

York St John University

Monitoring visit report

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Address:	Lord Mayor's Walk York YO31 7EX

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.

York St John University began providing degree apprenticeships in 2018. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 404 apprentices studying across seven standards. Of these, 290 apprentices were studying for degree apprenticeships at level 6. Around a third of these were data scientist apprentices. The remaining level 6 apprentices were studying chartered manager, police constable, project manager, laboratory scientist or healthcare science practitioner degree standards. At level 7, there were 114 apprentices taking the senior leader degree standard. The university subcontracts the delivery of functional skills English and mathematics to Runway Apprenticeships Ltd. All apprentices are aged 18 or 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 and managers collaborate closely with employers to develop the content of degree apprenticeships. For example, the data scientist degree apprenticeship addresses a significant skills gap identified by employers and education partnerships in the region. Employers value the opportunities that degree apprenticeship programmes offer to grow their own talent in high-demand areas where it is particularly difficult to recruit experienced staff.

Leaders adhere to the principles and requirements of apprenticeships and recruit apprentices with integrity. Staff check carefully what apprentices know and can do when they start and ensure that apprentices are on the most appropriate degree apprenticeship to meet their and their employers' needs. The small number of apprentices who need additional tuition to achieve English and mathematics qualifications receive appropriate support from the subcontractor. End-point assessments for apprentices are in place and have been communicated effectively to staff, apprentices and employers.

Leaders recruit well-qualified academic staff and work-based learning tutors for their apprenticeships. They ensure that staff have the necessary higher-level academic qualifications and industrial expertise and that they continue to develop their subject and industry-related skills to inform the curriculum content.

Leaders monitor the quality of degree apprenticeships closely and are responsive to feedback from teaching staff, employers and apprentices. For example, they have adapted modes of attendance for off-the-job training that better meets the needs of apprentices and their employers.

Leaders are ambitious for apprentices to achieve to the best of their abilities, and many apprentices have already progressed into more responsible roles in their organisations. Of those apprentices who have taken their end-point assessment to date, all have passed, with many achieving grades of distinction or merit.

Those with responsibility for governance understand the strengths and weaknesses of apprenticeships. The university has a well-established and robust committee structure in place to monitor the effectiveness of degree apprenticeships and uses this to hold leaders and managers to account for improving the quality of teaching.

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

Tutors and lecturers use the information that they have about apprentices' starting points to plan the support that apprentices need to meet the demands of degree-level study. For example, tutors identify any gaps in apprentices' skills, such as research, essay-writing and presentation skills, and plan how best to address these.

Tutors and lecturers work effectively with employers to plan industry-relevant, off-the-job training. This prepares apprentices well to consolidate their learning in the context of their employers' businesses. For example, chartered manager apprentices use what they learn about finance and financial controls to improve the streamlining of processes and efficiency in their workplaces. Data scientist apprentices build on their existing knowledge of fundamental aspects of algebra, statistics and programming to develop new applied data management skills. Senior leader apprentices learn how best to challenge norms within their workplace. As a result, apprentices use their new knowledge to bring fresh ideas and perspectives to employer organisations.

Staff, apprentices and employers take part in planned tripartite reviews which, for most apprentices, provide a reliable means of monitoring their progress. However, for a few apprentices, reviews are not conducted in a timely manner due to changes in staff or other delays. A few employers feel that the tripartite reviews do not offer sufficient opportunity to plan further training that would enhance their apprentices' skills and the contribution that they can make at work.

In most cases, tutors and lecturers use assessment well to check apprentices' understanding. They provide helpful written feedback which clearly explains what apprentices have done well and what they need to improve. Most apprentices develop a secure understanding of the theories and tools that they explore, and many demonstrate advanced critical thinking and analytical skills. However, for a few data scientist apprentices, feedback from assessment does not identify sufficiently what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

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

Leaders have in place an effective culture of safeguarding and protection. They have appointed a designated safeguarding officer and deputy with suitable expertise to perform these roles. In addition, there is a dedicated work-based learning tutor safeguarding lead for degree apprentices.

Leaders have effective links with external agencies, including the police, the City of York council and the regional 'Prevent' coordinator, through which they receive frequent updates about local risks. All staff undertake 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding-related staff development appropriate to their role.

Apprentices are helped to stay safe when at university. They say that they feel safe, including when working online. Factors that make them feel safe on campus include security staff and information provided on helplines.

Apprentices have a less well-developed understanding of the local risks that might affect them in their communities. Leaders recognise this and have very recently appointed new staff and made changes to induction and training to enhance apprentices' understanding.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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