

Inspection of Leeds Beckett University

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Apprenticeships **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Leeds Beckett University has provided apprenticeships since 2017. Apprenticeship provision is currently offered in 19 vocational areas. At the time of the inspection, there were 657 apprentices, including 31 on a level 7 senior leader programme, 109 on a level 6 civil engineering programme, 62 on a level 6 registered nurse degree programme, and 82 on a level 6 chartered surveyor programme. The university delivers apprenticeships in the school of the built environment, engineering and computing, the school of health, the Leeds business school, and the Leeds school of the arts. It subcontracts functional skills training in English and mathematics to Luminate Education Group.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices are sensible, professional and respectful. They demonstrate a passion for their work and for the communities that they serve. Apprentices have positive attitudes to their training, and they are committed to their learning. They demonstrate stamina and tenacity in pursuing their programmes to completion and in making a strong impact on the organisations in which they work.

Apprentices' attendance at lessons is prompt. Apprentices are focused in class and work well with their peers. Relationships among learners and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture, where the principles of equality and diversity are respected.

Learners feel safe and rarely experience bullying, harassment or discrimination. If incidents occur, learners are confident in reporting them, knowing that staff will take swift and appropriate action.

Apprentices develop and acquire new knowledge, skills and behaviours through their apprenticeship. They are better prepared for their work and future careers as a result. Many have high aspirations and see the apprenticeship and qualifications that they gain as a successful means to realising their ambitions.

Apprentices benefit from impartial careers advice, which helps them to make informed decisions about their career. A large number of apprentices are promoted or progress to higher paid roles up to and including director level during their programmes.

Staff support apprentices with additional learning needs well and provide them with additional resources where needed, including using coloured overlays for apprentices with dyslexia. Apprentices can access help from the student services team should they need to.

Apprentices benefit from the expertise of visiting professors and guest speakers. They value the input of these guests, as it helps them to make secure links between theory and the live workplace environment.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have invested significantly in the apprenticeship provision since the last monitoring visit. This has allowed further recruitment of specialist apprenticeship staff and resources. A dedicated central apprenticeship team has responsibility for managing, monitoring and improving apprentices' progress and the quality of the provision. Apprentices benefit from access to new training environments, such as a recently completed clinical skills simulation suite that provides nursing apprentices with opportunities to learn and practise their clinical skills.

Leaders and managers have in place a well-planned curriculum for apprenticeships that maps to the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours of each apprenticeship standard. The curriculum also includes other relevant topics, such as careers guidance, fundamental British values and the requirements of end-point assessment.

Curriculum leads and staff construct and sequence the curriculum in a logical way that scaffolds training through to level 7. Most lecturers provide interesting and engaging off-the-job training sessions. They use activities and teaching strategies well to stimulate and engage apprentices in debate and discussion about key concepts. They use real-life workplace scenarios to set projects that help apprentices apply their theoretical learning. These off-the-job activities link successfully to apprentices' training in the workplace, as apprentices are able to apply what they have learned to projects at work. For example, on the level 6 civil engineering apprenticeship, lecturers guide apprentices to use their theoretical learning when carrying out practical project work such as working in a design team to manage a client brief. Apprentices then apply their learning in the workplace, refining their knowledge and skills and contributing positively.

Leaders and managers recruit highly experienced and well-qualified staff, supporting them to maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge through frequent and useful continuous professional development. Degree apprenticeship assessors and lecturers benefit highly from training, which includes enhancing and updating their sector-specific knowledge and increasing their understanding of topics such as safeguarding and radicalisation. For example, nursing lecturers are registered nurses who are members of national professional nursing education networks and undertake training to maintain their professional status. Staff also have access to an online training site that provides additional support and guidance.

Managers work well with employers to ensure that programmes meet the needs of the local, regional and national economy to provide and retain well-trained, well-qualified and competent employees. Managers liaise closely with employers to involve them in the design of the curriculum. Staff actively engage with employers to understand new technologies, processes and practices. They then include these in the curriculum content, which helps apprentices to learn and acquire the skills that employers need. For example, in civil engineering, staff integrate into the curriculum content about new heat source technologies used in the engineering sector.

Leaders have identified that the cost-of-living crisis may have an impact on apprentices. They have set aside additional funds to support apprentices. The on-site catering outlets have added additional, affordable menu items. As a result, apprentices have access to affordable healthy food. Additionally, staff promote healthy living and direct apprentices to a community webpage that provides advice and guidance about keeping healthy and maintaining a work-life balance.

Most lecturers check apprentices' understanding systematically, using questioning skilfully to probe and test what apprentices know. However, a few staff members do not check apprentices' understanding well enough. A few apprentices who are

training remotely do not have the opportunity to demonstrate what they are gaining from participating in online sessions.

Assessors monitor apprentices' progress well and have a clear understanding of the progress that apprentices make. They use tripartite reviews successfully to understand the progress that apprentices make and determine how well they are doing in relation to their studies. They take swift action to help apprentices catch up if they fall behind. As a result, most apprentices are on target to achieve their apprenticeship. However, staff do not use information about apprentices' starting points to align the curriculum specifically to apprentices' job roles. As a result, apprentices do not consistently benefit from curriculum content that helps them know more about specific topics that relate to their job roles.

Leaders and managers have in place appropriate governance arrangements that have been greatly improved since the last monitoring visit. Arrangements include a number of committees and groups that allow for much more effective monitoring and reporting to governors. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas that need further development in apprenticeship provision, and they are able to hold leaders to account for the quality of the provision.

Leaders and managers have in place a range of quality assurance processes, including peer-to-peer observation, feedback from apprentices and employers, evaluations of the quality of training, and checking of apprentices' work. These processes enable them to identify the particular areas that they need to improve and to provide staff with useful advice and guidance on how to improve their teaching further.

Leaders and managers subcontract functional skills provision to a local college. Although there are strong systems in place for initial contracting and due diligence, the monitoring of apprentices' individual progress and referring of relevant apprentices to the provision for training towards functional skills examinations is not effective enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have in place relevant designated safeguarding leads and effective processes to monitor and support apprentices at risk, including from stress overload, financial difficulties, safeguarding and mental health concerns.

Apprentices are safe at work and when they attend university sessions. They understand what keeps them safe. They feel welcomed and supported to keep safe. They know who the designated safeguarding leads are and would report to lecturers and staff if they experience bullying or harassment.

Leaders recruit staff who are safe to work with vulnerable adults. They keep relevant records of safe recruitment processes, which cover Disclosure and Barring Service checks, right to work in the United Kingdom checks, certificate authenticity checks and at least two references.

Leaders and managers have in place a 'support, report, respect' initiative to ensure that staff and apprentices understand that the university has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment, including sexual violence. Student support advisers are trained in sexual violence, and there are three sexual violence liaison officers who specialise in ensuring that staff and apprentices receive relevant support and advice when necessary.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications receive the training that they need to enable them to take their examinations in a timely manner.
- Ensure that apprentices consistently benefit from curriculum content that helps them to know more about specific aspects of their sector in relation to their job roles, based on a thorough understanding of their individual starting points.
- Ensure that all lecturers accurately assess the knowledge that apprentices acquire so that they can identify gaps or misunderstandings.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133837
Address	City Campus Calverley Street Leeds LS6 3QS
Contact number	01138120000
Website	https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Professor Peter Slee
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Luminate Education Group

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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