

Arts University Bournemouth

Higher education institution

Inspection dates

23–26 January 2018

| Overall effectiveness | | | Outstanding |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding | 16 to 19 study programmes | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding | | |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding | | |
| Outcomes for learners | Outstanding | | |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | | | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Students on the foundation programme benefit substantially from the resources and ethos of the university, which contribute to their high levels of progress.
- Students develop excellent skills that prepare them very well for higher education and employment.
- Teachers have substantial commercial and industrial expertise that is directly relevant to their teaching, benefiting the students significantly.
- Leaders and governors take highly effective action to monitor the quality of the foundation diploma in order to maintain the high standards.
- Nearly all students complete and achieve their foundation diploma in art and design. A high proportion of these pass with a high grade.
- The curriculum, teaching, resources and programme of visiting practitioners are very well planned, with a very effective focus on shaping students' career and higher education choices.
- The standards of work that learners produce, particularly in photography, film and fashion and textiles, are very high.
- Students develop high levels of creativity and professional practice, including an excellent understanding of an artist's responsibility to behave ethically.
- The vast majority of students continue their studies on degree-level courses, having taken great care to select ones which are highly relevant to their career aspirations.
- Teachers have outstanding access to continuous professional development that ensures that they maintain high standards of professional practice.
- While students' attendance is regular, leaders do not set high enough expectations for the overall attendance of students.
- A very small minority of students do not complete their first assessed piece of work and make slower progress as a result.
- Governors receive regular reports and briefings on safeguarding but do not receive enough formal training.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Arts University Bournemouth is a higher education institution specialising in visual and performing arts courses. Approximately 6,000 students enrol each year on higher education, leisure and pre-degree courses. This inspection focused on the pre-degree foundation diploma in art and design course for students funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This foundation diploma is offered with pathways in fashion, costume and textiles, three-dimensional studies, film and animation, fine art, graphic design, illustration and photography.
- Approximately half the learners on the foundation diploma come from the local area. Others are recruited from across the United Kingdom and overseas. Approximately one in ten students is from a black or minority ethnic background and around three quarters are female. A very high proportion are aged 18 at the start of their course and have completed A levels or equivalent qualifications.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Set students higher expectations for their attendance.
- Analyse the reasons why a very small number of students do not complete their first assessed piece of work and devise a strategy to reduce this number so that these students make more rapid progress and achieve high grades in their final assessment.
- Increase the training on safeguarding that governors receive in order to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities for students.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders and governors have a very clear mission, vision and set of values, which are clearly evident through the work of teachers and students on the foundation diploma. These are brought to life in the work of the institution. For example, the mission emphasises the importance of 'turning creativity into careers'. This is realised through excellent careers advice and guidance, students developing a perceptive understanding of their potential artistic career and a very high proportion of students successfully continuing on to degree courses.
- The university's vision is for the institution to be distinctive for its 'maker culture', and its corporate values promote innovation and collaboration. These values and vision are evident in students' work, which clearly demonstrates a strong focus on students working together to produce a very broad range of innovative, well-crafted artwork to a high standard.
- Leaders and governors recognise and value the contribution of the foundation diploma programme to fulfilling the institution's mission, vision and values. Students on the foundation diploma programme benefit substantially from studying in a higher education institution. For example, as well as the dedicated further education facilities, students have access to a particularly good range of other accommodation and resources. Students also value the influence of the higher education culture in increasing their independence and autonomy as the course progresses.
- Leaders play a key role in developing the economic prosperity of the region through their involvement in the Dorset local enterprise partnership (LEP). For example, the institution helps the regional LEP meet several of its key priorities, in particular to promote growth in the creative industries and in the use of technology.
- Leaders and governors have highly effective quality assurance processes in place. All teachers are involved in the process of reviewing the quality of provision. Managers maintain a self-critical and incisive approach to identifying any areas of weakness and instigating strategies for improvement.
- Leaders have successfully dealt with the recommendations made at the previous inspection. In particular, they have significantly improved the organisation's approach to safeguarding. Managers have greatly improved how they gather and use data to track and monitor students' progress. They have also increased the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures. For example, teachers make very good use of the views of students from focus groups, student representatives and surveys to help ensure that the course meets students' expectations.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are comprehensive. They are highly effective in enabling managers and their teams to review and discuss their performance, and identify any areas for development.
- Teachers have outstanding access to continuous professional development. Leaders have high expectations that teachers keep their specialist knowledge and expertise up to date, acquire teaching qualifications where necessary, and undertake relevant research or postgraduate qualifications. Teachers welcome these opportunities and use them well to improve their teaching.

