

The National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure (NCATI)

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 148721

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2022

Type of provider: Designated 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 National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure (NCATI) is a designated institution. In May 2021, NCATI became part of the University of Birmingham group as a wholly owned subsidiary. It operates from two campuses in Birmingham and Doncaster. At the time of the visit, 66 apprentices were in learning. Twenty-nine apprentices were enrolled on the level 4 rail engineering advanced technician standard. A further 17 apprentices were enrolled on the level 4 associate project manager standard, and 17 on the level 4 building energy management systems control engineer standard. The remaining three apprentices were enrolled on the level 4 high-speed rail and infrastructure technician standard. A further 25 learners had just started a full-time study programme completing a level 3 qualification in engineering.

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 a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. They have designed the curriculum to support learners and apprentices to gain employment within the engineering, rail and transport sectors.

In most cases, leaders work closely with employers and key stakeholders to plan the curriculum. For example, they work closely with the owner and infrastructure manager of railways in Great Britain to identify the skill needs of the workforce in the rail industry. Senior leaders listen carefully to employers' and stakeholders' views. In response to feedback from employers, leaders have recently amended their curriculum offer. NCATI now offers full-time education programmes for young people to support learners moving into higher level apprenticeships and learning.

Senior leaders ensure that learners and apprentices have access to high-quality industry equipment. Learners and apprentices have access to overhead lines and

trains that are used on the high-speed rail 2 (HS2) development. Almost all lecturers hold teaching qualifications and have industry expertise in the sectors they teach. In most cases, teachers use this expertise effectively to support apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that their employers require.

Senior leaders meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship and have quickly put in place all the arrangements needed for apprentices to complete their final assessments. End-point assessment organisations are in place for all the apprenticeship standards offered by the provider.

Senior leaders have put in place a process to allow them to gain a view of the quality of education that apprentices receive. However, this process focuses too narrowly on what lecturers teach and what apprentices remember from a single lesson. As a result, senior leaders do not have an accurate view as to what apprentices learn over the duration of their apprenticeship.

Leaders have taken significant steps to ensure that they benefit from highly effective governance. Board members have a wide range of skills and expertise in education, industry and finance. This allows the board to provide robust and frequent challenge to senior leaders to improve the quality of education and training for apprentices.

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 curriculum managers have planned the curriculum effectively. Apprentices on the level 4 associate project manager standard develop their understanding of basic project management theories, before progressing to more complex theories linked to risk and issue management. As a result, most apprentices develop their understanding of more complex concepts over time.

Managers and lecturers identify clearly at the beginning of apprentices' programmes what apprentices already know and can do. Apprentices complete initial assessments and skills scans and are on an appropriate level of apprenticeship. However, in a minority of cases, lecturers do not use the information they gain from such assessments well enough to plan learning. They do not always plan learning sufficiently well to close gaps in apprentices' knowledge quickly. As a result, a few apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.

In most cases, managers and lecturers ensure that on- and off-the-job training is well-planned and coordinated. Apprentices develop their understanding of current legislation in their off-the-job training before applying this to projects in the workplace. This supports apprentices to remember the new content they have been taught.

Apprentice managers and lecturers do not ensure that all apprentices receive sufficiently useful feedback on their work. Too often, the actions given to apprentices to help them to improve their work are not clear. As a result, too many apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve their work, or how to achieve high grades at their final assessments.

In most cases, lecturers and apprentice managers support apprentices to develop their English and mathematical skills effectively. Apprentices develop their understanding of algebra and trigonometry linked to engineering principles early in their apprenticeship. However, this is not always reinforced sufficiently well in the curriculum, so that apprentices know and remember these principles.

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

Leaders have in place suitably qualified staff across both sites who are designated safeguarding leads. All staff, including governors, benefit from a range of useful safeguarding training.

Leaders and managers have in place a clear safeguarding policy. They frequently hold 'at risk' meetings to monitor learners and apprentices who require support.

Managers and safeguarding leads have established relationships with key local safeguarding agencies. They benefit from a range of useful information from regional 'Prevent' duty leads. Managers use this information well to help apprentices better understand local risk.

Leaders and managers take the required steps to make sure that they recruit staff who are safe to work with learners and apprentices. Leaders were quick to make sure that all staff hold the relevant enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks now that learners aged 16 and over attend NCATI. However, in a few cases, leaders do not always ensure that safer recruitment practices are carried out in line with their policies.

Leaders and managers support learners and apprentices to develop their understanding of safer working practices. For example, all apprentices benefit from obtaining their personal track safety certificate and have a good understanding of track-side safety.

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