

Coventry University

Higher education institution

Inspection dates

7–10 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not provide sufficient challenge for managers to ensure swift improvement to the quality of provision for students.
- Leaders and managers of the access to higher education courses have not taken effective actions to improve the quality of provision.
- Too much teaching on the access programme does not challenge students sufficiently. Students are not consistently encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their learning. Teachers do not check learning frequently, and students do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The planning and structure of the induction for those access students who join in November are weak. As a result, students take too long to settle into their class groups, which hampers their progress.
- A small proportion of feedback in foundation art and design lacks detail and does not explain clearly what students need to do to make better progress.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders, managers and governors have a clear strategic aim of widening participation in higher education. As a result, an increasing number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds gain qualifications and progress to higher education.
- Students are very clear about their next steps and are motivated and equipped to succeed in higher education by the culture and academic values of the university and its teachers.
- Students benefit from a wide range of support services, including online courses and resources, academic skills workshops and pastoral support.
- The standard of students' work on the foundation art and design programme is high. Students develop original ideas well and produce work, using a range of materials and techniques, which is often ambitious in scale and intent.
- Teachers on the foundation art and design programme are good at presenting complex ideas and concepts. Most students use their new knowledge to inform their creative work. As a result, students have made rapid progress this year.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Coventry University is situated in the centre of Coventry and caters for over 22,000 students, including a significant body of international students. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and two further education programmes: the foundation diploma in art and design, and access to higher education courses. The foundation art and design course is located within the university's School of Art and Design building. Coventry University has a subsidiary company, the CU Group. This company offers the access to higher education diploma at both CU Scarborough and CU Coventry. Three quarters of all further education students are on the access programme. Both programmes are full time. Two thirds of students on both programmes are female. Just over a third of students on foundation art and design and over half of all access students are from minority ethnic groups.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders should provide greater challenge to curriculum managers and course leaders by:
 - providing more detailed feedback on the quality of the annual review
 - recording clearly whether they agree with the judgements
 - outlining any further actions that are required
 - monitoring whether the actions have been completed successfully in a timely fashion, so that the quality of provision improves swiftly.
- Leaders and managers of the access to higher education course should improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers share good practice, so that teaching and learning are consistently good
 - training teachers to assess accurately, and to provide feedback which is detailed enough to help students to improve
 - producing a new plan for the integration of students who enrol in November, so that all students learn effectively and teachers are clear on what is expected of them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors are committed to the clear strategic aim of widening participation in higher education. As part of this strategy, they offer access to higher education courses, and the foundation diploma in art and design. Leaders encourage wider participation through the courses they offer and when they are timetabled. Since the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders have developed access to higher education courses in Coventry and at a new campus in Scarborough, which is an area where progression to higher education is low.
- Despite recent management changes, leadership and management of the access to higher education course require improvement. The annual review for 2016/17 did not accurately judge the quality of provision. While the observation of teaching and learning is accurate, managers' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment did not match the evidence provided and was too generous. As a result, actions to improve teaching have not been comprehensive enough, and managers have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good.
- While there are pockets of highly effective teaching, managers provide too few opportunities for the sharing of good practice within and across access to higher education courses. As a result, too many learners do not achieve their qualification, and there is too much variability in outcomes between curriculum disciplines and sites.
- Key aspects of course management of the access to higher education programme require improvement. Assessment practice is not consistently applied. A few assessors are not applying the grading criteria rigorously. Their approach to re-submissions of work and to extensions and deadlines differs.
- Managers on the access programme do not monitor closely enough the performance of different groups by ethnicity. They do not have specific plans to narrow the current gaps between males and females, and between white British learners and minority ethnic learners.
- Since the recent management changes in the leadership of access to higher education courses, student attendance has improved. Managers have recently produced a detailed action plan to address key areas for improvement around teaching, learning and assessment. It is currently too early to gauge the full impact of these actions.
- Leaders of the foundation diploma in art and design have not been able to halt the three-year decline in achievement rates and high grades. Senior managers have been slow to find permanent replacements to fill key management vacancies. However, following the appointment of a new course leader, and a revised focus on teaching, learning and assessment, the quality of the provision is now good, and current students are making good progress.
- Senior leaders are responsive to local and national priorities. They review the courses and subjects that they offer and respond to local need well. For example, managers have introduced a new access to engineering course, in response to the skills shortage in the Coventry region.
- Managers use performance management effectively to improve teaching. Following

observations, teachers are supported to improve, or in a small minority of cases leave the university.

