

Harper Adams 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.

Harper Adams University is based in Newport, Shropshire. The university provides specialist higher education in support of the agricultural, agricultural engineering, food science and technology, environmental science, veterinary science and land-based sectors. The university has been training apprentices since 2018. At the time of the visit, 162 apprentices were in learning. All apprentices were following apprenticeship standards, of which 71 were studying the level 6 chartered surveyor degree apprenticeship, 12 of whom were on the level 7 option, 30 were on the level 5 veterinary technician higher apprenticeship, 29 were on the level 6 food industry technical professional degree apprenticeship, 23 were on the food and drink advanced engineering degree apprenticeship, eight were on the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship and one was on the level 7 postgraduate engineer 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 a clear strategic vision, working closely with specialist employers and stakeholders to develop industry-relevant apprenticeships. For example, by working with local veterinary businesses, they influenced the apprenticeship trailblazer group to include a stronger emphasis on agricultural farming in the level 5 veterinary technician higher apprenticeship.

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum for most apprentices. The curriculum teaches apprentices a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviours which will enable them to work as a chartered surveyor or in the food industry. However, in a few instances, the curriculum does not yet reflect well enough the job roles of a few apprentices in chartered surveying, in particular those working in infrastructure and utilities roles.

Leaders have in place a detailed validation process for new apprenticeships. This has been adapted to include employer and apprentice representation as part of the approval panel. The validation process ensures course leaders closely map the apprenticeship standards to the requirements of the degree programmes, so they are fully integrated into module specifications and assessments.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of all elements of the apprenticeship. There is a detailed quality assurance process for the degree element of the apprenticeship. However, leaders do not yet scrutinise all components of the apprenticeship within this process to ensure that apprentices are progressing well in all areas of their learning. Leaders recognise this and are currently adapting the university quality processes to monitor this more closely as apprentices progress to gateway and end-point assessment.

Governors have the relevant skills and experience to provide support and challenge to leaders. However, discussions have largely been limited to the annual monitoring report. Governors are currently working with university leaders to further increase the opportunities to review the apprenticeship provision.

Leaders use a range of activities to provide apprentices with access to careers advice and guidance, including the university careers service and guest speakers. However, apprentices do not routinely access these services or engage in individual conversations about wider career opportunities.

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

Course leaders use their knowledge of the sector well to inform the planning of the curriculum. For example, when developing their skills in valuing properties and land, chartered surveyor apprentices learn the basic principles of how to carry out a valuation. They subsequently apply this knowledge to valuing the on-site farm, before finally undertaking a critical analysis of the work they have completed. As a result, learners systematically build their knowledge and reflect on their practice over time.

Lecturers are highly qualified and use their expertise well to teach apprentices. Lecturers on the level 6 food industry technical professional apprenticeship are well positioned to support and advise apprentices, demonstrating expertise and knowledge in the sector and incorporating the latest research in sessions. As a result, apprentices continually develop skills that reflect current and future industry practice.

The majority of apprentices receive helpful feedback on their work. Where this is effective, apprentices have a clear understanding of the areas they need to develop

and subsequently improve their work overtime. However, a few do not benefit from sufficiently detailed feedback, and apprentices have to seek out help from lecturers on how to improve their work.

The large majority of apprentices develop substantial new knowledge skills and behaviours while on their apprenticeship. As a result, most apprentices gain additional responsibilities in the workplace. For example, level 6 food industry technical professional apprentices have progressed to become site managers.

The majority of employers value the training that apprentices receive. However, on level 6 food technician apprenticeships, not all line managers benefit from regular communication from the Harper Adams' staff and have had limited opportunity to continually engage in the design and delivery of the apprenticeship. As a result, the coordination of on-the job and off-the-job training in these instances is weak.

Leaders do not ensure that lecturers systematically develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills. Although Harper Adams' staff assess apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics at the beginning of the apprenticeship, the outcome of these assessments is not shared with lecturers to inform their teaching and incorporate into the curriculum.

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

Leaders have in place appropriate policies, including safeguarding and safer recruitment practices, which are used well to ensure apprentices feel safe on the university campus.

The lead designated safeguarding officer works closely with university services and wider services, such as the regional Prevent officer, to support apprentices at risk.

Employer-led training supports apprentices to stay safe in their workplaces. Level 6 food industry technical professional apprentices have engaged with online training relating to handling specific chemicals in hygiene-related roles, and internet security. Level 6 chartered surveyor apprentices have received training on the risks associated with lone working.

Apprentices receive appropriate guidance on life in modern Britain and safeguarding when they enrol. This guidance covers relevant topics such as equality and diversity, preventing radicalisation, and health and safety. However, apprentices' knowledge of these topics is not sufficiently reinforced during the programme. As a result, some apprentices' understanding of these areas is too superficial.

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