

University of Sunderland

Higher education institution

Inspection dates

20–22 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students on the level 4 foundation in art and design programme make consistently strong progress from their starting points and achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Most students develop high-level technical skills and language. They benefit from excellent facilities and equipment and produce work that exceeds the expected level for their programme.
- Highly motivated tutors use their expertise well to design a curriculum and provide teaching, learning and assessment activities of an excellent quality.
- Students engage in realistic and commercially applicable projects. These provide them with collaborative work and high-profile opportunities to broaden their understanding of the breadth of opportunities in the creative industries.
- Employers support apprentices to develop good vocational knowledge and improve their writing, practical mathematical and digital skills well at work. Most apprentices make positive contributions to their employer's business. Apprentices' standard of work meets industry requirements.
- Leaders understand the skills gap in the region and have worked well with employers to develop a well-designed portfolio of training and development programmes.
- Leaders and governors have set ambitious priorities for the university. Their mission to act as an agent of social change and opportunity is strong.
- Progression for students and apprentices to higher education or employment is very high.
- Leaders and staff ensure that students and apprentices have a well-developed understanding of British values and demonstrate the importance of these values in their work.
- Governors, leaders and managers do not receive helpful enough management information; they do not have a sufficiently clear understanding and oversight of the quality of the apprenticeship provision.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on apprenticeship programmes is not consistently high. Until recently, too many apprentices did not make the progress of which they were capable.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The University of Sunderland provides an extensive range of undergraduate and post-graduate courses and one further education course, the level 4 foundation diploma in art and design. All students on the foundation diploma in art and design course are aged 16 or over and most have completed A-level or equivalent qualifications. They all study full time.
- The university has delivered an apprenticeship programme since 2017. The programme is delivered by the Microtechnology Training Centre (MTC). MTC is the training subsidiary of the university and is located at the university's Industry Centre. The apprenticeship programme is designed to improve participation in further and higher education and to provide employment opportunities in the university. Apprentices on level 6 standards-based programmes were not in scope for this inspection.
- Unemployment in Sunderland is well above the national average. The proportion of people that come from areas of social or economic disadvantage is well above the national average. The proportion of people who hold qualifications at levels 3 and 4 is lower than the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors should act to ensure that they:
 - receive accurate and relevant information that they need to hold managers and staff to account, including reports on apprentices' progress
 - provide challenge to managers and staff to continue to improve the quality of the apprenticeship provision.
- Leaders and managers should quicken the pace of improvement so that apprentices make at least good progress and achieve their qualification within planned timescales.
- Assessors should ensure that they pay close attention to the needs of individual apprentices in the planning and delivery of teaching and in the assessment of learning, so that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors have set ambitious priorities for the university. They have well-thought-out development plans for the foundation diploma in art and design and the apprenticeship provision. These are integral to the vision, ambitions and values set out in the strategic plan. They have determined the pedagogic and strategic direction of these programmes based on an effective analysis of, and vision for, social mobility in the city region.
- Students and apprentices come from all walks of life and backgrounds. The university's mission to act as an agent of social change and opportunity reflects well in their commitment to equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity in all their work with employers, students and apprentices.
- University leaders and MTC managers analyse the business development needs of the region well. They understand the skills gaps in the region and have worked with employers to develop a well-designed portfolio of development and training programmes that include apprenticeships.
- Staff benefit from wide-ranging and supportive continuing professional development and effective performance management. The art and design team constantly reflect on the programme design and their teaching methods to ensure that they deliver a creative curriculum. Consequently, students access high-quality teaching from well-qualified, thoughtful and experienced subject experts.
- The art and design team are proactive in their work with employers. As a result, students develop their academic, creative and technical knowledge and skills within realistic and commercially applicable contexts. Projects such as the 'Foundation Press' involve working with external arts organisations including Sunderland Culture, and collaborative cross-faculty projects in fashion give students high-profile opportunities to broaden their understanding of the breadth of opportunities in the creative industries.
- Managers follow well-designed recruitment practice to ensure that they recruit teaching and training staff with the required knowledge, skills and experience. They follow up poor practice diligently, providing support and challenge to improve teaching and learning that does not meet requirements. The recruitment of new staff to support the apprenticeship programme is beginning to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Reports to the work-based learning steering group do not sufficiently differentiate between the achievement and progress of apprenticeships delivered directly by MTC and those delivered by MTC as a subcontractor. Consequently, members of the steering group do not challenge MTC in enough detail about the progress that their own apprentices make.

The governance of the provider

- Governors, leaders and managers have high ambitions for their students and apprentices. Academic oversight and governance follow expected processes and are effective in following up issues identified at programme level. Leaders respond well to develop and enhance the student experience on the foundation diploma in art and design programme.

They recognise the weaknesses in apprenticeship provision and have developed appropriately challenging development plans to bring that provision in line with the high-quality foundation diploma in art and design.