- Managers produce overall reports on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They ensure that opportunities for further professional development relate to the areas for improvement. Staff value these opportunities.
- Leaders and managers ensure that students receive high-quality impartial careers guidance. The proportion of students who progress to higher education is high. There are good links to university departments, and leaders of degree programmes report that students make an effective transition to higher education as a result.

The governance of the provider

- Course leaders are accountable for the quality of their courses, to faculty boards, boards of study and academic committees. Course leaders produce detailed reports on the quality of the provision but the quality review bodies do not provide detailed feedback on how the course leaders can improve the reports, or whether more information is required, or whether they agree with the judgements. The review body does not specify clear actions for improvement that they can subsequently monitor. As a result, the review bodies do not provide sufficient challenge to course leaders.
- Governors support the university's strategy to widen participation to higher education from disadvantaged communities through providing a clear vision, and approving the necessary financial investment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers create a culture of respect, understanding and appreciation of difference. Managers make an appropriate assessment of risk, and take well-considered actions to keep students safe. They listen to students and respond appropriately to their concerns. Students know who they should report concerns to. Students feel safe on site and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Managers have effective approaches for vulnerable learners. For example, there are clear support plans for care leavers, students with mental health issues, and students who are under 18 years old. However, at this early stage in the year, students do not have a detailed understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and are not able to relate these to the local context.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning on adult programmes require improvement. During the week of inspection, the enrolment of a new cohort of adult students created considerable challenges for teachers, resulting in too much teaching that required improvement.
- Teachers on adult programmes did not always know how many of the newly enrolled students would be joining their class. They had little or no information on these students' prior attainment, or experience of formal education. As a result, teachers struggled to plan sessions to meet the needs of all students.

- During the week of inspection, a team of two teachers taught most of the lessons on adult programmes. However, these teachers did not plan sufficiently well how they would split their responsibilities and take full advantage of each other's skills. Lessons were often disorganised and students frequently distracted.
- Students on adult programmes receive insufficient challenge to help them think deeply about the topic they are studying. Many classroom activities ran over their allocated time and, consequently, students were unable to complete them by the end of the lesson. Students who finished tasks ahead of others had to wait for the next activity. Teachers do not invite students to evaluate their learning and reflect on what they need to do next. In a majority of lessons, the most able students receive insufficient challenge to help them achieve the highest grades.
- Teaching, learning and assessment on the foundation art and design course are good. Teachers use their industry knowledge to check, develop and extend students' practical skills, knowledge and understanding and prepare them for their next steps. They use the available information about students' previous academic achievement well to identify their needs and build on previous learning to extend knowledge and understanding. Students on study programmes produce high standards of work.
- Teachers and managers on all provision types have appropriately high expectations of their students and expect them to achieve and progress into higher education. They understand fully the wide range of often negative experiences of formal education that students bring with them when they enrol on courses. Teachers expect all students to achieve and progress regardless of their previous background or educational attainment. As a result, most students are making at least the progress expected of them.
- Teachers are well qualified and experienced to teach on access to higher education and foundation art and design courses. Many hold doctorate qualifications in their specialist subject and teach university courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Students value the expertise and experience of their teachers. Teachers use their skills well to engage and motivate students, particularly on the art and design programmes.
- Teachers make appropriate use of the available information on students to ensure that students enrol on a course that meets their needs and aspirations. Access students receive detailed advice and guidance about the entry qualifications they will need to gain a place on their chosen degree subject. However, teachers on adult programmes do not receive prompt information on students' previous educational attainment, including their prior attainment in English and mathematics, to help them plan learning effectively.
- Students receive impartial advice and guidance before they enrol on a course, as well as during their studies. The very large majority of students can articulate clearly their next steps and they know what they have to do to achieve their learning or career goals.
- Staff track and monitor students' progress well. Most students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers use tutorials to set appropriate targets for students.
- Students behave well in classrooms and in the university's public spaces. They respect their peers and are able to communicate well with teachers and support staff. They respect others' views and use appropriate language in learning sessions. Teachers promote equality of opportunity and diversity during learning sessions and treat all students fairly, which they value.

