



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection report

Cumbria Institute of the Arts

Dates of inspection: 22–26 March 2004

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Basic information about the institution

Name of institution:	Cumbria Institute of the Arts
Type of institution:	Higher education institute
Principal:	Professor David Vaughan
Address of institution:	Brampton Road Carlisle Cumbria CA3 9AY
Telephone number:	01228 400 300
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Chair of governors:	Bill Mackay
Unique reference number:	130635
Name of reporting inspector:	Lynda Cole
Dates of inspection:	22–26 March 2004

Part A: Summary

Information about the institution

Cumbria Institute of the Arts became a higher education (HE) sector institution in August 1997, having previously been a further education (FE) institution. The institute is located in Carlisle with its main campus near the city centre. The main campus is designated a world heritage campus due to its archaeological importance. The institute specialises in its FE work in art, design, media, performing arts and music. Courses offered are mostly at level 3 with provision in general art and design, fine art, media, photography, performing arts and music. Courses are managed through a structure of three schools categorised by subject areas.

Approximately a quarter of all students travel 80 miles or more each day. The proportion of students from minority ethnic communities is 2.5 % which is higher than the proportions in Carlisle and Cumbria, which are less than 1% according to the 2001 census. In 2003/04, there were 382 full-time FE students. At the time of the inspection, 69 students were enrolled on foundation studies, 114 on national diplomas and 9 on level 2 first diploma courses. There are 104 part-time students enrolled on a range of courses including jewellery, ceramics and furniture making.

The institute's mission is 'to provide a dynamic, stimulating and caring environment in which creativity, innovation and the pursuit of knowledge can flourish'.

How effective is the institution?

The institute provides a good education for most of its FE students. It has good links with external groups to widen participation in learning. Pass rates are good for full-time students. Retention rates are low on some courses, particularly on some national diplomas and on general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Inspectors judged provision in both curriculum areas inspected as good overall with contributory grades of satisfactory in music and unsatisfactory in media. The main strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- clear strategic direction and good leadership
 - excellent specialist resources
 - good pastoral and academic support for students
 - FE students benefit from strong cultural and creative HE ethos
 - good work produced by adult part-time students
 - productive external links and strong national profile
-

- thorough and realistic self-assessment report
- range of governors' expertise and experience.

What should be improved

- provision in media and GCE A levels
- the proportion of very good and better teaching
- retention rates on national diplomas and GCE A levels
- the way data are analysed and used to raise standards
- organisation of University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications
- the careers advice offered to those seeking employment
- progress on the action plans for equality and diversity.

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
General art, design and media	Good. The contributory grade for media provision is unsatisfactory . Teaching is mostly good or better in art and design courses. Teaching in media is mostly satisfactory. Pass and retention rates are high for foundation and access courses. Retention rates on national diploma media are poor. Part-time adult art and design students produce very good work.
Music and performing arts	Good. The contributory grade for music is satisfactory . Much teaching and learning is good, with lively, well-planned activities. Students' practical creative work is good on all courses. Pass and retention rates were high in performing arts in 2003. Pass rates are poor in music.

How well is the institution led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The principal and assistant principals provide strong leadership. The corporate plan provides clear strategic direction. Governors monitor finance and students' performance well. Retention rates remain a problem on many courses although a range of strategies have been used and there are signs of improvement. For example, since this time last year, retention rates have improved by 11% on national diplomas.

Communications are very good. Quality assurance arrangements are thorough. Self-assessment was conducted thoroughly and is realistic. The institute has no overview of the quality of teaching and peer observation is not always sufficiently critical. Course management is generally good but data are not used well enough to monitor and analyse trends in retention rates, achievement and students' destinations. The institute has good links with local schools and a wide range of partners. An equal opportunities policy has been produced. However, progress on action plans has been slow. Financial management is prudent and the institute provides good value for money.

To what extent is the institution educationally and socially inclusive?

