

Inspection of University of East London

Inspection dates: 26 to 29 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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

The University of East London (UEL) is based in the London Borough of Newham. The provider has three main sites where teaching takes place for apprentices, two in Stratford and one in Docklands. A small proportion of apprentices study mostly online.

At the time of inspection, there were around 700 apprentices across 15 apprenticeship standards from level 5 to level 7. Of these, 239 apprentices were studying the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship standard, 75 were studying the level 6 registered nurse standard, 98 were on the level 6 physiotherapist standard, 73 were on the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional standard and 36 were on the civil engineer standard. The remaining apprentices were mostly on other level 6 apprenticeship standards in healthcare or engineering-related subjects, with a small proportion studying business-based standards, including 34 on the level 7 senior people professional standard. At the time of the inspection, UEL was the only higher education institution that offered the level 6 geospatial mapping and science specialist standard. All apprentices were over the age of 18.

The university does not subcontract any of its apprenticeship provision.

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

Apprentices highly value their training. They have a positive attitude towards their studies and attend well. Apprentices appreciate the support they receive from caring and helpful teaching staff and workplace managers. As a result, they are professional, respectful and become valued employees.

Many apprentices do not have the conventional academic background to go on to higher level courses. These apprentices benefit enormously from the focus that leaders have on creating routes to education for them. For example, leaders offer a pathway in the civil engineering apprenticeship which is open to apprentices who do not already hold A-level mathematics. People who work locally in NHS trusts as healthcare assistants can go onto apprenticeships as nursing associates and registered nurses because of the strong links that leaders have with those trusts. As a result, these apprentices embark on careers which they previously did not think were possible.

Apprentices gain from having full access to the same support as undergraduate or postgraduate students. Leaders offer helpful experiences which get them involved in wider university life. For example, leaders hold a range of welcoming induction activities, including a hackathon for digital and technology solutions professional apprentices and a residential trip for civil engineers.

Apprentices build up their confidence and resilience throughout their studies. For example, nursing apprentices use their healthcare knowledge and empathy skills when they need to inform a patient of bad news.

Apprentices feel safe when they attend their training and work. Most apprentices understand safety risks in the local area and are taught by staff how to help keep themselves safe.

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

Managers have designed a range of suitable curriculums in close consultation with employers. They offer apprenticeships in sectors where there is a shortage of suitably skilled people to fill the jobs available, for example in the healthcare, digital and construction sectors. Managers adapt the course content thoughtfully to meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. For example, at the request of an NHS trust, staff teaching the level 5 nursing associate give additional time in the curriculum to teach clinical practice modules and focus on prominent health risks in the local area. As a result, apprentices are well prepared for their current jobs and future careers, and for their next steps in work or further study.

Staff teach apprentices topics in a logical order, so that apprentices learn underpinning knowledge before moving on to more complex content. For example, staff ensure level 6 physiotherapist apprentices know the anatomy and physiology of

the ankle, knee and hip and how balance and movement is linked to gravity and height. Lecturers move on to correct and reinforce the appropriate practical methods apprentices use with clients who may be developing compensation techniques. As a result, apprentices build on their knowledge over time.

Teaching staff teach apprentices extensive new knowledge which prepares them well for their work responsibilities. In most instances, apprentices follow training plans agreed with their employers and apply what they learn at work. For example, level 5 nursing associate apprentices use their knowledge of blood glucose theory to help work on the diabetic ward. Level 6 civil engineering apprentices learn the knowledge and skills to model the requirements, and complete accurate calculations and assessments, of concrete bedding forces in complex construction projects. Apprentices learn substantial new skills and knowledge.

Teaching staff are highly knowledgeable and often work in professional practice. Many have doctoral or masters degrees. Staff use their range of expertise to teach effectively. Lecturers explain concepts clearly and use helpful demonstrations. For example, in physiotherapy, lecturers show how sensory organs, nerves and muscles keep us balanced. In nursing, teaching staff use case studies effectively to hold insightful group discussions. As a result, apprentices confidently recall what they have been taught, and recognise how their new knowledge will help them in the future.

