

## University of Portsmouth

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## **Basic information about the institution**

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Name of institution:	University of Portsmouth
Type of institution:	University
Principal:	Professor John Craven
Address of institution:	University of Portsmouth University House Winston Churchill Avenue Portsmouth PO1 2UP
Telephone number:	023 9284 8484
Fax number:	023 9284 3197
Chair of governors:	James S Lamb
Unique reference number:	5503
Name of reporting inspector:	Harriet Harper HMI
Dates of inspection:	1-5 March 2004

## **Part A: Summary**

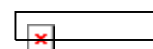
## **Information about the institution**

The university, founded as the Portsmouth and Gosport School of Science and Art in 1870, became a polytechnic in 1969 and a university in 1992. It merged, in 1994, with the Portsmouth College of Art, Design and Further Education. At the time of inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1997, there were some 3,000 students studying on further education (FE) programmes. The provision that is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is now much

are on art and design courses and the other third is on an access to higher education (HE) programme. All are aged 18 or over. The university has around 20,000 students in total.

The university is collaborating with the LSC over plans to transfer existing provision to a new city centre FE campus, which is yet to be built. There are plans for the campus to be managed by one of the local providers and to be operational from 2006/07. Much of the university's LSC-funded provision has already transferred to local colleges. The role of the university in relation to the new city centre campus is yet to be clarified. Achievement by school leavers in Portsmouth, with its predominantly white European population, is poor. By working with the LSC and local schools and colleges, and supporting the development of a new city centre campus, the university aims to promote progression opportunities at 16, raise aspirations in the local community and encourage participation in FE and HE.

### **How effective is the institution?**



Inspectors judged education and training to be outstanding in art, design and media and satisfactory in humanities. The key strengths and aspects that need to be improved are listed below.

#### ***Key strengths***

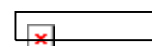
- good preparation for HE
- students' work that is of a high standard
- good teaching and academic support
- outstanding art, design and media provision
- very good student support services
- very good university resources used by FE students
- successful promotion of education within the local community.

#### ***What should be improved***

- retention and pass rates on the access to HE contemporary studies course
- the take-up of additional support in literacy for those identified as needing it
- accommodation at the Omega centre.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

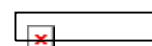
### Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).*

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Art, design and media	<b>Outstanding.</b> Retention and pass rates and progression to HE on pre-degree foundation and access courses are good. The development of academic and critical skills is excellent and students' work on the access course to art, design and photography is outstanding. FE students make good use of the wide range of specialist resources the university has to offer. Accommodation is overcrowded at the Omega centre and some students lack basic drawing skills.
Humanities: access to higher education, contemporary studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> The standard of students' work is high, resources are good and those who complete the course are well equipped to move on to HE. A wide choice of subjects, organised on a flexible basis, attracts a diverse group of students. Retention and pass rates were low in 2002/03. Too few of the students identified as needing additional help with literacy take up the support on offer.

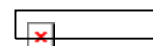
### How well is the institution led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. A clear direction has been set for FE in consultation with the LSC and other providers. Governors, managers and teaching and support staff remain committed to FE students, even though the provision represents a very small proportion of the university's activities. FE is appropriately represented on the governing body. Quality assurance systems are

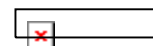
effectiveness of teaching on its FE provision, the standard of teaching on all courses is high. The self-assessment report is clear and self-critical. Overall, students' achievements are good. In recognition of the poor pass and retention rates on the contemporary studies course, action has been taken. It is too early, though, to judge the impact on students of the new measures in place. Financial monitoring is effective.

### **To what extent is the institution educationally and socially inclusive?**



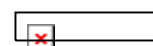
The university's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The main aim of the university's strategy to widen access and participation is to increase the proportion of students recruited from groups who are under-represented in HE. Students on FE courses reflect a diverse range of backgrounds, ages and ethnicity. Progression on to HE by these students is good. FE students are supported well by very good student services. The university has responded well to legislation on equal opportunities. Staff have been trained in the implications of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and satisfactory progress is being made in the implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). Accommodation and accessibility improvements are under way to meet legislative requirements. Progress towards meeting targets in the widening participation strategy is monitored effectively. To raise aspirations in a city with a history of low educational achievement, the university runs a wide range of summer schools, mentoring programmes and taster sessions, including a successful programme of activities for young people aged between 12 and 17. The long-term impact of these initiatives is yet to be evaluated. As a major employer in Portsmouth, the university is playing a leading role in the social and economic regeneration of the area through the promotion of education and enterprise.

### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Guidance and support for students are good. The university's flexible and responsive services, which include counselling, careers guidance, financial advice, a multi-faith chaplaincy and a nursery, are well used by FE students. The proportion of the university's hardship fund spent on FE students in 2002/03 was significantly higher than the proportion of FE students within the university. Additional support is good for those whose first language is not English and also for students with disabilities. The take-up of literacy support is too low. Key skills are not accredited. Students receive effective guidance on to courses and a well-planned and well-implemented induction. Students value the academic support given by teachers. Tutorials are effective in monitoring progress.

### **Students' views of the institution**



Students' views about the institution were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

#### ***What students like about the institution***

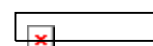
- very supportive teachers and technicians

- links with degree programmes
- being part of a university
- flexible courses
- access to good facilities and resources.

***What they feel could be improved***

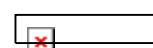
- studios at the Omega centre
- information about activities across the university
- arrangements for refreshments at the Omega centre and St George's building.

**Other information**



The institution inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the institution. Once published, the institution has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The institution's action plan must show what action the institution will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from institutions that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

**Part B: The institution as a whole**



## Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching	74	26	0
Learning	70	30	0

*Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).*

*As all students are aged 18 or over, no distinction is made between teaching and learning for those aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over.*

## Achievement and standards

1. The university provides for around 300 students on FE courses. The majority of students are aged 19 or over and studying on courses in art, design and media studies. In 2002/03, there were 203 students enrolled in this curriculum area. There were 148 students on the one-year full-time foundation course, of whom 118 were aged 18, and 55 students on access to HE courses. FE provision is also located in the humanities area of learning. In 2002/03, there were 43 full-time and 36 part-time adult students enrolled on the access to HE contemporary studies programme.

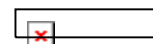
2. In art, design and media, pass rates on the access to HE courses are generally high, although there has been a downward trend on the art and design course, as well as on the film, video and photography course. Pass rates fell from 100% in 2000/01 to 90% in 2002/03 on the art and design courses, and from 92% to 79% on the film, video and photography course. Retention rates have varied considerably but were good at 86% for the art and design course and 93% for the film, video and photography course in 2002/03. Pass rates on the foundation diploma course have improved from 89% in 2001/02 to 95% in 2002/03. Retention rates on the foundation studies course are good, consistently around 90% or over for the last three years.

3. Students on the access to HE contemporary studies courses are not as successful as students on art and design courses. Pass rates on the full-time course fell to 73% in 2002/03. Of those who started the two-year part-time course in 2001/02, only 55% passed. Retention rates on the full-time course fell to 60% in 2002/03, and on the part-time courses in 2001/02, the retention rate was 55%. There are signs of improvement in retention rates for 2003/04. At the time of the inspection, fewer students had withdrawn from the course compared with the same time the previous year.

4. The standard of work produced by students is high and in some cases, for example, in art, design and media, it is outstanding. Students are well prepared for HE. They all develop skills in research, analysis and critical evaluation. Contemporary studies students demonstrate good writing skills and effective presentation skills and they work well collaboratively. Students grasp new concepts with ease. In a politics lesson, for example, students who were unfamiliar with 'think tanks' were quickly able to engage in a debate and identify some of the potential disadvantages of such institutions. Most students work independently with confidence. For example, one student, who was preparing illustration project work for critical review, worked quickly and expressively to capture the quality of animals in her work. Another successfully created a sombre mood by incorporating leaves and moss together with a variety of drawing materials. Students demonstrate good key skills, although these are not accredited.

5. There is good progression to HE for all students. In 2003, all students who completed the contemporary studies course went on to HE. Progression for art, design and media students is very good. Most students progress to degree courses at the university.

