

Arts University College Bournemouth

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	133793
Name of lead inspector:	Janet Mercer HMI
Last day of inspection:	27 April 2012
Type of provider:	Higher Education institution
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Information about the provider

1. The Arts University College Bournemouth specialises in further and higher education (HE) in the arts, design, media and performance, gaining degree awarding powers and university college status in 2009.
2. The Preparation for HE provision consists of: the foundation diploma in art and design, validated by the University of the Arts London awarding body; the BTEC extended diploma in art and design; and the BTEC diploma in photography. The foundation diploma is the largest further education course with over 300 students, mostly aged 16 to 18 and studying full time. Around 40 adults study a two-year, part-time foundation diploma. Approximately 90 students aged 16 to 18 enrol on the full-time two-year extended diploma and 30 students take the one-year diploma in photography.
3. Almost 75% of further education students are female and 8% come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 12% have declared a learning difficulty or disability, of whom the greatest proportion has dyslexia.
4. The further education provision is managed by the head of school of preparation for higher education, supported by nine pathway leaders who manage provision within each specialist art and design discipline. The head of school reports to the deputy principal.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to18)	330 full-time learners 1 part-time learner
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	125 full-time learners 45 part-time learners

Summary report

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

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

Overall effectiveness

5. The outstanding quality of provision at the Arts University College Bournemouth enables students to produce very high standards of work, achieve excellent results on their courses and progress successfully to higher education or employment in the creative industries. Students enjoy their courses immensely and value working in close proximity to higher education students.
6. Consistently high-quality teaching and technical support enable students to develop excellent practical and technical skills and strong critical and reflective practice. Regular critiques and assessment ensure that students can discuss work confidently and know how to improve although, in a few cases, written feedback and targets following tutorials are not sufficiently precise to steer improvement.
7. Teachers, visiting tutors and guest speakers use their own current practice extensively to develop students’ understanding of working in the creative industries and contemporary art and design practice. Students enjoy participating in, and often winning, local and national competitions and awards. These experiences, along with excellent advice and guidance from university college staff, prepare students extremely well for progression to higher education or arts-related employment.
8. Overall leadership and management are good, with excellent curriculum leadership by the head of school and specialist pathway leaders. Staff have a very clear shared vision of the role of the further education provision within the university college and its locality, and make an outstanding contribution to

promoting arts and cultural education in the area, including raising aspirations and standards in partner schools. The management and oversight of the safeguarding of students are satisfactory. Students feel very safe on campus, and the management of health and safety in workshops is very good. However, senior managers and governors acknowledge that they need to monitor the full implementation of safeguarding procedures more rigorously, and ensure that all staff receive updated awareness training at an appropriate level for their role, in addition to previous briefings.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students and the quality of art and design work are outstanding. A very high proportion of students on the foundation diploma course complete the course successfully. Students on the extended diploma in art and design and the diploma in photography achieve well, although a small minority do not complete their courses. Many students on all courses achieve merit or distinction grades. A high proportion progress to higher education or employment, with most gaining a place at their first choice university.
- Students acquire wide-ranging practical and technical skills, using varied media and techniques, including digital media in which they are highly competent. Sketchbooks and learning journals demonstrate students' in-depth visual and contextual research and well-developed critical and reflective practice. These skills enable students to refine their practice and improve the quality of their work. Students on the foundation and extended diplomas use drawing extensively to record the visual world and develop creative ideas.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Consistently good, and often outstanding, lessons enable students to learn independently and develop highly personalised and creative solutions to their project work. Frequent and productive critiques of students' work enable students to discuss their work confidently and articulately. Teachers and technicians use their considerable expertise effectively to extend students' specialist skills and understanding.
- Teachers assess students' work frequently and, in most cases, written feedback identifies exactly what students need to do to improve. In a few cases, mostly on the extended diploma and the diploma in photography, teachers' written feedback is not sufficiently clear about specific areas for improvement or how to achieve higher grades.
- The university college's further education courses are exceptionally well designed to support students' progress to higher education. Extensive enrichment activities, including visits to local and national galleries and museums, residential trips to European cities and opportunities to work with contemporary creative practitioners, significantly enhance students' learning.
- Outstanding work with partner organisations makes a significant contribution to enhancing students' experiences within the university college, as well as raising aspirations and attainment in local schools. Students are highly motivated by opportunities to engage with professional bodies and external arts organisations and to participate in, and often win, national art and design competitions.