The institute's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The institute plays a leading role in initiatives to widen participation in learning in Cumbria. Opportunities are provided for students who are reluctant to use more traditional routes into HE. The institute's wide range of provision includes well-established access and pre-access courses. The institute attracts students from across the entire lakes region and beyond and from electoral wards that are amongst the most educationally disadvantaged wards in the area. It provides equally for FE and HE students and promotes inclusion throughout the provision. Initial advice and guidance is good and support for students' literacy and language needs is satisfactory. The institute works effectively with other agencies such as Connexions Cumbria to encourage adults to return to learning. The institute complies with its statutory obligations as outlined in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Progress regarding equal opportunities and race discrimination is slow. Some actions relating to equality of opportunity have fallen behind target dates for completion. The institute complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA). All teaching accommodation is accessible by people with restricted mobility. Assistive technology is available and there is good support for students with physical disabilities.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Guidance and support for students are good. The institute's pre-entry arrangements include taster courses and summer schools. Most students are on appropriate courses. Initial induction arrangements are satisfactory. Students' information technology (IT) needs and abilities are appropriately assessed. Students are able to use any of the resources as long as they have received the relevant training. Students feel very well supported by staff and value their professional knowledge and skills. Course leaders regularly provide effective academic and personal support. Students are aware of the availability of other types of advice and support. Learning support services for students have recently improved in terms of range and

quantity. These new services have introduced more efficient and effective systems but have not yet been integrated effectively into the work of the institution. Appropriate careers advice and guidance is provided by course leaders. Other careers work, particularly for those students seeking employment, is limited. Funds to support students with hardship or transport difficulties are available and are efficiently administered. Flexible arrangements in timetables ease difficulties with travel. Residential bursaries are available for students living too far away to travel to study.

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 good facilities and equipment
- developing their creativity and independence
- experienced well-qualified staff who treat them like adults
- staff attitudes — 'passionate but not precious'
- the way key skills now form an integral part of course work
- friendly, open and informal environment
- their comments are listened to and acted on in order to improve courses.

What they feel could be improved

- the opportunities for social interaction
- better organisation and communication between campuses
- more pro-active students' union
- better and more timely preparation for UCAS.

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 Learning and Skills Council (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 16–18	69	26	6
19+			
Learning 16–18	63	34	3
19+			

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).

Achievement and standards

- Most students taking full-time courses are aged 16 to 18. Students' achievements are satisfactory overall. Pass rates for full-time students are good. Achievement is very good for students on the full-time foundation diploma studies in art and design. Retention rates are also high on the access to HE in art and design courses.
 - Overall, retention rates on national diploma courses are poor. Retention rates declined to 63% in 2002 and 60% in 2003. The institute has identified the need to improve retention rates of students in the first year of courses in media production, fine art and music. Data show that fewer students are now leaving courses early. At the time of inspection, the retention rate for first year groups was 88%, compared with 77% at the same time in 2003. Overall, pass rates on national diplomas have improved over a three-year period, to 82% in 2003.
 - Pass and retention rates for individual national diploma courses vary considerably. On the national diploma performing arts in 2003, retention and pass rates were high. On the media production course, retention rates fluctuate but are generally poor. However, student numbers on this course are small. Those students who are retained, pass the course. Retention rates are very low for the national diploma fine art course.
 - GCE A-level provision was introduced for a small number of arts-related subjects in 2001. Retention rates are high for AS-level courses. However, the pass rate is unsatisfactory, at 65% in 2002 and only 45% in 2003.
 - Achievement of key skills is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Approximately 150 students are entered for key skills examinations each year. Pass rates
-

were 55% in 2002 and 46% in 2003. Pass rates are good for IT at levels 2 and 3. For example, at level 3, pass rates were 60% in 2002 and 71% in 2003.

6. Part-time courses are attended mostly by adults. The pass rate for all part-time courses was 44% in 2003 but achievement is good on some courses. For example, in ceramics, pass rates are consistently high, reaching 89% in 2003. Students on jewellery, ceramics and furniture-making courses are producing ambitious pieces in design and demonstrate good practical skills.

