

Inspection of De Montfort University

Inspection dates:

10 to 13 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

De Montfort University is a large provider of further and higher education in Leicester. The university's apprenticeship courses and full-time further education courses for young people were in scope for this inspection. Inspectors did not inspect the university's undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses.

The large majority of apprentices study at the university's main campus, in the centre of Leicester. All young people also study at this campus.

At the time of the inspection, there were 600 apprentices at the university. Most apprentices followed standards-based courses at levels 5, 6 or 7 in management, healthcare, digital technology or policing. Approximately 60 young people studied art and design at level 3. All apprentices and learners were over the age of 18.

The university works with one subcontractor, Leicestershire Constabulary, to deliver some aspects of the police constable apprenticeship.

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

The majority of learners and apprentices have positive experiences at De Montfort University. They value the high-quality resources available to them for their studies. This includes resources to support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia or autism spectrum disorder. Learners and apprentices also appreciate the safe, respectful and inclusive environment at the university's main campus.

Leaders and managers work effectively with local employers to ensure that apprenticeship courses meet the needs of their industries well. As a result, apprentices learn the specific technical skills and knowledge that they need for their careers. The majority advance to successful and rewarding careers in their chosen sectors.

Through their studies, both learners and apprentices develop confidence and resilience. Learners who study level 3 art and design speak clearly and eloquently about their own artwork and offer constructive commentary on their peers' artwork. The large majority of apprentices develop well skills and behaviours for their job roles. They swiftly take on additional responsibilities, which improve their career prospects.

In a small number of cases, however, apprentices are disappointed because their courses are disjointed. These apprentices experience high rates of lecturer turnover, or find it difficult to manage their workloads, because their academic schedules are not well planned. This is particularly the case for those who study on the police constable standard.

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

Leaders and managers focus carefully on local, regional and national skills priorities, and plan the apprenticeship curriculum to reflect these. Courses such as paramedic, police constable and hearing-aid dispenser meet the demand for skilled professionals in these job roles. Leaders and managers work well with local employers to plan course topics so that they equip learners and apprentices with the skills and knowledge they need, ensuring that in most cases there are good links between classroom study and training at work.

Curriculum leads and lecturers plan and teach curriculums in a logical order. Apprentices who follow the level 5 hearing-aid dispenser standard first develop knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the middle ear before they move on to disease that causes severe and profound hearing loss. Level 6 digital technology solutions professional apprentices first grasp basic topics, such as data analysis, before they study more complex topics, such as database management systems.

Lecturers are highly qualified in their subject specialisms. They use their expertise to teach curriculums well. For example, lecturers who teach the paramedic level 6 standard explain clearly challenging new topics, such as anatomy and physiology. Lecturers on the police constable level 6 standard link academic theory to practical police work effectively. This enables apprentices to link activities such as research to realistic policing contexts.

Most lecturers use assessment well to reinforce learners' and apprentices' knowledge. Lecturers who teach the chartered manager level 6 standard skilfully ask questions in class and manage online discussions to check apprentices' knowledge of challenging topics. The majority of lecturers also provide learners and apprentices with helpful feedback. For example, apprentices on the hearing-aid dispenser level 5 standard improve their academic writing as a result of lecturers' feedback.

Leaders, managers and lecturers ensure that learners and apprentices with SEND receive valuable support. They sensitively encourage learners and apprentices with SEND to disclose their needs and offer prompt opportunities for diagnosis. Library staff ensure that pupils with SEND receive additional help so that they can access the library effectively.

As a result of good-quality teaching, the large majority of learners and apprentices achieve well on their courses. For example, a large proportion of learners who study art and design achieve merit or distinction grades. On management courses at levels 6 and 7, however, too many apprentices leave before they complete their learning. Too often, this is because they do not finish the functional skills aspect of their courses.

Learners and apprentices mostly produce work that is of a high standard. As a result of their studies, they know much more, and can do much more. For example, level 5 paramedic apprentices thoroughly understand how to maintain patient dignity and consent. Level 3 art and design learners competently use a wide array of different drawing tools to complete high-quality pieces of artwork.

During their studies, learners and apprentices receive useful information on the importance of citizenship and British values. They learn about how these topics relate to their home and work life, as well as at university. Because lecturers reinforce and check this knowledge throughout the curriculum, both learners and apprentices develop a sound grasp of these topics.

As part of the induction process, managers and lecturers set out clear expectations for behaviour and attendance. Learners' and apprentices' attitudes to their studies are largely good, and they attend classes at high rates. In a minority of cases, particularly on the police constable level 6 apprenticeship, apprentices have negative attitudes towards their studies. This is because they feel that some of the theoretical work they undertake is not relevant to their job roles.

Learners and apprentices have access to a wide range of resources to support their mental and physical health. This includes on-site health and welfare services, guidance on diet and wellness, and access to specialist external help.

Managers offer learners and apprentices a well-developed array of careers support. For example, learners who study level 3 art and design receive ample focus on careers in art and guidance on their options for higher education. Apprentices benefit from guidance, with job interviews and CV writing, as well as on specialisms that relate to their future careers.

Leaders and governors place a high value on the apprenticeship and further education courses that they offer and are ambitious for learners and apprentices. They view apprenticeships as a means of improving social justice, because they offer an alternative route into degree-level study.

Both leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They discuss key issues at numerous committees. However, at these committees, leaders do not set precise enough actions to bring about improvement, or review data that provides in-depth insight into the performance of courses. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not benefit from courses that are of consistently good quality.

Curriculum planning for the police constable level 6 apprenticeship requires improvement. University managers do not have a thorough enough oversight of the topics that the subcontractor teaches as part of this course. This means that lecturers do not frequently enough make appropriate links between modules of study to help apprentices remember knowledge in the long term.

In a few cases, lecturers are overly reliant on long presentations to explain topics to apprentices. After these presentations, lecturers do not take enough opportunity to check that apprentices understand the presentations. As a result, apprentices rely on self-study to develop an in-depth knowledge of these topics.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff with responsibility for safeguarding complete suitable training. There are adequate staff available to manage safeguarding concerns. As a result, safeguarding staff respond effectively to any concerns that learners and apprentices raise.

Leaders place a particular focus on sexual violence and harassment, following heightened concerns about these issues nationally. They offer a specific support unit to help learners and apprentices who have experienced sexual violence or harassment.

University leaders are an integral part of local 'Prevent' groups. As a result, they respond promptly and appropriately when related issues occur in the local area, such as recent community tensions in the city.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and governors should more rigorously tackle the problems with a minority of poorly performing courses. They should analyse evidence carefully, such as performance data, and set targets for improvement.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that they have thorough oversight of subcontracted provision so that they can ensure all courses are planned well and do not overburden apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133833
Address	The Gateway Leicester Leicestershire LE1 9BH
Contact number	01162551551
Website	https://www.dmu.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Professor Katie Normington
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 December 2017
Main subcontractors	Leicestershire Constabulary

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the registrar and secretary, 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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