- The development of students' skills in English, especially in academic writing, is good. The university provides an academic writing support service, which students use well to help with their coursework. Most teachers provide helpful feedback on students' spelling, punctuation and grammar on marked work, though not all teachers do this consistently well. Students develop mathematical skills well, especially those on adult programmes following pathways in engineering. However, teachers' promotion of mathematical skills on the foundation art and design programme is less effective.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Attendance and punctuality on the university's adult programmes were poor last year overall, and very poor on a few courses. This year, teaching staff routinely monitor students' attendance and send letters to those about whom they have concerns. This attendance monitoring has helped to give greater focus to the importance to students of attending all lessons. In the current year, attendance has improved but it is not yet consistently good.
- Most students have a basic awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and know how to report a concern if they feel unsafe. However, students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremist ideologies is superficial. Few students are able to articulate clearly their understanding of fundamental British values.
- Students have a positive attitude to learning and they feel well supported by the culture and academic value of the university and its teachers. Former students who are now studying for undergraduate qualifications speak proudly of their journey from their starting points, with many recalling the sacrifices that they had to make in pursuit of their academic studies. Many students were the first in their family to go to university.
- The university provides well-resourced and equipped classrooms, arts spaces and academic resources. Staff positively encourage students to take pride in their learning environment and commitment to learning.
- Students gain confidence in their ability to succeed in higher education. They learn to organise and take responsibility for their own learning, and they make good use of the university's very wide range of academic resources to further their studies in their own time. Students actively participate in opportunities that the university provides for them to act as student representatives, or to provide feedback on the quality of provision they are receiving.
- Students are able to articulate confidently their next steps in higher education. Most students on adult programmes progress on to degree courses in social science, nursing, midwifery and biological sciences. Students on study programmes have a very clear idea about their future higher-level studies, with most planning to progress on to one of the university's wide range of arts undergraduate courses and others progressing to higher educational institutions further afield.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Over the last three years, around a quarter of students taking the access to higher

education course have not successfully completed it. This is in line with the national rate. Students' chances of successfully completing the access course are affected too much by course pathway, site and start date. For example, learners on the business studies pathway have low achievements, while those undertaking health and human science have high achievements. Those learners who start the course in September have a much higher chance of success than those who start in January.

- On the access course, there are significant performance gaps between different groups of learners. Female learners achieve much better than male learners do, and white British learners succeed significantly better than minority ethnic learners do.
- Access students are working at, and producing work of an appropriate standard for, level 3. The vast majority of learners are making the progress expected of them. A high proportion of access students progress to higher education with the majority progressing within the university.
- Students on the foundation art and design study programme produce work of a very high standard. Students make good progress and, even at this early stage of the course, their work is often ambitious. Over the last three years, the proportion of students who progress to degree-level courses has increased. In 2016/17, all of the students who completed the course progressed on to higher education, with the majority progressing within the university.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of students who successfully complete the study programme has declined steadily from very high rates. This was affected by an increase in students not completing the course. Three years ago, over half of all students gained merits and distinctions. In 2016/17, only a third of students gained those grades.
- In foundation art and design, there are no significant differences between the achievements of learners aged 16 to 18 and adults, or between different ethnic groups. However, male learners aged 16 to 18 achieve better than female learners.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Currently, 44 students are on the study programme, which is the foundation diploma in art and design course. Teachers have high expectations of students on the course. They use their subject knowledge well and are very good at presenting complex ideas and concepts. Most students quickly understand teachers' explanations and use their knowledge to inform their creative work. As a result, students have made rapid progress this year.
- Teachers use well-planned and demanding activities and tasks to build the confidence and knowledge of students. Students use their new understanding of mark-making and visual language inventively. They describe and record what they see and think to generate original and convincing solutions to creative problems.
- Teachers discuss their students' work with them regularly and give very good advice on how to develop and improve their ideas and skills. Written feedback to students is supportive and encouraging. It evaluates the work completed, stating clearly how students can progress. A small proportion of written feedback lacks detail and does not

explain clearly enough what students need to do to improve, which affects their progress.

- The standard of students' work is high. Students develop informed and original ideas well. They produce work using a range of materials and techniques that is often ambitious in scale and intent. In a drawing exercise, students questioned conventions of space and structure by creating new ways of interpreting what they record through drawing. In a fast-paced media project, students generate ideas and storyboards for a film sequence that speculates on the future development of technology and the environment and the impact on society.
- Teachers develop the English skills of students well. Detailed briefings and support sessions help students prepare UCAS statements for progression into higher education, individual project proposals and to understand the conventions of academic writing. Students relate extensive research and contextual enquiry to many studio assignments. Most are appropriately analytical and evaluative. However, teachers do not provide sufficient support to those few students that are returning to education after a break, so that they develop sufficient historical and critical awareness to inform their work.
- Although students who require mathematical skills make the best use of many workshop and studio procedures, a few teachers do not develop or reinforce the mathematical understanding that students would need for future employment or higher study.
- Teachers provide a varied and productive programme of educational visits to museums, galleries and locations to enrich students' learning and experience. Students benefit greatly from the wider university environment in which they can observe and sample higher education through tutorials and practical workshops with undergraduate students. Students receive high-quality, impartial careers guidance.
- Teachers prepare students for higher study and employment very well. Students understand the challenges and opportunities of different areas of creative practice and develop a high standard of study and workplace skills. Most students gain advanced practical skills using specialist workshops and media rooms. Students collaborate confidently to share experiences and expand their learning. They develop good interpersonal and communication skills and attend regularly and on time.
- Teachers have created a strong culture of safe working practice and behaviour in workshops and the studios. Students feel safe when learning and know where to seek guidance or assistance if they have concerns about their well-being or ability to study. Students require more support in understanding how to protect themselves from the threats of radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders and managers have been slow to respond to declining achievement recently. However, the foundation diploma in art and design has been invigorated by changes that managers have now made. Teachers have implemented clear and imaginative strategies that have brought about rapid improvement this year.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Around 200 adult students study access to higher education diploma courses at level 3 in health and human sciences, business studies, social sciences and engineering.