### Quality of education and training



6. Overall, teaching is good. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 23 lessons. Most of the lessons observed were good or better and the rest were satisfactory. Some teaching in art, design and media was outstanding. The teaching on access to art and design and on theoretical studies to foundation students is particularly good. These lessons are intensive, challenging and productive.

7. In both curriculum areas, teachers produce thorough and carefully planned schemes of work, lesson plans and project briefs. In humanities, teachers use well-selected and stimulating resources. They make good use of a range of teaching methods although there is too much reliance on reading materials during the less successful lessons.

8. Teaching and support staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Those who teach on FE and HE programmes provide informed advice and continuity for students as they progress to further study within the university. Part-time art and design teachers, many of whom are also practising artists, provide valuable specialist expertise.

9. Art and design students benefit from excellent workshop accommodation at the Eldon building, where they work alongside HE students. Students have open access to studios and technical support is usually available. The comprehensive facilities at Eldon include wood and metals workshops, ceramic and glass, printmaking, photography and information technology (IT) suites. However, accommodation at the Omega centre is too small for the number of students who use it. Noise levels are high and there is little room for drawing classes.

10. FE students have access to excellent university facilities. The well-equipped library is open until midnight every day. Students use the newly refurbished, up-to-date sports and leisure facilities and amenities in the students' union building. All students have access to IT facilities in a range of locations across the university. The university is halfway through a programme to improve accessibility, following an audit of all university buildings by external consultants.

11. Students' work is assessed frequently and thoroughly. Written work is well marked and returned to students promptly. Teachers provide detailed feedback on what students need to do in order to improve and, in the best practice, they set clear targets and match their feedback closely to the assessment criteria. In art and design, double marking helps to maintain consistency of standards. Moderation on all courses is effective, supported by a detailed appeals procedure. However, there is little analysis of the performance of different groups of students.

12. FE students undertake an initial assessment. In many cases, the results are used effectively to provide students with appropriate support or further assessments. There is no initial assessment of numeracy skills. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the take-up of support in literacy is unsatisfactory. On the access to HE contemporary studies course, none of the 14 students who were identified as needing additional support attended the sessions on offer.

13. Academic support for students is very good. Students receive helpful and detailed feedback on their progress throughout their course. In art, design and media, each stage in the course is followed by an individual meeting with a tutor to discuss the outcomes of the relevant assignment. Many art and design courses contain an element of peer assessment which allows students to develop their communication and critical awareness and to learn from each other. On the access to HE



contemporary studies programme, formal reviews and tutorials are less frequent, although students are well supported by teaching staff, particularly in helping them to draft initial answers to complex questions. Attendance is monitored and there are effective procedures in place to follow up absences.

14. The university has productive links with the local LSC, schools and colleges and plays an active role in a wide range of strategic partnerships. The university successfully raises the profile of FE and HE with local people as young as 12, through its 'Up for it' scheme. Launched in 2002, the programme is for young people aged 12 to 17 and provides its 5,000 members with a range of events and workshops, as well as a magazine and website and discounts with local businesses. Activities for art, enterprise and sport are well established and new projects involve combining art with mathematics, as well as expanding the scope of the projects to include junior school pupils in Years 5 and 6.

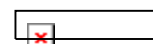
15. FE students take advantage of activities on offer to enhance their studies. Many join clubs and societies and participate in sporting activities. However, not all FE students were invited to the freshers' fair that was organised by the students' union. Art, design and media students benefit from visiting speakers, resident artists and trips both in the UK and abroad.

16. Students speak highly of the advice and information they received before enrolling on their course. Course literature and handbooks are good. Induction programmes help students to settle quickly into their course and students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities early in their course. Helpful learning packs supplement the support given by teachers and enable students to work independently.

17. Students whose first language is not English receive good support within their courses and from the academic skills unit. Students with disabilities are well supported by the additional support and disability advice centre. Staff from the centre respond swiftly to requests for laptop computers and other assistive technology, which is provided on loan. A disability liaison group has recently been established to help teachers adapt their teaching methods to take account of learning difficulties and disabilities, including dyslexia, but it is too early to judge the impact of this group on students.