- Students receive good pre-enrolment advice and guidance, and constructive tutorial support throughout their courses. Excellent support from academic and registry staff ensures that most students progress successfully to their chosen higher education course or to employment. However, tutors do not always ensure that targets for improvement following tutorials are always sufficiently precise to ensure that all students know exactly what they need to do to improve their work, or achieve higher grades.
- Good leadership and management ensure that the further education provision continues to make an important contribution to the university college's work. Excellent curriculum management by the head of school and pathway leaders ensures that students' achievements and the quality of provision are outstanding. Regular curriculum review by course teams ensures that courses and assignments engage students' interest and prepare them well for progression to higher education or employment in the creative industries.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Students report that they feel very safe on campus. Thorough risk assessments and very good reinforcement of safe working practices enable students to work safely in studios and workshops. While all staff have received safeguarding briefings, records of further training are not complete. Managers acknowledge that they need to monitor procedures more rigorously to ensure that the comprehensive safeguarding policy is fully implemented. The university college carries out appropriate criminal record and other checks, but its records do not distinguish easily between further and higher education staff.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good, and is particularly strong within the curriculum. Students often explore and develop their understanding of complex and sensitive social or political themes in their work. Students from different backgrounds, or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, all achieve equally well. Managers do not analyse higher grade achievement by different groups, or analyse student feedback separately for those on further or higher education courses.
- Through its thorough self-assessment, the university college accurately identifies key strengths and areas where further improvements can be made. Managers make good use of performance data and students' feedback to evaluate the quality of provision and take effective action to secure further improvement. However, they do not moderate judgements on the quality of teaching and learning effectively, or share good practice sufficiently, both in the university college or with similar external organisations.
- Students benefit from high-quality and very well-managed specialist facilities, including excellent library resources, and the unique Museum of Plastics in Design study collection housed on campus. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced within their subject discipline and bring their own professional and creative practice to bear on raising standards and enhancing students' experience and skills.

What does the Arts University College Bournemouth need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teachers provide clear and detailed feedback on students' work through assessment and tutorials, particularly, but not exclusively, on the extended diploma in art and design and on the diploma in photography, so that all students know how to improve their work.
- Ensure that managers record and monitor the implementation of all aspects of the safeguarding policy, to confirm that all staff have up-to-date training at an appropriate level; and that they maintain records of criminal record and other checks in a way which makes it easy to confirm that staff who work with young people have had appropriate checks. Managers should also ensure that risk assessments are clearly recorded.
- Ensure that managers analyse more incisively the performance data and feedback from different groups of students within the further education provision. This will enable them to monitor the impact of actions more comprehensively, and to enhance the existing good practice in equality and diversity.
- Increase the effectiveness of quality assurance of teaching and learning by providing more opportunities for observers to moderate judgements internally and to share best practice with similar organisations externally.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the excellent specialist accommodation and facilities
- the approachable and caring course leaders and teachers
- working alongside higher education students within the university college
- the freedom to explore and express their own ideas through their work
- the very good support they receive from technicians
- the range of different pathways available
- the fact that many teachers are practicing artists and designers
- the safe and welcoming environment.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the amount of space in studios for independent study
- the amount of locker space to store art equipment
- the opportunities to join critiques with students on different courses or specialist pathways
- the amount of information about local and national art and design competitions.

Summary of the views of stakeholders as confirmed by inspectors

What stakeholders like:

- the university college's strong contribution to raising aspirations and attainment in local schools
- the readiness of university college staff and students to respond and contribute to a wide range of events and activities.

