

Loughborough University

Higher education institution

Inspection dates		13-16 November 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Students on the foundation diploma in art and design course achieve extremely well with many gaining high grade passes and almost all progressing to higher education courses.
- The course enables students to gain confidence, think creatively, critically reflect and evaluate their work and the work of others and to develop excellent practical skills.
- Students produce work of a consistently high standard across all subject specialisms, with much sketchbook work being outstanding.
- Teaching enables students to explore and experiment with a wide range of materials and techniques and encourages them to develop their creative potential.
- Teachers have high expectations and provide good support, guidance and feedback to students. Access to resources and specialist equipment is very good and students benefit from working alongside undergraduates in studios and workshops.
- The curriculum is well designed and carefully structured to build on students' core art and design skills. Students are able to develop their skills successfully in a mature and supportive environment and benefit from an extensive choice of different specialist pathways.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- While much teaching and assessment is good, in a minority of lessons teachers do not always ensure all students remain fully motivated and occasionally students are not fully engaged or do not receive enough individual support and guidance.
- The feedback provided by teachers on students' written essay work does not always detail what they need to do to improve in order to prepare them for higher education courses.
- University systems to monitor the quality of the provision do not identify key strengths or areas for development in teaching and learning and do not enable course performance data to be used effectively to evaluate student outcomes or inform improvement planning.
- The university does not fulfil legislative requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students under the age of 18.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers provide sufficiently detailed feedback on students' essay writing assignments so they are clear about what they could do to improve and to better prepare them for higher level study.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to formally meet and share best practice to further enhance the quality and consistency of teaching to ensure all students are motivated, engaged and supported in all lessons.
- Carefully consider the way in which studios are organised and managed when teaching large groups, particularly during the exploratory stage of the course, to ensure teachers are able to guide and support all students to progress and achieve.
- Strengthen the foundation curriculum by providing increased opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities, such as additional drawing workshops or organised gallery visits that will broaden their horizons and benefit their idea development further.
- Enhance quality assurance arrangements by systematically reviewing the performance of the foundation course through a detailed analysis of success, retention and achievement data and high grade achievement information and by rigorously reviewing the quality of teaching and learning so that key strengths and areas for improvement are specifically identified.
- Ensure the university meets legislative requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students under the age of 18. Ensure all staff working in regulated activity undergo criminal record bureau checks to ensure their suitability for working with young people.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- The overwhelming majority of students on both the full-time and part-time foundation diploma in art and design course complete and achieve their qualification extremely successfully. The proportion of students who gain either a merit or distinction at the end of their course, across all specialist art and design pathways, is exceptionally high and has improved rapidly over the last three years.
- While data for different groups of students are not analysed routinely by managers, the data scrutinised during inspection showed all groups of students achieve equally well over time, including in the achievement of high grades. In the last two years, the achievement of merit and distinction grades for male students has increased notably to be on par with that of female students.
- Students' curiosity and passion for art and design, which is evident in how they articulate their ideas and in the energy they assert to assignments, contributes significantly to the rapid progress they make during their time on the foundation programme. Students' research and evaluation skills are very strong and this enables them to reflect and explore a wide array of creative and conceptual ideas and approaches. For example, a student in fine art used the idea of a simple flower to explore the topics of gender, the repetition of geometric shapes and imperfection through printmaking and film.
- The standard of students' art and design work across all subject specialisms is of a consistently high standard. Much sketchbook work is outstanding and demonstrates a rich exploration of colour, media and mark making, and often an imaginative and well-considered style of presentation.