18. Very good university services are available to all FE students. These include counselling, careers guidance, financial advice, a 38-place nursery and a chaplaincy that co-ordinates religious groups from a range of faiths. The counselling service provides specialist legal and mental health advice and a duty counsellor. The student finance service includes debt counselling; this service was used by 42 FE students in 2002/03. The university spent 11% of its student hardship fund on FE students in 2002/03. This proportion is significantly higher than the proportion of FE students in the university. The careers library is very well stocked with up-to-date materials, some of which have been specifically adapted for FE students. Services are well promoted to FE students through informative leaflets, dedicated student support websites and presentations during induction. The effectiveness of student support services is evaluated annually.

## Leadership and management



19. Leadership and management are good. The university's FE provision was previously inspected in June 1997. Progress against the subsequent action plan has been carefully monitored and most weaknesses have been addressed. Although the FE provision is decreasing, the university takes seriously its responsibilities for FE students. The university is committed to supporting its remaining FE students and continuing to be involved in the provision, even if it transfers to a new site. FE is provided in two schools - the school of education and continuing studies and the school of art and design and media - which lie within the faculty of humanities and social sciences and the faculty of the environment respectively.

20. A clear direction has been set for FE within the university through a well-written development plan which takes into account the strategic area review carried out by the local LSC. A new city centre FE campus is planned by the LSC although, at the time of inspection, it was not known which provider would manage the campus or the extent to which the university would remain directly involved in the delivery of FE provision. The development plan gives due attention to the risks involved. FE now constitutes only a small part of the university's provision. The number of full-time equivalent students has fallen from 2,426 in 1999 to 357 in 2003. In August 2003, local FE colleges took on the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and general education and languages. This transfer has been managed well so that the students have not been disadvantaged.

21. Communication is generally good. Minutes of the governing body are readily accessible by staff. The vice-chancellor and pro vice-chancellors regularly attend faculty and departmental meetings. Part-time staff are paid to attend course meetings. The university publishes a regular newsletter, as do many faculties and schools. E-mail is used extensively to inform all staff, and information on most aspects relating to the university is available on the intranet.

22. Governors support the strategy for FE. They are clear as to their role and monitor progress on the overall university strategy on a quarterly basis with a full review each year. They are aware of the pass and retention rates for the remaining FE provision and have reviewed the self-assessment report. Governors' meetings are very well attended and governors have reviewed their role. An audit of governors' skills is carried out each year which informs a nomination committee and seeks new members as necessary. Governors have a wide range of appropriate skills. A co-opted principal of a local FE college provides appropriate FE expertise. Governors receive regular reports on the university's overall financial position as well as a value for money report. The monitoring of the FE budget is carried out at faculty level. LSC income related to FE provision is top-sliced for central services and the remainder is delegated to the appropriate faculties. All expenditure is required to conform to the university's financial regulations. Faculties maintain close monitoring of the budgets for FE courses and this is overseen by the finance department. The university provides good value for money for its FE students.

23. The university has a clear and comprehensive quality assurance system that covers both HE and FE courses. Each faculty has an associate dean for quality who reports both to the dean for that faculty and to the pro vice-chancellor who has overall responsibility for quality at the university. Although course teams meet with a board of studies and the staff student consultative committee for each course, these meetings do not always result in clear actions, responsibilities or timescales for completion. The university's annual review of its FE provision clearly identifies progress in relation to the previous year's development plan.

24. Although there are many ways of obtaining students' feedback - including course-specific questionnaires, student-staff consultative committees, faculty student advisors and meetings with students union - there is no evidence to suggest that the views on resources expressed by students in art, design and media have been fully considered.

25. Peer assessment is used to improve teaching and learning but, as the university recognises, the process is not fully embedded. A programme of staff development has been implemented as a result of lesson observations recently undertaken by external consultants. It is too early to judge the impact on students of these activities.

