

Ravensbourne

Higher education institution

Inspection dates		4-7 December 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Students make good progress on their courses and achieve well. Almost all students gain places on undergraduate courses, and often in prestigious, specialist universities.
- Students explore diverse, and often unfamiliar, media and techniques, with a strong emphasis on experimenting with different ways of working and thinking. Students on all pathways appreciate the value of life drawing and opportunities to acquire thorough training and high level skills in using industry-standard specialist software.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers plan practical sessions well to enable students to develop relevant skills and work independently. Regular individual support and feedback from tutors, and peer assessment through frequent group critiques, develop students' practical and critical thinking skills well.
- Regular visits to galleries and current practitioners in design and media, and excellent links with the creative industries, ensure that students develop a clear understanding of progression routes through higher education to employment. Talks from industry specialists, many of whom are former Ravensbourne students, inspire and guide students in their choice of specialist pathway.
- Ravensbourne has invested significantly to ensure the organisation stays at the forefront of creative digital technology. Students benefit from very good access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, and teachers' relevant, up-to-date industry practice. Students develop a mature understanding of equality and diversity themes, through practical and contextual work.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The proportion of students achieving merit or distinction grades varies too much between subject specialist pathways.
- Teachers do not always use a sufficiently varied range of teaching strategies or activities to ensure that all students participate in larger group sessions. Written feedback and targets are not always sufficiently detailed to help students know how to achieve merit or distinction grades.
- Self-assessment reports, action plans and internal lesson observations do not always identify sufficiently clearly key areas or targets for improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers use a greater range of teaching strategies and activities, for example in theory sessions and group reviews, so that all students participate actively in the session. Make sure that teachers link planned learning outcomes more specifically to skills development, rather than completion of tasks, and make regular checks on learning for all students in the group.
- Require tutors to provide students with more precise written guidance on the standard of their work, so that they know how to achieve higher grades; and to help students to set their own targets for qualitative improvements in their projects.
- Increase the rigour and frequency of lesson observations, so that managers can identify better the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that self-assessment and quality improvement planning evaluate the quality of provision more critically, and identify clear areas and targets for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
------------------------------	------

- Students achieve well on both the pre-foundation and foundation diploma courses. A series of short, fast-paced projects, and challenging project briefs, from the start of the year, enable students to make rapid progress, often working with unfamiliar or unconventional media and techniques. The good balance of teacher support and independent working enables students to develop strongly individual approaches to their work as they move into specialist pathways.
- Almost all students progress successfully to undergraduate courses in a wide range of subject specialisms, and often to prestigious specialist institutions. Ravensbourne's detailed analysis of achievement by gender, ethnicity and disability, overall and by specialist pathways, shows no significant differences in the performance of different groups.
- However, the proportion of students achieving merit or distinction grades is lower than in similar institutions and varies between different specialist pathways; the grades were high in fashion and textiles and three-dimensional design, but low in graphic design and media in 2011/12.
- Frequent group critiques, and the use of weekly reflective journals, help students develop good critical thinking and evaluative skills, and build confidence in presenting their work, and in giving and receiving constructive feedback. They acquire good levels of subject-specific technical knowledge and terminology, enabling them to articulate ideas and responses clearly.
- Practical and written work is completed to a high standard. Design sheets are professionally presented and finished pieces of work demonstrate a high quality of production and finish. Students research topics thoroughly, drawing on a good balance of primary and secondary sources. For example, media students articulate well how cinematic techniques, camera angles and lighting can be used to create a particular mood or atmosphere, and how this supports the narrative structure in their film work.
- Fashion and textile students develop expertise across a wide range of related disciplines, including design, pattern cutting and garment construction, as well as retail aspects such as buying, marketing and fashion journalism. In three-dimensional design, students use drawing and maquettes well to record and develop ideas, exploring concepts such as space, form and structure, using a variety of different materials and making techniques. Highly specialist facilities, such as the rapid prototype laboratory, enable them to produce well-executed models to a professional standard.
- Students from all specialist pathways understand the value of life drawing, both in developing their observational skills and handling of varied media, and its relevance to their particular

subject discipline. The development of high level skills in digital media, using industry-standard equipment and software, across all disciplines, is a particular strength of this provision.

