

University of Worcester

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 Worcester (UW) gained degree-awarding powers in 1997, followed by full university status in 2005. The university started to teach apprenticeships in May 2018, with the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship standard. At the time of the visit, the university had 75 apprentices studying the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship standard, and five apprentices studying the level 7 senior leaders apprenticeship standard.

The vast majority of the university's apprentices work within the four regional hospitals. In early April 2020, some apprentices took a break in learning to enable their redeployment by their employer as a result of the workforce challenges they faced from COVID-19 (coronavirus). The majority of these learners returned in May 2020, and July 2020.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Significant progress

Leaders recognise the importance of long-standing partnerships with local employers. Initially, leaders taught a pilot nursing associate scheme with Health Education England. Following the success of that scheme, they identified the need to implement a nursing associate apprenticeship. They used the expertise of their local NHS Trusts and other health care providers to discuss and identify the requirements of the apprenticeship.

Employers know well their commitments to the apprenticeship. They work with the provider to match the taught elements of the apprenticeship to the knowledge and

skills requirements within apprentices' job roles. This gives apprentices the chance to practise their newly learned knowledge or skills. Apprentices on the nursing associate apprenticeship complete additional work placements in different clinical settings. In some cases, these work placements take place in different NHS trusts or health care providers, enhancing and widening apprentices' learning experiences.

Leaders from the business school ensure that apprentices gain the experience they need to benefit from the range of modules taught. On the level 7 senior leadership apprenticeship, where the module specification does not match the individual's job role, business school work coaches provide additional support. Where possible, they organise placements which ensure that apprentices gain exposure to differing job activities. This gives apprentices the opportunity to develop their understanding, enabling them to meet their potential.

Leaders use thorough quality assurance procedures to ensure that apprentices receive a high-quality learning experience. They use approval processes prior to allowing schools to teach an apprenticeship standard. As part of approval, schools must show that they have the relevant skills and expertise within the school to teach the apprenticeship. They must demonstrate that they meet internal quality assurance measures. These measures are regularly reviewed by an apprenticeship sub-committee. As a result, apprentices receive teaching from highly qualified and experienced staff, they make good progress and most achieve their expected outcomes.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Significant progress

Leaders and managers in nursing have developed a curriculum which aligns with the requirements set out to practise as a registered nursing associate. They complete 'learning environment profiles' which evaluate the workplace capabilities, ensuring that apprentices gain the experience and support they need. Practice facilitators communicate regularly with assessors on apprentices' progress. Learning is further reinforced through well-planned skills development workshops. As a result, apprentices develop substantial new skills and knowledge throughout their course.

Teachers in nursing use assessment well to check apprentices' understanding of key concepts. They provide apprentices with appropriate support and feedback to develop their knowledge and to challenge any misconceptions identified. As a result, apprentices understand what they need to know, or do, to improve.

Teachers on the level 7 senior leaders degree apprenticeship have designed the curriculum well. They ensure that taught modules present apprentices with the opportunities to practise what they have learned. For example, marketing knowledge sits within two modules. They order the teaching of these at various points, allowing

the apprentice to develop their skills and to build on previous learning. They work closely with business school work coaches and employers to contextualise assessments to the employer's business, which often lead to positive changes to the business. As a result, apprentices build learning over time and can identify the value of their learning.

Teachers on the level 7 senior leaders degree apprenticeship assess the starting points of apprentices precisely. This enables business school work coaches to plan the support apprentices need to complete their apprenticeship. They review this with apprentices frequently and encourage self-reflection, ensuring that apprentices are aware of the progress they make.

Leaders have widened the opportunity for apprentices to return to study. Apprentices can see how the apprenticeship has removed barriers to learning and value highly the opportunity to advance their careers. They recognise the career paths that are now available to them.

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

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding throughout the university. They use regular training, staff meetings and briefings along with signposting across the university campus to ensure a consistent message to staff and apprentices.

Leaders are appropriately experienced and have developed strong links with local safeguarding and 'Prevent' agencies. Processes for the recording of safeguarding concerns are systematic and support the tracking of referrals through to resolution.

Leaders recognised the need for an increased focus on well-being for apprentices. This attention has resulted in changes to some university policies. For example, apprentices can now access counselling facilities within 24 hours of raising a concern.

Apprentices recognise the need to protect themselves. They articulate well the risks of online grooming and know the local issues around county lines. The vast majority of apprentices work within local NHS trusts. During the pandemic, they completed individual risk assessments. These assessments enabled them to work in some of the most exposed wards during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of this experience, they see the value of using the correct personal protective equipment and the need to follow processes such as 'barrier nursing'. Most apprentices say they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.

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