

Cranfield University

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.

Cranfield University secured funding for the provision of training to apprentices in September 2017. Most of the training takes place at the Cranfield campus in Bedfordshire. In addition, the university provides training in Milton Keynes and Shrivenham. At the time of the monitoring visit, the university had 1,077 apprentices studying a range of higher apprenticeship standards in management, engineering and information technology. Most apprentices study level 7 senior leader apprenticeship. The university does not use subcontractors for any of its funded delivery.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Senior leaders have successfully realised their vision to provide high-quality apprenticeships as part of the university's curriculum. Senior leaders have expertly designed the apprenticeship curriculum to meet the needs of businesses operating in global markets. They have adapted the senior leader level 7 apprenticeship skilfully to include risk assessment, business resilience and disruptive technologies.

Senior leaders are ambitious for apprentices. Staff carry out recruitment with care and integrity. Apprentices who have not accessed higher education previously are matched to programmes in which they thrive. Staff make reasonable adjustments for any disability, health condition or learning difference apprentices may have. Staff provide additional specialist support on a one-to-one basis where required, such as for apprentices with dyslexia. As a result, apprentices make significant progress against their starting points and most successfully complete their apprenticeship with high grades.

Senior leaders have recruited teaching staff who are experts in their fields. Staff are highly effective at training apprentices to develop and apply new knowledge and

skills, and to reflect on their learning. Apprentices studying level 7 senior leader standards resolved simulated workplace crises through role play. As a result, they can apply their skills and knowledge quickly in the workplace.

Governance arrangements are effective. Those responsible for governance provide a high level of support and challenge to the senior leadership team. Governors use their extensive knowledge and experience to ensure that leaders improve apprentices' chances of success, such as by monitoring attendance effectively and extending support for English and mathematics.

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 well-planned and high-quality off-the-job training. Leaders have carefully sequenced training programmes to ensure that apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. As a result, apprentices are highly effective in using the skills and expertise of the staff they recruit and manage. Apprentices have developed a more strategic approach to workforce planning.

Apprentices consistently produce work to a very high standard. Most teachers provide thorough, timely feedback on apprentices' learning. Apprentices show exceptional improvement in their academic writing and reasoning skills over time. They use well-argued and referenced ideas to support their ideas.

Leaders and managers monitor apprentices' progress effectively, taking appropriate action where required. Staff ensure that apprentices who struggle with key concepts or fall behind in their work receive additional learning resources, more frequent tutor time and well-planned specialist support. As a result, apprentices remain in learning and achieve their qualifications.

Apprentices are well prepared for their end-point assessments and career progression. Most apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeships and gain promotions with their employers or in other sectors. Apprentices studying senior leader level 7 learn how to manage their staff and other colleagues within their businesses. Their success in using these techniques gives them the confidence to apply for new jobs with additional responsibilities. As a result, apprentices promptly gain promotion, moving into roles such as strategic procurement for large national employers.

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

Leaders and managers make safeguarding a high priority. They have recruited mental health first aiders to support apprentices and staff to maintain positive mental health. Apprentices know how to access support and staff respond to their needs in a timely manner, referring apprentices at immediate risk quickly to appropriate agencies. Apprentices know how to look after themselves and are encouraged to air concerns.

Apprentices feel safe at the university. Apprentices are aware of the potential for radicalisation in training and in the workplace. They recognise how to identify signs of concern, such as changes in behaviour.

Leaders have good links with local support agencies, such as local authority safeguarding leads. However, leaders have not developed strong links in other regions where apprentices are based. As a result, the provider is not sufficiently well informed of emerging safeguarding concerns that may affect apprentices where they live and work.

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