

# Inspection of University of the West of England, Bristol

Inspection dates:

6 to 9 December 2022

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

**Information about this provider**

The University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE, Bristol) introduced apprenticeships in 2018, initially in aerospace and nursing. At the time of Ofsted's monitoring visit (MV) in 2020, the university had 231 apprentices studying nursing apprenticeships. At the time of this inspection, 2,365 apprentices were enrolled on 25 different apprenticeships. Around a third of apprentices work in healthcare settings, most in Bristol and the surrounding area, but a significant number work across the country. Just over a quarter of apprentices are police constables employed by Avon & Somerset Constabulary. The remaining apprenticeships are mostly in engineering and construction, with a small number of apprenticeships for academic professionals, and also for leaders and managers. The university subcontracts the level 4 teaching for apprentices in aerospace and police constables.

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

Apprentices gain the knowledge they need to be successful in their career because lecturers and employers plan curriculums that reflect the industries in which apprentices work. Staff at the university consult extensively with employers when setting up an apprenticeship. As new cohorts of apprentices are recruited, they benefit from revisions to the curriculum that result from apprentices' and employers' feedback.

Apprentices become more confident to take extra responsibilities at work as a result of what they learn during their studies and the support and encouragement they receive from lecturers. Apprentices develop their confidence in communication as a result of well-managed and frequent class discussions. In class, they build strong, trusting relationships with peers, through which they feel able to discuss and evaluate their experiences at work. By learning how to deal with challenging situations at work, such as advanced clinical practitioners making difficult decisions when taking autonomous decisions for the first time about patient care, apprentices become more resilient and learn how to care for themselves and others.

Apprentices develop a good understanding of what constitutes high professional standards in the workplace. This is because lecturers, particularly those in sectors where ethics are of high importance, uphold these standards well and teach apprentices why they should adhere to them. For example, police apprentices are taught to consider the ethics that underpin their questioning when speaking to members of the public.

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

Leaders have rapidly developed a successful apprenticeship offer that builds on the university's long history of working with industries in the region. Leaders have been particularly successful in developing high-quality training in the public sector through apprenticeships in health and policing. Leaders' enthusiasm for, and commitment to, apprenticeships align well with the university's mission of meeting employment needs of the future.

The apprenticeships and the individual support provided by staff open opportunities to people from a wide range of backgrounds. Inspectors met many apprentices for whom the apprenticeship allows them to achieve a degree without incurring prohibitive costs or taking a break from their career. For others, an online programme, such as that offered in occupational therapy, has allowed them to access specialist training that is not available in their area of the country. Staff provide training on academic writing skills to apprentices who have not studied at university level before. This contributes considerably to apprentices' success. Leaders ensure that support for the high number of apprentices who have disclosed a disability is timely and effective.

Apprentices develop a strong work ethic because they recognise the benefits to their careers of achieving an apprenticeship. Most apprentices quickly learn skills that they apply in the workplace, which leads to employers quickly giving them new responsibilities. In a small number of cases, when planning a curriculum, managers do not take enough account of what apprentices already know or what the apprentice is doing at work. This leads to repetition for a small number of apprentices and, for others, a curriculum that is disconnected from the job they are doing at work.

Lecturers are well qualified and experienced, both as industry practitioners and teachers. They are sensitive to the demands on apprentices from their workplace and, in collaboration with employers, help apprentices manage substantial workloads. Apprentices feel listened to and can see how lecturers and leaders respond to their views.

Leaders help lecturers to teach well by training those who are not qualified teachers and providing all with continuing professional development. This contributes to the effective teaching on apprenticeships, particularly lecturers' use of assessment and feedback. Inspectors found many examples of lecturers successfully using a range of assessment methods to advise apprentices on how to improve the standards of their work and to correct errors.

Apprentices gain useful knowledge about their industry and the careers they may progress on to from their employers and lecturers. Lecturers facilitate further insights into careers through a strong programme of visiting speakers.

Leaders, including governors, pay considerable attention to the quality of apprenticeships, including the elements taught by subcontractors. They identify areas for improvement accurately and mostly take effective actions. For example, they carefully monitored the quality of the early cohorts of police apprentices and made improvements to the programme for subsequent cohorts. In their most recent self-assessment report, leaders had already recognised areas for improvement identified by inspectors during the inspection. These include the need to consistently use apprentices' prior knowledge to inform decisions about curriculum content.

In a small number of cases, leaders have been slow to make improvements. During the MV in 2020, inspectors identified a weakness in English and mathematics. Too many apprentices who do not have a level 2 in these subjects are still not getting the teaching they need and do not achieve their qualification quickly enough. Leaders identified nearly a year ago that they needed to improve apprentices' attendance. The actions they have taken have been fragmentary, and attendance on most apprenticeships remains too low. Occasionally, when managers identify an area for improvement, they record this in minutes of a meeting but do not follow it up to ensure improvements take place.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff with responsibilities for safeguarding are suitably qualified and experienced. These staff have appropriate links with relevant organisations in the local area. Staff are mostly well trained, although too many staff, including senior managers, have not completed the 'Prevent' duty training the university expects them to complete.

Leaders provide a wide range of support services that apprentices can access. Staff check that apprentices know about this support, as well as the support provided by their employers.

Leaders have established clear policies for deciding which staff need to be checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service. They carry out checks in accordance with these policies.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Teach apprentices who do not have a level 2 English or mathematics qualification the specific knowledge they need and provide them with the opportunity to achieve this qualification early in the apprenticeship.
- Identify why too many apprentices have low attendance and take the actions to improve this.
- Use committees and boards more effectively to hold managers to account for the success of actions they take once an area for improvement has been identified.
- Ensure that all curriculums take into account the apprentices' prior knowledge, to avoid repetition and to challenge apprentices to learn new knowledge.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133798
<b>Address</b>	Coldharbour Lane Frenchay Bristol BS16 1QY
<b>Contact number</b>	01179656261
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.uwe.ac.uk">https://www.uwe.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Professor Steve West
<b>Provider type</b>	Higher education institution
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Weston College of Further and Higher Education The chief Constable of Avon and Somerset

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the monitoring visit 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

Steven Tucker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matt Hann	His Majesty's Inspector
Abdul Miah	Ofsted Inspector
Nicky Witton	Ofsted Inspector
Maria Woodger	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Bradbury	Ofsted Inspector

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