

# University of the Arts London

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 133900

**Name of lead inspector:** Janet Mercer HMI

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**Type of provider:** Higher Education Institution

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## Information about the provider

1. The University of the Arts London (UAL) is a specialist university, comprising six colleges across London. These are Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Art.
2. The university has recently restructured its further education provision and now offers the foundation diploma in art and design at Central Saint Martins, the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre and the London College of Communication. Access to higher education courses are available at the London College of Communication and the London College of Fashion.
3. Further education courses account for 15% of the university's provision overall. In 2010/11 over 3,600 students were enrolled on full-time, further education courses, all at advanced level. Of these 75% were female and just over half were aged 16 to 18. Over 40% were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately two thirds of students study on the foundation diploma programme.
4. Students attend the university from all parts of the United Kingdom, with 9% of further education students coming from European Union countries and approximately one third from overseas. The largest numbers of international students on further education courses come from South East Asian countries. Approximately one quarter of UK students come from social or economically disadvantaged areas. In 2010/11 almost one third of UK students aged 16 to 18 were in receipt of the education maintenance allowance.
5. Further education provision is managed within each college by an associate dean or programme director. The university's dean of students and director of widening participation oversees the development and quality improvement of the further education provision.
6. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the university:
  - Holts Academy of Jewellery (jewellery manufacture)
  - Fashion Retail Academy (fashion retail and merchandising).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> Further education (16 to18)	1,935 full-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)	1,714 full-time learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	1

<b>Colleges</b>	
Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre	1
Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design	1
London College of Communication	2
London College of Fashion	2

## Overall effectiveness

7. Students achieve well at the University of the Arts London, where the quality of provision is good overall and outstanding on the foundation diploma courses at Central Saint Martins and the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre. Pass rates are very high on most courses, with the exception of two access to higher education courses. Managers are revising the structure and assessment requirements of the access courses to enable more students to succeed. Many students on the foundation and vocational design diploma courses achieve merit and distinction grades.
8. Students thrive in the challenging, creative environment and develop high-level practical, technical, conceptual and critical skills. Tutors set imaginative and challenging assignments which stretch students' abilities and enable the students to develop highly personal responses and creative solutions to problems. Students learn to research in depth, to convey complex ideas visually and through writing, and to work independently, which prepare them very well for progression to higher education or employment.

9. University staff work closely together to ensure students receive good care and personal and academic support. Students feel very safe within the university environment. Excellent links with national and international arts organisations and highly-qualified tutors, with current, relevant creative and industrial experience, ensure that students develop a very good understanding of contemporary creative practice and working within the creative industries.
10. Managers have carefully restructured the further education provision to ensure it fully supports students' ambitions to progress to undergraduate programmes. The university works exceptionally well with a wide range of schools, colleges and arts organisations in successfully enabling more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to benefit from its provision. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, with excellent assignments and activities which extend students' understanding of cultural differences and current social issues.

## **Main findings**

- Outcomes for students are good overall. Success rates are consistently very high on two of the three foundation courses and high on most vocational diplomas in design. Students achieve well on the access to higher education in fashion and fashion business courses, but pass rates have been low on the access to interior design and fashion media and communications courses for the last three years. Retention rates on one foundation course remain below average.
- Standards of students' work are very high. Students respond positively to challenging assignments, which stretch their conceptual, reflective and technical skills. The development of strong practical and technical skills and the capacity to work independently prepare students extremely well for higher education and employment.
- Attendance rates are satisfactory overall but vary considerably between courses. Although tutors monitor attendance, actions to ensure students' prompt return to college after an absence are not taken quickly enough. On a few courses, students commented that the poor attendance of some students had a detrimental impact on the progress of the whole group.
- Teaching and learning are good with examples of outstanding practice. No sessions observed by inspectors were inadequate, although a small, but significant, proportion was no more than satisfactory. Tutors provide stimulating, well-planned assignments which students find exciting and engaging, and which encourage them to take creative risks to produce well-researched and innovative solutions.
- Assessment practice is good with tutors thoughtfully balancing critical appraisal with sensitive and helpful guidance. Students deepen their understanding and develop their own reflective practice, enabling them to become independent and highly creative practitioners.

