

Inspection of University of Leeds

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The University of Leeds began providing levy-funded apprenticeships in September 2017 through its Lifelong Learning Centre. The range of programmes offered includes standards-based apprenticeships at levels 5, 6 and 7. At the time of the inspection, the university had 544 apprentices, all of whom were above 19 years of age. Of these, 40 apprentices were on the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship (integrated foundation degree) and 13 were on the level 5 healthcare assistant practitioner apprenticeship. There were 266 apprentices studying at level 6, of whom 155 were on the digital and technology solutions professional apprenticeship, 82 on the registered nurse apprenticeship, and 29 on the level 6 chartered manager degree apprenticeship. There were 225 apprentices studying at level 7, with 85 on the advanced clinical practitioner apprenticeship, 73 on the senior leader (integrated higher degree) apprenticeship, and 67 on the senior leader apprenticeship.

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

Apprentices acquire significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout their apprenticeship and learn the specialist skills required for their roles. They are well prepared for higher-level careers in healthcare, nursing, clinical practice, leadership and digital technologies. The small number of apprentices who have completed their end-point assessments have achieved with high grades.

Apprentices enjoy their programmes and are proud to be part of the university community. They appreciate the professional learning environment, including the library, which is well resourced to support research and further study.

Apprentices benefit from a culture of care and respect which makes them feel valued and safe. They build positive and productive relationships with university staff and their peers. Apprentices who are returning to learning as mature adults appreciate the support that they receive to enable them to develop the study skills, resilience and confidence that they need to make progress.

Apprentices have access to a variety of enrichment opportunities, and many participate in events and activities that enhance their apprenticeship experience. Apprentices on the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional programme participate in a broad range of sports activities, such as boxing, kickboxing and football. Apprentices also benefit from attending guest lectures and seminars, which enhance their knowledge and understanding of change and innovation in their sectors and disciplines.

Apprentices who have specific learning needs are well supported through the provision of additional academic support, such as one-to-one teaching and targeted small group sessions. Staff provide aids and assistive technologies for apprentices with specific learning requirements. As a result, apprentices with additional needs are supported well to progress and be successful at work.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for their apprenticeship programme to provide opportunities that enable apprentices to participate in higher education programmes that align well with employer and regional skills needs. They work collaboratively with employers to provide ambitious programmes that address employer demand for professional and higher skilled employees. For example, leaders and employers have worked closely together to build into the apprenticeship the digital competencies and content that level 6 digital and technology solutions professional apprentices need to be successful at work. These apprentices study Master's level degree units and 'discovery modules' that complement the technical curriculum and better prepare them for higher-level roles in their workplaces.

Leaders and managers have created an open, honest and transparent culture in which they strive for excellence. They have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision and take the necessary actions needed to improve underperformance where identified. For example, leaders responded proactively to retention concerns on the level 5 healthcare assistant practitioner apprenticeship and worked quickly to understand what the issues were before implementing a plan to resolve problems and improve retention.

Leaders and managers engage positively with most employers to ensure that apprentices benefit from and have access to high-quality on- and off-the-job training. Most employers provide apprentices who work in challenging and demanding roles with the time to complete their apprenticeship studies. However, a few apprentices on healthcare-related apprenticeships do not benefit from sufficient protected time to complete their off-the-job training. As a result, these few apprentices struggle to manage their academic and professional workloads compared with their peers.

Leaders and managers ensure that subcontractors deliver high-quality training in clinical skills, English and mathematics. Managers participate in fortnightly meetings with teaching staff at Luminate Education Group in order to understand the progress made by apprentices who require functional skills qualifications. As a result, a high proportion of apprentices achieve the qualifications that they need to progress to Gateway Qualifications and undertake their end-point assessments.

Apprentices benefit from teachers who have considerable professional and academic expertise in their specialist sectors. Teachers skilfully use their research activities to inform the content of the curriculum and their teaching. For example, level 6 registered nurse apprenticeship teachers use research information from their doctoral studies to broaden apprentices' understanding of the wide range of medicines available when undertaking patient consultations. As a result, apprentices develop a deeper understanding of the topics they study.

