

# Inspection of Brunel University

Inspection dates:

30 January to 1 February 2024

## Overall effectiveness

## Outstanding

The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Apprenticeships

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Brunel University London (BUL) is a higher education institution in Uxbridge, West London. It offers apprenticeship provision in the College of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences, and the College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences.

BUL offers standards-based apprenticeships at levels 5 and 7 to adult apprentices. At the time of the inspection, there were 78 apprentices enrolled across three apprenticeship standards. Of these, 57 apprentices were studying the level 5 nursing associate standard, 15 were studying the level 7 advanced clinical practitioner standard and six apprentices were studying the level 7 digital technology and solutions specialist standard.

The university subcontracts to Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges to teach functional skills qualifications. At the time of the inspection, fewer than five apprentices were studying functional skills level 2 mathematics at the subcontractor.

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

Apprentices feel privileged and proud to study at the university. They are inspired to have high ambitions by exceptional lecturers who are experts in their field. Apprentices demonstrate high levels of respect towards their lecturers and each other.

Apprentices benefit greatly from learning in a highly inclusive and supportive environment. Apprentices develop a mature understanding of different views and opinions. They demonstrate an excellent awareness of fundamental British values and the importance of cultural tolerance and respect in the workplace.

Apprentices display exemplary professional behaviours throughout their training and in the workplace. They have excellent attendance to lectures, in which they take part enthusiastically. Staff set high expectations for apprentices' conduct. They integrate relevant professional codes of practice into the nursing associate and advanced clinical practitioner curriculums. Consequently, these apprentices are fully conversant with their responsibilities as health professionals.

Apprentices make excellent progress and thrive in an environment where they quickly learn advanced technical knowledge and skills. Apprentices successfully apply their new knowledge and skills in the workplace to solve problems in their jobs. For example, following their training, advanced clinical practitioner apprentices confidently redesign services and implement new clinics to enhance patient care.

Apprentices feel safe. They know how to escalate concerns at the provider and within the workplace. Apprentices have a thorough understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. For example, they recognise signs, such as changes in behaviour and physical appearance that indicate that others may be at risk.

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

Leaders have developed apprenticeships which meet the needs of local and national employers. They work incredibly well with industry professionals and subject specialists to plan aspirational curriculums that include the essential knowledge and skills needed in the health care and digital technologies sectors. Teaching staff teach apprentices up-to-date skills and knowledge that are highly sought after in these sectors.

Teaching staff design challenging curriculums that include additional learning that closely matches workplace demands. For example, they teach advanced clinical practitioner apprentices highly specialised and bespoke pathways tailored to their specific clinical environment and service areas. This enables apprentices to work at an advanced level and make significant contributions to their workplace.

Teaching staff are highly qualified and experts within their fields. For example, advanced clinical practitioner lecturers are published researchers. Teaching staff use their professional networks and research effectively to inform their teaching and inspire apprentices. Apprentices and employers highly value learning about current research and trends in their sectors.

Leaders plan highly effective training that enables apprentices to build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. For example, in the early stages of their training, nursing associate apprentices learn the skills of visual inspection and palpation, and about the different conditions of the vein. They then use these skills to identify suitable locations when learning how to perform cannulation and venepuncture. The vast majority of apprentices sustain their employment and gain additional responsibilities or promotion at the end of their apprenticeships.

Teaching staff use creative teaching strategies that significantly enhance the apprentices' learning experience. They skilfully use immersive technologies to create clinical scenarios and escape room simulations for apprentices to develop their teamwork, leadership and problem-solving skills. Staff expertly use 3D interactive software to teach aspects of anatomy and physiology. Apprentices benefit immensely from training in these exciting and transformative learning environments. They develop a strong visual point of reference which helps them remember what they learn.

Staff work extremely efficiently with employers to ensure that apprentices make exceptional progress. Through frequent meetings, they thoroughly review apprentices' progress, set them relevant targets and encourage them to reflect on what they have learned critically. Employers make sure that apprentices have access to high-quality on-the-job training and support in the workplace. For example, nursing associate apprentices work with clinical educators on the wards who help them understand thoroughly treatments and procedures linked to clinical skills.

Teaching staff provide highly constructive and detailed feedback to apprentices on their written and practical work. Lecturers provide helpful recorded video feedback to apprentices on their performance in clinical competence assessments. Apprentices watch these as many times as needed to refine their practical skills. Apprentices increasingly improve their academic writing, refine their critical thinking and analytical skills, and produce work of a consistently high standard.

Lecturers use questioning and observation skilfully to check apprentices' knowledge and how they apply it in practice. They frequently use assessments to help apprentices commit their learning to long-term memory. Apprentices highly value the ongoing support from staff, who prepare them very well for the workplace and their final assessments. Most apprentices achieve high grades in their final assessments.

Staff provide effective support to apprentices with additional learning needs throughout their training. They carefully plan highly appropriate adjustments for apprentices specific to their individual needs. For example, they provide quiet rooms for apprentices who are deaf or hard of hearing to have group discussions, equip lecture theatres with audio-loops and provide earpieces. As a result, these

apprentices remain in training, make excellent progress and achieve as well as their peers.

Apprentices frequently participate in a wide range of additional activities that allow them to broaden their horizons and explore their interests. They eagerly take part in skills competitions and award shows, give talks about their specialist areas in conferences and run marathons to raise funds for charities. Through detailed discussions with staff on social issues, such as the impact of disease on their communities, apprentices develop empathy with others and expand their knowledge of local problems.

Staff prepare apprentices exceptionally well for their next steps. Apprentices gain valuable insights into their chosen careers through inspirational guest speakers. They are well informed about the breadth of career opportunities available in their sectors and beyond the areas they work in, such as research and teaching. Apprentices are highly motivated to progress to higher level education and gain promotion.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have a thorough oversight of the quality of education that apprentices receive. Leaders faced significant challenges in their first year of offering apprenticeships due to COVID-19-related disruptions in the healthcare sector. In their first cohort of a small number of nursing associate apprentices, only a few remained on their course and achieved. Leaders took prompt action and rapidly improved their employer engagement and student support interventions to make sure that apprentices received effective and timely support both on their course and in the workplace. Consequently, the retention of apprentices and their achievement rates have improved significantly from the previous year. The vast majority of apprentices stay on their programmes and are making excellent progress.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	133897
<b>Address</b>	Kingston Lane Uxbridge UB8 3PH
<b>Contact number</b>	01895 274000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.brunel.ac.uk">www.brunel.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Andrew Jones
<b>Provider type</b>	Higher education institution
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Harrow, Richmond & Uxbridge Colleges

## 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 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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