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Professor Fitt
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Dear Professor Fitt

Short inspection of Oxford Brookes University

Following the short inspection on 24 and 25 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since your previous inspection, leaders and managers have made sure that the university continues to provide consistently good education and training for art and design students. You and your senior management team, governors and staff provide a welcoming and safe environment for students. Students enjoy studying at the university and value their learning. They produce work of a very high standard and make excellent progress towards their qualifications.

Senior managers know the strengths and areas for improvement of the art and design course. They have maintained the strengths and successfully tackled the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Well-considered plans are in place to raise standards in the few areas that require further improvement. As a result, the proportion of students who gain their qualifications remains high. A high proportion of students move on to degree courses at other universities.

Leaders and managers use their good working relationships with professional contacts well to make sure students develop current and relevant industry skills.

Teaching, learning and assessment continue to be of a high standard across the large majority of lessons but are not yet outstanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have maintained good safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. Staff receive effective training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to make sure students are safe and feel safe. Students know whom to talk to if they have any concerns. Staff deal with concerns promptly and the designated safeguarding officer keeps full records of them.

Students understand and appreciate the importance of safe working practices within studios and apply them well when using specialist equipment.

Inspection findings

- Students produce work of a very high standard, developing excellent practical and technical skills and a good understanding of design and development process that they use very well.
- Students exemplify British values in their behaviours and attitudes to each other and their learning. They are respectful to each other and their tutors. Teachers incorporate British values and opportunities for students to widen their understanding of the world in all their assignment briefs.
- Through the completion of blogs and personal statements, students develop good reflective skills that they use carefully and successfully to identify personal targets. These support them to improve their technical skills and art and design knowledge.
- Students benefit from challenging and exciting live project briefs that help them to develop technical and work skills to meet industry needs. Recent briefs included designing a new livery for Porsche's anniversary car.
- Teachers use their broad experiences and professional contacts very well to include good careers advice and guidance throughout the students' programmes. As a result, the large majority of students continue to higher levels of education. Teachers provide a wide range of high-quality opportunities for students to gain an understanding of the industries in which they wish to work. For example, fashion students benefit from internships with prestigious fashion and design companies. Practising professionals, including commercial artists and designers, give frequent talks to students about their industry. The majority of students benefit from a wide range of community projects, such as designing products for the Natural History Museum. These develop their work skills and allow them to experience the demands of their chosen careers. However, students studying 3D and visual communications have insufficient industry-related opportunities.
- Managers' actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment have not been fully effective. Following the previous inspection, managers introduced a system of peer observations which did not lead to improvements in teaching and learning. In 2016, they introduced formal observations of every teacher to inform staff development. However, managers failed to analyse the information gathered sufficiently well or use it to inform the self-assessment process and staff training.

- Managers do not undertake observations of other key aspects of students' experience, such as reviews and tutorials. They do not have a sufficiently clear picture of either the quality or the impact of these on students.
- Teaching, learning and assessment continue to be good. Teachers use their considerable expertise and experience to explain complex procedures and ideas to students. Most teachers check learning well by using appropriate, and often probing, questioning that helps students refine their ideas. In a few instances lessons are not good. For example, in one lesson the teacher did not explain clearly what students were expected to achieve when carrying out peer reviews. As a result, students' critiques of each other's work lacked depth.
- Teachers give very clear oral and written feedback to students on their project briefs and ideas. As a result, they are able to improve their work, achieve their potential and confidently present and explain their pieces of work to one another.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outcomes of teaching and learning observations, including reviews and tutorials, are used to inform staff training and improve teaching and learning
- teachers develop industry-related opportunities for students studying 3D and visual communications in line with those available for fashion and fine arts students
- managers use the self-assessment process to reflect on and discuss the identified strengths and weaknesses more fully in their development of an improvement plan.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Hill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector were assisted by the head of the school of arts, as nominee. We met with you, members of the senior leadership and management team, teachers and students. We spoke with the chair of the board of governors and another board member. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed students' work. We scrutinised strategic and policy documents including those related to safeguarding, quality assurance and the performance of provision. We analysed data on students' achievement and progress and considered their views.