

# University of Bradford

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Malcolm Fraser, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Address:</b>	Richmond Road Bradford BD7 1DP

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

The University of Bradford was inspected in March 2022. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders, managers and staff made in comprehensively mapping higher degree programmes to the relevant apprenticeship standards, so that apprentices can develop effectively the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard they are following?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have led an effective review of all apprenticeships. Through this, they have ensured that the curriculum of the higher apprenticeship programmes that they provide covers the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standards. Leaders have overseen the work that curriculum staff have completed to map the learning outcomes of degrees to the apprenticeship standards. Through the improved formal oversight, review and curriculum approval processes for apprenticeships, leaders and managers can now assure themselves that higher degree programmes continue to align with the relevant apprenticeship standards.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have provided useful support for staff to help them to develop their understanding of all aspects of apprenticeships. This has given staff the skills and confidence to plan effective apprenticeship programmes. For example, in the chartered manager standard, staff have planned a personal development module that runs throughout apprentices' time on the programme. This enables apprentices to review and reflect regularly on their learning against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard. Staff have adapted the work-based research project that laboratory scientist apprentices complete to ensure that it covers the key knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need. They have also scheduled this later in apprentices' programmes. As a result, the gap in time between completing the degree award and apprentices being entered for the end-point assessment is much shorter. This ensures that apprentices are better prepared for the final assessment.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff carry out a thorough induction with all apprentices at the start of their programme. This ensures that apprentices understand the requirements of the apprenticeship, how these will be covered through the curriculum, and how the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they acquire will be assessed.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that they now maintain a rigorous oversight of quality of higher level apprenticeships, and through this, that they can identify aspects that need to improve?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have implemented a range of actions that have resulted in much strengthened governance and oversight of apprenticeships. Leaders' and managers' actions are having a positive impact on improving many aspects of the apprenticeships provided. However, leaders recognise that more work is required, particularly in relation to ensuring that apprentices experience consistently good teaching.

Leaders and managers have clarified well the lines of accountability for the quality of education and monitoring of apprenticeships in faculties and at a whole-institution level. In the year since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that procedures for the regular, formal monitoring of apprenticeships by the higher degree apprenticeship (HDA) compliance team and subcommittees overseeing the delivery and quality of apprenticeships are now effective in identifying areas for improvement. They are effective in implementing actions to address these.

To support their oversight of apprenticeships, managers have established a range of key performance indicators and quality measures that they use to monitor the quality of education and the progress that apprentices make. Through continually maturing governance and oversight arrangements, leaders and managers now quickly identify most areas that require improvement. They agree actions with the teams responsible for apprenticeships to make changes to the curriculum or to the arrangements for the delivery of apprenticeships.

Course leaders recognise and welcome the much-strengthened oversight and coordination of apprenticeships. Rather than working independently in individual subjects and faculties, course leaders now see themselves as an apprenticeship team. They welcome the clarity about what is expected of them through the monitoring and support they receive from the HDA compliance team. The compliance and quality subcommittee meetings provide an effective forum for professional discussion and sharing of good practice.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices on the nurse associate standard are aware of and can access the additional support they need to improve their subject knowledge and academic writing skills?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have conducted a review of the curriculum plans and the support processes in place for nurse associate apprentices. Subject leaders, supported by the university's academic skills team, carried out a survey of apprentices to establish common areas with which apprentices struggled. They used the results to plan and provide specific support sessions for apprentices.

Leaders also carried out a broader curriculum review to identify changes required to the curriculum for subsequent cohorts of apprentices. For example, in biology, a subject apprentices found particularly challenging, tutors have redesigned aspects of the curriculum to scaffold learning more effectively. They have introduced more frequent formative assessments. They plan for regular revisiting of key concepts to help apprentices consolidate their knowledge. Leaders have also introduced an essay-writing workshop to support apprentices to improve their academic writing.

Apprentices who raised concerns at the previous inspection, which took place early in their programme, now feel that they receive much better guidance and support. They welcome the positive changes that staff have made to the structure of their programme and the way in which the curriculum is taught. Lecturers clarify well for apprentices the expected outcomes of each module, so that apprentices understand the content they will cover and how they will be assessed.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the support available to them and how to access this through, for example, the university's academic skills and library teams. Apprentices welcome the direct input provided by the academic skills team staff, which has helped them to cope better with the academic challenges of the course. Course leaders expect lecturers to model good practice in academic writing and referencing in their teaching materials and resources, so that these expectations are reinforced for apprentices.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in providing support to lecturers so that they can give effective written feedback to apprentices that helps them to understand what they need to do to improve and how they can achieve higher marks?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have reinforced their expectation that all staff who teach on the apprenticeship programmes read and understand the university's assessment and feedback expectations. New teachers at the university have to complete formal training about these requirements. Staff have been encouraged to access the wide

range of centrally produced resources available to them to develop their teaching skills further, including in assessment and providing effective feedback. Through this, experienced staff can check whether they are meeting the expectations of the university and ask for support if they feel this is necessary.

Leaders and managers have focused on improving the quality of assessment and the effectiveness of feedback at recent faculty training days. During these development days, staff participate in useful workshop sessions with colleagues to carry out exercises that help to ensure the consistency of marking and the provision of feedback that helps apprentices to understand how to improve their work.

As a result of the actions taken by leaders and managers, the effectiveness of the feedback that apprentices receive is improving, and the majority have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and achieve higher marks.

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