- Governors, leaders and managers are right to recognise that management information requires further development so it can provide leaders with additional information and support them to provide challenge to improve the quality of provision. This includes information about the impact of actions that they take and progress towards improving the apprenticeship provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures for staff, students and apprentices are appropriate. Leaders and staff follow appropriate safeguarding and safe recruitment practice.
- Leaders and staff promote the safety and welfare of students and apprentices. Students have high levels of health and safety awareness in practical workshops and apprentices work safely.
- Leaders implement the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty and ensure that students and apprentices receive information at the start of their programme about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive mandatory training and regular updates on safeguarding topics and the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead and faculty champions are well trained. Staff understand the referral processes within the university. Safeguarding leads work well with organisations such as the NSPCC, local authorities, the police and the Internet Watch Foundation to develop and maintain a safe working and learning environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutors have excellent subject knowledge and industry experience. They use their skills effectively to plan the curriculum. They use challenging learning activities to inspire students to work innovatively and produce high-quality work that meets demanding deadlines.
- Students and apprentices benefit from access to the university's information, research and reference collections. The virtual learning environment supports students and apprentices to develop effective independent learning skills and improve their academic writing skills. This prepares students and apprentices well to move on to study at a higher level.
- Tutors and assessors provide effective support, such as specialist software and adjustments to short project deadlines, for students and apprentices who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The good technical support provided by staff in the practical areas ensures that students who require additional skills development improve their confidence quickly. As a result, students and apprentices who require support make at least as much progress as their peers.
- Tutors and assessors complete reliable and thorough assessments of apprentices' skills and understanding at the start of the programme. These ensure that apprentices have

the characteristics and ambition to succeed in their chosen career. Assessors use the information from early assessment well to ensure that apprentices work with employers who can support them to achieve realistic plans.

- Tutors challenge students on the foundation diploma in art and design programme to explore new ideas and media, and to take creative risks in the short exploratory projects in which they participate. Students and apprentices benefit from working alongside degree students and colleagues who are willing to share their experiences and knowledge. As a result, most make at least good progress in developing their vocational and technical skills.
- Tutors and assessors skilfully design assignments and projects that encourage students to consider carefully and apply aspects of fundamental British values in their work. For example, apprentices analyse the effect of unconscious bias during the recruitment process. Students produce contemporary pieces of art that investigate stereotypical perceptions of equality and freedom of speech in the local community.
- Tutors use insightful and creative assessment methods that ensure that students are clear about what they do well and how they can extend their skills and knowledge. For example, they encourage students to use high-level analytical skills during peer assessment and while critiquing the work of leading artists. Students have a good awareness of their progress.
- Until very recently, assessors have not used ongoing assessment well enough, or challenged apprentices to go beyond the minimum requirements of the programme. They have not provided apprentices with accurate and helpful feedback on their work or made good use of the information about the skills apprentices develop in the workplace. As a result, too many apprentices have not made the progress of which they are capable. Recently appointed assessors are beginning to address these areas of concern and have implemented more challenging individual reviews with apprentices. Early indications show that apprentices are beginning to make better progress towards achieving their qualification on time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- Students take pride in their work and they thrive in a culture of high aspirations. They are confident and self-assured. Students and apprentices attend regularly. They develop the skills and positive attitudes that employers value, which help them to be successful at work or meet challenging commercial deadlines in their career.
- Students benefit from an extensive range of real-work projects and activities. They use these opportunities well to experiment with an extended range of media and processes in their work. For example, students use digital and lens-based work alongside contemporary architectural glass designs. Students manipulate materials and incorporate local graffiti stimuli to produce urban fashion garments. They develop bookbinding skills during illustrated creative writing projects. Students develop excellent practical and technical skills and knowledge.
- Apprentices receive good support and additional training from employers and develop positive attitudes to work. Many develop good vocational and employability skills and make valuable contributions to their employers' businesses. For example, apprentices

develop their knowledge of payroll processing and stock control and apply these directly to their role.

