

# Inspection of Cambridge Professional Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

26 to 29 July 2022

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Apprenticeships

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Cambridge Professional Academy Limited is a national independent learning provider. It started to provide levy-funded apprenticeships in November 2018. Cambridge Professional Academy specialises in providing standards-based apprenticeships for the sales, management and marketing sectors.

There are approximately 153 apprentices in training, and most are over 19 years of age. Most apprentices are training on the level 4 marketing executive programme. On the level 6 marketing manager programme there are 52 apprentices in training and on the level 3 marketing assistant programme there are 18 apprentices. There are fewer than 10 apprentices on the level 4 sales executive, level 3 team leader/supervisor and level 5 operations manager programmes. Apprenticeship training is a hybrid of face-to-face and remote teaching. The provider has no subcontractors and no apprentices in receipt of high-needs funding.

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

Too many apprentices struggle to keep up to date with their off-the-job learning because the demands of their workplace are too great. Apprentices appreciate being able to develop their skills and knowledge alongside their job role. They value the flexible access to learning, which fits in with the demands of their workplace. However, apprentices do not benefit from effective guidance, support and review of this element of their learning.

Apprentices enjoy positive, inclusive and professional learning environments, in the classroom and online. Apprentices are taught by well-qualified and experienced trainers and coaches. Apprentices contribute well to discussions. They make insightful comments and ask questions to clarify their understanding. They learn how to express their views, and they understand how to listen to the views of others.

Apprentices develop professional behaviours that are relevant to their marketing job roles. For example, they swiftly learn to collaborate with colleagues and to work effectively in teams. Apprentices learn to give and receive constructive feedback in the classroom. As a result, they develop their confidence and become more resilient.

Apprentices make increasingly valuable contributions to their companies. Many apprentices take on new responsibilities or are identified by their managers for subsequent promotions. For example, marketing assistant apprentices become directly involved with clients or lead on new projects.

Apprentices enjoy a safe and secure working environment. They are aware of the risks associated with the internet and know how to keep themselves safe online. Apprentices are confident that their employers, trainers and skills coaches would not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination should it occur.

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

Leaders do not ensure that workplace managers have a full understanding of the apprenticeship programme. Leaders work effectively with employers at a strategic level to make sure the apprenticeship meets the needs of the business. However, leaders do not involve workplace managers in the planning of the apprentices' programme. Leaders do not ensure that apprentices are able to apply and deepen their new knowledge and skills in the workplace. As a result, too many apprentices find the work difficult to use in their job roles and make slow progress. In addition, too many apprentices withdraw from their training programme.

Managers and trainers plan the marketing curriculum effectively. They teach small modules of learning so that apprentices can understand concepts more easily. Trainers start the marketing manager course by considering the structure and roles within a marketing department. Trainers move on with apprentices to consider future developments in the marketing sector, such as the use of artificial intelligence.

Trainers use their current and extensive experience effectively to make learning realistic and meaningful for apprentices. Trainers give marketing assistant apprentices practical tips on which software to use to reach different customers.

Trainers provide apprentices with demanding assignments and projects. Apprentices produce work at the standard expected. In a few cases, apprentices' employers adopt recommendations apprentices make in their project work. Marketing manager apprentices use their learning to inform the marketing strategy for a new product. Marketing executive apprentices use page rankings on search engines when introducing new products.

Most trainers use classroom activities appropriately to check apprentices' understanding of new concepts. Trainers use questioning techniques effectively to check apprentices' learning. Trainers encourage apprentices to discuss what they have learned in previous workshops, such as Mendelow's matrices and Gant charts. Apprentices explain confidently how they have applied these techniques in their workplace.

Trainers do not provide apprentices with detailed and helpful feedback on their assignments so that they know how to improve. Where apprentices do receive feedback, too often, they do not receive it promptly to enable them to continue to make swift progress. Apprentices value the verbal feedback that they receive from trainers. In presentations and professional discussions, apprentices understand what they have done well. They know what they need to do to improve their skills.

Staff do not use initial assessment effectively to plan for the training needs of individual apprentices. Staff do not establish apprentices' English and mathematics exemptions early enough. Too few apprentices reach their end-point assessment having secured English and mathematics achievements. As a result, they are not able to progress with their apprenticeship completion.