- Students' work is highly personalised and they are encouraged by teachers to challenge preconceptions and push boundaries in how they consider their work and its impact. For example, one student within the visual communications pathway produced a final project based on how inanimate objects can evoke feelings, inspired by an old book she found in a charity shop. The final work used an array of inventive styles, music and lighting to create a captivating and technically challenging animation.
- Thought-provoking and open-ended assignments along with students' positive attitudes to learning enable them to work independently. Students are able to quickly and carefully think through creative solutions to art and/or design projects. They gain a broad knowledge of current practising artists and use this information well to inform their practical work.
- The quality of students' written work is good but teachers and students do not always give the same careful attention to written work as they do to practical work. A few students felt teachers could give greater feedback to aid the development of their essay-writing skills in preparation for higher education, and inspectors agree this is an area for further development.
- Students develop high levels of confidence in working with and manipulating a broad range of media and materials. For example, one student following the textiles pathway created flowing ruffles to emulate material using carefully manipulated strips of dried glue. Another student focused on throwaway plastics, using a combination of folded milk bottle cartons and lids to produce a range of intricate and beautiful organic structures.
- Progression to higher education courses is extremely high. In the last three years, almost all students have progressed to higher education on leaving the art foundation programme and of these, just under two thirds of students' progress successfully onto higher education courses within Loughborough University.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teachers are very knowledgeable practitioners and researchers in the visual arts and use their experience and knowledge of subjects to plan a challenging and successful course. Learning activities are carefully sequenced to ensure students make rapid progress. In the most effective lessons teachers give timely and incisive feedback to students that is responsive to their individual ideas and creative ambitions.
- Most lessons are demanding and successfully expand the outlook and ability of students to engage with the creative development of personal and often innovative ideas. Assignments emphasise the use of critical and conceptual thinking by students enabling fluent assimilation of practical skills for selecting and manipulating media and materials. On a few occasions teachers do not ensure every student remains fully motivated throughout lessons. While students' attitudes to learning are good overall, in a few lessons observed by inspectors, students' attendance was low.
- While the overall quality of teaching is good, and some lessons are outstanding, the quality of teaching does vary. A significant proportion of lessons are taught by part-time teachers and while their subject knowledge and expertise are excellent, there is some variability in teaching styles and the effectiveness of teaching. In a minority of lessons students are not fully engaged or do not receive enough individual support and guidance.
- Teachers provide good feedback in studios that is insightful and helpful to students in developing their work. In some lessons, teachers' feedback is not planned to include every student or insufficient space inhibits teacher's ability to effectively manage and support all students within the group. Written feedback at key points in the course is mostly detailed and indicates accurately how students can improve their work although written feedback during the early stages of the course is less detailed. Students are encouraged to evaluate their own and each other's work enabling them to make critical judgements about their ideas and progress.

- The development of students' critical thinking and writing abilities are good. Students written work is checked when they join the course and advice and support to improve their writing is offered where appropriate. The course develops their ability to research and enquire, facilitating a high standard of analytical and evaluative annotation in most sketchbooks and on worksheets.
- The development of students' literacy, numeracy, communication and interpersonal skills is good. These skills are developed well through group activities and short evaluations of work at the end of many projects. Some activities develop an understanding of ratios and proportion and require calculation of complex scales in two and three dimensions.
- While students benefit notably from working alongside students studying on undergraduate programmes, opportunities for foundation students to visit galleries, undertake additional drawing workshops or work with practising artists to broaden their skills and understanding even further are limited. Plans are in place to use the recently developed 'RADAR' resource, a small arts centre accessible to all university students but located within the school of the arts, to enhance students' access to artists, exhibition and community projects.
- The University promotes its art foundation diploma very effectively and consistently receives many more applications for places than are available. Comprehensive selection processes, completed with great integrity, ensure students most able to benefit are selected. Students are set work to complete before the course that prepares them well for the approaches to the ways of thinking and working they will encounter and the high expectations the course has of them.
- Tutorial guidance is very good and is highly effective in guiding students through the decisions they must make about their work and direction. During their specialist studies they benefit from working alongside undergraduate students and get excellent advice from teachers about progression to higher education. Many decide to continue at the University.
- The promotion of equality and diversity within teaching and learning is good. Teachers engage students from the beginning in an understanding of what influences their own circumstances and personal values. During each project students are encouraged to contextualise their work within broad cultural and historical enquiry. For example one recent self-initiated project explored the tensions created by the effects of environmental restraints in advanced economies on the subsistence lifestyles of those living in emerging economies.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers in the school of the arts set a clear strategic direction for the further education provision within the university and demonstrate a strong commitment to developing and improving the foundation programme. Day to day operational management is highly effective and senior managers have successfully developed a productive and beneficial culture of collaboration and team-working.
- Full-time teaching staff benefit from a supportive annual appraisal of their performance. They are active practitioners in their disciplines and enthusiastically and regularly update their subject skills and knowledge. They have attended occasional development sessions on teaching and learning provided by the university. Part-time teachers, who deliver the majority of the foundation programme, do not undergo formal appraisal or attend training sessions provided by the university to develop their teaching skills.
- The quality and effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment are not systematically evaluated. Procedures for reviewing and improving the quality of teaching and learning are informal and consequently strengths and areas for improvement are not routinely identified. Opportunities for the staff teaching team, many of whom are part-time, to share good practice or to review and evaluate their practice are limited.

