

Inspection of University College Of Estate Management

Inspection dates: 9–12 November 2021

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

Information about this provider

Established in 1919, the University College of Estate Management (UCEM) is an online education provider. The university has developed the academic elements of apprenticeship programmes since October 2015, and now works with a range of partners and employers to provide training to the built-environment sector.

The university has held a contract to provide apprenticeships since March 2017. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,455 apprentices on programmes from level 3 to level 7, all of whom were on standards-based apprenticeships. Of these, 1,341 apprentices were studying the chartered surveyor degree apprenticeship at level 6, 34 on the building control surveyor (integrated degree) apprenticeship at level 6, 23 on the construction site management degree apprenticeship at level 6, 10 on the senior leader apprenticeship at level 7 and 47 on the surveying technician apprenticeship at level 3. The university sub-contracts the delivery of functional skills English and mathematics for 20 learners to Runway Training.

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

Apprentices consistently demonstrate highly positive attitudes to their learning. The expectations of behaviour and conduct set by UCEM and their employers encourage apprentices to use opportunities in the workplace to build upon their achievements. Apprentices recognise the discipline required of them to balance the challenges of their studies with a demanding job role in construction and the built environment. Consequently, they take their studies seriously and this is reflected in their positive behaviour and conduct in the workplace.

Apprentices support each other very well. Some apprentices have created and joined self-help groups to help others and themselves, creating an environment where they share their learning experiences. As a result, apprentices develop a high level of resilience, ensuring they continue to make good progress in their learning.

Apprentices value the positive and nurturing environment created at work and during their learning. They are treated fairly by UCEM staff and their employers. As a result, apprentices flourish, gaining new responsibility in the workplace as they complete the different aspects of their learning and training.

Apprentices who are ambassadors and student representatives develop their professional behaviours. Through the ambassador network they have an opportunity to share their ideas, and discuss and debate topical industry issues, such as sustainability. They represent the university at events, which enables them to develop and improve their confidence and networking skills.

Apprentices feel safe. They understand how to keep themselves safe online as well as in their work environment. For example, chartered surveyor apprentices studying the valuation pathway are given a safety device when they go on field trips. They can use this to alert the company if they need help. As a result, they are reassured that their safety is of high importance to their employer.

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

Leaders work with an extensive range of stakeholders to establish and develop their national and international training needs. Most leaders have links directly to industry and serve on national committees, which include industry bodies, employers, industry champions and apprentices.

The board of trustees is well established, and is integral to the development, progress, and quality assurance of UCEM. Trustees have a wide range of further and higher education and professional experience. They provide effective challenge to leaders and managers about the suitability and quality of the apprenticeships.

Managers have planned and sequenced the curriculum so that learners build on previous learning. For example, building control surveyor apprentices study groundwork management and general law in the early stages of the apprenticeship, which

subsequently helps their understanding of more complex property law later in their studies.

Tutors benefit from a wide range of continuing professional development, which improves their teaching skills and keeps them occupationally current. As a result, the training which apprentices receive reflects current industry standards.

Technical support teams work closely with tutors to develop online materials. Consequently, most apprentices find the online learning engaging, and it helps them to develop new knowledge and skills. However, a few apprentices joining online sessions do not consistently benefit from high-quality training. In a few online sessions, tutors do not use the technology effectively to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable. For example, some modules lack variety and involve large amounts of intensive reading, with which a small number of apprentices struggle to engage.

Academic tutors support apprentices with additional learning needs well. Apprentices acquire the skills they need to succeed through a specialist online learning tool, which UCEM offers to help apprentices reach their full potential through cognitive assessment. For example, apprentices used this tool as they struggled with their recognition of learning in a specific module, resulting in them successfully completing the module to a high standard.

The significant majority of apprentices are developing new knowledge, skills, and behaviours. For example, several apprentices have improved their ability to liaise with clients and have subsequently been given their own properties to manage. These increased responsibilities and challenge allow them to progress towards becoming chartered with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Apprentices use the skills that they have developed confidently in the workplace. For example, training in legislation enabled them to conduct site inspections which improved over time. They were able to conduct tests independently and check live safety systems. However, in a small minority of cases, some level 6 construction site management apprentices cannot link the relevance of their learning to the workplace.

Apprentice outcomes officers use tri-partite reviews effectively to provide a valuable link between the academic elements of the course and the workplace skills development. Academic outcomes officers have detailed discussions with apprentices and their employers regarding progress and set clear targets to support completion. As a result, apprentices are able to implement the academic theories they have learned, in the workplace.

Academic tutors support apprentices to continue to improve their English and mathematics skills. For example, an apprentice successfully presented a health and safety review at board level, another is now able to prepare client reports without support or line manager monitoring. However, leaders do not effectively monitor the small amount of English and mathematics delivered by their subcontractor. Teaching is limited to email prompts to complete activities and mock papers. As a result, apprentices do not gain a strong understanding of the topics, and in a small minority of cases fall significantly

behind their completion targets.

Most apprentices benefit from high-quality feedback that supports them to improve and allows them to revisit learning. However, in a small number of modules, particularly those that are not as well developed within the virtual learning environment, feedback is not always sufficiently detailed to tell apprentices what they need to do to improve their work.

Leaders and managers use a range of activities to monitor the progress of apprentices carefully, such as discussions in tri-partite reviews, tracking apprentices' access of online learning, and attendance at webinars. As a result, the small minority of apprentices who fall behind are swiftly supported to catch up by tutors and apprentice outcomes officers.

Tutors have developed a range of resources to develop knowledge and skills beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship. Leaders and managers have made available a wide range of enrichment activities and professional practice workshops. However, the personal development programme is not well monitored and consequently managers do not know which of the apprentices are participating and the impact it might be having.

Tutors have embedded careers advice in modules across the apprenticeship; however, this is largely linked to the career pathways available with the employer. There are not yet sufficient opportunities for apprentices to access high-quality, unbiased information about career opportunities in the wider sector.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place an experienced team, who ensure that apprentices have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online. Staff receive purposeful training through the staff bulletin, with regular updates on areas of concern. For example, following the Reading knife attacks, apprentice outcomes officers discussed the incident, linking it to citizenship and British values with apprentices during review meetings.

Academic tutors ensure that apprentices are suitably informed about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism at the start of each semester. Leaders have put in place a 'Prevent' duty action plan which is detailed and links to appropriate policies and procedures. As a result, apprentices feel safe, including online, and know who to speak with if they have concerns. However, there is not yet a mechanism to ensure all apprentices receive information about the dangers or concerns in their local areas.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure leaders monitor the subcontracted provision carefully, so that tutors and employers support apprentices studying functional skills in English and mathematics to develop the relevant knowledge to achieve the qualification.

- Ensure that all online materials are of a consistently high standard for all apprenticeships, allowing all apprentices the opportunity to engage in learning more fully and reach their full potential.
- Ensure apprentices have access to impartial careers advice, so that all apprentices are aware of the wider range of progression opportunities available to them.
- Ensure the wider training linked to life in modern Britain is targeted and reflects the areas in which apprentices study and work, to help them keep safe from local risks.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276381
Address	Horizons 60 Queens Road Reading Berkshire RG1 4BS
Contact number	0118 467 2417
Website	www.ucem.ac.uk
Principal	Ashley Wheaton
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Runway Training

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of apprenticeships compliance, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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