- Staff regularly instil the importance of developing a strong professional ethic, and stress the importance of reliability, resilience and meeting deadlines. Attendance has improved markedly over the last year, and is good. However, a small minority of students did not always arrive punctually to sessions observed during the inspection.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
---	------

- Good teaching and learning, with regular and effective assessment of progress, enable students to achieve well. Teachers plan varied practical activities and tasks that enable students to develop relevant skills, work independently and meet deadlines. Assignment briefs are clear and relevant to industrial practice; teachers provide clear timelines to help students meet deadlines. Briefs include specific tasks, set out the evidence required for assessment, and clearly identify useful resources and contextual references.
- Teachers do not always plan for, or make sufficient use of, a range of learning strategies and activities to ensure that all students participate fully in lessons and group reviews. For example, use of small group work and targeted questioning to encourage all students to participate is under utilised in larger group sessions. Planned lesson outcomes focus more often on the completion of tasks, rather than on what students are expected to learn.
- Teachers' extensive professional practice and current industry experience enable students to develop a sound understanding of contemporary design and media practice. Students make good use of regular visits to galleries and current arts practitioners to inform their own work.
- Students receive very regular feedback from teachers on strengths and areas for improvement in their work. Self- and peer-assessment activities, during fortnightly one-to-one tutorials on the pre-foundation course, and in weekly critiques on the foundation diploma, enable students to evaluate their work critically against the relevant assessment criteria.
- Written feedback from teachers is often focused on the completion of tasks and is not always sufficiently specific or detailed to indicate how students could achieve merit or distinction grades. On the pre-foundation course, teachers set very clear targets with students, although the quality and effectiveness of target setting is not consistent across all provision, and not all students have targets that relate to achieving a higher standard of work.
- Students make excellent use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to plan and organise their work, and the standard of information it contains is consistently high for all courses and units. Students receive thorough training in using the VLE and specialist software packages. Media students make very good use of social media as a forum for student discussion, for scheduling group work and using industry-relevant communication tools.
- Managers recognise that the open-plan nature of the teaching spaces results in noise intrusion into lessons which can sometimes disrupt students' learning, and plans are in place to remedy this from January 2013.
- Support and guidance for students are very good. Comprehensive course information provided through outreach activities in schools, taster events and interviews, and a good induction programme, help students to make the transition from school to Ravensbourne smoothly.
- Processes for identifying students' literacy needs are excellent. Students participate in a range of well-planned activities during the first six weeks of their programme which enable teachers to evaluate their literacy skills and support needs. Student services staff provide comprehensive literacy and study skills support, through the tutorial programme and through discrete sessions with a literacy support teacher. While there is no discrete numeracy support, Ravensbourne

enables the very small number of students who do not have GCSE mathematics to achieve this at other nearby institutions.

- Student services staff and teachers provide excellent support and guidance to students progressing to higher education and employment. Parents and students value highly the higher education information and guidance events, and the excellent development of students' understanding of the creative industries and related employment.
- Highly effective communications between tutors on further and higher education courses at Ravensbourne ensure that students are very well prepared for higher education, for example through the very well attended pre-UCAS interview programme in December each year.
- Students find the industry days inspiring and very valuable in demonstrating how they might progress from foundation studies, through higher education to employment or self-employment. Teachers provide good support for students who want to gain work experience, and Ravensbourne has recently established a partnership with an apprenticeship provider which promotes apprenticeships in creative industries as an alternative progression option.
- Equality and diversity are promoted very well. All students participate in a project in the first six weeks exploring their identity in the wider context of society. Students' work shows a mature consideration of different aspects of diversity, as seen in the 'End is Nigh' media project and the 'Everyday Olympics' design project, and in their choice of subjects for their final major projects.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Ravensbourne has a bold and ambitious vision to champion the creative exploitation of digital technologies in design and media. The senior management team and governors all play an active role in shaping and overseeing the institution's strategic direction and development. The recent relocation to an award-winning new building, set in a prime location on the Greenwich peninsula, in the heart of an urban regeneration zone, exemplifies this vision. The new building is innovative in its open-plan design concept and is resourced with the most up-to-date technical equipment.
- Governance of the institution is strong. Governors regularly receive and consider timely and informative reports from managers on key areas such as student performance, outcomes and finances. They also review regularly core policies and procedures such as equality and diversity and safeguarding, as well as the board's membership to ensure that it is diverse and has a suitable range of skills, industrial and business links and expertise.
- The effective annual performance review and development scheme for teaching and support staff informs a detailed staff training and development plan. Ravensbourne ensures that all academic staff gain an appropriate teaching qualification and sponsors a significant number of staff through relevant post-graduate programmes. Staff value highly the organisation's commitment to promoting opportunities for professional development.
- While the peer lesson observation scheme has a specific focus each year, the scheme does not provide a sufficiently comprehensive view of the quality of teaching and learning across the organisation. Lesson observations are not sufficiently frequent or rigorous. Consequently, the scheme has not been fully effective in objectively identifying and sharing best practice or key areas for development and has contributed to the institution overestimating its strengths in this area.
- Ravensbourne is particularly good at capturing the views of students from questionnaires and course representatives. It has commissioned some valuable external quality audits. Detailed and well-presented data on different aspects of student performance inform self-assessment.

