

Inspection of University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Inspection dates:

5 to 8 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

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 Northumbria at Newcastle began delivering level 6 and 7 apprenticeships in 2017. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,612 apprentices studying on 17 apprenticeship programmes. The largest programmes are the level 6 police constable degree, the level 6 chartered surveyor degree, the level 6 quantity surveyor degree and the chartered manager degree apprenticeships. The remaining apprentices are studying programmes in the health, business, law and construction sectors. All current apprentices are aged 18 years or over.

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

Apprentices have positive attitudes to their programmes. They enjoy their training at the university and in their workplaces. Apprentices develop positive relationships with teachers, workplace coaches and their mentors at work. They are confident to ask questions and contribute well to discussions.

Teachers set high expectations for the behaviour and professionalism of apprentices. On the level 6 occupational therapist programme, leaders integrate the development of apprentices' awareness of professional requirements relating to the care of patients, inclusion and mental health issues. As a result, apprentices model and apply respectful and responsible values well in their studies and work roles.

Apprentices develop their character, confidence and resilience well as a result of their programmes. On the level 6 police constable degree apprenticeship, role-play activities using challenging scenarios help apprentices to develop the confidence to tackle situations encountered in their work roles, such as incidents of public disorder. Apprentices on the level 7 architect programme studying the workplace practices and law module develop the knowledge and confidence to enable them to be more active in workplace discussions.

Apprentices feel safe at the university and at work. Staff provide useful information on safeguarding early in the programmes. Apprentices know how to recognise concerns and how to report them should the need arise. They feel supported and are confident that staff would deal with any issues appropriately. However, in a few cases, apprentices' understanding of potential safety risks in their communities is limited. As a result, a few apprentices are not prepared effectively enough for life in modern Britain.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear strategy to offer programmes that contribute to the local, regional and national economy. They encourage social mobility and develop employability skills through a research-informed curriculum which includes up-to-date content that meets employers' needs. Leaders and managers work closely with large employers, such as NHS trusts and police constabularies, and with local enterprise partnerships to ensure that programmes meet skills needs. On the level 6 chartered manager programme, leaders collaborate with staff at a large national car dealership to customise the content of course materials. Apprentices carry out their own research and suggest organisational improvements. As a result, apprentices make valued contributions to their employers.

Leaders and managers have a strong focus on improving their provision. Apprentices and staff undertake frequent evaluations of the modules offered to make sure they are relevant and helpful. Teachers participate in peer lesson visits to share best

practice and to identify improvement actions and professional development opportunities. Teachers and training officers cite the visits as beneficial in developing their teaching practice.

Leaders and managers recognise that on a few programmes not enough apprentices complete their programme. In response, they have adapted the curriculum to place greater focus on the development of the required knowledge, skills and behaviours, as well as on achieving the qualification included in the apprenticeship. Leaders have invested in increased staffing and an online resource to improve the monitoring of apprentices' progress and the consistency of management across the different programmes. However, the system is in its infancy, and leaders and managers do not yet have clear enough oversight of how all apprenticeships are performing.

Staff plan and teach the curriculum to build apprentices' knowledge and skills incrementally. Apprentices on the level 6 police constable degree apprenticeship learn, practise and become confident in initial contact and stop and search procedures before they learn more difficult and complex powers of arrest. Apprentices studying on the level 6 operating department practitioner develop skills and confidence through regular practice. In lessons, they listen to the lobes of the lungs through stethoscopes, linking this to specific sounds and possible diseases and diagnosis. This repeated practice gives opportunities to make mistakes and learn. However, on a small number of programmes, teachers do not check that apprentices have understood theoretical concepts before moving on to the next topic.

Staff plan and adapt the curriculum effectively to meet ongoing employer priorities. On the level 6 operating department practitioner, they use a surgical centre to deliver a robotics workshop to apprentices. Experts in artificial intelligence provide practical sessions and group discussions to develop apprentices' understanding of robotic surgery. As a result, apprentices are well prepared to carry out their roles in the workplace.

In most cases, teachers use assessment well throughout the programme to help apprentices develop their understanding and improve their work. On the level 6 civil engineering programme, teachers communicate effectively the module assessment requirements. Teachers provide weekly informal feedback to apprentices through discussion and annotation to apprentices' drawings, and they encourage apprentices to explore new ideas. They then provide helpful formal feedback at key points in the semester. As a result, apprentices' work improves over time, and they produce work to a high standard.

Teachers and workplace coaches are well experienced and qualified to carry out their roles. All teachers have relevant industry experience and use this well to exemplify learning. Most teachers are assistant and associate professors or working towards a doctorate. Leaders support teachers without recognised teaching qualifications to complete appropriate training. Leaders and managers provide a wide range of training and professional development. They provide time for teachers to undertake sabbaticals to carry out research and development.

Staff provide apprentices with effective careers information, advice and guidance. Apprentices can discuss their next steps and progression routes with staff in the university's 'graduate futures' team. On the level 6 chartered manager programme, apprentices complete a personal development profile to identify their career goals. A professional development programme to refresh or specialise in nursing skills based on the health and social care framework is available for current level 6 registered nurse apprentices and alumni. As a result of the advice and support that they receive, apprentices are well prepared for their next steps in education, training and employment.

Staff do not do enough to promote the extensive range of extra-curricular activities that are available to apprentices at the university. Too few apprentices participate in opportunities to develop their skills and interests. In the cases where apprentices have participated in national and international competitions successfully, such as on the level 7 architect apprenticeship, these have been employer-led.

Leaders and managers work in partnership with their subcontractors to deliver the apprenticeship programmes. Staff at the subcontractors have access to the university training and professional development opportunities, such as the level 5 coaching and mentoring and level 4 train the trainer qualifications. They have access to all course and library resources to support their teaching. On the level 6 registered nurse degree, staff in the NHS trust work with module leads to ensure consistency of marking. They meet frequently to review and make improvements to session delivery. On the level 6 police constable apprenticeship teachers from the university attend sessions delivered by trainers at the subcontractor to ensure the delivery is seamless and collaborative.

Governance arrangements at the university place a strong focus on the apprenticeship provision. There is a clear structure that reports information from course level through relevant committees. Governors challenge leaders and managers to take effective action when apprentices do not make expected progress. For example, on the level 6 chartered surveyor, leaders now ensure that a chartered counsellor is in place in the workplace to provide support to develop apprentices' professional practice and to help prepare them for their end-point assessments.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Continue to improve oversight of apprentices' performance.
- Ensure that apprentices participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are available at the university.
- Ensure that apprentices are provided with sufficient age-appropriate information to live safely in modern Britain.
- Ensure that teachers use a range of effective teaching strategies, including those to check and consolidate learning.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133854
Address	Ellison Building Ellison Place Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8ST
Contact number	0191 232 6002
Website	www.northumbria.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Professor Andy Long
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust The Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary The Chief Constable of Northumbria

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the assistant director student and library services (quality), 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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