge aspects of programmes. Assessors adjusted the course structure for apprentices made redundant during the pandemic, to enable them to complete their apprenticeships and find new employment.

Tutors and assessors have changed curriculum topics to reflect the impact of COVID-19 on workplaces. For example, health and social care learners now complete a unit on infection control at the beginning of their course and focus more closely on policy updates. Safety, health and environment technician apprentices complete COVID-19-specific risk assessments.

Tutors, assessors and their managers frequently review individual learners' and apprentices' progress. Most participate well in their studies. Where learners and apprentices fall behind, tutors and assessors offer suitable individualised support.

How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Leaders state that they have enhanced online safety training, including how learners and apprentices confidentially report safeguarding concerns. Learners and apprentices find this training useful. Leaders and managers monitor online safety through various means, for example by using filtering and tracking tools.

Staff understand the risks that learners and apprentices face due to COVID-19 restrictions, including increased mental health difficulties. A few tutors have recently enrolled onto a suicide awareness training programme. A risk assessment, based on learners' and apprentices' personal circumstances, is part of each learning plan and review. Learners and apprentices value this personalised approach. They say it has supported them to continue studying.

Leaders continue to work with external agencies to support vulnerable learners and apprentices. They have maintained regional contacts to understand the safeguarding threats in the regions where learners and apprentices live. Despite this, tutors and assessors were not aware of local safeguarding threats.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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