What stakeholders would like to see improved:

- no areas for improvement reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. Leaders have established a clear strategic direction for the future of further education in the organisation. Their effective leadership and management provide a sound basis for further development and a strong commitment to secure continued improvements through a culture of high expectations of staff and students. Since the last inspection, the university college has made marked improvements in students' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. Success rates have improved in two of the three courses over the last three years.
10. Self-assessment is thorough, leading to detailed reports which accurately identify key strengths, and managers have a realistic understanding of how provision could be improved further. Overall quality assurance procedures are good and have led to improvement in targeted areas. However, in a few aspects, managers have not monitored the implementation of cross-college systems sufficiently rigorously. They have not always identified where agreed policies have not been fully implemented or actions recorded.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

11. Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students enjoy their experiences greatly and the vast majority make excellent progress in developing the necessary practical, technical and critical skills to succeed on their courses and progress successfully to higher education or employment in the creative industries. Attendance rates are consistently high.
12. Success rates on the foundation diploma course have risen over the last three years and are outstanding at 96%. Outcomes are good on the diploma in photography and the extended diploma in art and design. Retention rates have improved on the extended diploma over the last three years. The university college's data indicate further improvements in retention of current students on the art and design and photography diplomas, although it is too early to determine the full impact of this on increasing success rates further.
13. On all courses a high proportion of students achieve merit or distinction grades. Progression rates to undergraduate study or employment are very high, with the vast majority of students securing a place at their first choice university. The university college's analysis shows no discernible differences in the achievement of different groups by gender, ethnicity or disability. Students receiving additional learning support, mostly for dyslexia, achieve as well as their peers.
14. The quality of students' art and design work is outstanding. A strong culture of exploration and experimentation is evident in all subject disciplines. Students develop confidence in selecting and handling a wide range of media and

techniques, using them sensitively and skilfully to realise their creative intentions. For example, fashion students' sketchbooks are rich with exploration of texture and colour and are annotated extensively. Final garments are very well constructed and presented. Students on the diploma in photography produce high-quality work, with careful consideration of composition and the visual and emotional impact of their chosen imagery.

15. Well-planned and structured critiques ensure that students acquire a real depth of understanding through reflective and critical practice and can clearly explain their ideas and working processes and evaluate their effectiveness. This is well supported by in-depth visual and contextual research, through sketchbooks and learning journals. Students demonstrate considerable maturity in their ability to give and receive constructive feedback during critiques with their peers.
16. Students use drawing extensively for first-hand visual research and the development of ideas. Life drawing skills are strong on the foundation and extended diploma courses; students demonstrate considerable sensitivity in the use of line and tone to explore and describe form, volume and structure. Students acquire a high level of skill in using digital media, whether in visual research and development, or through photography, film and animation work.
17. Final major project work demonstrates how effectively students build on prior learning and experience to develop a personal visual language and lines of enquiry, leading to highly individual and frequently ambitious work.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

18. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching ensures that the vast majority of students learn independently and make very good progress over time. Teachers' emphasis on the importance of contextual referencing, in-depth research and experimentation with an array of different materials extends students' practical and thinking skills.
19. Imaginative and well-considered assignment briefs motivate students to explore highly personalised approaches to their work. Students' exploration of contemporary, and sometimes controversial or sensitive, subject matter heightens their understanding of current social and political issues. For example, one student created thought-provoking work which raised awareness of the continuing consequences of the Rwandan genocide. Teachers set projects which increase students' understanding and awareness of human rights. In a graphic design project students analysed quotations from political leaders, such as Martin Luther King, and produced a typographic piece to encapsulate the meaning and message.
20. Well-qualified teaching staff use their expertise skilfully to extend students' conceptual understanding and strongly encourage their creative thinking. In one lesson, a student articulated clearly and objectively to inspectors her extensive

research and thought processes in producing a carefully constructed garment based on the movement of water. Further education students benefit immensely from working in close proximity with students on higher education programmes; this helps to raise their aspirations and instils autonomy and independence. Most students demonstrate very good attitudes to learning and work diligently in lessons and in independent study time.

