

Inspection of University of West London

Inspection dates:

25 to 28 February 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

The University of West London is a higher education provider with two sites in west London and a small site dedicated to teaching nurses in Reading. At the time of inspection, around 1,000 apprentices were studying courses from levels 4 to 7 in nursing and allied professions, civil engineering, surveying, business and administration and digital technology. In addition, approximately 140 adult learners study functional skills courses in English and mathematics.

Leaders also offer a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses to just over 14,000 students, who were not in scope for this inspection.

The majority of students and apprentices come from London and the surrounding area. Most attend the university for one day per week and have the same access to resources and services as all other students.

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

Apprentices and learners enjoy studying at the university. Lecturers teach well-planned lessons that help apprentices and learners to develop their knowledge and skills over time. Apprentices and learners develop a secure understanding of theoretical concepts and how to apply them in practice. For example, lecturers teach nursing associate apprentices about different body systems and how to take basic physiological observations in year 1. In year 2, apprentices learn how to make decisions based on the clinical observations made for patients to plan their short- and long-term treatments. This ensures that apprentices become helpful members of their teams and take on increasing levels of responsibility over time. The large majority of apprentices and learners achieve their qualifications.

Staff effectively guide apprentices and learners towards their next steps. Apprentices benefit from guest talks from industry professional bodies. Adult learners receive support to identify their strengths and how to use these, combined with their functional skills qualifications, to take the next step in their careers.

Staff help apprentices and learners to develop their confidence, resilience and understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They provide students with access to mental health support and encourage everyone to use the on-site gym. This helps apprentices and learners studying functional skills feel like they are part of the university, with the same access to support as full-time students. Staff also offer apprentices and learners a substantial amount of information on important topics, such as consent, respect and examples of toxic relationships. Consequently, apprentices and learners possess a strong understanding of how to care for themselves.

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

Leaders and managers at all levels of the university understand the importance of apprenticeships in promoting social mobility. The decision to offer apprenticeships links well to the university's mission of being a career-led institution. Leaders offer a range of apprenticeships that help individuals into careers in areas of local, regional and national importance, such as nursing, digital skills and the built environment. Leaders have taken a bold step to offer functional skills qualifications to adult learners. These intensive short courses allow adults to improve their English and mathematics skills, so that they can subsequently access further and higher education.

Leaders and managers collaborate effectively with employers and industry boards to design courses. They use feedback well to adapt the curriculum. For example, based on employer feedback, leaders introduced a surveying practice module, so civil engineering apprentices could further develop their practical skills. This effective use of feedback helps to ensure apprentices are taught skills in line with industry expectations.

Lecturers are well qualified and use their experience effectively to support apprentices. Staff teaching apprentices on health-related courses maintain their clinical skills and registration, which keeps them up to date. Lecturers on built environment courses frequently attend industry conferences, so that they have the latest knowledge on modern methods of construction. Apprentices benefit from the up-to-date knowledge that lecturers have, which they then use effectively in their own workplace.

Lecturers use a range of appropriate assessments to help apprentices and learners improve. These range from multiple-choice questions to check their knowledge, to practical examinations focusing on conducting a particular task to the required standard. Apprentices in the latter stages of their course complete oral examinations, where they must provide a compelling rationale based on the information provided. Lecturers also provide helpful feedback to apprentices and learners so that they can improve their work. However, in functional skills mathematics, learners are not always provided with feedback and explanations that are sufficiently clear. Learners are overly dependent on resources that they use outside of lessons to try and understand important topics.

Staff support apprentices and learners very effectively. They have an open-door policy, so that apprentices and learners can speak to staff when necessary. This helps apprentices and learners to feel supported during their studies. Personal tutors meet monthly with apprentices to check on their progress. Frequent progress review meetings between the university tutors, apprentice and their line manager, ensure that apprentices have adequate opportunities to apply what they have learned in the workplace. However, in too many instances, staff use these meetings to check on the completion of administrative tasks rather than focusing on apprentices' competence in applying what they have learned in the workplace.

Staff provide apprentices and learners with a range of effective information about possible careers and next steps. Apprentices and learners can access the university's central careers team, as well as the specific advice about careers relating to their sectors that they receive from their lecturers.

Leaders and managers have high expectations for apprentices and learners who attend lessons online. However, in a small number of instances, teaching staff do not follow this guidance themselves and do not reinforce the requirements to have cameras on during lessons.

Leaders and managers have a good overview of the quality of education. They use a range of internal and external surveys and data to support their judgements. In a very small number of instances, staff do not always take up continuous professional development opportunities following observations and feedback on their practice. A range of university committees scrutinise the quality of apprenticeships and adult learning, holding leaders and managers to account for the provision's performance.

The governance arrangements are effective, and governors have a good overview of the quality of the courses. They challenge senior leaders appropriately for the quality and achievement of apprentices and learners on courses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the quality of progress reviews, so that apprentices have targets that are specific to the competencies they need to develop.
- Support staff to provide clearer explanations and improve their feedback to learners in functional skills mathematics lessons.
- Ensure that staff follow university guidelines for teaching online.

Provider details

Unique reference number 133901

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Website www.uwl.ac.uk

Principal, CEO or equivalent Peter John

Provider type Higher education institution

Date of previous inspection 30 April to 3 May 2019

Main subcontractors n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the university secretary and academic registrar, 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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