- In less than good sessions tutors do not always plan learning explicitly or check that all students are involved and are making good progress. Tutors' written feedback following assessment does not always provide sufficiently clear and specific detail for students to reflect on after their assessment tutorial.
- The university courses are exceptionally well designed to support students' progress to undergraduate programmes. Students' experience is significantly enhanced by additional qualifications and extensive enrichment activities.
- Outstanding work with partner organisations is highly effective in ensuring that the university achieves its ambition to be a leading art and design institution. Extensive work with many schools and colleges across Greater London makes a significant contribution to social inclusion and widening participation in higher education.
- Students receive good advice about the range of courses available. Well-planned and challenging induction activities help them to understand the demands and benefits of their course. Those who take up specialist learning support achieve at least as well as their peers.
- Good leadership and management ensure that the further education provision continues to make an important contribution to the university's work. Curriculum management is good overall and outstanding in two colleges.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The university provides a very safe, harmonious and respectful environment for a diverse range of students. It actively and successfully works to widen participation of disadvantaged students in further and higher education.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good and help to bring about improvement. However, self-assessment is not of consistently good quality across all the colleges and quality improvement plans are insufficiently precise. The current scheme for the observation of teaching and learning does not cover all staff routinely and is insufficiently evaluative of the impact of teaching on learning.
- Arrangements to keep learners safe are satisfactory and the university is acting promptly and effectively to strengthen its procedures. Students report they feel very safe in their environment.

### **What does the University of the Arts London need to do to improve further?**

- Improve retention rates so that they are consistently high across all the foundation diploma courses, and raise pass rates on access to higher education programmes by revising course unit structures and simplifying assessment requirements.
- Ensure that attendance is consistently high on all courses, by developing and implementing consistent arrangements in all colleges for monitoring students' attendance so that absent students return to study more quickly. Building on the best practice existing in two of the colleges, extend the information on the impact of attendance on attainment to all students.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by routinely and regularly monitoring teaching and learning, ensuring that observation records are more evaluative and that feedback to individuals clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Share existing good practice in teaching and learning more widely.
- Continue to improve the quality of provision by ensuring that self-assessment and action planning for improvement are consistently thorough and rigorous across all the colleges.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What students like:**

- how hard they have to work and the demanding intellectual challenge
- the high and professional standard of work they produce
- the independence fostered by the course, the effective integration of theory and practice, and the experimental approach to work
- the emphasis tutors place on the conceptual and creative process in their teaching, and how they encourage creative risk taking
- the accessible and supportive tutorials and group critiques and the range of feedback these provide
- the range of technical workshops and current industrial experience of teachers
- the creative culture and ambience and prestigious reputation of the university
- the good support for essay writing and applying to higher education.

#### **What students would like to see improved:**

- the booking system for technical workshops to alleviate the delay caused by high demand for some specialist workshop equipment in 3D, printmaking and textiles
- the consistent application of attendance expectations and policy to minimise the adverse effect on group dynamics of poor attendance by some students
- more workshops at Central Saint Martins
- better communications about what and where guest speakers are available.

# Main inspection report

## Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

11. Good leadership and management provide a secure basis for further development and quality improvement. Leaders and managers set high expectations and provide clear direction and strategy. From the valuable strategic review, the university has strengthened its understanding of the value, qualities and areas for improvement of its further education provision. Managers and staff are clear about what still needs to be done to make further improvement.
12. Arrangements to assure and improve the quality of provision are good. An increasingly robust quality system is often well applied, while the university continues its work to ensure that better practice is consistently followed. Self-assessment is thorough and largely accurate, but quality improvement plans are insufficiently detailed to allow meaningful targets for improvement to be set and progress monitored.

## Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

13. Outcomes for students are good overall and outstanding at Central Saint Martins and Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon. Success rates are consistently very high on the foundation diploma programmes at these colleges. Retention rates on the foundation diploma at the London College of Communication are below those of the other colleges, resulting in success rates a little below average.
14. Success rates have been low in recent years on the access to higher education interior design and fashion, media and communication courses. Success rates have improved on the access to higher education fashion and fashion business courses and are now good. Success rates are high on the majority of the college's vocational diplomas in design and for students on university courses at the Holts Academy of Jewellery and the Fashion Retail Academy.
15. Standards of work are generally very high. Students demonstrate high levels of motivation and commitment and enjoy their courses. They respond positively to challenging assignments. On most courses, they undertake high-quality, first-hand research which informs a highly personal development of ideas and responses.
16. At Central Saint Martins and the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre, extensive use of museum and gallery visits supports visual and academic research, but this is less well developed at the London College of Fashion where, in a few cases, students rely too heavily on secondary source material. Students at the London College of Communication regularly participate in design competitions and employer-sponsored projects which enhance their understanding of commercial practice.

17. Students develop skill and confidence in grappling with varied and complex challenges, and acquire highly-developed conceptual and technical skills. Students reflect critically on their own practice, through self- and peer reviews, annotation of work and the use of reflective journals. This develops the maturity of their thinking and practice; the depth of analysis in the reflective journals is a particularly strong feature of the work at Central Saint Martins. In a minority of cases students' reflective and critical skills are not sufficiently refined.
18. Progression rates to higher education and employment are high. The vast majority of students who apply to degree programmes are successful. Many students on vocational diploma courses progress to related employment. Students develop an excellent understanding of professional practice in the creative industries, through the expertise and experience of teaching staff, visiting tutors and speakers, external visits, work placements and internships.
19. Variations in the achievement of different groups of students are not significant. The university's detailed analysis identified lower rates of progression to degree courses for students from Black African or Caribbean heritage and managers have recently established a specific task group to investigate and develop actions to reduce this differential. On most courses, students in receipt of additional learning support achieve at least as well as, or better than, their peers, and the significant numbers of students with dyslexia achieve very well.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

20. The quality of most students' experiences is very good. Teaching and learning are good with many characteristics of outstanding teaching. No sessions were judged to be inadequate although a small, but significant, proportion were no better than satisfactory.
21. Students learn well as a result of carefully planned sessions taught by well-qualified and professionally active staff. In the better sessions, experienced practising artists and designers build rapport and trust with their students, and this fosters creative and innovative thinking. Many tutors are adept at designing stimulating and well-written assignments that motivate students to explore concepts and experiment extensively. Students gain confidence as a result and produce excellent prototypes and products. Tutors guide students astutely to reflect on their in-depth research, and probe and discuss with each other the extensive range of drawings, design ideas and concepts. This process fosters highly creative and independent working.
22. The combination of a strong focus on professional practice, alongside carefully planned assignments that make good use of exhibitions, gallery visits and prestigious external speakers, creates a stimulating atmosphere around the campuses. Workshops in technical aspects effectively support students' creative thinking, although in Central Saint Martins, demand sometimes exceeds the



availability and access is restricted. Tutors' high expectations of students help to instil the organisational skills needed to succeed at the next level.

23. Tutors' assessment practice provides good opportunities for students to increase the depth and breadth of their knowledge and develop highly creative reflective skills and sound understanding of principles. Tutors provide good verbal feedback on students' work, but written feedback is not always sufficiently detailed about how to improve work to enable all students to reflect further after tutorials and assessment points.
24. Initial assessment of students' ability to write fluently and cope with academic writing is widely shared with all the teams who teach students, so that assignments are planned to take account of students' particular needs. Students speak very highly of the support they receive to improve their academic writing.
25. The small, but significant, number of sessions that are satisfactory are characterised by insufficiently good planning. A few tutors are not adept in ensuring every student is participating fully. In a few cases tutors do not always make clear what is being learnt through the varied tasks and activities set, and therefore cannot measure how effectively some students have progressed in the session.
26. Although trained observers at each college observe lessons, managers do not ensure that this is carried out in a regular and routine way for all staff. While observation records provide teachers and managers with insights into how effective teaching is, observers do not provide sufficiently evaluative commentary or, frequently, enough specific detail about how to improve their practice swiftly.
27. The curriculum very successfully prepares students for progression to higher education. The largest programme, the foundation diploma, accredited through the University of the Arts London Awarding Body, enables students to develop their skills in a comprehensive range of specialist pathways. Through regular review and innovation, managers ensure that best practice is shared and that the provision is responsive to the needs of students, the creative sector and national policy. For example, one college is successfully piloting a new structure for the foundation diploma that allows students to have more time in specialist pathways before choosing their final option. Revised term dates this year give students more time to develop the specialist skills and portfolios needed for applying to higher education. The university is currently revising the structure of its access to higher education programmes to reduce and simplify the assessment requirements for students.
28. Courses are enriched and extended through good use of additional qualifications in design and drawing. For example, at the London College of Communication, students are able to progress directly into employment as a result of following additional courses that develop their technical skills in areas such as interior design and broadcasting media. These courses provide a very

good balance between developing students' commercial awareness and encouraging innovation and exploration.

