

Sheffield Hallam University

Progress monitoring report

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Address:	City Campus Pond Street Sheffield S1 1WB

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Sheffield Hallam University was last inspected in March 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education and training in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

Theme

What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Significant progress

Governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the apprenticeship provision. Since the previous inspection, they have strengthened considerably their capacity to scrutinise and challenge the quality of education that apprentices receive. They have invested in new management information systems and the development of work-based coaches to tackle successfully the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

Governors and senior leaders hold managers and tutors to account for the quality of the apprenticeship provision. Every academic department with a responsibility for

teaching apprenticeship programmes reports monthly to senior leaders on the progress of its apprentices, detailing the actions that they have taken to support those apprentices who do not make expected progress. As a result, the number of apprentices withdrawing early from programmes has reduced significantly.

Since the previous inspection, managers have worked more closely with employers and external partners to plan a curriculum that provides apprentices with skills and knowledge that enable employers to meet the needs of the regional economy. For example, the new standards-based level 4 programmes for surveyors and supervisors in construction addresses the shortages in these roles in the building industry.

Leaders and managers made sure that the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions did not interrupt apprentices' learning. They moved quickly to put all provision online, helped apprentices on furlough to continue their programmes and provided additional support to apprentices at risk of redundancy to find alternative employment or learning opportunities.

Leaders and managers have improved the arrangements for managing subcontractors. Although they have reduced their reliance on subcontracted provision, they ensure that subcontractors are held to account for the progress of apprentices and that actions are taken to support those who are at risk of falling behind.

Senior leaders and managers have worked effectively with local education partners and local partnership bodies to provide apprenticeship progression opportunities across the Sheffield City Region, from level 2 up to postgraduate level. They have used the impetus of the pandemic to accelerate these developments.

The university provides a comprehensive network of support for apprentices to make sure that they feel safe during the pandemic. As well as work-based coaches and academic tutors, apprentices can call on employability and student support services for advice. Apprentices know how to stay safe online at a time when they have become more reliant on online approaches for their learning.

Leaders and managers have improved the way that they recruit apprentices on to programmes since the previous inspection. They ensure that the starting points of apprentices are identified clearly, taking into account their prior experience and knowledge. For example, apprentices who have experience of working on building sites have projects designed for them that stretch their skills and knowledge beyond what is expected to meet the requirements of the programme.

Tutors have designed and developed high-quality online learning lessons for use during the pandemic. For example, they have recorded sessions demonstrating how to measure the deflection of timber beams under load and how to calculate concrete mix ratios. Tutors have responded positively to apprentices' feedback on what type of online learning works best for them. Tutors have adapted their most recent model

of teaching so that it mixes recorded live lectures, peer group activities and access to online research tools.

Apprentices demonstrate substantial new knowledge and skills that their employers value highly. For example, quantity surveyor technician apprentices learn how to interpret order of work schedules. They do this through live projects, often involving significant sums of money, that they programme effectively to ensure that the sequencing of the schedule is correct.

Tutors involve employers in reviews of modules to ensure that the skills and knowledge they teach meet current industry standards and practice. Some employers have provided case studies that tutors then use as examples in their teaching sessions. This provides confidence to employers and apprentices that the skills and knowledge being taught are up to date and relevant.

Tutors and managers have carefully designed the curriculum to enable apprentices from a non-academic background to develop skills in how to research and write assignments using increasingly complex concepts as they progress through higher education. Apprentices also apply these new skills at work when writing reports for employers.

A very small minority of apprentices on construction programmes who require additional support to access learning have not benefited from timely communication from tutors. Some apprentices who were on furlough have not been informed clearly how they can retrieve information from the teaching sessions that they missed.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that all tutors provide apprentices with timely information on how they can fill any gaps in their knowledge and skills if they miss teaching sessions while on furlough or for any other reasons.

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