26. A clear, self-critical and largely accurate self-assessment report for the FE provision, based on the common inspection framework, was produced for inspection. The report was co-ordinated by the associate dean for quality for each faculty and shared with faculty staff for comment. External advice was provided by a vice-principal from a local FE college. A member of the governors' audit and quality committee took part in the process and the final report was considered by the university's quality committee. Good progress is being made in relation to addressing issues in the subsequent action plan.

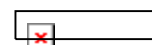
27. Management of the FE provision is good in the school of art, design and media and satisfactory in contemporary studies. The performance of students is monitored at course level within individual

schools and statistical information is analysed well. Although an overall target was set for a 2% improvement in retention and pass rates for all the FE courses, this was recognised to be insufficiently linked to past performance. Acknowledging the poor retention and pass rates on the access to HE contemporary studies programme in 2002/03, this provision has been transferred to the school of education and continuing studies, where staff are more experienced in dealing with mature students from diverse backgrounds and where there is a stronger focus on improving teaching and learning. It is too early to judge the impact of new measures that have been put in place to improve retention rates.

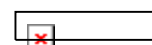
28. The sharing of good practice in teaching by course teams is not systematic. However, a wide range of staff development activities is organised and well promoted by the university. Attendance at lunchtime training events on topical issues is generally good. Staff have an annual appraisal which identifies training needs. These are linked to organisational and strategic needs and are evaluated for their effectiveness. Many part-time staff are included in the process. Outcomes of peer observations, which are confidential, are not required to be considered in appraisal.

29. The university has comprehensive and clear policies on equal opportunities, race equality and widening participation. These are promoted well to staff and published on the intranet. Regular training events are generally well attended. Clear action plans have been developed and good progress has been made. Audits of accommodation and assistive aids have been carried out and adaptation of accommodation is under way. Statistical information relating to the performance of students by ethnic origin, gender and disability was not available at the time of inspection but is due to be published in September 2004. Governors have been briefed on the changes in legislation and progress of the plans. Equality of opportunity is promoted around the university and within lessons, although there has been some delay in appointing a member of staff with specific responsibility for equal opportunities.

## Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



### Art, design and media



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

#### **Strengths**

- very good retention and pass rates
- very good progression to HE
- excellent development of students' academic and critical skills

- students' outstanding work on the access to art, design and photography course
- good teaching
- good use by FE students of a wide range of specialist resources.

### ***Weaknesses***

- a lack of basic drawing skills by some students
- overcrowded accommodation at the Omega centre.

### ***Scope of provision***

30. The school of art, design and media offers a full-time pre-degree, foundation diploma in art and design and also access to HE courses in art, design and photography and film, video and media. At the time of inspection, there were 94 full-time students aged 18 and 113 part-time adult students. The pre-degree foundation diploma in art and design and film, video and media courses are located in purpose-built accommodation at the Eldon building in the city centre. At the time of inspection, the access to art, design and photography course was based a short distance away at the Omega centre.

### ***Achievement and standards***

31. Retention and pass rates on access courses are high. On the pre-degree art foundation course, retention and pass rates have been at, or close to, the national averages for three years. There is good progression to HE from all courses. There are effective arrangements with the university which enable students to progress on to HE courses within the same institution. Many students are offered places at their first-choice university elsewhere.

32. Students develop excellent academic and critical skills. They produce well-considered lecture response notes in an articulate and convincing manner. These are assessed and useful written feedback from teachers encourages students to engage in personal responses to lectures. Students use a range of materials and develop their skills when working on two-dimensional and three-dimensional projects. A variety of three-dimensional work is undertaken in workshops. All foundation students are given an induction on the safe use of machinery.

33. Students' work on the access to art and design and photography course is outstanding. In three-dimensional work, for example, students used unconventional combinations of materials they had found to create design products, such as lamps and clock housings. The prototypes were ambitious. Students demonstrated great tenacity in the ways in which they worked through the design problems they had encountered in the realisation of their ideas. Students communicate well and work independently with confidence. In a group critical review, for example, a student discussed her sculpture, which communicated how she felt about her many roles and compartmentalised life

through its revolving, reflective surfaces. Another student had used corsets and wire to represent her views about control of women. She delighted in the discoveries and associations she had found with medical corsets, cages, the history of barbed wire and the work of Frida Kahlo.