Staff give apprentices valuable opportunities to apply their new knowledge in well-equipped workshops. For example, lecturers teach nursing apprentices thoroughly to make the right clinical decisions through setting different scenarios on virtual wards before apprentices apply their new skills at work. Staff teaching level 6 geospatial mapping and science specialist apprenticeships guide apprentices effectively to use professional surveying equipment and software when calculating traverse lines. They give apprentices feedback that helps them to produce accurate results. As a result, apprentices refine their skills and work to a professional standard.

Staff check the progress of apprentices frequently by setting a range of appropriate tasks. Lecturers check apprentices' understanding through effective questioning. In most instances, staff provide useful explanations to help apprentices improve both their technical and academic writing skills, and to tailor their training to make sure apprentices learn what they need to know. Staff prepare apprentices well for their final assessments.

Staff teach apprentices valuable mathematics and English skills relevant to their professional needs. For example, nursing associate apprentices learn measurements and percentages to correctly administer medication and injections. As a result, apprentices gain vital skills to work safely. However, for the small number of apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics qualifications, managers do not ensure apprentices attend this training early enough.

Staff provide appropriate support for apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, they make appropriate adjustments to

assessments, share resources in advance and provide assistive technologies as needed. As a result, a high proportion of apprentices with SEND make good progress and achieve their apprenticeship standards.

Managers ensure that most employers offer high quality on-the-job training. For example, nursing associate apprentices and digital and technology solutions professional apprentices work in different departments to widen their experience. Mentors review apprentices' calculations on-site and model technical steps so that civil engineering apprentices complete complex projects. As a result, apprentices secure deep knowledge of industry techniques.

In most instances, staff hold effective reviews where they reflect on the knowledge and skills apprentices learn. Coaches of nursing apprentices plan with apprentices and employers how apprentices can consolidate what they have been taught. However, staff do not hold frequent or effective enough progress reviews involving the apprentice and their employer for a small proportion of senior people professional or physiotherapist apprentices. As a result, too many of these apprentices are not clear on their progress or steps they need to take to improve.

Most apprentices achieve their courses, and in most areas achieve high grades. As a result, apprentices benefit from professional recognition and industry registrations. In areas such as the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional a high proportion of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship standards. However, in areas where final assessments are not part of the overall degree, such as chartered manager and civil engineering site manager, the proportion of apprentices who achieve is too low. Leaders recognise this and are making effective improvements. Overall, the proportion of apprentices who are achieving their apprenticeship standard is rising, but still requires further improvement.

Managers, tutors and university staff provide helpful careers activities for most apprentices who take part in face-to-face training at the university. Guest speakers talk to apprentices about wider opportunities within subject sectors. For example, digital and technology solutions professional apprentices are introduced to new career paths in cyber security and artificial intelligence. However, for apprentices who complete most of their learning online, staff provide careers advice that is too limited.

Leaders have suitable governance arrangements in place. University leaders and independent board members with valuable expertise make sure the apprenticeship offer aligns with their strategic vision. They provide useful guidance on strategic plans and provide appropriate support and challenge to managers. Managers escalate relevant issues to the university board, who help to resolve them effectively. However, leaders and managers do not scrutinise the overall performance of the apprenticeship provision thoroughly enough. As a result, leaders and managers have been slow to rectify some areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the monitoring and scrutiny of the quality of apprentices' training to ensure that, across all programmes, apprentices receive a high-quality experience.
- Make sure that all apprentices receive frequent enough and high-quality reviews of their progress that involve the apprentice and their employer.
- Provide consistently high-quality and impartial careers advice and guidance to all apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133814
Address	4-6 University Way London E16 2RD
Contact number	02082233000
Website	www.uel.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Professor Amanda Broderick
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Dean of the School of Education and Communities, 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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