- The self-assessment report contains too much description and too little evaluation of impact. This, in turn, results in a quality improvement plan that provides insufficient breadth, insight or focus to support sustained higher level improvements in the overall quality of provision.
- Ravensbourne has excellent and extensive links locally and regionally with employers, industry, local schools and the community, which benefit students, the institution and the local community. For students, the links provide valuable opportunities for live projects, work experience, progression into higher education and employment. For local schools, partnerships encourage post-16 progression, and community links enable the institution to play a key role in the economic growth of the area and the regeneration of the Greenwich peninsula.
- Senior and middle managers ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners and the local community. While the curriculum offer is very specialised, the institution continues to adapt its provision to ensure it remains at the cutting edge of technology, thereby maintaining a valuable strategic market lead. The design of the curriculum, teaching methods and influence of Ravensbourne's higher education provision help foster a culture of independent thinking and learning in students. The institution also works closely with the local borough to provide community courses for adults, who may not otherwise have access to digital media.
- Ravensbourne promotes equality and diversity very well within the institution and local community. It helps raise students' awareness of these themes through the design of relevant and topical assignments and the related teaching. Policies and procedures underpin the culture of equality across the organisation. The institution monitors performance of different groups of students and reports this through the self-assessment report to governors.
- Ravensbourne meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students and complies with legislation on disability and health and safety. The institution succeeds in creating a relaxed and safe environment in which students and staff can work and study. Students find it a safe and welcoming environment.
- An effective programme of risk assessment and health and safety audits ensures the well-being of students, and all staff and students receive training in the correct use of specialist, and often valuable, equipment. The institution has the relevant criminal records and other pre-employment checks in place for staff. Governors and staff receive mandatory training on safeguarding as part of their induction. Students confirm that the institution effectively tackles any bullying or discrimination. They have ready access to support, guidance and counselling services if required.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Design and media	2

Provider details

Ravensbourne	
Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year 2011/12	Full-time: 337
	Part-time: 0
Principal/CEO	Professor Robin Baker
Date of previous inspection	n/a
Website address	www.rave.ac.uk

Main course or learning programme level	Level 3	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+
Full-time	306	57
Part-time	0	0

Additional socio-economic information

Ravensbourne is a small higher education institution offering further education, undergraduate and postgraduate courses in a wide range of design and media specialisms. The further education consists of a pre-foundation diploma and three foundation diploma courses, the largest of which covers a broad range of design and media pathways. Students can also opt for a more specialist course in media production or fashion and textiles. Further education courses constitute around 20% of Ravensbourne's overall provision.

Ravensbourne relocated to the North Greenwich peninsula in 2010. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased and is above that of the local borough and broadly similar to that of London as a whole. The largest employment sectors in Greenwich are managerial, professional and administrative work, and other skilled trades. The institution draws foundation diploma students from a wide geographical area and they progress to a wide range of universities and specialist courses across the country.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Janet Mercer HMI
----------------	------------------

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the further education subject leader as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners, parents and stakeholders; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the further education provision. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all courses and specialist pathways and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

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>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk or if you have any questions about Learner View please email Ofsted at: learnerview@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012