7. Much of the work on art and design courses is good. Students use their research well and produce good exploratory work and imaginative ideas. However, drawing and presentation skills are poor in GCE A-level art. Students' work on national diploma media production is satisfactory. Most video production work does not have enough developed technique, particularly in the use of sound.

8. Students on performing arts and music courses demonstrate good creativity and practical skills in lessons and in performance. In a national diploma dance lesson, second-year students demonstrated very good imaginative choreography and team work. Some music technology students, however, find difficulty learning first principles of music theory and notation. However, these students are competent when using specialist audio software. National diploma popular music students who compose their own songs record personal, confident performances. Students are open to new ideas and relate well to teachers.

9. Attendance and punctuality are good. Overall, attendance during the inspection was 82%, and was highest in performing arts and music, at 86%.

Quality of education and training

10. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 35 lessons. They judged that teaching was good or better in nearly 70% of lessons observed, satisfactory in nearly 25% and unsatisfactory in nearly 6%. No teaching was judged to be outstanding. A higher proportion of teaching was good or better in performing arts and music than in general art design and media.

11. In the best lessons, teachers carefully plan activities and teach enthusiastically, sharing their professional knowledge well. Art students enjoy learning technical skills and developing creative original solutions to assignments and projects. Hand-outs are well written and effectively aid learning. In performing arts, teachers build good relationships of support and trust with students. Students collaborate to produce some innovative work. In one successful music lesson, students had fun learning about various music styles and forms.

12. Some teaching of first-year students is too complex. For example, assignments for first year national diploma in fine art contain too many stages and tasks. Too little attention is paid to the needs of individual students in some lessons. In media, checking students' understanding in lessons relies too much on discussion and open questions.

13. Teaching for key skills is integrated well with students' coursework. Teachers liaise effectively with the IT trainers who prepare lessons on particular aspects of software programmes applicable to specific projects. In one lesson, for the national diploma fine art course, students were effectively taught how to use slide presentation software to enhance their work in contextual and historical studies.

14. The institute is situated on four campuses with the main provision housed in attractive, purpose-built accommodation. Recreation areas include a refectory on the main campus and communal facilities attached to the student accommodation block. The refectory is small and gets cramped and inadequate at peak times. Newly refurbished facilities at the Caldewgate campus are soon to be opened and will provide a recreation area and refreshments for students on this campus and those at the nearby Shaddon Mill. There is suitable access for people with restricted mobility to all teaching and recreational accommodation.

15. FE students benefit greatly from access to specialist resources shared with HE students. Equipment and specialist resources are good. Students can gain an insight into processes and procedures used professionally. Each course has a designated base room with work spaces for students to work on their own and to display research and work in progress. Resource areas, such as three-dimensional design and specialist workshops and digital media, are managed centrally. Teams of technical staff effectively support students in specialist areas. Students are encouraged to work in their own time using resources available on Saturday mornings and during vacation periods. IT resources are excellent and facilities are managed well. A particularly effective system is used to train students to work on computer software appropriate to their needs. Students benefit from training on specific topics which are not part of their own course. The institute's library has an extensive stock of books and an excellent range of journals, videos and compact discs (CDs).

16. Staff are suitably well qualified and they share their professional experience with students. Most teachers have teaching qualifications and those without are encouraged and supported to gain one. Staff can apply for scholarly research funds using very well-defined criteria. Staff development is not closely aligned to the strategic direction and is not always identified through the appraisal process. However, staff receive training at staff conferences, on courses where they work towards specific qualifications and on short professional updating courses.

17. The institute has well-established policies for assessing FE and HE courses, and has detailed guidance to meet various awarding body requirements. External verifiers' reports are appropriately reviewed, and action points are suitably monitored. The staff handbook and the institute's intranet provide detailed academic guidance. Responsibilities are defined clearly. Assessment procedures are thorough and are moderated objectively. Course teams scrutinise course assessment decisions. Following moderation, proposed grades are presented to the institute's examination boards for further scrutiny and validation.

