

Inspection of APA Procurement Training Limited

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 January 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

APA Procurement Training Limited (APA) is an independent training provider based in Swindon, Wiltshire. It was established to teach the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply qualifications to learners. In 2017, it started delivering the level 4 standards-based apprenticeship programme in commercial procurement and supply.

At APA's first monitoring visit in October 2019, inspectors judged the provider to have made insufficient progress in all three themes. At the second monitoring visit in October 2020, it was judged to have made reasonable progress. At the time of this inspection, 24 apprentices were studying on standards-based apprenticeship programmes in commercial procurement and supply at levels 3 and 4.

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

Apprentices benefit from the close and effective links that APA's leaders have developed with employers. Apprentices are supported in the workplace well by skilled supervisors. Supervisors and tutors work together closely to ensure that apprentices increase their levels of confidence, recognise the contribution they make in the workplace and develop their resilience and independence.

Well-qualified and experienced tutors ensure that apprentices learn and understand the fundamental components of the curriculum. They use current and relevant examples of procurement, which helps apprentices contextualise and apply new knowledge to their own job roles. However, leaders recognise that staff would benefit from further training to enable them to better support the wider personal development of apprentices.

Apprentices benefit from a supportive and calm learning environment. They display positive attitudes to their learning and take great pride in their work. They develop social skills and technical expertise and have high ambitions for their future careers in procurement and supply-chain roles.

Apprentices support each other well. During online sessions, they work together in small groups to develop solutions to improve challenging workplace problems. Apprentices learn how to manage work-based projects successfully in preparation for their end-point assessment. Apprentices achieve their apprenticeship in the planned timescales and make good progress within their chosen careers.

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

Leaders have high aspirations to meet the needs of a wide range of employers by providing apprentices with good-quality training in procurement and supply. They are ambitious and clear about what apprentices will learn and achieve as a result of studying the apprenticeship. Apprentices successfully complete their programmes in the planned timescales and fulfil essential roles within their organisations. This supports their organisations to be more effective and efficient, and such aspects are now integral to the growth of businesses and local, national and international economies.

Leaders have devised an appropriate and well-planned curriculum that meets a well-defined need for skilled staff. The curriculum content is comprehensive and builds on apprentices' prior experience and ongoing learning. As a result, learners build a broad base of knowledge that helps to improve their business, professional and personal skills over time. Apprentices recognise their new knowledge as a result of studying the apprenticeship. Most importantly, they know how to apply this knowledge to their working environment. The depth of training and learning achieved by apprentices is designed to help them gain skills above and beyond the standards expected for the qualification.

Apprentices understand how the curriculum has had a positive impact on their career development. They cite clear and compelling examples of how their apprenticeship, whether at level 3 or 4, is benefiting them and their employer. This includes apprentices' ability to identify and implement new efficiencies at work. Some have introduced improved approaches to tendering, which has led to effective partnership working. Others have implemented new strategies that reduce costs and improve the reliability of the supply chain. Apprentices can identify how the apprenticeship is having a positive influence on their career and job satisfaction.

Most have either gained promotion, been given new responsibilities, or have greater influence in their job roles. Consequently, their self-confidence and sense of self-worth improve substantially.

Tutors are well qualified and highly experienced in the procurement and supply sector. They use this knowledge very well to ensure that apprentices gain a rounded, relevant and up-to-date learning experience. Tutors use current trends, such as in the procurement of personal protective equipment, to ensure that apprentices have real-world examples to work with. Apprentices benefit from a calm and supportive learning environment in which they are confident to speak about their own professional and personal development. Apprentices rightly value the supportive nature of APA's tutors and recognise the positive impact of regular communication with their employers. Tutors set high expectations for apprentices' attendance and behaviour, and apprentices behave respectfully at all times.

Apprentices increase their problem-solving and detailed research skills. Most demonstrate good skills in project management and data analysis alongside initiative, planning and organisational skills. They are highly complimentary about the positive impact their learning has had on their work. For instance, they can provide examples of how they are more effective under pressure and can challenge poor practice in their workplace.

Apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and are highly motivated to succeed. They take pride in their work and have high ambitions for their future careers. Most apprentices complete the apprenticeship successfully and continue working for their current employer. However, while trainers and employers provide apprentices with useful guidance on the next steps for promotion and career goals and training, apprentices do not benefit from impartial careers advice and are not sufficiently aware of the wider career or progression opportunities available to them.

Leaders have not ensured that apprentices benefit from a structured wider curriculum offer. Consequently, too many have only a superficial understanding of personal development topics, such as healthy relationships, mental health and well-being. For example, apprentices are unaware of the signs of controlling or coercive relationships.

Leaders' quality assurance of teaching and learning is a largely informal process and requires further improvement. Leaders evaluate recorded learning sessions and listen into live online sessions on a regular basis, gaining evidence of the impact of training on apprentices' learning. While these activities provide some indication of an individual tutor's competence, leaders do not use this information well enough to establish the extent to which apprentices are making progress in learning the curriculum compared with their starting points. In addition, leaders do not use this intelligence to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high for all apprentices. However, tutors discuss and evaluate with leaders the quality and impact of teaching and learning sessions. They reflect on what could be improved to maximise the impact of the training on apprentices' knowledge and skills development. As a result, tutors change the format, approach, content and

sequencing of sessions to make these more relevant and informative for apprentices.

Leaders have enhanced the effectiveness of governance through the recent recruitment of a non-executive director. Leaders have recently carried out a rigorous self-assessment process and now have a better understanding of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this knowledge on the quality of provision received by apprentices. Leaders' strategic actions have not yet resulted in systems that capture fully key data, such as staff training needs, to improve further the quality of teaching. For example, many tutors are not confident in developing wider aspects of learners' knowledge about topics such as fundamental British values and the risks associated with radicalisation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices understand the dangers of working online and know to whom and how to report any concerns. They are confident that any issues will be dealt with quickly by employers and provider staff.

Leaders recognise rightly that they need to strengthen further the culture of safeguarding. For example, leaders have an appropriate safeguarding policy that includes the arrangements for safer recruitment. However, they recognise the need to improve the administrative processes for the monitoring of staff recruitment and training, so that they can be assured that appropriate safeguarding checks and actions have taken place to safeguard apprentices.

Leaders have provided apprentices with training on safeguarding, the risks associated with radicalisation and exploitation and fundamental British values at the start of their programme. However, tutors do not revisit this learning frequently enough to ensure that apprentices deepen their knowledge and understanding of these topics in the context of their working practices and personal lives.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high and measure apprentices' progress from their starting points to ensure that they make good progress in understanding and remembering the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices benefit from studying a curriculum that includes a wide range of personal development topics, including impartial careers education, advice and guidance, so that they are better prepared for, and informed about future careers.
- Leaders should ensure that the teaching of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism develops apprentices' understanding of how they could be affected by such matters within their work and personal lives.

- Leaders and governors should implement fully systems to quality assure policies and processes to deliver rapid improvements in the recording and analysis of the arrangements for safeguarding.

Provider details

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Website	www.apatraining.co.uk
CEO	Ian Penman
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, 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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