

University of Hertfordshire

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit.

The University of Hertfordshire was inspected in October 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.

The University of Hertfordshire began providing directly funded apprenticeship provision in April 2018. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 604 apprentices on standards-based programmes. Most apprentices are over 19 years of age and are training on apprenticeships from level 5 to level 7.

The university provides training at level 5 for 94 nursing associate apprentices. Most apprentices are on level 6 apprenticeship programmes. These include 73 chartered manager (degree), 18 healthcare science practitioner (integrated degree), 91 registered nurse, 103 occupational therapist, and 27 digital and technology solutions professional. There are 103 apprentices on the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship programme. Fewer than five apprentices are on the level 6 control technical support engineer and level 7 advanced clinical practitioner (integrated degree).

There are no apprentices in receipt of high-needs funding, and the university does not work with subcontractors.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring they have a clear oversight of the quality of education and the progress that apprentices are making, and how effectively do governors use this information to hold leaders to account?

Significant progress

Leaders have responded decisively to successfully drive improvements. Leaders reviewed and tailored their structures, governance, career guidance and safeguarding practices for apprenticeship programmes. As a result, leaders have ensured that they meet the expectations of apprenticeship programmes.

Leaders have established a dedicated and impactful governance structure for apprenticeships. Link governors talk to apprentices and visit lessons to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have ensured that managers clearly and consistently report apprenticeship performance to support

quality assurance and data analysis. Governors use their understanding effectively. They support and challenge leaders and managers, both informally and formally. As a result, leaders and governors now have timely, detailed and holistic oversight of apprentices' progress. They use this understanding to ensure that apprentices receive the timely support they need to remain in learning and achieve.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices develop knowledge and skills beyond the academic and vocational curriculum? Reasonable progress

Apprentices have access to a wide range of helpful support services and resources to develop their wider skills. Apprentices make use of online support for study skills development, such as critical thinking. Apprentices can take part in the 'Go Herts Award', a formal recognition for engagement in a range of extra-curricular activities. Apprentices have a good understanding that they have access to a broad range of facilities within the university. For example, they can use the sports facilities or access online arts courses.

Most apprentices feel that they have developed their broader skills effectively as a result of their apprenticeship. They confidently deal with complex situations, chair meetings and speak at national forums. As a result, apprentices are well prepared to take on more senior roles within and outside of their organisations.

Staff support apprentices effectively to consider how to contribute to community activities. For example, apprentices mentor cohorts of new apprentices through a buddying system. A few apprentices take on visiting speaker activities to motivate current apprentices about their career pathways.

Too few employers have a good understanding of what the university offers, such as professional development workshops. At progress reviews, tutors do not involve the apprentice and their employer effectively in planning the curriculum beyond academic skills and knowledge. As a result, apprentices and their employers do not easily identify developmental opportunities that might arise within the workplace. In a few instances, workplace mentors support apprentices to take opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills beyond the academic curriculum, such as volunteering to chair a national committee for their sector. However, too few employers understand how they can further support apprentices' wider skills development.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that they provide effective, ongoing careers advice and guidance to enable apprentices to plan their next steps? Significant progress

Leaders have taken swift action to improve the career advice and guidance for apprentices. Leaders have appointed a qualified career coach for apprenticeships.

They have established a multidisciplinary team of professionals to work together to support apprentices. Leaders have trained curriculum tutors to ensure that the guidance they provide is tailored to the apprenticeship standard. They have developed a careers portal of online resources for career advice and guidance relevant to the apprenticeship standards.

Leaders support apprentices effectively with their career development plans. Career tutors make early contact with apprentices. Apprentices receive helpful information about the career portal early in their programme. Apprentices complete a questionnaire that tailors the resources to their areas for development. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding of the careers advice and guidance that is available to them.

Apprentices value the opportunity in teaching sessions to learn from their peers who are employed in other workplace settings. As a result, senior leader apprentices understand how their new leadership skills will support their future careers in other sectors. Apprentices gain the confidence to apply for roles they had not considered before their programme.

Apprentices value additional professional development workshops, such as CV writing, use of social networking platforms for strategic job roles, new business start-ups, understanding imposter syndrome and 'preparing for the unexpected'. As a result, apprentices develop skills for high-level job interviews and roles. Employers support apprentices to understand that they may not always gain new roles they apply for. They support apprentices to understand that application processes are a learning experience. As a result, apprentices are more willing to challenge themselves. They become more resilient and motivated to explore employment opportunities.

How much progress have leaders made in monitoring and supporting apprentices' well-being and safeguarding to ensure that they remain in learning and achieve?

Significant progress

Leaders have ensured that the support for apprentices' well-being is well resourced. Leaders have appointed a dedicated safeguarding manager to support apprentices. Apprentices have access to counselling, childcare, and learning and bereavement support. Apprentices can access personal support mobile applications and personal safety alarms. Managers send monthly newsletters to apprentices that provide them with helpful information. The newsletters contain career, well-being and safeguarding topics. As a result, apprentices receive helpful and timely support to remain on their programme. Apprentices who do receive support go on to achieve aspects of their academic programme that they had previously failed.

Leaders have improved communication and safeguarding training for staff and apprentices. Leaders have appointed a link governor, who works effectively with the safeguarding manager to understand the specific concerns that may affect apprentices. They consider trends and learn from these to improve support. Leaders

and governors are aware of the pressures apprentices face in, for example, studying alongside full-time work. Managers keep detailed logs of concerns to ensure that apprentices quickly receive the support they need. Leaders and governors meet frequently to review and manage apprentices' well-being to ensure that they remain on their programmes.

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