21. Almost all studios have excellent learning resources and access to computers with specialist software, used extensively by students. Staff and students make very good use of the virtual learning environment to support research and practical work. Students value highly the very good support provided by technicians in lessons and workshops.
22. High-quality, frequent assessment helps students understand how to develop and improve their work further. Students frequently engage in productive group and individual critiques which build confidence and develop a strong ethos of self-reflection. In one lesson, a short, intense critique of a student's final major project work involved high level discussion about the key considerations for illustrations for a children's book. The session concluded with a very useful, targeted action plan for the student to extend their work significantly within a short deadline, giving thoughtful consideration to the needs of the likely audience, exhibition display and evaluation against the criteria in the project proposal.
23. In a small minority of cases, mostly, but not exclusively, on the extended diploma and the diploma in photography, teachers' written feedback is not always detailed enough to provide sufficiently clear targets for improvement. While teachers actively stress the importance of the quality of students' written research and evaluation, and encourage the use of specialist and technical language, they occasionally miss opportunities to correct, and reinforce the importance of, students' spelling and grammar.
24. The curriculum is highly successful in meeting the university's aim of preparing students for progression to undergraduate study. The foundation diploma in art and design includes an additional entry route tailored for students who wish to follow a dedicated media pathway. The extended diploma enables students to complete projects in collaboration with external clients, adding valuable commercial and vocational experience. On the diploma in photography, teachers' extensive links with national associations and subject bodies create beneficial opportunities for students to attend conferences and exhibit their work.
25. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, including organised and independent visits to galleries and museums and residential trips to major European cities. Talks by eminent practitioners help students gain greater understanding of how creative practitioners work, in a variety of commercial and professional contexts.

26. The university college has developed excellent and productive links with its partners. All course teams collaborate extensively with local schools and organisations to promote the arts and cultural education in the local community. Students gain confidence and good interpersonal skills through volunteering to run practical workshops which promote creative opportunities in the locality. For example, photography students recently held workshops during The Young Photographers' Creativity Conference, a one-day event for local sixth-form students, held at The Lighthouse in Poole. Outreach work with schools, including summer and Saturday schools, masterclasses, taster and portfolio days, contributes significantly to increasing access to the arts. It raises aspirations and attainment for local school students, many of whom progress to the university college. Collaborative work between one school and university college staff was instrumental in raising pupils' achievement significantly in GCSE textiles.
27. Engagement with professional and educational bodies greatly enhances the curriculum and reputation of the university college. Students enjoy and benefit from participating in local and national competitions and opportunities to meet with leading visiting artists and designers. Carefully-chosen artwork on loan from the Arts Council England collections, and displayed around the campus, exposes students to diverse artistic practice and subject matter.
28. Students receive comprehensive pre-enrolment course guidance and detailed information on support services, including accommodation, transport, funding, student union and social facilities. Tutors work diligently with other staff in identifying, and providing good support for, students' learning support needs or other disabilities. Students receive extensive guidance on successful studying through the virtual learning environment and practical workshops. Excellent advice and guidance for progression to higher education from teachers, tutors and registry staff ensure that students make well-informed university choices and present high-quality portfolios, resulting in very high progression rates.
29. Course tutors regularly monitor students' progress between formal assessment points. While they identify specific actions for each project, they do not always set more precise targets to develop learning over time and monitor how well students achieve this, particularly on the extended diploma and diploma in photography courses.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

30. The university college has established a clear vision and rationale for its further education provision, which is understood and shared by managers, staff and governors. Senior leaders are strongly committed to sustaining high-quality provision, which plays a key part in the local 14 to 19 education strategy, and in art and design education in the wider region and nationally. Excellent curriculum leadership ensures that courses are very well planned and course teams work together very effectively to establish a culture of high expectations. This not only raises aspirations for university college students, but productive

partnerships with local schools raise aspirations in the locality and effectively increase participation in the arts.

