

# University of Bath

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 Bath (the university) started providing apprenticeships in 2018 for employers across England. It offers integrated degree apprenticeships in level 7 digital and technology solutions professional apprenticeships (DTSP), and level 7 architect apprenticeships (Arch). Apprentices predominantly work in financial services and with architects' practices. At the time of inspection, 88 apprentices were studying the DTSP and six the Arch. A further six apprentices were on a break in learning. All apprentices were over 19 years old.

## Themes

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

### Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have developed ambitious apprenticeships that meet the needs of their sectors well. They offer apprenticeships in areas where they have strong expertise and can teach apprentices the content to the high standard the sectors demand. They have used their extensive specialist knowledge and their well-established relationships with employers to develop apprenticeships that meet employers' needs and offer them flexibility. For example, on the DTSP programme leaders have introduced options that employers value highly, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. As result, apprentices acquire substantial skills, knowledge and key behaviours and have a positive impact on their employers' businesses.

Leaders ensure that experienced and well-qualified tutors teach apprentices. They recruit tutors carefully to ensure they have the right expertise and experience. The university also offers structured professional development that contributes effectively to maintaining tutors' expertise. For example, tutors receive help with gaining membership of professional bodies, improving their teaching and spending time in industrial placements. They also receive time away from teaching to undertake subject-focused research. As a result, apprentices benefit from tutors who are

informed by the latest research and have up-to-date sector knowledge and experience.

Leaders do not maintain detailed enough oversight of their apprenticeship provision. Because of this, leaders cannot be sure that all the requirements of an apprenticeship are met. For example, they do not check that meetings between employers, tutors and apprentices take place regularly. Oversight of measures to assure the quality of apprenticeship provision is not a sufficiently integral part of wider institutional quality assurance processes. As a result, leaders do not routinely identify strengths or weaknesses relating specifically to apprenticeships. Leaders understand this and are putting in place arrangements to ensure appropriate scrutiny and action.

Governors challenge and support leaders well. For example, they have identified the need for increasing oversight and quality assurance of the apprenticeship and have challenged leaders to provide it. These measures are still quite new and as such their impact is not yet known.

**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**

Leaders and managers have devised and implemented a curriculum that is sequenced effectively, to allow apprentices to build their knowledge and skills over time. For example, the DTSP apprentices learn about key areas such as programming structures and problem-solving before moving on to more complex aspects of software engineering. However, apprentices only have a limited understanding of the requirements of the assessments that take place at the end of their apprenticeship.

Apprentices take on substantial additional responsibilities within their workplace. For example, DTSP apprentices provide mentoring support and digital skills development for other members of their employers' staff. Apprentices continue to improve their English language skills, including the use of specialist vocabulary, throughout their apprenticeships. For example, they extend their written English skills through writing reports. Apprentices improve their mathematics skills through practise. For example, the use of mathematics is integral to the programming modules DTSP apprentices study. Arch apprentices routinely use a wide range of calculations needed for building design and construction.

Apprentices benefit from using high-quality learning resources when studying at the university. Arch apprentices have the use of architectural studio space. Tutors and external experts support them well when they are using the studios. DTSP apprentices have access to a wide range of resources when learning programming code. Their peers often work with them in the problem-solving and debugging of code. This, along with undertaking group-based projects, assists apprentices in developing teamwork and cooperative working skills.

The majority of apprentices are well supported by tutors and workplace mentors during their apprenticeship. For example, Arch apprentices, their tutors and mentors meet frequently to plan and coordinate apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. However, for first year DTSP apprentices, formal reviews of their progress are not frequent enough.

<p><b>How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?</b></p>	<p><b>Reasonable progress</b></p>
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Leaders have adopted appropriate policies for safeguarding and concerning the 'Prevent' duty as part of a whole-establishment approach to student well-being. Leaders have ensured that designated safeguarding officers (DSOs) are appropriately trained and experienced. DSOs regularly seek expert external advice and guidance to ensure that they remain up to date with safeguarding matters. However, apprentices do not receive enough explicit teaching about the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism.

The university offers a wide range of pastoral support services which are available to apprentices, including the periods when apprentices are working with their employer. These include help with health and well-being both online and through face-to-face sessions with qualified staff.

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