- Teachers benefit significantly from frequently working alongside each other when planning, delivering and evaluating assignments. Through this, teachers share ideas and further improve their already high levels of expertise. However, the internal peer observation system is of less value. It provides few meaningful opportunities for teachers to discuss and explore the effectiveness of their approaches to classroom practice.
- While students' attendance on the foundation diploma programme is regular, leaders do not establish high enough expectations for the overall attendance of students. For example, the student handbook sets a very low expectation for attendance. Teachers do not provide sufficient guidance to students on the improvements that they need to make to their attendance.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is highly effective. Governors work closely to support and challenge the leadership team in establishing the strategic priorities of the institution and reviewing and monitoring quality. Their scrutiny makes an important contribution to the quality of the foundation diploma remaining high, and students' level of satisfaction continuing to increase.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Managers carry out suitable pre-employment checks on all staff, and have in place appropriate procedures for checking visiting speakers. The designated safeguarding lead for the university has effective links with external agencies to help assure the well-being of students, and to report any concerns should they arise.
- Governors receive a valuable briefing on safeguarding as part of their induction, but this is not followed up with sufficient formal training on all aspects of safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have developed a broad and exciting curriculum which, together with a wide range of teaching methods, provides a rich and very productive learning experience. Methods include studio demonstrations, lectures, individual advice and feedback and tutorials. All teachers ensure that the curriculum is strongly focused on preparing students for the next stage of their education and training.
- Assignments and learning materials engage and challenge students from the start of the course. Tasks and assignments encourage students to take risks with ideas and to develop a highly individual body of work through the course. Students use the excellent library and its extensive reference and research materials to inform their cultural and historical understanding, giving their work depth and context.
- Teachers skilfully energise and motivate students through short supplementary tasks, such as a small-scale design project, the 'matchbox' task, and highly specialised practical workshops on skills such as stitching images, bookbinding and spot welding.
- Students use sketchbooks extensively to record and evaluate thought-provoking and exciting ideas and many of the sketchbooks are outstanding by the end of the course.

Students learn how to edit their portfolio of work decisively, which leads to a concise collection reflecting their skills and ideas. This, along with mock interviews and their observations of other students at the university, prepares them well for interviews for higher education courses.

- Students acquire an excellent understanding of specialist creative processes and procedures and many develop digital, print and making skills to an exceptional standard. For example, graphic design students attend workshops in printmaking which enable them to understand in detail the construction of images and layering of colours. Bookbinding workshops provide them with a very good working knowledge of sequence and narrative formats of publications and storyboarding.
- Teachers have substantial commercial and industrial expertise that is directly relevant to their teaching, and benefits the students significantly. Visiting and guest lecturers add further insight into working in the arts-based industries as well as the knowledge and skills that students will require to succeed.
- Assessment is very well planned and is highly effective in helping students make rapid progress. Teachers provide timely and useful feedback following assessments. Tutorial and assessment records build into a comprehensive and accessible document succinctly summarising students' progress.
- Students' work mostly draws on a wide range of cultural influences and social issues and is realised with insight and discretion. Teachers systematically include considerations of equality, tolerance, respect, diversity and sustainability in lessons and assignment briefs. For example, in fashion, textiles and costume, teachers introduce students to examples of how some artists and designers produce work that is superficially decorative but uses colour, symbols, motifs and pattern in order to challenge and provoke debate. These themes are illustrated well through examples such as Grayson Perry's 'Comfort Blanket', which represents immigrants' perceptions of the United Kingdom, or work by Yinka Shonibare which comments on British colonialism. Illustration students completed a project entitled 'under the influence', exploring the taboo of drug use in a neutrally evaluative manner. This was designed to educate and inform teenagers of the well-being consequences of using psychotropic drugs in therapeutic and abusive situations. Through the project, students provided insightful commentary about truth and lies in the news, public health, freedom of choice, democracy, and law and order.
- Teachers provide an excellent drawing programme that equips students with the skills to visualise and communicate ideas appropriately within their discipline. However, students do not explore mark-making and expressive drawing in enough depth or produce larger-scale work in fine art during the programme's early stages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students develop an excellent knowledge of what it like to work in the arts-based industries through extensive and regular talks and workshops with practising artists and designers. Their knowledge further develops through the highly effective use of assignments that draw on professional practice in the careers to which the students aspire.