- An annual course review provides a mechanism that enables the university's governance committees to scrutinise the performance of the foundation programme adequately. The course review reports on student recruitment, withdrawals and destinations, and carefully considers external examiner reports, staff/ student committee minutes and summary evaluative data for the course. However, the review does not make enough use of data to monitor trends in students' outcomes, for example, by gender, ethnicity, disability or specialist pathway and does not consider the quality of teaching and learning in any useful detail.
- The university provides many opportunities for students to share their views and to influence decision making processes. Students from the foundation course are invited to attend staff/ student committee meetings and the school's learning and teaching committee although they do not always do so. The course team regularly seeks and acts on students' views and students speak highly of the support and feedback provided by their teachers.
- Most resources for learning are very good and enable students to use a wide range of specialist equipment that enables them to develop skills in a broad variety of disciplines. However, in a minority of studios, insufficient space inhibits teacher's ability to effectively manage and support all students within the group.
- The curriculum is carefully structured and designed to build upon students' core art and design skills. It enables students to successfully develop their basic and experimental drawing skills and to progress their initial ideas through a structured process of investigational study through to a final creative product. Students are able to explore and refine a wide range of ideas in a mature and thoughtful way. The curriculum very effectively meets the needs and interests of students and the course is heavily over-subscribed.
- Equality and diversity are actively promoted both in the foundation programme and more widely across the university. The course is well-regarded locally and nationally and recruits a wide and diverse student population.
- Staff and students work safely in workshops and studios and the university has comprehensive health and safety policies. Pastoral support services are extensive and are used well by students. All students interviewed during inspection reported that they felt very safe. However, the university does not meet its legislative responsibilities in relation to safeguarding students under the age of 18. Teaching staff and personal support tutors have not undergone criminal record bureau checks to ensure their suitability to work with young people.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Loughborough University

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2		2	2					
Outcomes for learners	1		1	1					
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2		2	2					
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3		3	3					

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Visual Arts	2

Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A
Number of community learners	N/A
Number of employability learners	N/A
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The provider has no subcontracting arrangements.

Additional socio-economic information

Loughborough University is located in the town of Loughborough in Leicestershire. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and post-graduate courses at higher education level and one further education course, the foundation diploma in art and design. Most students recruited to the foundation diploma course are aged 18 or over when they start their course, usually having completed A-level or equivalent study. The vast majority of students study full-time and the university recruits locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Rates of unemployment in Loughborough are below regional and national levels. The proportion of students leaving school with 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is around the national average. Post 16, the average point score per candidate and per examination entry is slightly lower than average national rates.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Paul Joyce HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the university's Assistant Registrar as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. The inspection scope covered only the foundation diploma in art and design course in the school of the arts. Inspectors used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gather the views of learners and these views are reflected throughout the report. Inspectors observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews and interviewed university managers, teachers and support staff.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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