

# Inspection of Arden University Limited

Inspection dates: 6 to 9 February 2024

**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

Arden University is a higher education institution based in Coventry, West Midlands. The university currently teaches online and blended degrees and apprenticeships to over 25,000 students globally. At the time of inspection, there were 1,004 apprentices studying at levels 6 and 7. Thirty-four were on the level 6 supply chain leadership professional degree apprenticeship, 249 were on the level 6 chartered manager degree apprenticeship, 47 were on the level 6 project manager degree apprenticeship, and the remaining 674 were on the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices display positive attitudes to their learning. They understand and articulate how their studies help them to be more effective in the workplace and help them to continue with their careers. Apprentices are keen to learn, and many aspire to achieve distinction grades.

Tutors and coaches create calm and inclusive environments when teaching online classes, which enables apprentices to learn effectively. They manage activities, such as group discussions, so that apprentices feel confident to share their experiences.

Tutors and coaches support apprentices to develop their character and confidence throughout their apprenticeship. For example, on the level 6 chartered manager apprenticeship, apprentices gain the confidence to lead professional teams more effectively and take on increased responsibility in the workplace.

Throughout their studies, apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours which they use well in the workplace. As a result of their studies, most apprentices quickly make a positive impact, and many undertake more complex roles.

Tutors and coaches support apprentices to develop an understanding of life in modern Britain and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, while apprentices receive newsletters which identify potential risks in the areas where they live and work, too often coaches do not discuss these with apprentices during their reviews. As a result, too few apprentices develop an understanding of these risks.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they need help or support. They are confident that if they raise a concern, leaders will take action to deal with it quickly.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the apprenticeships they have chosen to teach. They have developed curriculums which target gaps in leadership and management skills both across industry and in the healthcare sector nationally. Leaders focus on increasing participation for apprentices who do not yet have the skills they need to access a degree-level apprenticeship. They have invested in the support they provide for apprentices to improve these skills through a dedicated functional skills team. As a result, apprentices develop the English and mathematics skills they need to be successful.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the curriculums which apprentices follow are logically ordered to support them in building on their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Apprentices on the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship first study a range of theories and principles of leadership, such as organisational

behaviour. They contextualise these within their own workplace and subsequently put them into practice. As a result, apprentices learn new concepts which they can quickly apply in the workplace from early in their studies.

In most cases, employers frequently attend reviews and are active in supporting apprentices' training. They work with coaches to provide workplace tasks linked to the curriculum, which may be outside of apprentices' job roles. For example, level 6 project management apprentices have shadowed other departments in their workplace, broadening their understanding of their organisation. As a result, apprentices are well supported to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful at work.

Most tutors provide apprentices with detailed developmental feedback on their work. Apprentices act on the feedback they receive and, as a result, make considerable progress in improving the quality of their work over time. However, in a minority of cases, tutors do not always ensure the feedback that apprentices receive on their academic work helps them to improve. Leaders have rightly identified this and have acted to improve the quality of the feedback that all apprentices receive. However, the full impact of these actions cannot yet be seen.

Tutors use teaching strategies effectively to help apprentices know and remember more throughout their course. They record lessons for apprentices to refer back to, regularly recap key learning, and explore case studies. Tutors question apprentices to check their understanding of key concepts, such as using the Gibbs model in decision-making and adjust their teaching to fill any gaps in learning.

Leaders have processes in place for managing and monitoring the quality of their apprenticeships. They use these processes to identify areas for development and implement interventions to bring about improvements quickly. For example, having identified the number of apprentices who leave their apprenticeship early as a concern, they have improved initial advice and guidance, which has led to improvements in recent cohorts.

Leaders have established a board of governors for their apprenticeships, including an external member with experience in apprenticeships and quality improvement. Leaders ensure that governors receive the information they need to provide appropriate challenge to the leadership team. Consequently, governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of apprenticeships. They regularly challenge leaders and monitor areas needing improvement.

Coaches routinely discuss career options and potential next steps with apprentices. They have access to a university-wide suite of high-quality additional careers resources, and coaches have substantially increased the number of apprentices who access these. As a result, apprentices understand the opportunities available to them and their potential next steps.

Tutors and coaches prepare apprentices well for their end-point assessment. They introduce the requirements of the assessment at the beginning of their

apprenticeships and apprentices understand what they need to do to achieve distinction grades. Coaches schedule additional end-point assessment preparation lessons and mock assessments. They provide helpful feedback to help apprentices achieve their best. As a result, apprentices who undertake their end-point assessments achieve very well. Almost all apprentices achieve distinction grades and take on additional responsibilities or promotions either during or upon completion of their apprenticeship.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Continue to embed strategies to improve the number of apprentices who remain on their apprenticeships.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive feedback, which helps them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop apprentices' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism where they live and work.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54108
<b>Address</b>	Arden House Middlemarch Park Coventry CV3 4FJ
<b>Contact number</b>	02476 515700
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://arden.ac.uk">https://arden.ac.uk</a>
<b>CEO</b>	Professor Carl Lygo
<b>Provider type</b>	Higher education institution
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeship operations, 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

Stuart Collett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sharon Dowling	His Majesty's Inspector
Mark Parton	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Ibbotson	His Majesty's Inspector
Joel Dalhouse	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Morgan	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Clark	His Majesty's Inspector

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