

Semester: Learning and Development Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2526607
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Semester Learning and Development received its first publicly funded contract for apprenticeship training in April 2018. Semester Learning and Development is an independent learning provider that delivers apprenticeships in the engineering sector. Apprentices follow the advanced engineering manufacture (craft and technician) at level 3. The provider also delivers apprenticeships in IT and telecommunications as a subcontractor. The subcontracted provision was not in scope for this monitoring visit.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Apprentices in the engineering sector, specialising in working with employers who require a more flexible delivery model, benefit from a flexible curriculum design. Staff ensure that learning programmes are highly responsive to the advanced manufacturing sector in which they work. This meets employers' needs and national skills shortages well.

The curriculum ensures that apprentices benefit from helpful advice and guidance at the start and throughout the apprenticeship. Candidates are assessed at the start to ensure they are placed on the right level of programme to best suit their abilities and engineering employers' business needs. Tutors use progress review meetings to provide clear career and progression advice throughout the apprenticeship. Tutors use their high levels of electrical/electronic, mechanical and business knowledge, skills and expertise to provide apprentices with a relevant curriculum experience. The different elements of the curriculum combine well to provide distance learning resources, one-to-one learning sessions, work shadowing and additional occupationally relevant qualifications. Tutors are supported well by leaders to maintain their professional and vocational standards and receive regular updating.

The managing director (MD) has a good understanding of the quality of the provision. Regular apprentice and employer feedback is used to support improvement to the quality of the specialist curriculum offered. Exhaustive sampling of tutors' assessment decisions also provides a clear picture of quality. The MD uses such information well to bring about rapid improvement. For example, previous tracking arrangements were not accurate enough in tracking the progress of apprentices, but this has now improved.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? **Reasonable progress**

Through careful planning, leaders and staff have ensured the correct sequencing of apprentices' engineering knowledge and vocational skills development. Staff ensure that the learning programmes are flexible and responsive to the sector in which they work. For example, provision is available across Europe, so apprentices would find regular attendance in a fixed location difficult. This approach helps ensure that apprentices quickly acquire new knowledge and skills which benefit the employer's business.

Tutors provide good-quality training through the online learning platform, virtual classroom and supportive 1:1 tutorial sessions. These focus on the knowledge and technical understanding required to work in the engineering sector. Apprentices gain very good new skills in the workplace, working alongside highly experienced and knowledgeable supervisors and service engineers.

Tutors and supervisors provide curriculum content that not only develops their knowledge of engineering but supports apprentices' improvements in English, mathematics and digital skills. Technical report writing skills are developed well when apprentices create accurate maintenance schedules and identify IT software upgrades to improve reliability and running costs.

The curriculum is carefully constructed in consultation with employers. Staff have devised schemes of work for the delivery of the programme and employers have developed on-the-job training plans. This aspect encompasses the more specialist skills which apprentices need to do their jobs well and safely. For example, apprentices receive offshore safety, working at heights and confined spaces training.

Assessment is reliable and robust. Work is marked closely throughout the apprenticeship and helpful, insightful feedback ensures that the apprentice knows how to improve technical writing and practical skills.

Progress is tracked so that apprentices and supervisors can see what has been completed and what is left to do. Review meetings are frequent but lack more precise targets for employers to keep their apprentices motivated. Due to periods of

training being disrupted through work being needed on overseas assignments, progress has slowed. Provider and employer staff have recently implemented a robust intervention plan to ensure that all complete on time.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

Reasonable progress

Safeguarding arrangements have been established that protect apprentices and staff. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and are subject to regular review. All feel safe and know who to contact with any concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead is appropriately qualified to carry out the role effectively. All staff benefit from regular training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and are updated on at least an annual basis. Safe recruitment practices are implemented effectively when new staff are recruited. A 'Prevent' duty risk assessment is in place.

On and off-the-job curriculum and training plans encompass the more specialist skills needed to complete the apprenticeship well and safely. They also ensure that all know how to stay safe in the industry in which they work and benefit from a range of additional health and safety training programmes. Those working in politically sensitive regions receive additional intensive awareness training on staying safe from extremists and radicalisation.

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