Inspection of University of Winchester

Inspection dates:	23 April to 15 May 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 Winchester is a higher education provider based in the city of Winchester, Hampshire. It has approximately 8,000 students studying a range of undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees and apprenticeships. The university has been an apprenticeship provider since 2015.

At the time of the inspection, there were 384 apprentices on apprenticeship standards at level 5 and level 6. Almost all apprentices were aged 19 years old or over and none were in receipt of high needs funding. Most apprentices were on degree apprenticeships in the health and well-being sector. There were 146 on the level 6 social worker apprenticeship, 86 were on the level 6 registered nurse apprenticeship, 28 were on the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship and 18 were on a recently launched level 6 apprenticeship in midwifery. The remaining apprentices were on digital and business apprenticeships that are being phased out by the university.

The university works with Hampshire County Council and with Functional Skills UK, who teach level 2 functional skills qualifications for the very small number of apprentices who need them.

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

Most apprentices enjoy their studies. They demonstrate high levels of engagement and have a very positive attitude towards their learning. Social worker and healthcare apprentices, many who felt they had reached career 'ceilings', value the opportunity to work towards professional status, which the apprenticeship provides.

Apprentices benefit from effective teaching. As a result, they swiftly learn new knowledge, skills and behaviours, which they apply confidently in the workplace. For example, apprentice midwives learn to conduct abdominal palpation and to plot the growth of babies onto charts and in notes. They quickly develop the skills they need to support those in their care effectively. Chartered manager apprentices use their new knowledge to introduce project management tools, which help them to be efficient in the workplace.

Digital technology solutions professional (DTSP) apprentices who have had their teaching disrupted due to frequent staff changes, have a less positive attitude towards their learning than other apprentices. A small number have lost motivation to engage in teaching sessions and have left before completing their apprenticeship.

Apprentices benefit from helpful careers advice and guidance. As a result, they are prepared well for their next steps. Professional careers advisors provide useful workshops and individual advice interviews that support apprentices with CV writing and preparing for job interviews. Guest speakers talk about career opportunities in a range of specialisms that apprentices may wish to move on to in the future. Staff help apprentices to make informed choices at the end of their apprenticeship. Most stay with their employer and gain promotion.

Apprentices feel safe. They know how to report concerns or seek support at work and at the university. Social worker apprentices develop a deep understanding of safeguarding in relation to their daily work, protecting vulnerable children and their families. They apply this understanding well to their personal safety and well-being. Healthcare apprentices have a highly developed sense of safe working practices, which minimises the chance of cross infection. They safeguard themselves, their colleagues and patients well.

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

Leaders have carefully designed an apprenticeship offer that widens participation, providing apprentices with a range of accessible routes into higher education and professional careers. They have used their well-established employer links effectively to identify regional skills gaps. They have designed apprenticeships that meet these needs. For example, local authority and NHS employers collaborate very successfully with the university to attract new talent and upskill existing staff. As a result, they are now able to fill vacancies in midwifery and social work, that have been challenging to recruit to.

Leaders and managers rightly understand that apprenticeships in the business and digital sectors have not provided the high quality of education they expect. The new team acted swiftly to close these programmes to new entrants. They have taken appropriate actions to improve the experience and outcomes for apprentices still on programme. They have recruited and trained new teaching and coaching staff, improved monitoring and tracking and put in place extra teaching sessions for those who fall behind. As a result, most chartered manager and data scientist apprentices now attend well and are making expected progress. It is still too early to see the full impact for apprentices on the DTSP apprenticeship.

Leaders have planned the curriculum logically, so apprentices build their knowledge and skills based on what they already know and can do. For example, nursing apprentices learn about healthy lifestyles so they can then provide guidance to patients on how to improve their well-being. They practise clinical skills, such as managing deteriorating patients safely, in simulation suites, before using these skills on hospital wards. As a result, they make good progress and quickly become effective in the workplace.

Leaders recruit teaching staff who are well-qualified industry experts. Many continue to work in the sector they teach. They maintain professional registrations as social workers, midwives and nurses. They use their subject expertise to help apprentices understand how theory relates to practice. For example, social work tutors use their experiences to devise interesting case studies for apprentices to discuss. Nursing tutors produce scenarios for apprentices to manage in simulations. Data science tutors use their research on business intelligence to help apprentices understand how organisations can make data-driven decisions. As a result, apprentices' benefit from up-to-date, research-informed teaching that helps them to be effective in the workplace.

Most teaching staff present and explain concepts and terminology clearly. They plan lessons effectively. Teachers break learning down into manageable chunks and use engaging resources to help apprentices reflect on topics and recall them. They use questioning well to check apprentices' understanding of complex topics and adapt their teaching appropriately. Consequently, they make sure that apprentices, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, know more and can do more than when they started their apprenticeship.

Leaders design health and well-being apprenticeships so what apprentices learn in lessons links closely to what they learn at work. Nursing apprentices capture their workplace learning carefully in detailed portfolios mapped to the apprenticeship standards and professional body expectations. Employers are fully involved in frequent, helpful progress reviews. As a result, they understand the progress their apprentices make. They know how to support them on the wards, as they work towards mastering the skills they learn in the classroom.

Coaches and tutors on business and digital apprenticeships focus too much on the achievement of the academic award and not on what apprentices are learning in the workplace. Skills coaches do not review or discuss workplace learning portfolios until

near the end of the apprenticeship. As a result, a small number of apprentices on these courses, and their employers, are unclear about the progress they are making or what they need to do for their final assessment.

Tutors and coaches provide apprentices with helpful feedback on their written and practical work, which clearly identifies what they have done well and where they can improve. Chartered manager apprentices respond positively to feedback about using additional research sources and theories. They produce work of an increasingly high quality as a result. Nursing associate apprentices adapt their workplace practices to ensure they cover the health concerns of non-binary individuals. They practise patient handovers until they can perform them competently and confidently. Apprentices improve their work over time, as a result of the feedback they receive. Most apprentices achieve their qualifications, many with high grades.

Staff support apprentices adeptly to become and stay mentally and physically healthy. They help social worker apprentices develop emotional resilience through strategies, such as clinical supervisions and peer support networks. They help them to identify the emotional impact of the work they do and avoid 'burn-out'. Registered nurses greatly appreciate the supportive workshop sessions, where they can discuss their work in challenging clinical settings and get help for their mental well-being. As a result, apprentices learn valuable strategies to manage their own health and well-being effectively.

Leaders have put in place appropriate arrangements with subcontractors, which enables the very small number of apprentices who need functional skills qualifications to achieve them. As a result, all apprentices who need functional skills qualifications achieve them before they start their final assessments. However, leaders rightly recognise that there is a lack of formal links with these teaching partners. They did not check on teaching quality. They did not track apprentices' progress towards achieving the qualifications. Leaders have recently taken suitable steps to strengthen oversight of this important aspect of the apprenticeship. These processes are in their infancy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Continue to improve the quality of education for those apprentices who remain on the level 6 digital technologies solutions professional apprenticeship.
- Make sure that digital and business apprentices are clear about the progress they are making with workplace learning and the steps they need to take to prepare for final assessments.
- Improve the oversight of functional skills provision, taught by subcontractor partners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133880
Address	Sparkford Road Winchester Hampshire SO22 4NR
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Website	https://www.winchester.ac.uk
Principal, Vice Chancellor	Sarah Greer
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Hampshire County Council Functional Skills UK

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship compliance manager, 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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