18. Students' work is regularly assessed during individual tutorial reviews of work and through summative assessments. Assessment practice is satisfactory overall. However, on

the national diploma media course, there is too much dependence on report writing as a means of assessment. Written feedback given to most students is extensive, encouraging and constructive. Helpful guidance is given on how to develop creative and performance work to achieve higher grades. Clear reasons are provided for the grades that are awarded.

Assessment for students on the national diploma fine art is often complex and too prescriptive. Written feedback for AS level photography and fine art students is too brief. Monitoring of students' progress on most courses is recorded well and students are given clear targets. This practice is not yet well developed on GCE A-level courses. The newly appointed course leader has recently introduced a system to provide students with anticipated exam grades based on their assessed work. All students receive regular reports on their progress directly, including those aged 16 to 18. Staff respond appropriately to requests for information from the parents of students aged 16 to 18.

19. The institute offers a very good range of arts courses, which fulfils a specialist arts role and offers students clear progression routes in this field. The range of courses contributes to widening participation in learning. Most full-time students are either following a level 3 course or the diploma in foundation studies in art and design, which has a range of specialist pathways. The institute offers a flexible and inclusive approach to learning in order to enable students to achieve a qualification. For example, students taking either a national certificate or a national award are accommodated on the national diploma course. A small but growing range of GCE A levels are provided in collaboration with schools in Carlisle. The institute has successful access to HE courses, and also offers pre-access courses to encourage people to return to learning. Many students progress from these courses to HE courses, either at the institute or elsewhere.

20. The institute has a lead role in initiatives to widen participation in learning in the region, and works in collaboration with local schools, colleges and other agencies to provide for the needs of the local community. A performing arts course is being developed with help from the institute at the Lakes College, in order to provide better access to students in that area. There is a good range of evening classes, with some subjects offered at different levels.

21. The institute is a cultural centre for Carlisle and the Cumbria region. It offers alternative cinema and theatre facilities, hosts civic events and exhibitions and has many guest speakers. This presents students with frequent opportunities to widen their learning experience. Students participate in residential trips, which are good enrichment activities.

22. A new approach to the development of students' key skills is particularly effective. Specialist trainers work well with course leaders to ensure key skills form an integral part of project briefs and are assessed concurrently. There are very good, well-organised lessons for IT skills.

23. Pre-entry advice and guidance for students is very good. Information on courses is clear and extremely well produced. Attracting students from a very wide area, the institute offers a range of pre-entry events, including a well-established summer school and various taster workshops and seminars run flexibly at a range of locations in the area. Course leaders interview potential students and provide them with impartial and informed advice. A useful

induction activity helps students to settle into work. The ongoing induction and training available for IT to match students' needs and abilities to the institute's resources is an example of equality in action. Students are able to gain access to all resources through training that accredits their level of expertise as bronze, silver, gold or platinum. IT and other resources are similarly categorised and students are able to use all equipment as long as they have the appropriate level of expertise. Training courses are open to all students, whatever course they are on, and are frequently available.

24. A full-time learning support teacher has recently been appointed. All students undertake an initial assessment of basic skills and have a variety of opportunities to disclose any learning needs. Information is passed quickly to course leaders. The team of part-time learning support teachers includes a good range of expertise and knowledge. Specialist individual support takes place in either a bare uninspiring room or during students' lesson. Support for students with learning disabilities is very good. Approximately half of those students identified as having additional learning needs accept the support available. Progress of all these students is yet to be evaluated.

25. The institute has a well-established system of academic guidance and support. All students are allocated a teacher who oversees their progress and welfare. Effective informal monitoring of students' progress through everyday contact with teachers in lessons is reinforced by regular formal meetings. Students benefit from the professional knowledge and skills of staff, and up-to-date advice and guidance from practising artists and designers. Students value the support they receive at the institute. Course leaders are responsible for providing advice and guidance about HE applications. Course project briefs are developed to enable students to explore progression routes. There is no central management for the provision of careers advice or HE applications and students' experience of this is variable. The institute has provided students with access to professional counselling and careers advice. Links are developing with other external sources of support, such as establishing a drop-in health clinic. The services are not yet fully integrated with other support provided, and staff are not clear how their roles and responsibilities relate to the other work of the institute.

