

Inspection of University of Nottingham

Inspection dates: 11 to 14 June 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

Leaders offer apprenticeships at level 6 and 7 in a range of subjects. This includes nursing (healthcare and veterinary), architecture, data science, laboratory science and electro-mechanical engineering.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 370 apprentices who are all adults. Three hundred and twenty apprentices study level 7 advanced clinical practitioner (ACP), level 7 architect, level 6 electro-mechanical engineer or level 6 data scientist apprenticeships.

The remaining apprentices study level 7 senior leader, level 7 bioinformatics scientist or level 6 laboratory scientist apprenticeships. Leaders are 'teaching out' the level 7 senior leader, level 7 clinical practitioner (veterinary pathway), level 7 bioinformatics scientist and level 6 laboratory scientist apprenticeships. No new apprentices are recruited for these programmes.

Apprentices study their courses in a range of ways. This can include face-to-face sessions at a university site in Nottingham, training at work or blended programmes that are taught online.

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

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to be successful at work and academically. They gain confidence and take on responsibilities and tasks that they did not initially think they would be capable of. For example, laboratory scientist apprentices progress to being able to present complex clinical demonstrations to large audiences.

Most apprentices demonstrate a very high commitment to their studies and rarely miss any sessions. They are professional at work and often operate in challenging and demanding roles. Apprentices are rightly proud of what they achieve. For example, ACP apprentices share their pride after identifying undiagnosed conditions in patients during clinical skills sessions.

Leaders ensure that apprentices can access the full range of university support services. This includes health and well-being guidance, mental health assistance and access to fitness facilities if they are local. Apprentices feel fully supported, and safe at work and during their studies.

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

Leaders have a clear vision and rationale for their apprenticeship provision. Following a recent strategic review, they decided to stop offering some courses. This ensures that the apprenticeships they offer align fully with leaders' research and strategic priorities. Apprentices who are completing courses that are being 'taught out' are supported to complete their studies.

Employers are understandably highly satisfied with the communication and relationships they have with staff. Leaders consult frequently with employers about what their needs are. They use this information very well to inform apprenticeship curriculums. Employers highly value the guidance they receive from university staff to recruit and support their apprentices.

Managers and teachers sequence the content of courses sensibly. For example, data scientist apprentices learn fundamental mathematical and computer science skills before the more sophisticated topics of probability modelling and machine learning. This supports apprentices to progressively develop their knowledge and expertise.

Staff determine apprentices' starting points and appropriately use this information to adjust teaching where necessary. Apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support from a specialist team. This allows them to participate fully in their courses.

Teachers are highly qualified and experienced. They use their expertise to provide apprentices with up-to-date knowledge and relate this to industry practices well. Apprentices benefit from a range of approaches to teaching that include independent online study, short workshops and face-to-face teaching blocks. Most of

these approaches are applied to a high standard by teachers, although a small proportion of independent study resources are basic. As a result, a few apprentices find themselves seeking out additional materials to support their learning.

In sessions, teachers do not always check apprentices' understanding of topics well enough. For example, teachers prepare well-crafted multiple-choice polls, but not all apprentices respond, or they ask generic questions like 'Does everyone understand that?' As a result, teachers do not always know if apprentices have understood a topic before they move on.

Teachers work well with employers to provide apprentices with good opportunities to practise what they study at work. For example, following their theory lessons on each body system, ACP apprentices undertake clinical skills sessions with volunteer patients. This allows them to apply what they learn and get useful feedback from their managers on their performance. Apprentices are challenged to complete demanding work that matches the curriculum, and teachers mark it to an exacting standard. This helps apprentices to develop a high level of expertise.

Apprentices make good progress towards achieving their qualifications and most produce a good standard of work. They are well prepared for their final assessments. On the ACP apprenticeship, which is the only one with published results, a high proportion pass and most achieve distinction grades.

Leaders provide a suitable range of ways for apprentices to access and receive independent careers guidance. This includes one-to-one appointments, useful careers resources and workshops on career planning. As a result, many apprentices know the direction they want their careers to take and how they can achieve that.

Leaders and managers implement a good array of well-considered quality improvement processes. This includes activities such as monthly programme review meetings, teacher observations and internal quality reviews. In the main, these processes are used well to identify any areas for development, and remedial actions are completed swiftly. However, teachers' action plans, following their observations, do not sufficiently focus on the areas for improvement that leaders have rightly identified. As a result, teachers do not always undertake training and development in the areas they most need to.

Governors have the relevant backgrounds and experience they need to undertake their roles. They meet frequently with leaders to discuss the quality of training and the experiences of apprentices and employers. Governors receive a good standard of information that they use well to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices benefit from the same high standard of learning resources to aid their learning.
- Support teachers to improve how well they check apprentices' understanding during sessions, so they move on to future topics at the right pace.
- Ensure that teachers undertake the specific training and development identified in their observations to help them improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133856
Address	University Park Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG7 2RD
Contact number	01159 515151
Website	https://www.nottingham.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Shearer West
Provider type	Higher Education Institution
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	DREEAM (Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust) Runway Apprenticeships Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of professional and workbased learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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

Emma Woods, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Karen Green	Ofsted Inspector
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