

University of East London

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 East London is based in the London Borough of Newham. The university gained a direct contract to teach standards-based apprenticeships in 2019 and, currently, has around 400 apprentices. Of these, 196 apprentices were studying the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeships. Seventy-eight were on the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional standard and 33 were on the civil engineer standard. The remaining apprentices were mostly on other level 6 apprenticeship standards in medical, science or engineering-related subjects. Thirteen apprentices were on the level 7 academic professional standard. All apprentices were aged over 19. The university does not subcontract any of its apprenticeship provision.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have carefully selected apprenticeship standards that link with the expertise they have in their schools, and for which there are shortages of trained employees. They have a strong focus on, and commitment to, supporting local people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds into sustainable employment. Leaders have highly effective partnerships with employers so that the programmes they offer help substantially to close known workforce gaps, such as in health trusts.

Leaders have set up a suitable management structure to achieve consistency in the quality of apprentices' experiences across different programmes. The apprenticeship compliance sub-committee is an effective forum for representatives from each school and from central services of the university to share good practice. Leaders have established clear and effective lines of accountability through the committee to the university's departments.

Leaders and managers evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the provision accurately. They have introduced suitable processes to allow staff to record and monitor closely the progress that apprentices make. They acknowledge that they are still to achieve consistency in the quality and amount of information held for apprentices on all programmes.

Employers are very positive about the relationship they have with the university. They receive sufficient information about the progress of their apprentices. They appreciate that staff respond quickly to any concerns they may have.

Staff and employers have a clear understanding of the requirements for off-the-job training and ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement. Apprentices benefit from weekly teaching sessions and study time. However, on occasions, apprentices find the academic workload high and struggle to complete all of this in their allocated training time during busy periods at work.

Leaders and managers provide suitable support for those apprentices who need to complete qualifications in mathematics and English. They have recently recruited new specialist tutors who offer a range of times for apprentices to attend teaching sessions.

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

Staff recruit apprentices appropriately onto programmes. Apprentices work in suitable jobs that enable them to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours in line with their training. Apprentices appreciate the considerable expertise of their teachers and the benefits an apprenticeship brings them. They are very knowledgeable about the career options available to them on completion.

Leaders have carefully considered the content and teaching of the apprenticeships. On some programmes, such as applied health care, they make good use of an employer advisory board to shape the content of the curriculum. Teachers focus clearly on developing apprentices' relevant skills and behaviours, such as clinical reasoning, digital proficiency and emotional intelligence.

Apprentices learn in a logical order. They gain foundation knowledge early in their programme and refer back to this when they complete specific tasks at work. For example, in civil engineering, apprentices learn about ground conditions and mechanical structures. They then apply this at work in subsequent years and projects. Apprentices remember their learning well. For example, digital and technological solution apprentices recall confidently their knowledge about coding and programming languages.

In most cases, staff assess accurately apprentices' starting points and, as necessary, accredit apprentices' prior learning. Staff make good use of assessment during the programme so that apprentices know how well they are doing and receive helpful feedback on areas for further improvement. The majority of apprentices are aware of the requirements of their final assessments, although, at times, staff do not provide this information early enough in the programme.

Staff carry out reviews of apprentices' progress, but, too often, these are not frequent enough or employers are unable to attend them. Staff do not reflect sufficiently with the apprentices and their employers on the workplace knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices have gained over time.

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

Leaders and managers place a high emphasis on safeguarding learners and on supporting them and staff to maintain positive mental health. They have put effective management structures and policies in place, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty, for the effective management of safeguarding, and to share good practice. Leaders liaise appropriately with local agencies so that they are informed of the greatest risks that apprentices face. They make sure that they are informed about ways of managing these risks through regular training.

Apprentices feel safe at the university. They know how to report concerns. Apprentices are familiar with safeguarding as it relates to their programmes or areas of work. Staff inform apprentices of safeguarding topics at the start of the programme but do not do enough through reviews to assure themselves of apprentices' ongoing understanding of these topics.

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