

Birmingham City University (Birmingham Institute of Art and Design)

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Higher Education Institution

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Information about the provider

1. Birmingham City University is a large university with six faculties, one of which, the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, provides a range of further education (FE) courses. Birmingham Institute of Art and Design has five schools and operates from four campus sites. FE learners attend two of the campuses: the School of Jewellery in the city centre and the School of Art, Bournville. In 2011/12 nearly 90% of the FE learners were enrolled on the foundation diploma in art and design at Bournville, which aims to prepare them for higher education (HE) courses in art and design. The remaining learners are enrolled on the part-time foundation diploma programme, the extended diploma in design crafts (jewellery), a one year certificate in clock and watch servicing or a two year certificate in repair, restoration and conservation of clocks and watches. From September 2012 the two courses in horology will no longer be offered and all of the University's programmes in horology will be at undergraduate level.
2. The FE provision is funded by the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency, whose responsibilities transferred to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) at the beginning of April 2012. Over half of all learners who enrol to the FE arts provision reside in Birmingham. Almost all learners in 2011/12 are studying at advanced level. Some 71% of learners are female and 22% are of minority ethnic heritage.
3. In Birmingham, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is below the regional and national averages. The local unemployment rate has risen and is high.
4. The university's mission is "to be a powerful force for learning, creativity and innovation, promoting economic, social and cultural well-being."

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to18)	171 full-time learners 4 part-time learners
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	60 full-time learners 86 part-time learners

Summary report

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

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

Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of Birmingham Institute of Art and Design is good. The vibrant learning environment raises learners’ creative aspirations and enables the large majority of learners to achieve well, enjoy their studies and progress to higher education or employment.
6. Lessons are enhanced by the expertise of teaching staff who are often practising artists or designers and who use their experience well to support learners to develop their ideas and creative flair. Many learners produce high standards of work, and in horology and jewellery, the level of learners’ technical ability and practical application is outstanding. Lessons and the curriculum are enriched significantly by access to the extensive art and design resources at the university and by FE learners working adjacent to learners in higher education. In some cases, however, particularly but not exclusively on the foundation diploma, an over-use of self-directed study means that learners’ progress is not always maximised and they are not supported as comprehensively as they could be.
7. Senior managers within the university have set a clear and ambitious vision for the FE arts provision within its HE establishment. Since the last inspection, several aspects of quality assurance have improved and some trends, such as the proportion of learners gaining high grades, have increased markedly. Despite these improvements the accountability and monitoring of FE performance overall, and particularly at course level, lacks rigour. As a result, trends in underperformance or for different groups of learners are not always

identified or monitored sharply enough. For this reason, the university's capacity to sustain and improve its good provision is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on the foundation diploma in art and design are consistently high and improving. Overall, learners aged 16 to 18 achieve well and much better than adult learners who achieve satisfactorily. While success rates are closely aligned between male and female learners, they continue to be uneven for other learner groups, including those of minority ethnic heritage.
- The standard of learners' work is high, including on the foundation diploma. The quality of practical work on the design crafts course is outstanding. The technical skills of horology learners frequently gain national recognition. The quality of learners' drawing skills, however, is variable and, where it is less developed, reduces the richness of their portfolio and sketchbook work.
- Teaching and learning are good. Highly experienced and qualified teaching staff apply their expertise well to support and direct learners' conceptual thinking and broaden their understanding of art and design. In a minority of lessons however, too much emphasis is given to learners' own directed study which at times means their learning and progress are not extended to their potential.
- The university's monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The procedures for observing lessons have improved and are well founded. However these are not applied consistently and moderation arrangements are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, not all development points to improve teaching practice are identified clearly.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners appropriately. All learners value the inspiration they receive from often working adjacent to those studying at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Formal extra-curricular opportunities on the foundation diploma to enable learners to engage in workshops to support their study, such as life drawing, ceramics or in community projects, are too infrequent.
- Support arrangements are satisfactory. Careers guidance is good and contributes to most learners progressing successfully to higher education. While staff give freely of their time when requested, formal arrangements for pastoral, and privately located tutorials are insufficient. The use of individual learning plans to monitor learners' progress and attendance is good in some areas but less comprehensive in others.
- Strong, well-established partnerships are bringing about significant benefits for learners, particularly in horology and jewellery. These links, including artists in residence and on-site galleries, ensure that learners gain a good understanding of the broader art and design world and that they are then able to reflect this knowledge and context effectively through their own work.