29. The university is recognised internationally as a leading arts and design provider. Through its outstanding work with partners, it makes a significant contribution to social inclusion and widening participation in higher education. Inspirational and innovative activities involve an extensive range of partners including employers, local authorities, schools, specialist art and design and general further education colleges. Each year around 2,000 students from schools and colleges benefit from participating in a very well planned series of Saturday workshops, summer schools and portfolio days. Some of these lead to intermediate level accreditation in drawing, contributing to raising attainment and aspiration in partner schools.
30. University managers make a considerable contribution to raising standards in art and design education by becoming trustees of foundation schools, governors of specialist schools and through research activity. Current students benefit from the university's extensive links with the creative industries and the involvement of alumni. Students from partner schools and colleges applying to the university are supported through progression agreements that help them to develop their portfolios and, in most cases, guarantee them an interview.
31. The university's strong partnerships with business have supported the introduction of apprenticeships and vocational programmes at intermediate and advanced level, providing work-based and industry-specific qualifications in fashion retailing and jewellery manufacture.
32. Students receive good advice about the range of courses offered at each of the colleges through on-line information, open days and summer schools. Carefully planned course-specific induction, including activities that diagnose additional support needs, helps students to settle in quickly. Students who declare on application that they have a specific learning difficulty and/or disability receive very good and prompt support. Students value highly the personalised support they receive from tutors who are understanding and responsive to their needs.
33. The university offers a wide range of specialist support services including health and well-being, financial and housing advice. The student union's advocacy service supports students well in their relationships with university staff. A robust review of learning support across the university has provided clear recommendations for further development to address any disparities in the services available across the colleges.
34. Course tutors provide very good support through formal individual tutorial sessions and frequent informal reviews that help students to understand how they are progressing and what more they need to do to reach their aspirations. Effective course planning identifies points where students may need extra help in, for example, meeting assignment deadlines, and additional support is available for those who need it.

35. Systems to monitor and improve attendance are not consistently well developed and implemented in all colleges, and attendance rates, while satisfactory overall, vary considerably between courses. A number of students commented on the adverse impact of poor attendance by some students on the whole group. The university acknowledges the need to improve these systems so that absences are followed up more quickly.
36. Students receive very good advice and guidance that helps them to progress successfully to undergraduate-level study. Tutors integrate preparation for the next stage as a key component from the start of most programmes. Student ambassadors and higher education tutors also provide good advice on study at degree level.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

37. Good leadership and change management have strengthened the contribution that further education provision makes to the university overall. Leaders, managers and their staff have skilfully reviewed the purpose, scope and size of further education in the university. They have communicated a clear strategic vision for further education to staff, students and partners of the university, re-emphasising the role of further education in facilitating students' progression to higher education. The strategic review has improved further the open communication and productive teamwork among staff. Tutors comment positively on the opportunities they have to make their views known and on the visibility of managers.
38. Further education provision benefits from very effective governance. Governors have significant and extensive experience in the arts and related areas. They play a valuable part in determining the vision and strategy for further education and provide critical challenge and support to managers. Since the previous inspection of the further education provision, the work of governors in setting strategic and improvement targets, and monitoring progress against them, has significantly improved.
39. Curriculum management is good overall, but the rigour and quality vary between the colleges. In two colleges, leadership and management are outstanding, but they are satisfactory in another. Some variability remains in how well managers use performance data to identify areas for improvement and develop robust actions to secure improvements. Management of the subcontracted provision is good.
40. Arrangements for safeguarding students are satisfactory. The university has identified the need to improve the consistency of implementation of some safeguarding procedures and commissioned an external review to support this work. Working practices are safe and managers and staff carry out very thorough risk assessment. The roles and responsibilities of the staff who manage safeguarding are clear; problems relating to the safeguarding of

students occur very rarely and are dealt with appropriately. Managers ensure that criminal records and other checks are carried out on all staff who regularly work with young students or vulnerable adults, and that a single central record of these checks is maintained. Training for staff in safeguarding is appropriate and governors are suitably briefed. Safeguarding arrangements for residential students are good.

41. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The university has made significant progress in recent years in ensuring the rigorous application of policies and in monitoring their effectiveness. A recently strengthened committee structure, covering each college, continues to promote equality and diversity very effectively. Arrangements to involve students in equality and diversity matters are good. Tutors' promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity within the curriculum is often outstanding. Assignments frequently incorporate diverse cultural themes and students' work often reflects and celebrates social and cultural diversity.
42. The university reports extensively on its initiatives for a wide range of work relating to equality. Good analysis of students' performance and staff profiles informs the work of the university. For example, the identification of variations in progression and high grade achievement rates between some ethnic groups have prompted speedy action. The university very successfully increases the participation of disadvantaged groups in further and higher education courses.
43. Quality improvement arrangements, led by expert managers and the further education quality co-ordinators group, are effective in improving provision. Governors and senior managers are extensively involved in the review of performance. Course and college self-assessment reports inform the comprehensive university-wide self-assessment report. Managers use performance data increasingly well to support self-assessment judgements. The views of students, extensively collected, are used well to support judgements and identify where further improvements can be made. However, course-level improvement plans are not of consistently good quality, with the clarity and detail of improvement targets varying between colleges.
44. Financial management is good and the further education provision represents good value for money. Outcomes for students and quality of provision are good overall and outstanding in two colleges. The standard of accommodation and resources is often high. The university's property strategy is significantly improving the quality and efficient use of the college estate. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They engage in a good range of training and professional development activities to support their continuing professional development.

# Colleges

## Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre

Grade 1

### Context

45. Some 575 students study for the foundation diploma in art and design. They also take an advanced-level drawing certificate as part of their programme. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18 and over 40% come from overseas.

### Key findings

- Success rates have been consistently high on the foundation diploma in art and design and a high proportion achieve merit and distinction grades. Success rates on the additional drawing certificate varied between the three constituent colleges last year. Managers have ensured that the drawing course is now better integrated into the main programme, and students' achievements have improved. Progression to higher education is very good.
- The quality of students' work is outstanding. Students carry out thorough research from diverse sources, making excellent use of drawing, found objects and photography. Sketchbooks demonstrate a high degree of invigorating experimentation. Students confidently use a wide variety of media and produce new and innovative solutions to problems. Students use gallery visits very effectively to draw on artists' work and incorporate this into their own practice.
- Teaching and learning are very good, with some outstanding characteristics. Tutors plan lessons carefully and raise students' aspirations through setting high expectations, preparing stimulating and challenging assignments and discussing students' work intensely and rigorously with them on an individual basis. Tutors encourage students to organise and plan their own work well to meet demanding deadlines.
- Tutors skilfully challenge and extend students' ideas and, as a result, students' work is highly individual and shows significant maturity. Students quickly develop a strongly personal approach to their work and many devote much of their free time to reaching the highest standards. The majority of students demonstrate well-honed reflective and critical skills. However, occasionally tutors do not sufficiently challenge students to reflect, to question ideas and explore alternatives.
- Tutors are adept in using different learning and teaching strategies to meet individual needs and abilities. They pay particular attention to overcoming language barriers by explaining often complex concepts in different ways, and supporting students well to develop good written and oral skills.
- Assessment systems are good and well understood by students. Tutors provide constructive verbal feedback, and students are very aware of their progress and what they need to do to improve. However, tutors' written feedback is not

always explicit or sufficiently detailed to ensure that students are able to make improvements. Students are confident to ask for help and many strive to continually improve their work. Those who receive additional learning support achieve exceptionally well. Students feel very safe and secure and enjoy their studies.

