

Inspection of Queen Mary University of London

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 October 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

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is a higher education institution based in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. QMUL has campuses at Mile End, Whitechapel, Canning Town, Charterhouse Square, Holborn and Ilford. Apprentices study face to face and online.

QMUL teaches apprenticeships in the digital, healthcare and financial services sectors. At the time of the inspection, there were 436 apprentices studying standards from level 4 to level 7. Of these, 17 apprentices were studying the level 4 investment operations specialist standard, 147 the level 6 digital and technology solutions professional standard, 203 the level 7 senior professional economist (integrated degree) standard, 37 the level 7 academic professional standard, and 30 the level 7 digital and technology solutions specialist (integrated degree) standard. Fewer than five apprentices were studying the level 6 chartered manager (degree) standard.

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

Apprentices demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes towards their studies. They are committed to their education and training and are keen to make progress. They are keen to do well because they want to move on to higher level study. For example, on completion of their programme, many level 4 investment operations specialist apprentices move on to degree-level study. Apprentices aspire to achieve high grades and a large proportion do so.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and skills. They swiftly put these into practice at work. For example, in class level 7 senior professional economist apprentices study statistical computing and data visualisation software. They then use this software at work to complete tasks such as modelling the impact of interest rate changes. The skills which apprentices develop reflect very well what employers in the financial sector need.

Apprentices benefit from demanding and ambitious teaching. Tutors make good use of a wide range of high-quality teaching approaches that consistently challenge apprentices to improve their knowledge. Apprentices enjoy participating in group discussions, completing critical reflections, making video presentations and learning from external guest speakers from their chosen industry.

Apprentices are fully included in the university community. Leaders ensure that they have the same access to facilities, services and wider opportunities that undergraduate and postgraduate students have. Apprentices are actively involved in a wide range of clubs and societies such as the Jewish society, pottery, salsa dance, lacrosse and the talented athletes' chess club. Apprentices develop exceptionally well their interests, talents, and social skills, and make new friends.

Apprentices are safe when they attend training and at work. They are confident that staff would listen to them if they had any concerns and take quick action to resolve them.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices across all their programmes enjoy an excellent experience. They work very effectively with employers and industrial boards to select the right courses that help to meet the skills needs of the digital, healthcare and financial sectors. Apprentices benefit from an ambitious curriculum that is consistently demanding and highly relevant. Apprentices develop knowledge and skills that are highly valued in the sectors in which they work.

Leaders and managers place a significant emphasis on promoting social mobility, diversity and inclusion. For example, they design their recruitment processes to make sure that apprentices from under-represented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds have access to higher education. As a result, some apprentices embark

on careers that they did not think were open to them such as being senior economic advisers.

Leaders work very effectively with prestigious organisations to design their curriculum. In consultation with employers, they tailor the content to ensure that it meets skills gaps. For example, in their level 7 academic professional apprenticeship managers include topics such as theories of teaching to support apprentices who have clinical education roles at work. These apprentices are able to apply what they have learned by selecting and adapting teaching theories to meet the different needs of the physiotherapists, nurses and other health professionals they teach.

Tutors make effective use of high-quality teaching approaches to help apprentices understand important knowledge. They teach lectures that are academically rigorous and follow these up with one-to-one question and answer sessions to consolidate what they teach. They ensure apprentices have access to excellent learning resources including electronic books, academic journals and research papers. As a result, apprentices gain new knowledge and skills quickly.

In most programmes, apprentices benefit from gaining valuable additional qualifications that go beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship. For example, level 4 investment operations specialist apprentices complete training that is mandated by their industry body from which they gain a professional qualification. This qualification allows them to start to work independently with clients in their financial settings.

Tutors are highly qualified and have extensive industry experience. Many publish journal articles and books, have post-graduate qualifications and complete research in their professional fields. Tutors use their knowledge and experience to inspire apprentices. For example, they give expert guidance to digital and technology solutions professionals to help them evaluate software projects and develop holistic perspectives on software engineering.

Tutors give apprentices very effective on-going support and guidance to help them prepare for their final assessments. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the individual components of their end-point assessment and when they must complete tasks. They understand the grades they can achieve and are confident they will be successful. Apprentices pass their assessment at the first attempt and a high proportion gain high grades, including merits and distinctions.

Staff ensure that apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Apprentices have access to an extensive range of university services. Staff make reasonable adjustments so that apprentices receive the support they need. For example, staff provide apprentices with dyslexia with teaching materials in advance of sessions. As a result, apprentices with SEND make good progress.

Tutors mark apprentices' work carefully. They provide comprehensive feedback and set demanding targets that challenge apprentices to improve their work to a higher

standard. For example, tutors share with apprentices specific research by recognised authors that they should read to expand their knowledge. Apprentices are very clear about how to improve their work.

Skills coaches frequently check the progress that apprentices make. During reviews, employers and skills coaches identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. They identify valuable opportunities for apprentices to fill these gaps through tasks at work, and set clear targets for them to complete.

Staff provide apprentices with a comprehensive and highly effective programme of careers advice and guidance. They enjoy sessions taught by industry specialist guest speakers, attend careers fairs, and receive good-quality help to prepare for interviews, including psychometric tests. Many apprentices gain early career promotions, progress onto higher level qualifications and take on additional responsibilities at work.

Leaders have made significant investments into their apprenticeship provision. Working with managers and those with governance responsibilities, they have developed comprehensive systems that help them to strive for excellence. They ensure there is accountability and scrutiny at the highest level. When they are challenged, leaders and managers respond swiftly and make improvements to their provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133813
Address	Mile End Road London E1 4NS
Contact number	02078 825555
Website	www.qmul.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Professor Colin Bailey
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 deputy vice-principal for education, and professor of reproductive biology, 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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