Teachers carefully plan and sequence the curriculum so that apprentices develop a firm understanding of key concepts before competently applying what they have learned in their workplaces. For example, level 7 advanced clinical practitioner apprentices are taught how to conduct a medical diagnosis prior to prescribing medication. They then apply their training in clinical settings and recommend treatments, improving rehabilitation outcomes for patients.

Teachers check apprentices' understanding of learning effectively, using a range of assessment strategies, such as observing apprentices' practice and setting challenging written assignments. They carefully identify and correct misunderstandings and misconceptions. However, in a few instances, assessment feedback is insufficiently focused on helping apprentices to understand what they need to do to improve their work or sustain positive outcomes. For example, on a programming assessment completed by level 6 digital and technology solutions professional apprentices, questions were marked and graded but apprentices did not receive sufficient explanations about how these marks had been achieved.

Most teachers use reviews to identify and discuss any barriers to apprentices' well-being. This includes discussing apprentices' mental health and directing apprentices to useful sources of support. However, too many apprentices do not benefit from reviews that allow them to have meaningful discussions about their progress or their future on- and off-the-job training. As a result, these apprentices do not have the opportunity to reflect fully on their learning, monitor their progress or plan future learning opportunities. Leaders and managers have taken action to improve the consistency of the quality of reviews, and most staff are improving their practice to support apprentices more effectively.

Most apprentices develop very positive attitudes towards their learning and develop professional workplace behaviours. They are committed to their apprenticeship and are keen to achieve the high standard that their teachers and employers expect of them. However, a few apprentices do not have a secure understanding of the arrangements for end-point assessment, and a very few level 5 nursing associate apprentices do not appreciate its importance.

Apprentices benefit from a range of opportunities that prepare them well to become more responsible citizens. Apprentices on the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional apprenticeship study a computing module which provides them with information and guidance about ethical hacking. They are reminded to comply with all relevant legislation when undertaking the practice and, consequently, apprentices understand their responsibilities.

Teachers provide apprentices with helpful careers advice and guidance. Apprentices attend careers fairs and talks, which they find useful, and are supported with understanding how they can seek alternative careers should they choose to discontinue their current employment. For example, level 6 nursing apprentices are directed to alternative careers available in community nursing and district nursing. Apprentices become more aware of the opportunities open to them with their current and other employers.

Those responsible for governance have a clear understanding of apprenticeship performance and the progress of apprentices. They take an active role in committee and board meetings to consider apprenticeship provision and monitor improvement actions taken by leaders and managers. As a result, governance is effective, and leaders and managers value the opportunities provided through frequent challenge to assess the impact of the improvement actions that they take.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance are committed to the safety and well-being of apprentices. Leaders ensure that all staff are suitable to work with apprentices and promote a safe and inclusive culture where apprentices can flourish. Apprentices feel safe and know how to stay safe.

Staff provide apprentices with useful, age-appropriate information that helps them to understand their rights and responsibilities in their workplaces and during their time at the university. For example, level 6 digital and technology solutions professional apprentices benefit from listening to guest speakers who cover topics on sexual harassment in the workplace. This information raises apprentices' awareness of the challenges that women in particular may face and how their own personal actions can contribute positively to sustaining a culture that eradicates sexual harassment.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all employers understand and protect off-the-job training time so that all apprentices complete their studies effectively and experience a positive work-life balance.
- Ensure that all apprentices are provided with clear feedback that identifies what they have done well and what they need to do to improve to sustain positive outcomes.
- Ensure that all apprentices and employers have a clear understanding of the commitment required to complete an apprenticeship by clearly communicating the requirements of the apprenticeship and the end-point assessment.
- Ensure that all staff, employers and apprentices engage in rich discussions during reviews so that apprentices fully understand their progress and can plan future learning opportunities which are meaningful.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133839
Address	Woodhouse Lane Leeds LS2 9JT
Contact number	0113 243 1751
Website	www.leeds.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Simone Buitendijk
Provider type	University
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Luminate Education Group Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of learning enhancement, 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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