

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 133852

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Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Type of provider: Higher education institution

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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 Newcastle upon Tyne began the delivery of apprenticeships in September 2019. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 123 apprentices enrolled on four different standards-based apprenticeships. Almost all apprentices study level 7 standards. Over half of the current apprentices are studying the level 7 digital and technical solutions standard and almost a third are studying the level 7 senior leader standard. The remaining small number of apprentices are studying the level 7 power engineer standard or the level 3 team leader/supervisor standard. All apprentices are aged 19 or above. The university subcontracts the delivery of courses leading to functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics to Runway Training.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear and appropriate strategy for the introduction and growth of apprenticeship programmes. They are firmly committed to the development and delivery of programmes only in areas where they have subject expertise and that meet regional needs. Leaders had a cautious approach to the initial implementation of apprenticeships at the university but now have plans to expand into new subject areas such as electrification.

Managers ensure that employers understand their role in apprenticeships. Employers provide apprentices with the protected time away from the workplace to which they are entitled. They also identify appropriate ways in which apprentices can apply their knowledge and practise their skills in the workplace.

Managers recruit apprentices with integrity. Staff have at least three 'touch points' with apprentices before the programme begins. These involve apprentices self-

assessing their knowledge, skills and behaviours in advance of attending an interview to assess their suitability for the apprenticeship. This means that apprentices are recruited to appropriate programmes on which they can quickly develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their job role and career aspirations.

Managers have a clear oversight of apprentices' progress. They track closely the off-the-job training that apprentices complete and the frequency with which tripartite meetings take place. Leaders and managers make good use of this information to help apprentices who fall behind. However, leaders rightly recognise that their approach to capturing the extent to which apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours is not sufficiently well developed and have suitable plans to improve this.

Leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve further the quality of training that apprentices receive. They thoughtfully introduced new staff roles to support apprentices better and created governance structures which ensure that managers are held to account for the progress of apprentices. However, a few academic staff do not yet have a clear enough understanding of the requirements of apprenticeship programmes.

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 make effective use of their research activity and their networks to inform the curriculum. For example, staff who teach the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship share their contemporary expertise on sustainability and inclusion. Apprentices apply their learning of these topics well in the workplace to challenge organisational cultures and perceptions of race in their organisations.

Apprentices develop relevant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they apply well in the workplace. Employers speak highly of the contribution that apprentices make. Apprentices on the level 7 digital and technical solutions programme put their newly developed leadership skills to good use and, as a result, can successfully manage complex development projects.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the external assessment that apprentices need to complete at the end of their programme. Skills coaches provide effective support to apprentices in readiness for this final assessment and help them to plan suitable work-based projects in advance. Apprentices know what is expected of them and are making at least expected levels of progress with their preparations.

Lecturers and skills coaches provide apprentices with useful advice and clear pointers on how to improve their assignment work. Most apprentices value the timely support

that they receive and use this guidance well to improve the standard of their work. However, a few apprentices on the level 7 digital and technical solutions standard do not benefit from such responsive guidance and support.

Staff thoroughly assess what apprentices know and can do before they join the apprenticeship. Most skills coaches make good use of this information and work well with employers to plan a meaningful programme of training for apprentices. Apprentices on the level 7 senior leader programme benefit from attending board meetings and completing financial planning tasks to fill gaps in their experience and understanding. However, a few apprentices on the level 7 digital and technical solutions standard with no prior experience in coding do not receive enough support to improve rapidly their knowledge of this topic.

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

Leaders are well trained and keep themselves up to date with current threats and risks. They carry out suitable assessments of the risks that apprentices might face and successfully implement relevant policies for the safeguarding of apprentices.

Staff make available a collection of helpful resources which apprentices can access to support their safety and well-being. Skills coaches discuss relevant safeguarding topics in their monthly meetings with apprentices. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe at the university, in the workplace and online. They know who to contact if they need help.

Staff complete a range of topical safeguarding training which includes themes such as coercive control and mental health awareness. However, systems for overseeing the completion of training are not rigorous enough, making it difficult for leaders to see the full picture. Leaders have already taken action to address this, but it is too soon to see the impact.

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