

# University of Northumbria at Newcastle

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 Northumbria at Newcastle received a contract in 2017 to deliver level 6 and 7 apprenticeship programmes. At the time of this visit, there were 1,798 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships. Over 80 per cent of apprentices are on level 6 programmes, with the remainder on level 7 programmes. Around a third of apprentices are on the level 6 policing apprenticeship, which has the largest number of enrolments. The university also provides apprenticeships in chartered surveying, registered nursing and civil engineering at level 6. The university provides apprenticeships at level 7 in senior leadership, advanced clinical practice, architecture, solicitor and district nursing. Almost all apprentices are aged 19 and over.

## Themes

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

### Reasonable progress

Leaders have designed and developed an apprenticeship curriculum to meet regional employment priorities. They have thoroughly evaluated the needs of employers to enable them to build a diverse degree apprenticeship offer at levels 6 and 7. Leaders work with prestigious companies and large organisations, such as regional police forces, to meet current and future skills needs in staff shortage areas.

Leaders provide staff with useful training to enhance their teaching effectiveness. Staff complete a short 'essentials in teaching' programme when they begin teaching at the university. Those new to teaching study the postgraduate certificate in academic practice, which enables them to develop the skills required to teach in higher education.

Leaders conduct useful quality assurance activities. They carry out reviews of subcontracted provision, routinely practise team teaching and joint assessment and

use external auditors to assure themselves that the quality of provision is of a sufficiently high standard. Through their quality assurance activities, leaders identified that they needed to employ progress coaches to improve the coordination of on- and off-the-job training for apprentices.

Governors hold leaders to account well to drive forward sustainable improvements in the quality of the curriculum. All governors participate in an induction training programme, which ensures that they fully understand their role as governors. The board is comprised of both internal staff and independent professionals with a broad range of expertise in areas such as law, finance, apprenticeships and safeguarding.

As leaders are aware, retention on a few programmes, such as the chartered surveying and senior leader apprenticeships, is too low. Leaders rightly recognised that they needed to ensure that more apprentices completed their studies, within the planned time, particularly the few apprentices who needed to achieve English and mathematics qualifications. They have adjusted how these programmes are planned and sequenced, have created new staff roles, such as progress coaches, and invested in additional resources. However, it is too early to determine the impact of these actions.

**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**

Staff use initial assessment effectively to ensure that apprentices are enrolled on the right programme. They plan meaningful learning that helps apprentices to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that meet employers' needs. For example, chartered surveying apprentices with prior knowledge in building design have additional learning, such as town planning, included in their training plans.

Staff teach apprentices the skills that they need to be effective and to improve their performance at work. Apprentices studying surveying learn new skills during their off-the job-training such as how to use building information modelling software that saves money for clients on large building developments. Consequently, apprentices quickly become confident, competent and valuable team members at work.

Progress coaches hold useful tripartite meetings with apprentices and employers to review apprentices' progress. Senior leader apprentices routinely discuss what they have learned about topics such as professional ethics and corporate accountability during reviews, including how they are now much more confident in holding managers to account in their own workplace.

Teachers provide apprentices with helpful feedback on how to improve their work, including academic writing and the use of academic conventions. They teach apprentices how to be more critical and analytical in their assignments. For example, teachers give feedback that includes links to resources about referencing, which

helps apprentices to improve their academic writing. The support that apprentices receive helps them to improve the standard of their written work during their time on the apprenticeship.

Teachers successfully develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills. They embed well-contextualised learning throughout programmes. In policing, apprentices learn to write and submit crime reports to a legal standard that is essential in their role. Apprentices in surveying learn how to calculate thermal loss accurately depending on the type of insulation that they use to increase energy efficiency in buildings.

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

Leaders have appropriate safeguarding procedures in place. Leaders update staff about recent case studies, including instances of radicalisation in colleges, reports from the healthcare sector and wider incidents in the community that are relevant to the north east.

Apprentices understand the risks related to them at work, including the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They are taught about signs that they need to be aware of. For example, chartered surveyor apprentices learn about the risks of working on large building projects where there are volatile chemicals that could be a target for extremist activity.

Apprentices feel safe. They know that leaders accurately record and respond swiftly to safeguarding incidents. Leaders work with external agencies, such as the police, probation and healthcare services, to provide appropriate support for apprentices. Where concerns are of a serious nature, such as sex or hate crime, each individual circumstance is fully investigated.

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