31. The governing body brings a wide range of relevant expertise and experience and plays a key role in determining university college strategic priorities. Governors have a very good understanding of the university college's performance and its position in the local and regional education landscape, and are acutely aware of future challenges, including changes in funding. However, the governing body and senior managers have not monitored the implementation of all aspects of the comprehensive safeguarding policy sufficiently rigorously.
32. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory. Very good health and safety inductions enable students to work safely and the number of accidents and safety incidents is consistently low. Risk assessments for workshops and off-site visits are thorough. Students often take responsibility for producing their own risk assessments so they are able to plan for, and manage, any potential risks. In response to student feedback, the university college has improved on-site lighting, signage and security, including an innovative bespoke police team, a jointly-funded initiative with another local university. All these factors contribute to students feeling very safe around the campus.
33. A detailed policy and associated procedures for safeguarding, including the promotion of e-safety, are in place, but managers have not yet ensured that these are fully implemented and systematically reviewed in all respects. All staff have received briefings on safeguarding, but managers recognise that records do not clearly indicate whether all have completed training to the required level for their particular role. Detailed plans are in place to ensure that all staff and governors receive updated training, to the appropriate level, by September 2012. Appropriate criminal record and other checks and risk assessments are undertaken for all staff who work regularly with young people or vulnerable adults. Records of these checks are kept, but not in the best way to enable managers easily to distinguish those staff working with younger further education students, and to monitor their records.
34. Managers have raised awareness of equality and diversity successfully across the university college and staff promote these aspects well. A single equality scheme and plan are in place and managers monitor and review their implementation appropriately. Several initiatives, such as an internal research paper about the experience of minority ethnic students, have informed improvement planning. Informative analysis shows that there are no discernible gaps in success rates between students from different groups; however, there is no similar analysis about the achievement of higher grades. Managers' analysis of feedback by students from different groups does not distinguish between those in further or higher education courses.
35. The effective promotion of equalities through the curriculum is a particular strength. Carefully-planned projects raise students' awareness of human rights

and matters relating to diversity. For example, students worked on a large-scale, multi-disciplinary project with pupils from a special school creating props, set design, costumes and promotional material for a musical theatre production. Photography and film students have explored themes such as gender, self-image and different belief systems in their work.

36. Student feedback, through course representatives, focus groups and regular surveys makes a significant contribution to improving provision and the student experience. The university college takes students' views seriously and responds swiftly to concerns raised, and ideas for improvement. As a result, there have been positive changes to course structures and content, and assessment procedures and guidance, so that students feel better informed about requirements. Partner organisations and other stakeholders speak very positively about their relations with the university college and opportunities for them to contribute to planning and development.
37. Managers use thorough and well-established self-assessment procedures to form an accurate view of the relative strengths and areas for improvement across the further education provision. In their detailed course self-assessment reports, course leaders use performance and progression data and student feedback well to evaluate the quality of provision. However, there are a few inconsistencies in the quality of self-assessment between courses, for example in the analysis of findings from lesson observations and achievement of higher grades. Managers use lesson observation routinely to monitor the quality of teaching and learning; however, the internal observation team does not have an effective system for moderating the judgements and findings from observations. There are too few opportunities for university college staff to jointly observe lessons to moderate and ensure consistency of judgements, and few links with external partners in similar organisations to compare performance and share good practice.
38. Students benefit from excellent specialist accommodation and equipment in studios and workshops. Extensive library resources, including books, specialist periodicals and journals, digital media and DVDs of film and animations, and the work of a subject librarian dedicated to further education provision, support all specialist pathways very well. The university college's Museum of Design in Plastics provides a unique resource for design history and practice, for students in the university college and local schools. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced in their specialist disciplines and all hold, or are working towards, a relevant teaching qualification. Given the outstanding outcomes and quality of provision for students, and the active promotion of sustainable practice, the university college provides outstanding value for money.

Information about the inspection

39. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the university college's deputy principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the university college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
40. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and stakeholders. They also looked at questionnaires learners and stakeholders had recently completed for the university college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Arts University College Bournemouth

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	455	330	125
Part-time learners	45	1	44
Overall effectiveness	1	1	1
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1		
How well do learners progress?	1		
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>			
Quality of provision	1	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1		
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		
Leadership and management	2	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
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?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1		
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?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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