- Resources and specialist facilities are very good. Students benefit from additional lectures and activities beyond their usual timetabled sessions. Students make good use of high-quality resources and materials on the virtual learning environment to support work in progress, or if they miss lectures or activities. Students benefit from excellent technical and workshop support available to them during, and beyond, timetabled sessions. Tutors and technical support staff are very well qualified.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers and tutors work together very closely to plan courses in detail and to achieve identified priorities. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and realistic about the strengths and areas for improvement. Targets for improvement are clear and well understood by staff, who use data well to analyse performance and take swift action to secure improvement.
- The university has managed the restructuring of the foundation course skilfully and tutors value the open and supportive approach to change. Tutors have benefited from new opportunities to work in more diverse teams and share best practice. Students have benefited from the richer learning environment, increased contact with specialist staff and from greater access to resources.
- The college has been particularly successful in encouraging students from disadvantaged areas to progress to the foundation diploma and to higher education. Outstanding partnership working with local schools, galleries and external agencies enables many school pupils to benefit from Saturday and holiday courses. A significant proportion of these progress successfully to the foundation diploma.

### **What does the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon progression centre need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the clarity and detail of written feedback to ensure that students are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure that teachers consistently place sufficient emphasis on the development of students' reflection and self-critical skills.

**Context**

46. Currently 778 students study the foundation diploma in art and design, of whom 474 are aged 16 to 18 and 304 are over 19. Over 40% of students are from overseas. Foundation diploma students also study an additional advanced-level award in drawing.

**Key findings**

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Success rates on the foundation diploma have risen in recent years and are high. The pass rate has been 100% in each of the last three years. Although the majority of students completed the drawing award, the overall pass rate was around 80%.
- Students make excellent progress and their work is of a very high standard. They conceive their ideas intelligently through research, and nurture them carefully through further development activities. Sketchbooks demonstrate maturing of perception and selection skills and explicitly record the sequence and progress of ideas both conceptually and visually. Students acquire a broad range of media and making skills through workshops, and tutors thoughtfully create assignments in which these skills may be applied.
- Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons stretch and extend the intellectual and creative abilities of students. Tutors explain complex concepts clearly and equip students to develop ideas confidently. They schedule projects to tight deadlines and design well-conceived assignments, which entice engagement and speculation, pose questions and lines of enquiry and do not predetermine solutions or outcomes. Extensive use of museum and gallery visits informs and supports excellent first-hand research.
- Students are highly motivated and participate in lessons readily. The course fosters excellent independent thinking and working skills in students which they value greatly and use well. Emphasis on evaluating and communicating ideas often leads to innovative solutions and confident command of the creative process. Students' excellent reflective journals clearly demonstrate how their work and thinking develops over time.
- Assessment is carefully balanced between discussing progress and grading. Students are articulate and benefit from observing the assessment of their peers. In one fine art seminar, work was projected from a 'blog'. Students had prepared critiques from this, which led to an informed discourse and prompted passionate responses from participants. Tutors accurately measure progress; however, tutors' written feedback given at the assessment tutorials does not always state clearly ways to improve.
- Teachers make excellent use of external links to develop the academic and vocational skills of students. Extensive collaboration with external bodies successfully links study opportunities to the creative industries. Practicing artists

and professional guests provide insightful perspective to lessons. In one fashion styling lesson, students were briefed by a guest photographer on the role of narrative to style a shoot and then photographed agency models to record garments they had made earlier.

- Studios and display spaces are well appointed. Print, 3D and digital workshops, as well as some specialist textile facilities, are well managed and heavily used. At times of high demand, access to some of these is sometimes restricted. Regular displays of recent work by students in communal spaces enable students to share ideas and provide insight into the work of other specialist practice. Foundation students have access to the exceptional library and collections housed in the college's striking new building at nearby King's Cross.
- Outstanding support and guidance for students are instrumental in helping them succeed. Links with higher education begin early in the course with students completing projects briefed or critiqued by tutors from undergraduate courses. A number of staff also work in a range of other universities or colleges and in higher education. They share their wider knowledge and experience to inform and secure progression for students to further study in the UK and abroad.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The curriculum is responsive to students' needs and very well organised. Clear communication ensures clarity of roles and responsibilities across the team and makes best use of available resources. Managers are vigilant in monitoring standards and quality across the specialist pathways. They effectively review and evaluate performance to raise or maintain high standards. However, they do not always ensure that good practice in learning and teaching is shared systematically.
- Promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity in the curriculum is outstanding. The wide-ranging cultural and political interests of students and staff enrich critical discourse and creativity. Assignments and activities encourage students to develop their understanding of difference. Students inform and exchange ideas readily from broad contextual and artistic enquiry.