Apprentices learn technical language and become skilled and confident at using these terms in their job roles. Trainers teach apprentices proofreading skills to enable them to self-correct their written work. However, too few trainers and skills coaches correct apprentices' grammar and punctuation errors consistently. As a result, apprentices do not improve the quality of their written work sufficiently. Trainers develop apprentices' mathematics skills effectively through financial and budgeting units and assignments. For example, marketing assistants can calculate breakeven points and return on investments.

Too few apprentices remain on their apprenticeship programmes. Trainers and skills coaches do not communicate effectively with apprentices' workplace managers. Skills coaches do not ensure that apprentices' progress reviews take place frequently enough. Apprentices, employers and skills coaches do not have a shared understanding of the progress apprentices are making. Skills coaches do not establish what the apprentice needs to do to improve. As a result, too few of those apprentices that do remain on their programme, complete within their planned end dates.

Most apprentices have a good understanding of the components of their apprenticeship. They know what they need to do to complete their programme. Most apprentices know how they will be assessed and what they need to do to gain high grades. Most apprentices feel well prepared for their final examinations. Marketing executive apprentices value the verbal feedback that they receive on professional discussions. As a result, they feel well prepared for their final examination. However, marketing manager apprentices do not understand how their final examination is graded.

Staff do not routinely share helpful information about apprentices with a declared learning need. Leaders have not established a well-planned approach to support apprentices with a learning difficulty or disability. However, leaders have ensured that learning materials are easily accessible in different formats. Trainers and skills coaches make helpful adaptations to teaching and assessments to help individual apprentices. As a result, learners with a learning need progress in line with other apprentices.

Most apprentices receive helpful careers guidance. Trainers and coaches help apprentices to have a good understanding of their progression options. Tutors and coaches use their inside knowledge of the sector to support apprentices in planning their careers. However, too few apprentices have received, or consider themselves to have received, impartial careers advice and guidance.

Most apprentices have a limited understanding of fundamental British values, radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have not considered the order and selection of the wider curriculum well enough. When teaching these topics, trainers and skills coaches make limited connections with apprentices' workplace or personal context. For example, apprentices recall looking at the values held by different communities. They can articulate the legal framework around marketing. However, most apprentices do not recognise issues such as tolerance, the rule of law or democracy as being part of their training.

Leaders do not develop the teaching skills of staff appropriately. Too few staff have a recognised teaching qualification, and leaders do not ensure that staff take up the offer of teacher training. Staff complete a broad range of professional development in sales, management and marketing. However, staff are not able to recall any training they have received, or any planned activities, to develop their teaching skills. As a result, the experience of apprentices is too variable and dependent on the staff who are supporting them.

Leaders do not have a clear oversight of the progress apprentices are making. For example, apprentices' records are often on different online platforms. Staff find it too difficult to find or access apprentices' work or records. Leaders are not able to easily access headline performance data, such as attendance and destinations. As a result, leaders cannot easily identify those apprentices who are falling behind to implement the support apprentices require.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. Leaders have developed a positive culture for safeguarding. Leaders monitor and support effectively any well-being concerns that apprentices may be experiencing. Apprentices feel confident to contact their employer or skills coach if they had any safeguarding concerns. Leaders have effective external links to support safeguarding. For example, they liaise with the regional 'Prevent' duty coordinator to ensure that they receive up-to-date information.

Leaders have not yet implemented a curriculum to support apprentices' awareness and understanding of inappropriate and abusive relationships. Leaders have developed relevant online resources and planned the training for apprentices on these topics, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders must ensure that apprentices benefit from a consistently high-quality training programme that supports them to stay on the course and achieve.
- Leaders must ensure that staff use the findings of initial assessment effectively to plan for the training needs of individual apprentices. Leaders must ensure that apprentices reach their end-point assessment having secured their English and mathematics qualifications.
- Leaders must involve apprentices' workplace managers in the planning, tailoring and reviewing of the apprentice's curriculum. Leaders must ensure that apprentices are supported to remain on the programme and make swift progress.
- Staff must ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to improve and to enable them to make swift progress.
- Leaders must ensure that staff, apprentices and employers have a good understanding of the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices are developing.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Martin Hutchins
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, 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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