

Inspection of Oxford Brookes University

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Oxford Brookes University is a higher education institution with campuses in Oxford and Swindon. The university teaches level 3 foundation art and design to young people and adults and, since 2017, has also taught level 5 and level 7 apprenticeship programmes.

At the time of inspection, there were 80 students aged 16 to 18 years and 10 adults studying the diploma in art and design. There were approximately 250 apprentices training in seven apprenticeship standards. All apprentices were aged over 18 years. Approximately 65 apprentices were training for the level 7 architect integrated degree apprenticeship, and 60 were training for the level 7 senior leader degree apprenticeship. An additional 50 apprentices were training for the level 5 nursing associate apprenticeship and 40 were training for the advanced clinical practitioner integrated degree apprenticeship. A small number of apprentices were training for the chartered town planner, district nurse and senior people apprenticeships at level 7.

The university works with one subcontractor, Runway Training, which provides training for level 2 functional skills qualifications.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Adults, younger students and most apprentices have very positive attitudes to their studies, their work and the activities they engage in beyond the classroom. They attend well and enjoy rich opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. For example, foundation art and design students work on exciting projects set by international commercial artists to understand the relationship between art and commerce. As a result, most adults, young students and apprentices are motivated highly to achieve their individual learning and career goals.

Apprentices improve in confidence rapidly and demonstrate the high standards of professional behaviours that employers demand. For example, nursing associate apprentices learn and practise professional nursing standards in the classroom and apply them confidently when working with patients. Consequently, they understand clearly the high expectations of conduct and expertise required in the workplace.

Art and design students develop highly valuable employability skills and confidence quickly through demanding and high-profile work experience opportunities. For example, students develop first-hand practical skills designing and constructing sets for a prominent tailor during London Fashion Week. As a result, art students gain enviable knowledge of the world of work. They are exceptionally prepared for the demands of a professional career in the creative arts.

Adults, younger students and apprentices benefit from opportunities to acquire valuable wider insights on topics such as equality and diversity, British values and keeping themselves mentally healthy. For example, foundation art and design students engage in collaborative external projects that focus on cultural identity and civic responsibility. Architects adhere carefully to the code of conduct of their professional body and demonstrate respect and tolerance in class and at work. However, leaders have not ensured that apprentices benefit from training on physical health.

Adults, younger students and apprentices benefit from high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance. Art and design students highly value advice they receive from staff, alumni and industry professionals. Apprentices attend careers events where they develop their understanding of the wide range of employment opportunities available to them. As a result, adults, younger students and apprentices are well informed about their next steps for further study or employment.

Adults, younger students and apprentices feel safe, including online. They are confident that any concerns they may have will be acted on by staff rapidly and appropriately.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculums they offer. They work closely with stakeholders to ensure the courses and training they provide are aligned closely to

the skills needs of the region and sectors. For example, leaders of the level 7 advanced clinical practitioner apprenticeship understand the workforce development plan for NHS England and align the level 7 advanced clinical practitioners to successfully meet the need for skilled advanced practitioners to work with patients with complex needs. As a result, adults, younger students and apprentices develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need for the industries for which they are training.

Leaders have designed and sequenced the content of courses thoughtfully and logically. For example, staff on the senior leader apprenticeship meet apprentices and employers to discuss which optional units would most meet their needs and when best to study them. Consequently, adults, younger students and apprentices build skills incrementally.

Tutors teach new concepts skilfully so that adults, younger students and apprentices remember new information quickly and successfully. They use a broad range of effective teaching techniques that ensure adults, younger students and apprentices have a thorough understanding of their new skills before applying them at work. For example, level 7 advanced clinical practitioner tutors teach apprentices how to diagnose conditions and provide appropriate evidence for their decisions. Apprentices role play these skills and practise responding to tutors' questions. As such, tutors prepare adults, younger students and apprentices carefully to use their newly learned skills competently and confidently in working environments.

Foundation art and design students benefit from the teaching of very experienced and aspirational tutors, who are exceptionally enthusiastic about art education. Tutors explain concepts very clearly and bring their subjects to life with real and interesting examples. For example, students were taught how to make Ankara headaddresses by a teacher in Nigeria via video call. The tutor linked this to teaching them about sustainable fashion and the impact of fast fashion on communities and lives. As a result, students broaden their art knowledge and learn to consider relevant concepts, such as sustainability.

Art tutors incorporate English and mathematics into their lessons purposefully. For example, they assess students' written skills diligently through feedback on students' analyses of artists' techniques. As a result, students develop English and mathematical abilities confidently throughout their studies.

Tutors use a range of effective assessment techniques to help adults, younger students and apprentices understand their progress and what they need to do to improve further. They provide plentiful opportunities for students and apprentices to reflect and work on areas of weakness through tailored support. Consequently, tutors prepare most adults, younger students and apprentices appropriately for their final assessments.

Staff work well with employers to support apprentices in the workplace successfully. Staff ensure that on- and off-the-job training is well aligned so that apprentices practise and consolidate their learning in a timely manner. Staff work closely with

nursing associate employers to ensure apprentices have the opportunity to practise their new skills in their workplaces. Most employers participate well in timely, helpful reviews. Consequently, most are clear about the progress their apprentices are making and know how to support them effectively in the workplace.

All adults and almost all younger students on the foundation art programme achieve their qualifications, and most achieve high grades. They progress consistently to prominent art institutions and flourishing careers within the creative arts sector. Those with additional learning needs frequently surpass the achievements of their peers.

Leaders have developed an effective system of oversight and scrutiny that enables them to identify strengths and weaknesses within teaching and management across the university quickly. For example, leaders are implementing the effective art teaching observation policy and process across its apprenticeship programmes. As a result, leaders share best practice across all subject areas and make informed decisions to improve their provision.

Leaders have effective quality assurance processes in place to manage their functional skills subcontractor. For example, having identified a decline in service and teaching, they investigated and decided to change provider swiftly. As such, apprentices enjoy lessons with the new provider, and early indications are that apprentices are on track to be successful in their English and mathematics tests.

Leaders rightly recognised that too many apprentices did not achieve their qualifications successfully. They identified key issues and put in place thoughtful actions to drive improvement. For example, leaders have improved the way staff and apprentices work with employers. They removed the ability for apprentices to achieve qualifications without doing the apprenticeship, and they are recruiting specialist skills coaches. Though the actions leaders have taken have led to a greater proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications, it is too early to judge whether these improvements are sustained in all apprenticeship programmes.

Governance is effective. Committee members and the highest level board members at the university have access to accurate and timely information about the quality of teaching and management of the provision, including updates on statutory requirements such as safeguarding. They challenge areas that need addressing, make decisions and monitor key projects. For example, board members supported projects to improve internal reporting and recruit additional staff to support apprentices' development. Consequently, governors understand the strengths and weaknesses well and support leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices remain in learning, make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that apprentices have opportunities to benefit from teaching on how to stay physically healthy.

Provider details

Unique reference number	133864
Address	Headington Campus Gipsy Lane Headington Oxford Oxfordshire OX3 0BP
Contact number	01865 741111
Website	https://www.brookes.ac.uk
Vice Chancellor	Professor Alistair Fitt
Provider type	Higher education institution
Date of previous inspection	26 November 2013
Main subcontractors	Runway Training

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Interim Pro Vice Chancellor Education, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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