

University of the Arts London

Higher education institution

Inspection dates

1–2 and 27–28 February 2017

Overall effectiveness			Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding	16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding		
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Students make excellent progress, and the standard of their work is very high.
- Students demonstrate high levels of reflection, depth of thought and creativity, as well as very good technical expertise; they develop excellent research skills, and a highly experimental approach to their work.
- Students ably articulate significant insight and intellect to underpin their creative work.
- On completion of their course, a high proportion of students successfully progress on to highly prestigious universities to undertake arts-related degrees.
- Excellent strategic leadership and strong governance successfully maintain the emphasis on effective further education within a university setting.
- Highly skilled and experienced staff provide very clear guidance to students, while giving them the skills and confidence to develop an independent and autonomous approach to their work.
- Staff and students benefit from the diverse international student cohort, which helps raise students' awareness of a wide range of different cultures and societies, and underpins their strong understanding of equality and diversity.

Full report

Information about the provider

- University of the Arts London is a specialist creative arts university with sites across London. It is comprised of six colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Arts.
- At the time of the inspection, the university's further education foundation diploma provision was located at Central Saint Martins (CSM) campuses in Kings Cross and Archway, and at the Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon (CCW) foundation centre in Camberwell.
- At the time of the inspection there were around 630 students from the UK on the foundation diploma and a further 470 international students.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce to students the importance of maintaining and improving attendance and punctuality; ensure that managers and teachers enforce the institution's processes and sanctions on poor attendance and punctuality where required.
- Explore and identify with staff, suitable strategies for managing large student cohorts effectively in workshops, to ensure that all students remain fully engaged with the classroom activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Strategic leadership of the foundation diploma is excellent. Governors and senior leaders provide a clear and positive direction for the foundation diploma, ensuring that the further education provision remains a core component to the curriculum at the university. Leaders and managers are dedicated to ensuring that all students flourish, and can develop the skills they will need for successful progression to higher education.
- Programme and curriculum leaders work as a cohesive team to help maintain the quality of provision and drive forward improvements. Managers work creatively to provide a wide and purposeful curriculum for all students. They receive effective support from senior leaders, and provide a welcoming, secure and supportive environment for learning, which students value highly.
- Managers, students and staff demonstrate very positive working relationships and a clear professional regard for one another. The vast majority of tutors are highly experienced practicing professionals, who share their knowledge and expertise freely with students, act as role models, and enable students to develop their own standards and skills.
- Governors, senior leaders and staff use their evaluation of the provision effectively to identify strengths and areas for development across the provision. The self-assessment report links well to a comprehensive action and improvement plan with realistic targets and aims. Governors are actively involved in the self-assessment process, and provide valuable support and challenge to leaders.
- Senior leaders and governors have worked very effectively to deal with areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, and have successfully addressed virtually all weaknesses from the report. In particular, leaders have instigated an effective scheme to improve the quality of teaching and learning, which is helping teachers continue to improve their practice. Teachers benefit from a broad range of high-quality staff development activities. All staff continue to work as arts practitioners to maintain their expertise.
- Comprehensive measures are in place to collect students' views and feedback. Managers analyse students' feedback thoroughly, and act swiftly to make any possible changes to improve the provision. Students value highly the openness and approachability of staff and the easy access they have to their tutors.
- The multicultural and international nature of the student community helps underpin a high level of awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. All staff actively promote students' appreciation of equality of opportunity. Managers have developed clear guidelines and resources to support students' understanding of fundamental British Values, clearly linking these to the college values. Managers have completed a comprehensive risk assessment in response to 'Prevent' legislation, and foundation diploma students understand the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

The governance of the provider

- Governance of the further education provision is highly effective. Governors have recently made a decision to extend membership of the further education committee to strengthen it further. This committee maintains the primary responsibility for overseeing the quality and strategic direction of the foundation diploma, and regularly reports to the university's main court of governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Each campus provides a safe and welcoming environment, with suitable access and security arrangements. Students feel safe around the campuses.
- Managers have put in place detailed and appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. Safeguarding arrangements address students' well-being in residential settings, as well as their time spent at the main university campuses. Suitably-trained designated safeguarding officers are in place. All staff, including residential and student union staff, have undergone appropriate training. Leaders maintain productive links with external agencies associated with maintaining the health and well-being of students.
- Students receive good guidance about how to keep themselves and others safe, how to recognise unsafe behaviour and how to communicate with staff in the event of concerns associated with radicalisation or extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers plan courses very well to enable students to acquire a sound balance of practical skills and theoretical understanding and to prepare excellent project briefs that are challenging and demanding. Teachers fully engage students, and encourage them to formulate reflective and original ideas.
- Students make very good use of excellent resources and accommodation, including workshops, studios, e-resources and the library. Students' work often demonstrates informed contextual research, high levels of conceptual thinking and innovative solutions to solving problems. Teachers support students to produce practical work, which combines sophisticated research and highly developed technical skills.
- Most students use online blogs very well to record and share their research influences and reflections with teachers. Staff, in turn, provide helpful written feedback, using sophisticated technical language, providing constructive advice about process and techniques. This provides students with detailed and insightful guidance on how to improve.
- Teachers also give useful and constructively critical verbal feedback to students in tutorials. Teachers skilfully direct students into productive lines of enquiry, encouraging creative speculation as well as challenging any unrealistic or impractical concepts.
- Teachers make very good use of the university archive materials to enrich students' learning and professional understanding. For example, students completed a 'Lost Letter' project, referencing the University's typography archive, which includes original drawings and designs for London Transport, to enhance students' understanding of the structure of

letter form and its potential for communication.