- Teachers and careers advisers provide comprehensive advice and guidance for students whose intentions are to work in the creative arts. Teachers use their extensive knowledge of higher education and their insightful knowledge of each student's artistry or creative aspirations to advise students on degree courses they should consider. A 'Where next?' careers and progression presentation provides students with good information about other universities and how to research the courses they offer. Teachers also provide excellent support to the small number of students who want to follow alternative subjects and training routes.
- Teachers ensure that students develop a mature understanding and appreciation of ethical creative practice and of their responsibilities as artists, designers and citizens. For example, photography students understand their responsibility to gain permission from subjects and graphic design students understand the impact of the implicit messages in their work on a viewer or user.
- Staff in the university's student support services provide excellent help with personal matters as well as improving students' study skills. Teachers and managers of the support services work closely together to ensure that the services are timely and, where appropriate, improve students' work.
- Students have a good awareness of how to work safely in workshops as a result of comprehensive inductions. Students feel safe in the university and know what actions to take if they feel threatened or concerned. They are aware of how to stay safe online and of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Teachers return to this topic throughout the students' course to review and improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Students improve their communication skills well. Students quickly learn how to reflect on the quality of artwork when carrying out critiques of their own and other students' work. They learn how to explain their personal artistic development eloquently.
- Students improve their written English skills well. They effectively evaluate their work and write perceptively about their creative development. Teachers provide useful feedback on students' English skills and support staff provide effective help for students who have specific difficulties with English. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities in the curriculum for students to develop their mathematical skills.

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

- Standards of student work are very high and much is outstanding. In photography, film and fashion, costume and textiles students' work is of an exceptionally high standard. Students quickly develop their creative and technical skills to produce distinctively individual and innovative work. Students use the excellent technical resources with skill and confidence to create extremely well-finished pieces of work.
- A very high proportion of students move onto higher education courses that are relevant to the subjects they studied on their foundation diploma. Of these, around half take up degree courses at the university. Students make extremely well-informed choices about potential higher education courses. This stems from the wide range of opportunities they take to both experiment in a range of art forms and specialise in a specific discipline. They explain articulately the value of their chosen degree course to their career

aspirations. Students state clearly how the foundation diploma has helped them to see confidently how their skills and artistic vision can form the foundation for a career.

- Since the previous inspection in 2012, a very high proportion of students have continued to complete their course successfully; significantly above the national rate for the foundation diploma in art and design. Each year, only a very small number leave before the end of the course and all but a very small number of students who complete the course achieve their qualification.
- A high proportion of students, except those on the graphic design pathway, achieve a distinction grade. A higher proportion of students from a disadvantaged background achieve a distinction grade than of other students. However, a slightly lower proportion of students from a black and minority ethnic background and students who have a disability achieve a distinction grade.
- A minority of students do not pass their first assignment at the first attempt, although this proportion decreases for later assignments. These students also tend to have lower rates of attendance, particularly at key tutorials. They subsequently achieve significantly fewer distinction grades than other students at the end of the course.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 133793 |
| Type of provider | Higher education institution |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 269 |
| Principal/CEO | Professor Stuart Bartholomew CBE |
| Telephone number | 01202 533011 |
| Website | www.aub.ac.uk |

Provider information at the time of the inspection

| Main course or learning programme level | Level 1 or below | | Level 2 | | Level 3 | | Level 4 or above | |
|--|------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) | – | – | – | – | – | – | 253 | 25 |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | – | – | – | – | – | – | | |
| Number of traineeships | 16–19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | – | | – | | – | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14 to 16 | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Number of learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding | 0 | | | | | | | |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of school for preparation for higher education as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Steven Tucker, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Peter Nelson | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Mike Addison | Ofsted Inspector |
| Clifford Shaw | Ofsted Inspector |

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