Leadership and management

26. Leadership and management are good. The institute has dealt with most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection in 1997. However, retention and pass rates on several courses remain an issue. The principal and two assistant principals provide good leadership and work closely with the governors. The principal's involvement with national groups brings benefit to the institute. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The institute is in a sound financial position and has successfully managed a number of improvements to the buildings which includes a major development on the main campus. The institute has met its funding targets for the last three years.

27. The strategic direction is clear. Detailed consideration has been given to all aspects of the institute's work. The institute was designated an HE establishment in 1997 and has maintained its FE involvement. FE is viewed as an important part of the curriculum.

Currently FE courses account for 21% of the institute's provision. The corporate plan includes both HE and FE provision and clear objectives and targets have been set. Governors receive regular updates on the institute's progress against the targets set in the plan. Staff are well informed and are able to contribute towards achieving the targets.

28. Governors are provided with detailed financial information and monitor it closely. Information on applications, enrolments and withdrawals from courses is discussed at each meeting. Governors have a wide range of skills which are used well by the institute. Many have experience in art, design and media. There is also representation from FE and from the students.

29. Communications are very good. Senior managers are accessible and approachable. Staff are involved extensively on committees and advisory groups. The institute's intranet provides access to a wide range of documents, policies and procedures and minutes of meetings. One-day staff conferences are held three times each year. Conferences start with a briefing from the principal and are used to update staff on various issues faced by the institute. Staff have good access to development opportunities. Annual staff reviews identify staff development needs but these are not explicitly linked to the institute's objectives. A two-day staff development event is held each year which concentrates on approaches to teaching and learning.

30. Arrangements for the quality assurance of courses are systematic. Staff have a good understanding of the quality assurance system and are supportive of it. Student representatives receive training for their roles on various committees. The system is structured and the process is thorough. An excellent detailed report is produced every year for each course. The strengths and weaknesses of the provision are clearly identified. School review panels, including an external representative, examine the thoroughness of a sample of these reports and produce a summary to identify overall actions. There is significant sharing of good practice. However, some of the action plans arising from the course reports are not always clear, and progress on previous action plans is not evaluated sufficiently. A comprehensive overview on the work of all schools is presented to the academic board, which in turn reports to governors. Exam boards, chaired by a different head of school, ensure the consistency of grading decisions. A number of effective student feedback systems exist for individual courses but there is no overall system for the provision of feedback.

31. The institute has a well-established system of peer observation. However, some observations are insufficiently critical and do not effectively aid improvement. Heads of school are beginning to summarise the outcomes of peer reviews to identify key themes. A teaching and learning advisory group produces guidance on the direction and quality of teaching. Teaching practice varies considerably across the institute. In music, performing arts and key skills, there is good teaching but some teaching for first-year students in art, design and media is inappropriate. The self-assessment report is clear and accurate and identified many similar strengths and weaknesses that were noted by inspectors. Heads of schools produced an initial draft of the self-assessment report which was shared with staff for comment. The final report was approved by senior managers and the academic board.

32. Course management is good and staff work well together as teams. However, there is insufficient co-ordination between teams and there are inconsistencies in their practices. Management structures are clear. Communication with part-time staff is good. They are paid to attend meetings. Actions are taken in response to students' comments to improve the courses. Course organisation is mostly good, although the media production course is not well structured. The management information system is capable of producing a wide range of reports, but data are not used effectively at course level to monitor retention rates and achievement. Data about students' destinations are not easily available. Data about GCE A-level students are inaccurate. Course leaders do not sufficiently analyse trends and do not use targets effectively. Reports produced from the management information system for governors and senior managers are informative but are not presented well.

33. The institute has good links with local schools. Pupils from schools can attend the institute to take arts courses. The institute organises a well-attended summer school programme for young people. The institute has close links with a good range of local and regional partners. The institute has been successful in attracting students from a variety of backgrounds.