- Senior leaders have a clear strategic vision for the development of further education provision. They have strengthened quality assurance arrangements, although these are not implemented consistently by curriculum managers.
- Governance arrangements are satisfactory overall. An FE forum has helped provide a useful focus on the further education provision. This forum, however, lacks the independent objectivity that would enable leaders and managers to be more effectively challenged and held to account.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory and the day-to-day operational management of provision is effective. However, curriculum managers do not take sufficient responsibility for monitoring, evaluating or improving provision. Data are not used effectively to inform improvement planning. Attendance and retention rates are not monitored closely enough and accountability arrangements are underdeveloped. Self-assessment is insufficiently critical.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Curriculum provision adequately promotes equality and diversity, with some good examples in several assignment briefs and in project work. The use of data to monitor the performance of different groups of learners is much improved; however, target setting and action planning to reduce achievement gaps are underdeveloped.
- The university provides a safe, friendly and harmonious learning environment. Accommodation and resources are of a high standard overall and are excellent in the jewellery school. The university's further education provision provides good value for money.

What does Birmingham City University need to do to improve further?

- Ensure greater consistency in achievement across all learner groups, including by age and ethnicity, by strengthening the analysis, monitoring and reporting of performance by different groups of learners. Additionally ensure that reporting formats focus more explicitly on any gaps in achievement over time.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are applied consistently across sites and that opportunities to share best practice and expertise are maximised. Strengthen moderation arrangements so that observers are more consistent in making and recording their judgements.
- Revise the curriculum to: strengthen further learners' basic drawing skills by ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to practise and explore a range of drawing techniques which will enable them to express line, shape and form more confidently through their portfolio work; incorporate more opportunities for learners to participate in extra-curricular activities; and reduce the reliance on self-directed study.
- Enhance support arrangements by ensuring that learners have the opportunity for more formal tutorials in an environment that enables their progress and personal development to be reviewed more privately. Ensure that individual

learning plans are used more consistently to set useful targets that aid and monitor learners' progress.

- Strengthen the accountability arrangements for curriculum managers to ensure that quality assurance processes are applied consistently and robustly. Sharpen monitoring and evaluation processes, including self-assessment, and ensure that curriculum managers use data more effectively to improve provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the knowledgeable and approachable teaching staff
- the wide range of quality resources and equipment
- the creative learning environments
- working closely alongside learners in higher education
- the good support they receive from technicians
- the well-resourced learning centres which aid their study
- frequent access to artists in residence on the extended diploma
- the high visibility and friendly nature of security staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more teacher contact time in sessions and with some demonstrations
- access to computers and printers at both sites
- communication between courses
- more frequent opportunities for directed support and guidance
- the amount of parking available, particularly for learners with mobility difficulties.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. The university's capacity to bring about sustained improvements to further education provision is satisfactory. Since the last inspection most of the key areas for improvement identified have been satisfactorily rectified and most of the strengths have been sustained. The success rate for the largest provision, the foundation diploma in art and design, improved in 2010/11 and was around the high national average rate of similar providers. However, the success rate performance of different courses is more uneven.
9. Quality assurance arrangements, including self-assessment, continue to develop although these are not applied consistently within the curriculum. Processes to monitor important performance indicators such as attendance, retention and the quality of teaching and learning are not fully effective. The self-assessment process is inclusive and enables staff to contribute to the evaluation of provision; however, the report is not sufficiently self-critical and does not identify several important areas for improvement. Curriculum managers do not take sufficient responsibility for monitoring and improving courses for which they are responsible.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Outcomes for learners are good. In 2010/11 success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 improved for the third consecutive year and were high. For adult learners however, success rates declined for the third year and are satisfactory. The university's in-year data show that the high retention rate for younger learners has been sustained but retention remains static for adult learners.
11. The diploma in foundation art and design, by far the largest course within the further education provision, has performed consistently well over time. Although learner numbers are very small on the extended diploma in design crafts and the certificate in clock and watch servicing, success rates were low in 2010/11. The proportion of learners who gain merit or distinction grades at the end of their course is very high.
12. The university analyses the performance of different groups of learners although it is not reported explicitly enough through the self-assessment report. Senior managers accurately identify that learners of minority ethnic heritage do not achieve as well as White British learners. In 2010/11, the gap in achievement reduced between male and female learners and was minimal. While the success rate for learners with dyslexia or with an identified disability improved, the gaps in achievement between these smaller, but important groups, remain.

