

Lancaster University

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.

Lancaster University is a higher education institution in Lancashire. It offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in a variety of sectors. Lancaster University has been training apprentices since 2018. At the time of the visit, there were 167 apprentices in learning. Apprentices all study at level 7, with 160 apprentices on the senior leader apprenticeship and seven on the process automation engineering apprenticeship.

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 developed a clear strategy and rationale to provide an ambitious level 7 apprenticeship offer that meets identified skills gaps in senior leadership and process automation engineering locally, regionally and nationally. They work closely with employers such as the NHS, police constabularies and small and medium-size enterprises to co-create personalised apprenticeship programmes that meet the needs of employers and apprentices.

Senior leaders rightly recognised that the order in which the different topics of the senior leader apprenticeship were taught resulted in too many apprentices failing to complete all aspects of the apprenticeship. For example, apprentices completed the qualification element of the apprenticeship and then withdrew before taking their final assessments. As a result, leaders and managers have adapted and amended substantially the order in which the apprenticeship is taught. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who remain on their apprenticeship has improved significantly.

Leaders and managers have introduced stringent processes to monitor the quality of apprenticeship training. Peer review, the staff–student apprenticeship committee and

programme approval committees all contribute to evaluating and improving the quality of education and training. Self-assessment processes identify precisely the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeships. For example, leaders and managers identified that the systems to record and monitor apprentices' progress required further improvement. Leaders and managers have recently implemented a new electronic system to achieve this, but it is too soon to measure the impact.

Staff benefit from targeted training to support their teaching. For example, staff undertake qualifications in coaching and mentoring so they know how to help support apprentices with their learning.

Council members and the apprenticeship sub-committee receive useful reports and updates from leaders about the apprenticeship programmes. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Council members provide rigorous challenge to leaders and managers and hold them to account for their 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

Each curriculum has been designed sequentially and in a logical way. Each curriculum ensures that apprentices first master the foundation elements of personal learning and development before moving on to more complex elements such as economics. For example, senior leader apprentices understand the approaches to organisational development and use these as part of a year-long workplace project that combines learning from other subjects.

Each curriculum provides apprentices with substantial knowledge combined with workplace practice that enables them to add value to their organisations. For example, senior leader apprentices introduce working groups to co-design and develop short-, medium- and long-term development plans with their colleagues to implement organisational change.

Apprentices' employers take part in training on the content and requirements of the apprenticeship. Consequently, most employers understand what apprentices are learning and provide relevant activities to help apprentices practise their skills in the workplace. A few employers do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop. This has rightly been identified by leaders and managers who have plans to provide additional training for employers. However, this has yet to happen.

Apprentices benefit from structured feedback from their tutors, coaches and mentors. Feedback informs apprentices about what they have done well and how to improve their work. However, feedback is focused primarily on the learning

objectives of the qualification module and not the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the apprentices have developed or need to develop.

Apprentices are introduced to the requirements of the final assessment at the start of their training. Mentors and coaches frequently review apprentices' progress, providing guidance about activities and evidence that can be included in the apprentices' portfolios of work. As a result, apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments.

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

Senior leaders place a very high priority on keeping all university students, including apprentices, safe. They ensure that the safeguarding team are suitably experienced and qualified.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have a good understanding of the processes in place to support apprentices who may make a safeguarding disclosure, for example making referrals to external agencies. The safeguarding team have not yet had to deal with any safeguarding incidents relating to apprentices.

Staff benefit from useful training to heighten their awareness and understanding of the threats of radicalisation and extremism in higher education and apprenticeships.

Apprentices benefit from training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty at the start of their training and can apply their knowledge in the workplace. For example, apprentices working in police forces use their knowledge of safeguarding to identify young people at risk of child criminal exploitation.

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