### **What does the Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by developing and sharing best practice in learning and teaching.
- Ensure that written feedback consistently states ways for students to improve their work.



**Context**

47. At the time of inspection 656 full-time students were enrolled on advanced-level courses. Of these, 371 were taking the foundation diploma in art and design, 34 were enrolled on the access to higher education interior design course and 251 predominantly adult students were taking vocational diplomas in design. Full-time students take a range of additional qualifications in drawing and design.

**Key findings**

- Outcome for students are good. Success rates on the majority of vocational design diplomas are high. Pass rates on the foundation diploma are consistently high, but retention rates declined in 2010/11 and were satisfactory. Pass rates have been low on the access to higher education course for the last three years. The proportion of students achieving merit and distinction grades is good overall, and is particularly high on the majority of the vocational diplomas in design. Attendance is satisfactory overall but low on a few courses.
- The standard of students' work is often above the levels normally expected. Students learn to work very well independently, supported by effective study support, good technical resources and access to tutors. Students' practical work demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of research and reflective practice. Students use sketchbooks very well for research and design development.
- Excellent use of primary research enables students to produce insightful and highly individual responses. Students use drawing well to investigate and understand subject matter and develop ideas across all subject strands, including lens-based and multimedia subjects.
- Students work hard and benefit from a range of technical resources that enhance their work. They respond positively and creatively to well-designed and imaginative project briefs that enable creative exploration and are closely related to commercial practice. Students regularly enter, and often win, design competitions and engage in projects sponsored by employers and clients which enhance their understanding of professional and industry practice.
- Students on the design diploma courses acquire a strong technical understanding of their disciplines. Progression to higher education and employment is very good. Many students gain places at prestigious universities, and others progress to vocationally-related employment and internships. Students feel very safe in the secure college site. The college environment supports a culture of creativity, providing excellent facilities for formal and informal study.
- Teaching and learning are good. Trusting relationships between staff and students enable high quality discourse and debate which supports highly individual practical work well. Students work confidently and purposefully, benefiting from very good individualised support and guidance from tutors. Most

students speak positively about the good pace, structure and organisation of their courses. However, in a minority of lessons, tutors do not provide sufficient structure for less confident students to help them to meet deadlines or improve their project planning. Not all tutors are equally adept in ensuring that all students are making good progress.

- Tutors' assessment practice is good; tutors provide students with regular and constructive feedback to help them improve. Tutors provide detailed formal feedback that relates clearly to assessment criteria and uses concise and accessible language.
- The college's excellent work with partner organisations enables students to develop good professional practice. It contributes to many innovative partnership projects, including development work in schools, contributing design solutions to local groups and employers, media development and support and contributions by students to national magazines. For example, media students work with the Professional Footballers Association to develop its members' presentation skills and thus to improve their employment prospects.
- Students value the good support they receive. Tutors are accessible to students and tutor groups provide a strong and a clear system of pastoral and academic support. Students in receipt of learning support achieve well. The college successfully attracts students from disadvantaged backgrounds and they succeed well.
- Leadership and management are good, with a strong focus on achieving high standards of work. Resources are good and deployed effectively to support good achievement. Extensive library resources support students' theoretical and practical work very well. Managers have revised the structure of the access course to improve pass rates, but it is too early to determine the impact of this on students' achievement.
- Tutors are actively engaged in the planning and self-assessment processes and well informed about college developments. Self-assessment and quality improvement processes are generally effective but do not always clearly identify key areas for improvement or sharply focused actions to secure improvement. Managers do not use performance data routinely to set measurable targets.

### **What does the London College of Communication need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all teachers are adept at identifying and supporting the minority of students who are making less progress than they could.
- Use management information and data more routinely to monitor performance and to set precise targets for course improvements.

