

Inspection of Sheffield Hallam University

Inspection dates:

8 to 11 February 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) began the direct delivery of apprenticeships in 2015. The number of apprentices who study at SHU has grown significantly in recent years. At the time of this inspection, there were 2,006 apprentices on 33 standards-based programmes in seven different sector-subject areas. The large majority of apprentices study degree apprenticeship standards at level 6. Most of the remaining apprentices study degree apprenticeship standards at level 7. Less than 5% of apprentices study standards-based programmes at levels 4 and 5.

Nearly a quarter of apprentices study standards related to health, public services and care. This includes the level 6 police constable standard, which accounts for 12% of all apprentices at the university. Large numbers of apprentices study standards linked to construction, planning and the built environment. SHU subcontracts the delivery of functional skills in English and mathematics to The Sheffield College.

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

Apprentices increase their confidence as a result of the support and training that they receive from their tutors and coaches. They put this confidence to good use in the workplace. For example, construction site supervisor apprentices deliver 'toolbox talks' to site operatives that outline their company's approach to diversity and inclusion.

University staff and employers provide apprentices with a wide range of relevant information on how to keep themselves safe. Apprentices understand how to stay safe at the university, when staying in the city for study, and in their workplace. For example, packaging professional apprentices, who travel from other regions for their training, receive useful information on personal safety in Sheffield.

Tutors and work-based learning coaches set out clear expectations for apprentices' behaviour from the start of their programmes. They contextualise and explain effectively to apprentices the importance of professionalism and respect. Apprentices studying the chartered manager degree apprenticeship learn about the importance of psychological contracts and the implications of these for conduct in the workplace. Apprentices respond well and demonstrate behaviours that are appropriate in their job roles.

Work-based learning coaches work well with employers to create a purposeful and supportive learning environment for apprentices. Most apprentices value the tripartite approach to mapping and monitoring their progress and quickly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, a minority of workplace mentors for physiotherapy apprentices hold very senior roles, which limits their capacity to provide the same high level of support that other apprentices receive.

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

Since the previous inspection in 2019, leaders have taken a range of deliberate and meaningful steps that are having a positive impact on the quality of education that apprentices receive. For example, they have introduced the role of work-based learning coach into programme teams and changed the approach to curriculum design. Leaders now require academic teams to write apprenticeship programmes that start with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the apprenticeship standard, as opposed to degree programme and module learning outcomes.

University leaders work very well with employers and leaders in the Sheffield City Region to identify and address skills needs. They host constructive employer advisory boards, support trailblazer groups and provide effective support to the combined mayoral authority. This enables the university to provide apprenticeships that address local and national priorities, such as in construction, health and packaging.

Curriculum leaders develop a suitably ambitious curriculum across the range of apprenticeship standards. For example, the content of the packaging professional apprenticeship is highly innovative and informed by social and political interest in sustainability and reducing the use of plastics. As a result, apprentices, many of whom may otherwise not have been able to engage in higher education, gain the knowledge and skills that they need to enjoy successful careers.

University staff make good use of their partnerships and subcontracting arrangements with employers to plan relevant curriculums. They work well, for example, with South Yorkshire Police to design and teach the curriculum for police constable apprentices. This helps apprentices to develop quickly the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be highly effective police officers.

Tutors plan the curriculum carefully and logically so that apprentices develop underpinning knowledge that they can then apply in practical situations. As a result, apprentices know more and can do more. Physiotherapy apprentices learn increasingly complex aspects of neurology and respiration, which they then practise during practical training and simulation.

Tutors and work-based learning coaches are well qualified and skilled in their subjects. They put this expertise to good use to plan and deliver effective teaching that makes frequent reference to industry practices to deepen apprentices' understanding of a broad range of concepts. For example, tutors of construction quantity surveying share their experiences of sustainability and energy efficiency.

Leaders provide staff with the opportunity to undertake meaningful training to support the delivery of high-quality apprenticeships. Department managers facilitate 'green days', when teaching staff come together to discuss subject-specific teaching. Staff also benefit from the strategic relationships that leaders have with employers that help to inform their research. Construction tutors have been able to visit a zero-carbon concept home being developed by an employer.

Leaders and managers oversee subcontracted provision well. They hold monthly monitoring meetings to identify apprentices who are at risk of falling behind and agree interventions to support apprentices to catch up on any missed learning. Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have taken rigorous and collaborative action with staff at The Sheffield College to strengthen the management, oversight and delivery of functional skills courses in English and mathematics for those apprentices who need to achieve qualifications in these subjects.

Leaders deliberately select governors with the appropriate skills and expertise to carry out their role effectively. Since the previous inspection, leaders have recruited new governors with specific expertise in further education and apprenticeships. External governors provide meaningful challenge to leaders about the quality of education that apprentices receive. They seek reassurance about the extent to which apprentices receive the off-the-job training to which they are entitled and the effectiveness of support for apprentices following periods of COVID-19-related absence.

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive framework for planning the wider curriculum for apprentices. They have developed a 'scheme for embedding essentials', which helps staff to plan where relevant topics such as preparing for life in modern Britain fit naturally into the curriculum. For example, construction town-planning apprentices benefit from specific discussions about democracy. Although most apprentices understand fundamental British values well and can apply them to their workplace, a few only have a superficial understanding.

Leaders and staff have developed a thorough range of opportunities for apprentices to receive information, advice and guidance to support their next steps. Apprentices can access specialist support from dedicated employability advisers. They also benefit from individual career conversations in professional practice modules that form part of their programme. Most apprentices are well informed about the options available to them after their apprenticeship. For example, packaging professional apprentices have a good understanding of the diverse range of employment routes open to them, such as in packaging design, manufacturing and labelling.

Leaders and staff provide comprehensive support for apprentices who need extra help at difficult times. Apprentices receive assistance from a variety of 'Hallam Help' services, such as mental health support. Those who access these services speak very highly of them. However, a few apprentices who have had no need for the support are not fully aware of what is available to them should they need it.

University staff communicate well with most employers to ensure that they are fully aware of their role in the apprenticeship. Most staff clearly outline the role and expectations of the workplace mentor and provide supplementary information such as newsletters where necessary. A few workplace mentors for physiotherapy apprentices are insufficiently informed before they agree to become a mentor about what their role entails or the level of commitment required.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders implement suitable structures and policies to support the safeguarding and well-being of apprentices. They assess appropriately the risks facing apprentices and oversee actions to mitigate these risks through a dedicated safeguarding advisory group and board. Leaders keep themselves up to date with issues that could affect the safety and well-being of apprentices.

Leaders provide staff with relevant training to raise awareness of safeguarding matters. Staff complete a range of online modules, which are supplemented with targeted training in departments. While monitoring systems are being developed through the roll-out of new training modules, oversight of compliance with safeguarding training requirements is not clear enough.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Continue to develop and evaluate the 'scheme for embedding essentials' framework so that all apprentices are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Ensure that there is clear oversight of the safeguarding training that staff complete to confirm that there is full compliance with university policies.
- Consider and identify additional ways in which the expectations of workplace mentors can be successfully communicated to all employers, so that all apprentices can enjoy the same high levels of support.
- Ensure that all apprentices are fully aware of the range of support services available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133871
Address	City Campus Howard Street Sheffield S1 1WB
Contact number	0114 225 2051
Website	www.shu.ac.uk
Principal	Professor Sir Chris Husbands
Provider type	University
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 March 2019
Main subcontractors	Derby College Group South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner The Sheffield College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of skills and partnerships, 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.

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