34. Sketchbooks are diverse and experimental. There is a high level of enquiry and very good examples of individual and personal work. Students' presentations are of a very high standard. On the foundation course, there is some good developmental work from primary sources with comprehensive supporting sketchbooks and reflective journals which record the sequence of development and show increasing maturity and depth of approach. There is good experimentation with media.

35. Some students lack basic drawing skills, in particular those who have a low level of basic drawing skills on entry. Their mark making is poor and their work is naive. Access students attend regular life drawing classes. As part of the introductory stage of the foundation course, there is a programme of drawing but it is insufficient to address the needs of all students. In one lesson, teaching and learning were disrupted by the poor punctuality of some students.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in Art, design and media, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
ABC diploma foundation studies art and design pre-degree	3	No. of starts	136	160	161
		% retention	89	94	92
		% pass rate	92	89	95
Access to HE art and design*	3	No. of starts	42	54	49
		% retention	74	89	86
		% pass rate	100	96	90
Access to HE film, video and photography*	3	No. of starts	21	21	15
		% retention	62	71	93
		% pass rate	92	87	79
Access to HE media studies*	3	No. of starts	8	13	5
		% retention	75	77	80
		% pass rate	100	100	100

*Source: institution*

*\*These three courses have been combined into two courses for 2003/04 : access to art, design and photography and access to film, video and media*

***Quality of education and training***

36. All teaching observed was satisfactory or better and some lessons were outstanding. Teachers give clear advice and direction. Teachers are experienced and supportive and know their students well. Teachers use probing and appropriately challenging questioning to encourage students to justify their work and explain their design decisions. The teaching of theoretical studies to foundation students is particularly good. For example, in a theoretical studies lecture on fashion, culture and society, students were given examples of gender as a constructed state with examples from the 1980s. The teacher used a wide range of media, including video and sound clips as well as historical and contemporary references. The pace of the lesson was fast and engaging. Curious and interesting images and enticing tasters of sound clips captured the interest of students and invited further enquiry.

37. On the access to art, design and photography course, teachers challenge the use of over-familiar subject matter and ensure students consider and justify every aspect of their work. Teachers' expectations are high and sessions are intensive and productive. As part of their study skills programme, students prepare presentations. One group of students had been enterprising in its research and had interviewed a well-known sculptor. They were able to illustrate their presentation with photographs of his work in progress and had gained insight into his working methods.

38. Lively and challenging assignments help students to generate ideas. In a lesson where students discussed preliminary ideas for their final major project, the teacher provided a diverse collection of first-day stamp covers to stimulate and inspire them. These provided examples of a wide variety of styles and themes for illustration in miniature. Teachers produce project briefs of a high standard. They are well planned, clear and help students to manage their time effectively. They include references to research sources, a diary section with a programme of visiting lecturers, key activities, self-directed study days and tutor support time.

39. Workshop accommodation is excellent at the Eldon building. Three-dimensional, print and ceramics workshops are shared with degree students. The range of equipment is extensive. Students have open access to studios. When using the workshops, good technical support is available most of the time. There is good access to computers but technicians are often busy and not able to help students. Students on access to film, video and media have restricted access to digital editing technologies. Displays of the work of previous illustration students set standards and stimulate ideas.

40. Students enjoy working with degree students and often learn from them. There is good sharing of teaching and resources between FE and HE. Students benefit from the knowledge and experience of staff who teach across both programmes and who are able to give informed advice and continuity. Accommodation at the Omega centre is overcrowded. There is insufficient room to work comfortably on large-scale pieces. Base rooms at both sites are divided with temporary screens between specialist areas. These are not soundproofed and not ideal for teaching or learning due to the noise of different activities. Staff and students speak highly of the library and helpful library staff. There is a good range of specialist books and periodicals, although there are too few copies of up-to-date books on fashion and textiles.

41. Assessment is very good. Written feedback to students is accurate, supportive and constructively critical. In one case, for example, the grade was a low pass but the written comment encouraged the student to maintain her experimental drawing as a tool to communicate her ideas. Students are encouraged to give their own written feedback and, in some cases, this is comprehensive. Work is assessed twice, by different tutors, to ensure consistency of standards.

