



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the City and Guilds of London Art School, January 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the City and Guilds of London Art School (the Art School) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the January 2018 [monitoring visit report](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The Art School continues to offer full and part-time degree programmes in Conservation Studies and Fine Art. Diploma and Postgraduate Diplomas in Historic Carving are provided and accredited by the City and Guilds Institute. These programmes operate alongside a Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, accredited by the University of the Arts London (UAL). The Art School currently has 236 students, reflecting a six per cent increase from the previous year and has the equivalent of 15 permanent academic staff as well as 29 annually appointed academic tutors. Within the last year, the Ravensbourne University London (the University) has replaced Birmingham City University (BCU) as the awarding body for Conservation Studies and Fine Art programmes. These programmes were successfully validated by the University in September 2018, with additional undergraduate, graduate diploma, postgraduate diploma, and master's pathways being approved for provision starting in September 2019.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Art School continues to make progress in the areas of identified good practice, and systematically collects student performance data at School as well as programme-level (paragraphs 4 and 5). The change of awarding body and the requirements for the Office for Students (the OfS) registration have hampered progress in finalising and rolling out appropriate policies and procedures, with a number of documents still to be amended (paragraph 5). The Art School is implementing its institutional action plan, which is informed by an appropriate range of sources and regularly monitored by senior staff and the Academic Board. Actions relating to the Institutional Approval by the University have been fully addressed (paragraph 6). The Art School uses detailed, systematic and appropriate admissions procedures, interviewing every applicant to ascertain the most appropriate course and level prior to making an admissions decision (paragraphs 7 and 8). Assessment is carried out with rigour and integrity as evidenced by external examiner reports and student feedback (paragraphs 9 and 10). Following recent internal verification, the Art School is considering the introduction of measures to improve standardisation of developmental feedback between tutors (paragraph 9). The Art School monitors and reflects on retention and pass rates for all of its cohorts (paragraphs 11 and 12) and it continues to work with national frameworks and benchmarks as appropriate external reference points (paragraph 13).

4 The Action Plan evidences further progress since the previous monitoring visit in January 2018, reflecting the consistent application of internal quality monitoring processes. Good practice continues to be enhanced through formalising processes for staff appointments and developing professional practice, extending live project opportunities to students through involvement with employers and alumni networks, and the mapping of embedded student support throughout the institution. In particular, external examiners comment very favourably on the strong support provided by the Art School that leads to a high quality of student learning and achievement.

5 The Art School has continued to build on the recommendations and affirmations from the 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) that were tracked by the 2018 Educational Oversight monitoring team. This includes the systematic use of student data extending to qualitative as well as quantitative information, and the application of the Data and Information Management project and the HEDIIP Data Capability Project Toolkit. The Art School has completed the mapping of assessment processes and students are now tracked at every assessment point from entry to graduation. While there has been further progress in rolling out policies, practices and procedures, this has been disrupted by the work required for the change of awarding body from BCU to the University, the successful validation of new courses and the requirements for OfS registration.

6 The Art School continues to operate a detailed annual institutional action plan, which includes any incomplete actions from the previous year and refers to the separate QAA Action Plan. This is informed by annual programme monitoring, student feedback, external sources such as the OfS and QAA, the building masterplan, and ad hoc projects approved by senior management and Academic Board. Progress is regularly monitored and recorded by the Senior Management Team and Academic Board. Annual Programme Monitoring reports are reviewed by departmental Boards of Studies with any incomplete actions transferred to the institutional Action Plan. Institutional approval by the University was subject to the Art School addressing an accompanying action plan, and this has now been completed.

7 The Art School's detailed Admissions Policy is aligned with the University's publicly available regulations and policies. Tutors are given comprehensive training for conducting and reporting on interviews, with no complaints from applicants being made. Applicants receive clear and accurate information, with very quick responses to enquiries and formal acknowledgments of applications. Interview reports trigger acceptance or deferral outcomes by the Art School. Students indicated that interviewers put them at ease, discussed their achievements and career ambitions, and ensured that the most suitable course had been selected. Appropriate enrolment and induction information is provided systematically for successful applicants, covering all aspects of course requirements, health and safety, and workshop practices.

8 Applicants are provided with opportunities to disclose learning needs at application, interview and enrolment, with the Art School making effective and appropriate adjustments. The Art School also implements appropriate procedures and policies for the admission of students with prior learning or extensive practical experience, as well as applicants with English as a second language. All students have access to study skills development via the Royal Literary Fellow and are provided with support in research and essay writing.

9 Assessment processes, which include double and group marking by tutors, are clearly explained at induction and in student handbooks, and students are aware of marking schemes and grading criteria. Students confirmed that they are provided with detailed written feedback - reinforced by tutorial discussions - on their formative assignments, stating that this is normally received sooner than the stated turnaround time of two weeks. Reflective portfolios accompany practical assessment tasks, with student groups engaging in critiques

facilitated by tutors. Internal verification has identified the need for a critical-friend system to standardise developmental feedback between tutors. Students and staff referred to robust documented procedures for avoiding academic malpractice.

10 External examiner reports contain very positive comments about transparent and unambiguous assessment processes used by the Art School and complement the high quality of the vast majority of student work. Departments respond to comments within their annual monitoring reports, with the Art School incorporating actions as appropriate within its overall planning process. One example involves the launch of a workshop and tutorial programme to ensure that all students fully relate learning outcomes to assessment tasks.

11 Overall retention rates for the last three full foundation diploma cohorts show an increase from 91% to 94% between 2015-18, with annual student enrolment numbers reduced from 97 to 88 over the same period. Undergraduate diploma and degree retention rates ranged between 90% and 95% over the last three years, with annual student numbers declining from 42 for 2015-17 to 36 in 2017-18. For the same three-year period, postgraduate diploma and master's retention rates ranged between 88% and 100% for annual cohorts numbering between 16 and 18 students. The Art School emphasises that, with small numbers, individual cases can disproportionately affect statistical data

12 Pass rates for completing students from the 2015-16 cohort were 97% for the foundation diploma, 95% for undergraduate and diploma students, and 100% for postgraduate programmes. Pass rates for students who enrolled in 2016-17 and had completed their studies, stood at 100% for the one-year foundation diploma as well as the one-year postgraduate diploma and master's programmes.

Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

13 The Art School makes use of external academic reference points through engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, facilitated by the Strengthening the Infrastructure project for developing a series of policies, processes and regulations. The Art School further notes that the quinquennial review of all policies includes reference to codes for UK Corporate Governance, Higher Education Governance, Consumer Protection, and Charity Governance. All diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are mapped to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ). External examiners ensure that appropriate standards are observed, with the Art School responding systematically to feedback with action points that are monitored. External organisations provide further reference points including Independent Higher Education (formerly Study UK), the Office for Students, the Office for Independent Adjudication, the Consumer and Marketing Authority, HESA, and UK Visas and Immigration.

Background to the monitoring visit

14 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mike Coulson, Reviewer, and Professor Danny Saunders, QAA Officer, on 29 January 2019.

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