34. The institute has an equal opportunities policy. However, no detail is provided about how the policy will be implemented. The institute has complied with the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Staff have received training on this legislation and governors have been briefed about it. Progress on the action plan has been slow. The plan has not been reviewed for over a year. Course reports include recruitment data on students' gender, age, disability and ethnicity, but data on the overall performance of different groups have not yet been produced. The institute has responded well to the requirements of the SENDA. Audits have been carried out on policies and procedures. Assistive technology has been made available, and adaptations have been made to buildings. A comprehensive action plan has been produced recently.

35. Financial management is prudent. Financial delegation is clear and is understood by staff. Staffing budgets are held centrally and consumable budgets delegated to course leaders. No financial distinction is made between FE and HE courses. Budgets are agreed between resource managers and one of the institute's committees. Resources are very good. FE students benefit considerably from the shared specialist HE resources. Staff hours are carefully monitored and staff are efficiently deployed. The financial system monitors expenditure against profile and provides appropriate information for each course. The average class size during inspection was 10 and attendance was 83%. Taking all these factors into account with student achievement data, the institute offers good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

General art, design and media

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade for media is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- good pass and retention rates on foundation and access art and design courses
- very effective teaching of key skills
- particularly good work produced by adult part-time art and design students
- good specialist resources.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates for GCE A level
- poor retention rates on national diploma fine art and media production
- inappropriate teaching strategies for first-year students
- insufficiently close monitoring of retention and pass rates and students' destinations.

Scope of provision

36. There is a good range of courses in art and design and media. There are 272 art and design students and 77 media students; of these, 186 students are aged 16 to 18. There are 73 students studying part time. The institute offers AS level and GCE A2 courses in art, photography, media and film studies. It also offers national diplomas in media production and fine art, and a foundation studies course in art and design with specialist pathways in fine art, visual communication, fashion and textiles and three-dimensional design. There is an access to HE in art and design course and a number of part-time craft courses. Enrichment opportunities, such as visits to Madrid and New York, are organised for foundation and media students.

Achievement and standards

37. Part-time adult art and design students produce very good work. Students in evening classes are working on ambitious pieces. Students on furniture-making courses use a wide range of machinery and varied techniques to produce complex, well-designed pieces.

Students on the access course are developing forceful, lively drawings using experimental media. Work produced in one class was dynamic and expressive and showed a confidence unusual in mature students returning to study. Students' on the foundation in art and design course produce large amounts of well-researched work that shows sophisticated ideas and a good range of media. The national diploma fine art students' work is satisfactory, showing a good use of print and textiles within design work. However, much of this work is exploratory and is not completed. AS-level students' drawing skills are tentative and they rely too heavily on drawing from secondary sources. Students' work on national diploma media production is satisfactory. Video productions include the exploration of techniques in drama and documentary. However, much of the work is introspective and does not have a clear sense of its intended audience.

38. There are good pass and retention rates on the art and design foundation, access and part-time courses. In 2002 and 2003, there were poor retention rates on the national diploma courses in fine art and media production. Current retention rates are 54% on fine art and 43% on media production. The pass rates on all AS level and GCE A2 courses were very low in 2002 and 2003. Most art and design students proceed to HE. A significant proportion of those students completing the national diplomas and the access course also gain places in HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in General Art, Design and Media, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Diploma in foundation Studies in art and design	3	No. of starts	65	64	84
		% retention	89	94	93
		% pass rate	95	97	95
National diploma in fine art	3	No. of starts	37	22	29
		% retention	97	45	48
		% pass rate	72	80	71
National diploma in media production	3	No. of starts	16	19	17
		% retention	94	47	65
		% pass rate	73	100	100
Access to HE art and design, full time	3	No. of starts	*	19	20
		% retention	*	100	95
		% pass rate	*	100	79

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
AS level film studies	3	No. of starts	25	37	34
		% retention	68	89	**
		% pass rate	88	48	**

Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

* course did not run

**data unreliable

Quality of education and training

39. There is much good teaching. The teaching on the access to art and design course is sensitive and manages to balance the need to be supportive of students and the need to establish academic standards and challenge. The teaching on foundation art and design is demanding. Teachers are critical in a very constructive way. During the inspection, students were preparing for interview for HE and teachers were conducting mock interviews. These were recorded on video and provided a good opportunity for students to practice presenting their folio of work in an interview setting.