42. Although all students have an initial assessment, the take-up of additional learning support is low. The teaching of study skills for access to art, design and photography students is very good. Good support is given in lessons to assist students who speak English as an additional language. Some students attend additional sessions in English for academic study.

43. Visiting speakers from creative industries help students to make informed career choices. Students benefit from subject-specific enhancement activities, such as visits to galleries and trips abroad, as well as opportunities to participate in the wide range of the university's societies and clubs. However, many students based in the Omega centre feel isolated from the rest of the university.

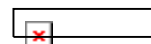
44. Tutorials, which are mostly informal, are good. In one tutorial, which focused on academic portfolio preparation for an interview for HE, the teacher provided a good opportunity for the student to rehearse interview responses, assess progress and discuss future plans.

### ***Leadership and management***

45. Leadership and management at curriculum level are good. There are good relationships between FE and degree staff, some of whom teach on both programmes. The approach to lesson

planning is systematic and effective and is supported by useful documentation for teachers and students. Managers set a clear direction and staff are enthusiastic about teaching students at FE level. There is no clear evidence from meetings or documentation that students' views have been fully considered.

### **Humanities: access to higher education, contemporary studies**



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

#### ***Strengths***

- high standard of students' work
- good resources
- flexible provision for a diverse group of students
- good progression to HE.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- low retention rates in 2002/03
- low pass rates on the part-time access to HE contemporary studies course in 2002/03
- poor take-up of additional literacy support for those identified as needing it.

#### ***Scope of provision***

46. The access to HE contemporary studies course is offered within the school of education and continuing studies. The wide subject choice - which includes communication studies, education studies, European studies, history, law, English literature, politics, sociology, philosophy and psychology - provides students with the opportunity to make a career-related choice or to keep their options open. The provision is organised very flexibly so that students can study at times and at a pace suitable to their individual circumstances. This means that students can study full-time or part-

time, during the day or in the evenings. Study skills workshops are also available, including one Saturday a month. On the full-time programme students take four subjects over one year; part-time students take two subjects a year for two years. In some cases, it is possible for students to take a longer period of time to complete their courses, depending on their individual needs. Some students also take general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics and/or English at the university, both of which are organised by a local FE college. At the time of inspection, there were 88 students on the programme.

### ***Achievement and standards***

47. Retention on the access to HE in contemporary studies course is unsatisfactory, particularly on the part-time programme. Most students who leave do so in the first two months of the programme and most of those who withdraw are aged 20 to 30. At the time of the inspection, in-year retention figures show some improvement, compared to the same period in the previous year. Pass rates declined in 2002/03 on both courses. Students leaving the programme early are unable to gain accreditation for any units completed as the qualification is accredited only at level 3. Rates of progression on to degree courses are high, with all completers in 2003 moving on to further study.

48. Standards of work are good with students demonstrating a range of skills and knowledge appropriate to the various subjects available. For example, students in a philosophy lesson were able to critique the key ideas of existentialism. In history and sociology lessons, students demonstrate their ability to interpret quantitative data and make well-founded deductions. Students in history lessons show good skills at interpreting visual sources, such as photographs of housing in Britain during the 1930s. Students develop good communication skills. For example, in a sociology lesson, after examining national statistics relating to the incidence of poverty in Britain, students confidently presented the results of their group activity outlining their policies to combat the problem. Students acquire good academic skills, such as writing bibliographies and research, and they are very well equipped to move on to degree courses.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in Humanities: access to higher education, contemporary studies, 2001 to 2003***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Access to HE contemporary studies, full-time	3	No. of starts	22	22	43
		% retention	73	82	60
		% pass rate	63	78	73
Access to HE contemporary studies, part-time	3	No. of starts	*	8	20
		% retention	*	100	55
		% pass rate	*	88	55

Source: institution

\* course did not run

### ***Quality of education and training***

49. Teaching is good or better in most lessons. In the better lessons, careful planning leads to the good development of students' academic skills with high standards of written and oral work. Schemes of work are well planned to give students a sound basis in the various subjects and take account of the fact that many students have no prior experience of these subjects.