13. The quality of learners' work overall is good and often very good. The standard of learners' jewellery work on the extended diploma is exceptional. Learners develop excellent technical skills within horology and the extended diploma in design crafts. Learners on the foundation programme produce rich sketchbook work, often exploring a range of textures and recording idea development very effectively. The strength of drawing across portfolios is variable and in some cases, where learners' drawing skills are weaker, it affects the overall quality and impact of their body of work.
14. The university provides a stimulating, vibrant learning environment in which learners feel very safe and work safely across a wide range of technical workshops. Learners develop and apply a good range of creative approaches to their work. Their interpersonal skills are good and this enables them to discuss their work and ideas with confidence. In many cases, learners' work is self-expressive and thought-provoking with final show pieces including an installation on degeneration, links between alcoholism and faith, and work highlighting the preconceptions about mental health. The vast majority of learners progress successfully into higher education or employment.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good and enable most learners to make at least good progress through their studies. Staff are very well qualified and many are practising artists and designers. Several of them are supported to pursue research secondments to further enhance their knowledge as art and design practitioners. Teaching staff use their specialist expertise well to extend learners' understanding, to develop learners' use of professional dialogue of the art world and to enhance their idea exploration. As a result, learners are able to express their creative intentions persuasively. For example in a fashion and textile lesson, learners completing their final major project had been encouraged by the teacher to give careful consideration to how their piece would be finally displayed. One learner was able to articulate clearly her ideas around presenting her delicate textile piece, based on the translucency and colours of dragonfly wings, in a replicated scientific specimen box. A learner following the three-dimensional pathway had produced a series of carefully crafted sculptures based on the formation of water droplets and had reflected thoughtfully on how lighting and positioning would subtly enhance this work for its intended audience.
16. The majority of learners have good attitudes to learning and show an avid enthusiasm for their subject. In a minority of lessons teachers' overreliance on learners' self-directed study results in a more leisurely pace of learning. Consequently, in these sessions the level of challenge is often reduced and learners' progress is not always maximised in the time available.
17. Within jewellery and horology, learners' application of theory into practice is outstanding. For example, in a jewellery lesson, learners producing complex

catches and clasps designs were able to apply their technical knowledge very effectively to create individualised designs. One learner created an intricate and striking clasp having found inspiration from the folding mechanism of a cardboard box.

18. The university has strengthened its arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Observations now take place frequently through the year. The moderation of observations, while improved, is insufficient. The good systems in place are not always applied consistently by observers. Managers do not routinely undertake joint observations and frequent checks of written observation records, to ensure observers' judgments made about lessons are objective and well founded.
19. Teachers' assessment of learners' work is frequent and accurate. In the majority of cases, written feedback to steer improvement is good, but in a small minority of cases written comments are either too cursory or the actions required are not explained clearly enough. The use of information learning technology (ILT) is satisfactory. The university's student intranet is much improved and enables access to a wide range of resources; however, the virtual learning environment (VLE) is not used to its full potential and learning resources and functionality are more limited.
20. The university's further education provision meets the needs and interests of learners appropriately. Courses provide good opportunities for progression. Learners benefit significantly from working within an HE environment which raises their aspirations, inspires their own work and assists them in choosing their eventual specialist pathway. Enrichment opportunities are very good for learners on horology and jewellery courses and they include regular participation in prestigious competitions and working alongside artists in residence. While learners are encouraged by staff to visit museums and galleries, the range of planned opportunities for enrichment for learners on the foundation diploma course is too narrow. Often reduced formal curriculum teaching time restricts the opportunities for learners to participate in activities such as regular taught drawing classes or ceramic workshops or to engage more in community projects.
21. Partnership working is good overall. Learners benefit notably from both well-established and developing partnership arrangements within the further education provision. Collaboration with local and national manufacturers, retailers and galleries within jewellery and horology is particularly strong. Frequent collaboration with artists in residence on the extended diploma has ensured that learners gain first-hand knowledge of the work ethic of current contemporary designers and jewellers and learn from their experiences and personalised approaches to design. Within the foundation diploma, the use of the on-site, 'international project space' gallery, is highly effective in allowing national and international artists and designers to display their work throughout the year. This enhances learners' appreciation of how to curate an exhibition which is reflected through their careful consideration of how to present their

own work. In horology, strong links with internationally-renowned watchmakers, local auctioneers and bullion manufacturers are bringing significant benefits to learners in the form of outstanding resources and access to affordable raw materials which extend notably the range of techniques they can learn.

22. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Initial assessment arrangements identify appropriately the additional support needs of learners, and the support provided to those with an identified learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, is good. Support arrangements to develop learners' numeracy skills, where required, remain less well defined. Careers education and guidance are very good.
23. Tutorial arrangements are satisfactory. Teaching and support staff know their learners well and give freely of their time to support learners who seek help. However, opportunities for more formal, discrete tutorial time, away from often noisy learning environments, are insufficient. Individual learning plans to record and monitor learners' progress are now much better established across the different specialist pathways. However, while some are detailed and clearly track all facets of learners' progress, including concerns with literacy or attendance, others are completed more sparsely and do not follow up issues coherently or in a timely fashion. The use of data to inform decision-making and to monitor and measure the impact of support is underdeveloped. For example, attendance, in-year retention and data on how successfully those learners who receive mentoring achieve, are not reviewed systematically. Technician support within studios and workshops is very effective and valued highly by learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. Senior leaders have a clear strategic vision for the future development of further education courses and the contribution this provision makes to the university overall. Leaders and managers promote very high standards and successfully raise expectations and aspirations. Senior leaders have introduced many beneficial changes that are enhancing performance monitoring and accountability arrangements; however, these are not yet consistently applied at curriculum level. While a culture of target setting, monitoring and evaluation is developing, the implementation at curriculum level is inconsistent. Management information, including performance data, are not used sufficiently well by curriculum managers to monitor and improve provision. Whilst curriculum management is satisfactory overall and the day-to-day operational management of teaching and learning is effective, performance management arrangements are underdeveloped.
25. Governors monitor the provision effectively and ensure that information is scrutinised through various university committees including the faculty academic standards and quality enhancement committee. However, arrangements to enable independent scrutiny of further education provision and

to provide support and challenge to leaders and managers about the wider performance of provision are more limited. Whilst the FE Forum provides a useful means of reviewing provision and the evaluation of safeguarding, equality and diversity, attendance, retention and achievement data, the committee is not independent of managers and staff responsible for curriculum delivery. Committees lack a degree of independent objectivity and challenge that would enhance governance and accountability arrangements.

26. Procedures for safeguarding young learners and vulnerable adults are satisfactory. Managers ensure that appropriate employment checks have been completed on staff in regular contact with learners and staff have received adequate safeguarding training. The university has clear policies and procedures relating to arrangements for safeguarding learners and for the management of health and safety in the curriculum.
27. The university now monitors the success rates of different groups of learners and has introduced a useful report that identifies trends in performance. Achievement gaps have been identified and senior managers now recognise the need to set targets and to take specific actions to close gaps. Useful staff training has been provided to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues and to introduce strategies that staff can use to improve the performance of different groups. At subject level, however, staff have not set targets to narrow identified achievement gaps and they have implemented few specific actions.
28. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to promote equality and diversity and learners have a satisfactory understanding of key issues. While equality and diversity themes are not always coherently planned into the curriculum, they are promoted well in several cases. Learners' appreciation and awareness of cultural and equality themes is often evident through their work. Extended diploma learners enter work, and are often successful in, the annual national British medal competition, which this year included a theme on disability. One learner achieved particular recognition for producing a tactile medallion that embraced texture and incorporated Braille. On the foundation diploma, several learners' final projects explored topics around gender, stereotyping and human rights. The university is committed to widening participation and provides a friendly and harmonious learning environment.
29. Managers provide a range of opportunities that enable learners to express their views and to contribute to decision making processes as part of the university's learner involvement strategy. While these arrangements are entirely appropriate and are open to all university students, it is unclear to what extent further education learners participate or contribute. Opportunities to raise issues specifically related to further education courses are limited to boards of studies meetings where course representatives actively contribute to course evaluation. Learners are not currently represented on the FE Forum.
30. Although quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened since the last inspection, their implementation at curriculum level is inconsistent.

Curriculum managers do not apply quality assurance procedures, including those for the observation of teaching and learning, with sufficient rigour. Attendance and retention data are not monitored closely enough and curriculum managers do not take sufficient ownership of the performance monitoring and improvement planning of courses for which they are responsible. Self-assessment is satisfactory overall, although in some areas the report is insufficiently self-critical. Quality improvement planning has been significantly strengthened at senior management level and actions are now planned which are specifically targeted to have a measurable impact on performance.

31. Accommodation and resources are extensive. Resources to support teaching and learning are of high quality with excellent resources at the jewellery school. The university supports the continuing professional development of staff very effectively. The university contributes financially to support the development and delivery of further education provision. Given good outcomes for learners, high progression rates and good teaching and learning the further education provision at the university provides good value for money.

Information about the inspection

32. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the university's associate dean for student experience as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the university's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners. They also looked at questionnaires learners and stakeholders had recently completed for the university. They observed learning sessions, and considered a wide range of learners' work. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the university's FE provision offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Birmingham City University (Birmingham Institute of Art and Design)

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	216	156	60
Part-time learners	38	6	32
Overall effectiveness	2	2	3
Capacity to improve	3		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	3
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?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a		
Quality of provision	2	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	3	3	3
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>	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?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
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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