**Context**

48. Currently 414 students study on three access to higher education courses. Approximately two thirds of these are international students. The largest course is access to fashion with 209 students; 74 students study access to fashion business and 131 study access to fashion, media and communication. The majority of students are female and over 19.

**Key findings**

- Outcomes for students are good. Success rates have improved and are now high on access to fashion, the largest of the three courses, and on access to fashion business. Success rates have been low for the last three years on access to fashion, media and communication, owing to low pass rates. Managers have identified difficulties arising from the large number of unit assessments required and appropriate action is in place to re-design this structure.
- Standards of work are high. Cultural and historical studies are strong across all three programmes. On the fashion course, students use life drawing effectively to develop a personal drawing style through inventive use of media. On the fashion business course, students' well-researched personal projects show a clear understanding of the vocational context. However, in a few cases students' design work is over reliant on cut and pasted images, and written work lacks sufficient personal enquiry and evaluation.
- Students are well motivated, work with enthusiasm, and feel safe within the college buildings. The college has established a professional working environment and assignments emphasise the vocational context of the learning. However, attendance in lessons is too often low and students commented on the adverse impact of this on the whole group's progress.
- Students' progression to higher education is good. Personal and professional development lessons prepare students well for their future careers and raise their aspirations. A significant majority of students who apply to higher education gain a place. Many overseas students return to study or gain employment in their home countries. A few students already have a first degree and progress to postgraduate study.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most tutors are practising designers and bring a wealth of personal experience to the learning, instilling an industry-standard work ethic in their lessons. In the majority of lessons students make good progress through active learning. Tutors challenge students to discuss theoretical concepts and relate them to their studio practice. In workshop lessons they develop and reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of technical language so that students gain confidence to discuss work in progress. Students' participation in critiques prompts good reflection and peer evaluation.
- However, in a few lessons, the lack of first-hand research does not sufficiently stimulate and inspire students to develop personal approaches to their work. In

a small minority of lessons students do not always understand the activity fully, and tutors do not encourage them sufficiently to discuss their work.

- Tutors' assessment practice is thorough and well managed. Students set their own targets and tutors monitor these regularly to raise student aspirations. Tutors provide constructive written feedback, which is particularly thorough in fashion business, giving clear recommendations on how to improve.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Initial assessment effectively identifies support needs. Students who attend learning and language support sessions achieve well, but attendance in these sessions is low. Students value good individual support from tutors and the open access to workshop space. In personal tutorials, tutors conduct effective dialogue with individual students, focused on self-evaluation and personal target setting.
- Students benefit from excellent facilities, including specialist studios for fashion and textiles, drawing, photography, computer suites and lecture theatres. The vintage Lime Grove building is particularly well kept. However, many studios have little display of students' work which limits opportunities for sharing ideas and best practice.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students are excited by belonging to a large, multicultural fashion environment. Diverse cultural themes are well integrated into assignments and discussions in lessons explore worldwide fashion identities. However, tutors miss some opportunities to extend the discussion of cultural diversity in lessons and to capitalise on the diverse cultural backgrounds and traditions of the students themselves.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. The three newly-appointed full-time course leaders are beginning to have a positive impact on raising achievement. Last year's self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical in analysing achievement data, although the quality improvement plan identifies appropriate actions. Systems for monitoring attendance are in place but have not yet had enough impact on securing improvements.
- Tutors reflect critically on their own practice and are committed to raising students' aspirations and attainment. However, managers do not ensure that new tutors are observed early enough to help them improve quickly, or that all tutors know how to support students' diverse language needs and abilities.

### **What does the London College of Fashion need to do to improve further?**

- Simplify the curriculum and assessment structure in order to improve pass rates, particularly on the fashion, media and communication course.
- Share the good practice in teaching and learning that exists across the different courses to ensure that all teachers are able to support different students' needs and improve less successful learning.
- Consistently monitor and improve attendance in order to maximise students' opportunities to succeed.

## **Information about the inspection**

49. Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the university's dean of students and director of widening participation and progression, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the university's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
50. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of students and employers. They also looked at questionnaires students and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the colleges where the university offers further education courses.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### University of the Arts London

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>				
Full-time learners		1271	1318	16
Part-time learners				
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2			
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2			
How well do learners progress?	2			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1			
How safe do learners feel?	1			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>			
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2			

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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