

University of Strathclyde

Monitoring visit report

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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 Strathclyde began to recruit apprentices funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency from 2019. There are currently 64 apprentices across three apprenticeship standards. Thirty apprentices follow a level 7 senior leader apprenticeship. Twenty one study the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional (integrated degree) apprenticeship. The remainder are on the level 6 science industry process and plant engineer (integrated degree) apprenticeship. Apprentices are based in various locations in England. Most apprentices are aged 19 and above, though 8 were under the age of 19 at the beginning of their programme.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers are ambitious about what apprentices can achieve. They have selected and developed a clear and coherent curriculum. This allows apprentices to gain the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses. They work effectively with large multinational corporations. University staff meet with senior management teams at these employers to develop the curriculum. They discuss the apprenticeships in detail and plan how to incorporate key organisational competencies within the curriculum. Apprentices apply their theoretical learning to situations they experience at work. For instance, senior leaders consider ways to manage organisational restructures.

Lecturers include a broad range of topics beyond the prescribed curriculum. Apprentices attend lectures on equality, diversity and inclusion, the importance of innovation, networking with colleagues and building relationships. These lectures provide useful professional development for apprentices.

Apprentices, employers and university staff have a sound understanding of the requirements of external assessment. Lecturers prepare apprentices well for this. For example, in the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional apprenticeship, lecturers ensure apprentices scope out their work-based project thoroughly and provide constructive feedback to help them to develop their ideas further.

Lecturers are highly qualified and experienced. Work-based learning and academic mentors have up-to-date industrial experience. This ensures work-based training is highly relevant. Leaders place a strong emphasis on the importance of professional development for staff. This includes a strong focus on training that develop lecturers' teaching skills. As a result of this training, lecturers teach courses effectively and use well-devised methods to help apprentices understand course content.

Senior leaders hold managers to account for the quality of training. Managers complete extensive quality assurance checks to ensure training is of a consistently high standard. Currently, they do not review the quality of the progress reviews that academic mentors and work-based learning advisors complete. The quality of progress reviews is too inconsistent.

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

Apprentices receive high-quality training. Lecturers teach courses in a logical order. This enables apprentices to incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, level 7 senior leader apprentices first learn how to write reflectively. They then learn about leading organisational change before they move on to operations management and business analytics.

Well in advance of each lecture, apprentices complete a range of activities relating to the topic they are studying. This includes core reading, quizzes, and discussions. This means apprentices are very well prepared for their off-the-job training and quickly develop the knowledge and skills they need to make an effective contribution in their employers' businesses.

Lecturers create a calm and welcoming online teaching environment. Apprentices are highly motivated and display positive attitudes to learning. They contribute enthusiastically to lessons and display respectful attitudes towards each other and their lecturers.

Apprentices recall previous learning and relate this to what they are doing at work. For example, after learning about marketing and branding, apprentices understand its importance in securing new customers. Apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills effectively. They write operational and strategic reports that are well formatted and professional. They use mathematical skills to manage budgets and accurately analyse and forecast expenditure.

Leaders have fostered highly productive working relationship with employers. Employers ensure apprentices have sufficient time to attend lectures and complete their learning. They attend progress reviews and ensure that apprentices have sufficient opportunities to practise their skills at work. Apprentices receive very effective levels of support from academic and workplace mentors, and line managers.

Employers value the contributions that apprentices make to their business. As a result, apprentices become trusted members of their teams. Managers of level 7 senior leader apprentices see them become more effective, decisive and confident managers as their apprenticeship progresses.

Apprentices achieve their qualifications. Most gain merit or distinction grades. A significant number of apprentices achieve promotion during or after their apprenticeship. All current apprentices are on target to complete their apprenticeships on time.

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

University staff at all levels of the organisation take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Leaders have in place a suitable range of policies and procedures to manage safeguarding referrals. They promote the extensive support services the university offers very well. Leaders take a sensible approach to recruiting new staff. They complete appropriate checks to ensure themselves of their suitability to work in education and training.

Leaders have appointed a designated safeguarding lead who is appropriately trained and experienced. They have devised an appropriate 'Prevent' duty action plan. However, a few apprentices do not recall any training about radicalisation and extremism. Leaders recognise they need to do more work to contextualise relevant safeguarding themes in the curriculum.

Apprentices report that they feel safe when at the university or working online. They know where to find information on safeguarding and who to report any concerns to.

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