40. The teaching of key skills is very effective. Students on the national diploma in fine art course were exploring the mathematics involved in the golden section and related this work to their studio project on icon images.

41. The teaching of first-year students is not planned well and does not take sufficient account of the different needs of students. In media and film classes, group discussions and open questions are the main teaching strategies used by teachers. Many students made little or no contribution in classes. Knowledge and understanding of media forms are weak. On the national diploma in fine art, the teaching is through detailed assignment briefs, which often containing too many stages and tasks.

42. Carefully considered and supportive written feedback is given to students on art courses during regular individual tutorials. Assignments effectively cover the specifications for national diploma media. However, there is too much dependence on report writing at the early stages of the course.

43. Students are well supported on their courses. In art and design, teachers are demanding and set clear targets during tutorials. In media, the tutorials identify current progress but are not always effective in setting clear actions, and some students are unsure about deadlines for coursework. Students with learning difficulties participate well in classes with the assistance of support staff.

44. There is good accommodation and excellent specialist facilities. The art and design studios are light and spacious. The national diploma fine art and foundation students have individual work areas where they work in their own time. All students have access to all the

workshops available to HE students. There is good media accommodation. The Shaddon Mill campus provides good light and open art studios and performing arts spaces. The Caldewgate campus has been recently refurbished and provides photography darkrooms and a good lighting studio. Staff are well qualified, many with postgraduate qualifications.

Leadership and management

45. There is good leadership in this area. The self-assessment report was thorough and realistic. Strategies to improve retention rates are beginning to have an impact as fewer first-year students are leaving courses early. Some assessment methods are inappropriate to the stage and level of students' courses. Care is taken to give all students the opportunities to reach their full potential. However, in some lessons teachers do not take sufficient account of individual students' needs. Staff listen to students' comments and act on them quickly to improve the course. There is insufficiently close monitoring of targets and trends in retention rates and students' destinations at course level.

Performing arts and music

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade for music is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates in national diploma performing arts in 2003
- much good and lively teaching in music and performing arts
- good standard of creative practical work
- good specialist equipment and performance spaces
- extensive range of live performance and production activities.

Weaknesses

- very low pass rates on AS level music technology
- low achievement on national diploma music in 2003
- insufficient use of data to improve standards.

Scope of provision

46. There is a range of vocational and academic courses. At level 2, there are first diplomas in performing arts and music technology. At level 3, there are national diplomas in performing arts and popular music. GCE A-level courses are offered in drama and theatre studies, and music technology. A national certificate and a national award in performing arts are qualification routes available as part of the national diploma in performing arts. There are 54 students on performing arts courses and 38 on music courses. Students can take additional units in dance, studying part-time in evening lessons at the institute's Shaddon Mill campus. Music students are taught in individual instrument lessons in their first term and are supported by the institute to take graded music exams.

Achievement and standards

47. Students on performing arts courses achieve high pass rates. In 2003, the AS level drama and theatre studies pass rate was 90% and for national diploma in performing arts it was 93%. Results in national diploma popular music are poor with low retention and pass rates in 2003. For AS level music technology, pass rates are unsatisfactory, at 21% in 2002, falling to 10% in 2003.

48. Retention rates are high in performing arts but low on national diploma popular music. Retention rates are considerably better for current first-year students on national diploma courses.

49. Students demonstrate a good standard of creativity and practical skills in lessons and in performances. In a dance lesson, second-year students demonstrated a high standard of imaginative choreography and team work in their examination piece. National diploma performing arts students working on the text of 'Crazy Face' by Clive Barker explored different short scenes with confidence, producing good physical and vocal technique. AS level and first diploma music technology students had difficulty with basic principles of music theory and notation. However, they were competent when using specialist audio software. National diploma popular music students, who had composed their own songs recorded confident performances and were gaining useful experience performing live with their own bands.

