

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of institution: Arts Institute at Bournemouth

Date of visit: 9 December 2008

### Context

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth is a specialist higher education institute which also offers further education in art, design and media for approximately 500 students. The majority are enrolled on the foundation diploma in art and design, with 326 full-time students on this programme in 2007/08. The institute also offers national diploma in art and design, national certificate in photography and a two-year part-time foundation course for adult learners. The majority of students are aged 16 to 18.

The institute was last inspected in November 2003. At this inspection the provision for foundation studies in art and design and national diplomas in design was judged good, but graphic design was unsatisfactory. Leadership and management, support for students and social and educational inclusion were all good.

The institute has re-organised its further education (FE) provision since the last inspection, in line with its strategic vision as a higher education institute. FE courses are now grouped together in a single preparation for higher education department, with a programme leader responsible for all FE provision. In 2007, the institute also revised its foundation diploma in art and design and now offers this as a level 4 programme, validated by the University of the Arts, London. The institute was awarded university college status in August 2008.

### Achievement and standards

What progress has been made on improving retention on part-time foundation and national diploma art and design courses?
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Retention rates on the national diploma art and design courses have improved by 10 percentage points since the last inspection. Retention and achievement rates dropped slightly in 2006/07. The institute's analysis of the reasons for this indicates that changes in the course structure and organisation in that year had a negative effect on retention rates. In 2007/08 retention and achievement rates improved and pass rates are high.

Retention rates on the part-time foundation diploma courses improved by 15 percentage points in 2006/07, but declined a little in 2007/08 to 68%. Pass rates are high. Success rates on the foundation diploma course have been consistently high over the last three years.

To what extent have success rates improved on National Open College Network (NOCN) courses, offered as additional qualifications?

Success rates on NOCN courses have improved steadily over the last three years, but remain low at 50%. The institute no longer offers these qualifications to foundation diploma students, as the new level 4 qualification is deemed to be more academically demanding and the additional qualifications are no longer appropriate. Managers are confident that by focussing more closely on the smaller number of national diploma students who take these additional qualifications they will be able to improve success rates further.

What actions have been taken to improve success rates on key skills courses?

Key skills success rates have improved markedly since the last inspection, particularly on ICT level 2, which was taken by over 330 students in 2007/08. Success rates in ICT have increased steadily each year, improving from 15% in 2003 to 73% in 2008. Relatively small numbers of students took level 2 key skills in application of number and communications in 2007/08, as most have already achieved GCSE English or mathematics before they join the institute. Success rates in these key skills declined in 2006/07, and whilst they have improved in 2007/08, they remain below their 2005/06 level.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in strengthening the monitoring of attendance and punctuality and what impact has this had?

The institute has made significant progress in improving its systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. There are now rigorous systems for monitoring attendance at individual student level, with prompt actions to follow up absences within two days. Attendance rates have improved markedly since the last inspection, when inspectors noted some poor attendance and punctuality. The institute's attendance data indicates that attendance rates were high in 2007/08 at 96% overall. The institute has also implemented more consistent recording of any late arrival to sessions, in line with the requirements for educational maintenance awards. Data on punctuality indicates that most students arrive to their sessions on time.

What progress has the institute made in increasing the proportion of very good or outstanding teaching and learning?

The institute has significantly improved the rigour of the internal observation of teaching and learning. A particular improvement is the emphasis on the effective oversight and development on the numerous visiting tutors who are all observed and provided with support and guidance. Since the last inspection the institute has developed its own post-graduate certificate of education course which all staff without formal teaching qualifications are required to undertake. Practices developed by staff on this course are having a good effect on the practice of staff in general.

The re-designed peer observation system scrutinises the quality of teaching and learning well and provides teachers with useful information. The team of observers are allocated much more time to carry out this work and spend considerable time feeding back outcomes and supporting teachers immediately after the observation. Teachers are able to designate a particular theme they want the observer to focus on. Staff recognise the benefits this scrutiny has brought to their teaching. Good practice is being shared effectively through well organised and structured teaching and learning staff development days. However, the quality of the written feedback on observation reports is variable. Not all observers' comments are sufficiently evaluative and too often statements are contradictory. Summary judgements on some forms do not capture important areas for improvement and weaknesses described in the body of the text. The resulting grades are often therefore too generous.

How well does assessment and feedback to foundation diploma students support improvement?

The institute has developed a very clear structure for assessing work and providing feedback to students. Assessment is clearly organised for each unit of the course and relates specifically to the unit assessment criteria. Assessment booklets for each learner record their achievement against each unit. Tutors provide written feedback on strengths in the work with a particular focus on areas for improvement. In the best examples seen, actions for improvement are clear and well focussed on students' individual needs and provide useful feedback on how to develop and improve their work, including developing their conceptual, practical and reflective skills. There is some variability in the precision of these actions and they do not currently include timescales.

## Leadership and management

How well have the changes in the curriculum offer for national diploma students contributed to improvements in the quality of provision and students' work in graphic design?

The institute has made significant changes to the curriculum offer for students wishing to specialise in aspects of graphic design. Since the last inspection the further education work has been strategically refocused and grouped together under a preparation for higher education department. Clearer lines of accountability and a more structured approach are raising achievement and setting high expectations for students. A programme leader who oversees the work of this newly designated provision is well supported by pathway leaders, teachers and visiting tutors.

The national diploma in graphic design has been discontinued and replaced by a national diploma in design with a number of specialist pathways available. National diploma students are separated into two distinct groups; one focused on graphics, illustration, film and animation and the other on fine art, textiles and 3D. Links with the foundation art and design course are strong with students able to attend workshops and symposiums offered across the department. Interest from foundation students in the graphic design specialism has increased significantly over recent years, and the quality of provision in graphic design has improved since the last inspection.

National diploma students benefit from a well organized peer-assisted learning project whereby higher education students mentor small groups of students facilitating discussion on a regular basis. Examples of work provided show a greater emphasis on primary research, stronger investigative approaches and a higher standard of design development and execution.