- Students and apprentices benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that enhance their learning and broaden their cultural awareness and appreciation. They participate in community and business enterprise activities that help them to exhibit their work and demonstrate their practical skills. Students work collaboratively with a broad range of employers, artists and creative groups. They display their creative work in galleries and local art exhibitions. Students produce digital compositions of a high quality for personal commissions, such as calendars and short films about the local area. Students and apprentices develop their understanding through the exploration of female archetypes and motivational women in the business world.
- Students and apprentices promote an open culture of respect, tolerance and celebration of diversity. They show mutual respect for others' ideas and views, including those of peers, staff, colleagues and the wider community.
- Students and apprentices feel safe. They benefit from access to the wider university environment and services on offer. They are aware of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and whom to contact if they have any concerns.
- Tutors use their experience effectively and provide good career advice. Students benefit from activities such as talks by guest speakers from the creative and business sectors, short project work with leading artists, and visits to prestigious universities and employers. Students articulate how they use these activities to plan their next steps or career choices. Most students know what they want to do next and what their specialist pathway will be.
- Apprentices receive helpful advice and guidance at the start of their programme. However, assessors do not provide apprentices with sufficiently helpful independent careers guidance during their programme. This means that apprentices are not in a position to consider all future options open to them or to develop realistic pathways towards their long-term career plans. Leaders have plans to improve the support and guidance that apprentices receive; it is too early to see the impact from recent initiatives.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Most students on the level 4 foundation in art and design programme complete their programme, and all of those who complete achieve their qualification within the planned timescales.
- Most students make consistently strong progress from their starting points and meet challenging targets. More than three quarters of students achieve high grades.
- Almost all students produce theoretical and practical work that exceeds the level required for their programme. Students effectively develop the skills that they will need to be successful in the industry or on the higher education course to which they plan to progress.
- Apprentices receive good support and additional training from employers and develop positive attitudes to work. Many develop good vocational and employability skills and make valuable contributions to their employers' businesses. Most apprentices produce

work that meets industry and apprenticeship requirements.

- Progression to higher education or employment is very high. Students and apprentices successfully move on to their next steps. All students progress on to higher education degrees or employment and a high proportion of apprentices gain employment during or at the end of their programme.
- Students and apprentices from areas of social or economic disadvantage achieve as well as their peers.
- Until recently, too many apprentices made slow progress towards achieving their apprenticeship qualification within the planned time.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The university has 20 students on level 4 foundation in art and design programme. The provision is located within the university's faculty of arts and creative industries, which is in specialist accommodation at the National Glass Centre. Foundation students opt for one of five specialisms; these are fine art, fashion design and promotion (including textiles), visual communication (including graphics, illustration and animation), lens-based media and artist designer maker (including glass and ceramics). These students account for two thirds of all the provision in scope for this inspection.
- Leaders and managers evaluate the quality of provision extremely well. They set high expectations of what tutors and students can achieve. Staff value students' contributions in their self-assessment of the provision and take swift actions to make further improvements. Consequently, students follow excellent individualised programmes and achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are of a consistently excellent standard. Tutors challenge students to achieve the best that they can. Students develop strong independent learning skills and critical self-awareness about their work.
- Students benefit from excellent facilities and specialist equipment to support their practical and academic work. They use a wide range of specialist technology confidently, such as two- and three-dimensional software and precision laser-cutting machines. Students skilfully use traditional craft equipment, such as hot glass kilns, fabrication and ceramic materials. They produce highly individualised work of an excellent quality that reflect good industry practice.
- Students develop the technical expertise and skills to present their work to a wide range of audiences. Consequently, they are prepared very well and confidently progress on to higher-level study and sustainable employment within the art sector.

Apprenticeships

Good

- The university has 10 apprentices following level 2 and level 3 framework programmes. The provision is located at the Industry Centre, close to the City campus. Apprentices benefit from well-equipped training facilities and informal learning areas which help them to develop their independent learning skills. All current apprentices study on the business

administration programmes, and a high proportion of apprentices work in university departments such as human resources and in the student union. This provision accounts for a third of all in-scope provision for this inspection.

- Leaders and managers have been successful in ensuring that the programme meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. They ensure that apprentices receive a good standard of education and training that is flexible and appropriate to meet apprentices' and employers' needs. Staff and employers plan on- and off-the-job training well. Apprentices who work at the university benefit from participation in the wide range of professional development and training on offer to staff. This helps apprentices to develop the specific occupational requirements of their job role. Consequently, apprentices make an effective contribution to their employers' businesses.
- Most apprentices develop good workplace skills. For example, apprentices produce minutes of meetings that require few amendments. They improve their vocabulary which helps them to deal confidently during conversations with prospective students about scholarships, and they use spreadsheet formulae to carry out complex calculations. Staff and employers support apprentices well to develop their English, digital and practical mathematical skills further in the context of their work roles.
- A high proportion of apprentices gain employment or additional responsibility during their programme. Two apprentices have recently achieved their qualification and have moved on to a higher-level apprenticeship.
- Managers and assessors do not use assessment information effectively to track all aspects of apprentices' progress. They have an accurate view of the progress that apprentices make towards completing the qualification units. However, they do not use individual reviews with apprentices to evaluate fully how well apprentices develop their broader skills and knowledge. Until recently, too many apprentices did not achieve at a level of which they were capable.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 133881 |
| Type of provider | Higher education institution |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 28 |
| Principal/CEO | Sir David Bell |
| Telephone number | 0191 5152000 |
| Website | www.sunderland.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) | – | – | – | – | – | – | 8 | 12 |
| Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | – | 2 | 1 | 7 | – | – | | |
| 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 deputy vice-chancellor (academic), 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. They reviewed learners' progress by using a case-study approach. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Tracey Mace-Akroyd, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Chris Jones | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Heather Hartmann | Ofsted Inspector |

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