Engineering is a new area of study for 2017/18. Forty of the students are based in Scarborough, and the remainder in Coventry. Students enrol in September and November for a year-long programme in CU Coventry and in October and January in CU Scarborough. The programme has doubled in size over four years.

- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good. In too many lessons, students are distracted and do not focus on the subject. Students in a science-related lesson were disengaged by unimaginative activities and the teacher's insufficient checking of their progress. A minority of students were texting on their mobile phones and not challenged by the tutors.
- Too many teachers do not challenge students sufficiently to think deeply about the topic. They do not develop students' technical language effectively or check whether they have understood topics. Teachers do not plan lessons sufficiently well to meet the needs of students who enrol at different times.
- Too many activities lack structure, do not keep to time and are not finished. Students who finish tasks ahead of time have to wait for others to catch up before undertaking the next activity. In one lesson, students left at the appointed time without evaluating their learning and reflecting on what they needed to do next. In another lesson, engineering students spent too much time on worksheets on mathematical calculations and did not have time to develop their understanding of wider study skills. A few teachers do not challenge latecomers, who disrupt other students. In a majority of lessons, teachers do not challenge the most able students to achieve higher standards.
- In a few lessons, students are engaged and attentive. They develop new knowledge and skills with enthusiasm and commitment. Teachers use variety and pace well to engage and motivate students. They check students' progress frequently.
- Most students develop effective study skills and understand the demanding requirements of higher-level learning. Students in social science and business benefit from academic practice tutors who are skilled teaching practitioners and complement the vocational specialists. Students in a social science lesson enjoyed competing in an online quiz, which helped to check their understanding of effective study skills.
- In a business lesson, students used a wide range of learning activities to understand the requirements of essay writing. Students enjoyed the challenge of researching ideas, working in small groups then feeding back to the whole class. The tutor summarised succinctly how well each group had contributed and checked that students understood key messages.
- Too much feedback to students lacks detail and does not explain how they should improve their work. Not all tutors give sufficient feedback on improving the use of English language and identifying grammatical mistakes. For example, feedback for social science students clearly identifies how students can improve and develop their skills, and signposts them to academic writing. However, in a business assignment, the feedback comment was minimal – with no developmental feedback and no reference to the many grammatical errors in the essay. Managers are aware of this; they are working with staff to improve the quality and consistency of feedback.
- Tutors work in pairs when class sizes are large but do not plan their team-teaching approach sufficiently well. Students are unsure who is leading a lesson, when to start an activity, or whose direction to follow.

- Students who start in November are poorly integrated into learning groups. Tutors do not plan lessons to integrate students or prepare them to attend induction briefings. As a result, students who enrolled in September sit through repeated sessions, which slows their progress. Students who start in November are confused about what they have missed and how they will catch up.
- Current students make the expected progress. Students who started in September have completed a semester and submitted their assignments. The number of submissions has increased significantly on the previous year, which was previously very low in social science and business. Standards of work are appropriate to level 3. A minority of students exceed the standards required.
- Students receive impartial advice and guidance when choosing their next steps. The university encourages students to research carefully the requirements of their degree courses.
- Students are set appropriate targets, which focus on the grades they need to get on to a degree programme. Other targets include raising confidence or being able to present to others. Students who have not studied for some time gain confidence and valuable study skills, which help prepare them for university-level assessments.
- Students have regular tutorials and can request more frequent meetings if they feel it is necessary. Tutors monitor the progress of students' individual learning plans and risks to achievement effectively. They refer to support services where appropriate. Records are maintained appropriately in student files.
- Students value and benefit from the support services available, including one-to-one tutorials, specialist tutors, academic writing support, English and mathematics workshops and online resources through the virtual learning environment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133808
Type of provider	Higher education institution
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	202
Vice chancellor/CEO	James Latham
Telephone number	02476 887688
Website	www.coventry.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)	-	-	-	-	27	242	-	-
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	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group director of quality, 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

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