A sample of retention and pass rates in Performing Arts and Music, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
National diploma popular music	3	No. of starts	9	4	21
		% retention	89	100	48
		% pass rate	75	100	60
National diploma performing arts	3	No. of starts	16	16	16
		% retention	100	100	94
		% pass rate	69	63	93
AS level music technology	3	No. of starts	7	19	11
		% retention	86	74	91
		% pass rate	83	21	10
AS level drama and theatre studies	3	No. of starts	11	17	10
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	91	88	90

Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

Quality of education and training

50. There is much good teaching on all courses, distinguished by lively and varied styles of teaching. In the best lessons, activities are well structured and carefully planned. Teachers consider carefully the needs of individual students. In one lesson on music time signatures, the teacher captivated the students who were having fun developing their knowledge in identifying different music forms and styles. Teachers produce very useful, relevant hand-outs to aid learning. In performing arts, one teacher used a good mixture of improvisation and directed work which developed the students' range of inventive skills needed for effective characterisation.

51. Assignment briefs focus on activities that interest students, often with a practical performance at the end. Teachers create a stimulating and trusting environment in which students explore their creative ideas. Performing arts students work well in groups, learning quickly from each other's creative ideas. There is careful checking of student progress and positive critical feedback is given by teachers, both in lessons and following written assignments.

52. Visiting professional directors work with national diploma performing arts students on theatre production. One such example is 'Willow Pattern', directed by a member of Theatre by the Lake, Keswick as part of the project sponsored by a well-known multi-national oil company. Performances took place in the institute and in Kendal and Keswick. Students spoke highly of this opportunity to work with professionals and understand the pressures of working in a theatre environment.

53. Specialist accommodation and equipment are very good. Students and visiting companies perform in the Stanwix Arts Theatre, a flexible space equipped to professional standards. A dance studio with semi-sprung flooring is also used for student productions and music events. Music students use the excellent recording studio and dedicated computer suites for recording and editing. The practice rooms are large and well equipped but lack adequate sound-proofing. For lessons on a fully sprung dance floor, students travel to nearby Shaddon Mill.

54. Part-time music teachers bring a wide range of specialist skills. Musical instruments and sound equipment are in good supply and effectively co-ordinated centrally by a team of technical staff who support students well. The institute runs an innovative system for using equipment, grading students' abilities and skills from bronze to platinum according to the complexity of equipment they are trained to use and borrow for course work.

55. A thorough tutorial system ensures that students understand how they are progressing on national diplomas. The newly appointed course leader of GCE A levels has recently introduced a system to provide students with anticipated exam grades on their assessed work. Key skills tuition and support is very well integrated into the curriculum with key skills staff helping students on assignments as well as during lessons.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership is good. Full-time staff manage GCE A levels, music and performing arts effectively and provide good leadership. The management structure is well defined. The quality assurance and course review systems are comprehensive. Staff were effectively involved in self-assessment which was conducted thoroughly. However, in identifying areas for improvement, there is insufficient rigour in analysing and using data to set targets and improve standards. Course leaders identified the need to improve retention rates, and strategies put in place are beginning to have an impact. Teachers keenly promote a greater understanding of other cultures and devise projects based on a varied range of customs, traditions and societies.

Part D: Institution data
Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age 2003/04

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	0	0
2	3	2
3	97	98
4/5	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the institution in Spring 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2003/04

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	237	114	100
Humanities	0	0	0
English, languages and communication	0	0	0

Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
Total	237	114	100

Source: provided by the institution in spring 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	All ages		
		2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
2	Starters excluding transfers	0	2	0
	Retention rate %	0	100	0
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate %	0	100	0
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	Starters excluding transfers	220	291	353
	Retention rate %	88	87	88
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pass rate %	83	79	68
	National average %	n/a	n/a	n/a

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..
3. All data produced by the Institute

Notes