50. Lessons offer a variety of activities designed to appeal to different learning preferences. Teachers encourage students' mastery of technical terminology and evaluative skills. For example, in a lesson on the short story, the teacher introduced James Joyce's use of language by means of



some challenging and unusual literary terminology of Greek origin as well as alternative terms in English. In this way, students were given the opportunity to acquire a more sophisticated vocabulary for literary studies which they could use when they felt comfortable with it. In some of the less successful lessons, lengthy amounts of text were given to students to read prior to completing a task and this restricted the time for discussion and other learning activities.

51. Good teaching is matched by the careful selection and preparation of resources. These include good study packs, references to appropriate additional learning materials, overhead transparencies of a professional standard and the well-planned use of the internet for research. Information and communications technology (ICT) is not highly developed for teaching and learning. Although rooms are equipped with digital projectors, these are not often used.

52. Teachers are very well qualified and have very good subject knowledge. Some of them are external examiners, a factor which contributes to their effectiveness as assessors. Rooms which are bright and cheerful in the daytime are poorly lit in the evenings and present a less welcoming appearance.

53. Assessment practice is rigorous on the access to HE contemporary studies programme. The standard of feedback on students' work is very good, with helpful annotations and specific guidance on how to improve. In the best examples, very clear targets for improvement are set and feedback is closely matched to the assessment criteria. Work is marked promptly and returned to students with additional verbal guidance. There are opportunities for drafting assignments early in the course to help improve students' confidence. In some subjects, for example, sociology, a variety of assessment methods is used, including essays, a presentation, an investigation and an examination. However, assessment in some other subjects is limited to essays.

54. Students value being part of a university and comment on how well prepared they are for HE. A few students are involved in subject-related societies and activities. However, enrichment activities are limited and, when organised, attendance is low. A group of law students visited the Royal Courts of Justice in London, but a visit to the local magistrates' court was not well attended.

55. At enrolment, students are assessed to determine their literacy needs. Additional, appropriate support is readily available but students often do not take advantage of this offer. Students praise the personal and academic support they receive from their teachers and such support is readily available. The two skills workshops, which take place each week and one Saturday a month, are attended voluntarily and attract low numbers.

56. The contemporary studies programme reflects the university's emphasis on widening participation; students are from diverse backgrounds, including different nationalities and minority ethnic groups. The programme fulfils its aim of drawing from postcodes representing disadvantaged areas of Portsmouth and there is a good mix of male and female students of different ages. Previous students testify to the impact this course has had on their lives, taking them from having no formal qualifications to undertaking HE study and in some cases, contemplating postgraduate courses.

### ***Leadership and management***

57. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The programme is well led and, following the transfer of this provision to the school of education and continuing studies, there is evidence of clear direction, good communication and improvements in the management of the programme. Staff speak highly of the support given to them by the management and administrative staff of the school. Some recent staff development has been provided to refresh teachers' classroom skills and peer observations have been introduced. It is too early to judge the extent to which the change in management is impacting on retention and pass rates, although retention rates show some signs of improvement.

## **Part D: Institution data**

**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**

Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	100	100
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004*

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age spring 2004**

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	0	0	0
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	0	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	0	0	0
Information and communication technology	0	0	0
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	0	0	0
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	0	0	0
Visual and performing arts and media	94	113	72
Humanities	0	88	28
English, languages and communication	0	0	0
Foundation programmes	0	0	0

<b>Total</b>	94	201	100
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Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
<b>1</b>	Starters excluding transfers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>2</b>	Starters excluding transfers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>3</b>	Starters excluding transfers	93	122	131	136	156	162
	Retention rate %	92	95	90	74	86	78
	National average %	71	77	*	68	70	*
	Pass rate %	93	92	95	89	88	84
	National average %	77	79	*	69	72	*
<b>4/5</b>	Starters excluding transfers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

\* data unavailable

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for institutions of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary institutions or sixth form institutions).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Institutions in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.

2. Institution rates for 2000 to 2003: Institution ISR..

**Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level**

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	74	26	0	23
Level 2 (intermediate)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Level 1 (foundation)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other sessions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>

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