

Inspection of Utility & Construction Training Limited

Inspection dates: 5 to 8 July 2021

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

Information about this provider

Utility and Construction Training Limited (UCT) was established in 2007. The company offers specialised training courses for businesses involved in power, high and low voltage, gas distribution, clean and wastewater networks, highways maintenance, groundworker and construction activities. UCT have their national training centre at Carrington, Manchester, and a further two training centres, one in Bellshill, Scotland and one in Barnet, North London.

UCT began to receive public funding for apprenticeships in May 2017. Before that, it offered apprenticeships as a subcontractor. At the time of the inspection, UCT had 87 apprentices in training. Sixty-three apprentices follow standards-based apprenticeships. Thirty-six apprentices are on the level 3 power network craftsperson apprenticeship and 27 are on the level 2 gas network team leader/gas network operative and highway maintenance skilled operative apprenticeships. Twenty-three apprentices are on the level 2 water utility operations apprenticeship framework. Approximately one fifth of the company's business receives government funding. UCT no longer subcontracts any part of its provision to other organisations.

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

Apprentices enjoy their studies. They particularly enjoy learning practical tasks, such as welding, which they use in the workplace. UCT offers a supportive environment to practise these skills. Apprentices apply their knowledge in a safe, non-critical atmosphere until they achieve competence.

Apprentices develop a high level of knowledge that they use to perform their jobs to industry standards. They develop appropriate skills to carry out tasks in the workplace. Apprentices are proud to share this new knowledge with their colleagues on returning to the workplace.

Apprentices develop high levels of confidence, resilience and teamwork. This helps them communicate better in the workplace and in their personal lives. They develop better work relationships and feel confident in expressing their views and opinions. Most apprentices show determination to succeed. Apprentices whose learning and training was hampered during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions have caught up on missed work.

Apprentices are well supported by tutors in the training centre and by mentors and employers in the workplace. As a result, the vast majority make good progress. They can work independently and take on more complex tasks at work. Employers recognise and value the contributions apprentices make to their business.

Apprentices feel safe and understand how to report any concerns. However, the majority of apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and are unable to relate it to their work or personal lives.

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

Leaders use their significant expertise in the utilities and construction industries to provide effective apprenticeships that meet the needs of employers. They work closely with employers to help them recruit new apprentices to fill skills shortages in these industries. Employers contribute to the development of the curriculum which helps to ensure that it is current and relevant.

Trainers use their expert knowledge to ensure the curriculum is taught in an order that makes sense to apprentices and employers. Trainers build their knowledge and skills progressively. This allows apprentices to master early career skills before they move to more complex activities. For example, they develop competency in using hand tools before they work onsite on raised platforms. Trainers ensure apprentices have a thorough knowledge of health and safety before they progress to onsite work.

Trainers use information about apprentices' starting points well to help plan a curriculum that supports apprentices in the development of substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices practise their new skills in a safe

environment. They become competent at using copper for earthing live equipment before moving to substation dismantling.

Trainers use demonstration and frequent practice, so apprentices develop familiarity and confidence in using their new skills. Apprentices develop brazing skills securely in workshops before transferring these skills to more challenging outdoor environments. They make mistakes and rectify them in the workshops until they achieve industry standard competence.

Apprentices develop their social and personal skills through a detailed tutorial programme. They design campaigns to raise awareness of charitable agencies that support the construction industry. Apprentices are confident in signposting colleagues to the agencies for support, for example for financial assistance or advice on depression.

Leaders do not ensure apprentices have a clear understanding of their next career steps. They do not provide a programme of impartial careers education, advice and guidance. Employers select some apprentices for promotion and further training. This leaves other apprentices to find their own information about further training and careers in the utility and construction industry.

Leaders have only recently introduced new quality assurance processes. These have not had time to bed in or provide leaders with assurance on the quality of education. For example, leaders do not ensure trainers receive accurate and technical feedback about the quality of their training. Professional development for staff is not tailored and has been infrequent. The self-assessment process lacks detail and rigour. Actions identified to rectify weaknesses are not measurable, so leaders are unable to monitor progress.

The new external governor provides insightful scrutiny and appropriate challenge to senior leaders. Leaders have rectified the weaknesses identified at the last monitoring visit.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding apprentices is a high priority. The designated safeguarding lead and staff have appropriate training and experience to carry out their roles effectively. Apprentices feel safe and are safe.

Staff benefit from regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They have had more recent training on aspects such as mental health awareness. Staff know how to keep apprentices safe and report any concerns they may have. Apprentices staying away from home have additional safeguarding risk assessments, and those under the age of 18 have chaperones.

Apprentices, who all work in high risk industries, have a very good understanding of

health and safety procedures. Trainers ensure that apprentices understand about safeguarding and how it applies to them in practice and in work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to ensure they accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education and provide trainers with accurate feedback about the quality of their training, so they know how to improve.
- Leaders should ensure apprentices receive sufficient impartial careers education, advice and guidance throughout their programme, so they are able to make well-informed decisions about their next steps into promoted roles or further training.
- Leaders should ensure apprentices develop a robust understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. Apprentices need to understand how to stay safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in their industry and in their personal lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276404
Address	Pembroke House Carrington Business Park Manchester Road Carrington Manchester M31 4DD
Contact number	0161 776 4186
Website	uctraining.co.uk
CEO	John Killen
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of business development, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection reports. 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.

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