- Staff ensure that students review and critique each other's work. Students welcome this approach, responding very well to feedback, both from staff and from their peers. For example, a group of students helped produce research material for an individual within their group in response to a fashion design brief. This helped them develop ideas they could then transfer into their own work, as well as helping the individual think differently about their own brief.
- Students explore topics associated with equality and diversity extremely well within their work. Staff encourage students to develop a wide range of social, health, cultural and gender themes such as HIV, feminism, gender identity, dual heritage and gang culture. Students clearly articulate why they choose these themes, and why they think they are important to explore.
- In a few cases, teachers do not manage learning within large workshops well. In these sessions, students do not participate fully as they struggle to hear their peers or the teacher clearly, or are unable to see projected images used by the teacher in a large studio.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students show a great sense of pride in their work. They clearly value the opportunities they have at UAL; they appreciate the very high quality of resources available to them, the opportunities they have to work alongside higher education students, and the skills and knowledge they develop as a result.
- Pre-course information is very detailed, with every applicant receiving materials that clearly explain the scope and expectations of the course. The application process is fair and impartial; all applicants submit a portfolio for review and they are selected primarily on the quality of their work.
- Students benefit from frequent meetings with their tutors to ensure that they receive the support they need to maintain their rate of progress. Students can request a one-to-one tutorial, as well as being able to access online support and feedback from teachers whenever they need it.
- Students make very good progress in their work, through the constructive, insightful and critical guidance they receive from teachers. One student described how teachers feedback with 'brutal honesty'. This helps keep students on track as they strive to improve and develop their knowledge and skills.
- Students develop very good independent learning skills, they work productively towards clear learning outcomes within sessions; they know their deadlines and plan their work schedules accordingly.
- Students receive very good impartial advice and guidance to ensure that they progress to higher level study suitable to their skills and interests.
- Students develop their awareness of professional and commercial production techniques very well throughout the course. Staff make particularly good use of the university's alumni to raise students' awareness of job opportunities and promote a range of job roles available to arts graduates. Students appreciate how teachers' valuable first-hand industry

experience and their skills as practicing artists help to enhance the quality of the course.

- Students often participate in a range of work-related activities throughout their course. For example, staff frequently organise additional workshops, delivered by current arts practitioners, and talks from well-known artists. Students also curate their own exhibitions and sell their art work.
- Students recognise and appreciate the significant opportunities and resources that are readily available to them by studying in London. They frequently visit galleries, exhibitions and museums, as well as attending theatre and dance performances as part of their primary research.
- Students have regular opportunities to feed back their views to managers through course representatives. This has resulted in, for example, changes to library opening hours and the introduction of gender-neutral toilets.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are, at times, not good enough. Too many students arrive late and, on occasions, attendance is too low.

Outcomes for learners

Outstanding

- The proportion of students who successfully achieve the foundation diploma is very high. Staff set very high standards and expectations of students. There has been an overall increase in the proportion of students who achieve merit and distinction grades over the past three years.
- Students make excellent progress and the standard of their work is very high. Students work extremely well, both individually and in groups; they recognise the benefits of pooling their ideas, and developing a shared understanding to extend their own creative thinking.
- Students develop a very broad range of technical skills, knowledge, creative and aesthetic awareness. Staff ensure that students experiment and take risks with their work, and move away from their comfort zones. They ensure that students focus on the creative process, to research, experiment and explore their emerging ideas, and avoid focusing too early on the final product. As a result, students' sketch books demonstrate high levels of reflection, depth of thought and creativity, as well as very good technical expertise.
- Students are highly articulate; they show significant insight and intellect to underpin their creative work. For example, a group of students working at an early stage of a clothing design project discussed the links between the uses of 'woven' fabric, and the way globalisation and migration leads to the interweaving of different cultures and societies across the globe. In these, and other discussions, students benefited substantially from the eclectic, multicultural backgrounds of the student group.
- The course provides an excellent foundation for students to progress to a broad range of undergraduate courses in the arts. On completion of their diploma, a very high proportion of students successfully gain places on prestigious creative arts degrees. Over half of students on the foundation diploma progressed to one of the degree courses within UAL.
- While, in general, there are no significant differences in the performance of different groups of students, managers have identified that a slightly higher-than-average proportion of students from black and minority ethnic heritage receive referrals for their final project. As a result, managers are focusing their attention on this group of students

to provide additional support, to avoid them being at a disadvantage.

- All students develop verbal communication skills and levels of literacy to a very high standard, as a result of good support from staff and the highly research-based, interactive and discursive nature of the course. For example, during peer review discussions, students skilfully express their ideas and opinions about the content and quality of their work, and the work of others, demonstrating high levels of fluency, observation and insight.
- A very small proportion of students are required to undertake GCSE English or mathematics as part of their programme. While students make good progress in their lessons, invariably they do not attend the final examinations in the summer, as their course ends around 6 weeks prior to the formal examinations.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133900
Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	16 to 18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	630
Deputy Vice Chancellor	Simon Ofield-Kerr
Telephone number	0207 514 6000
Website	www.arts.ac.uk/

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	-	-	-	-	622	8	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of further education as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Peter Nelson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Tricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Linnia Khemdoudi	Ofsted Inspector

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