

Identifying good practice: a survey of college provision in arts and media

This report presents the findings from a survey of college provision in arts and media and identifies the factors that enable students to produce high-quality work and make good progress. Between October 2007 and April 2008, inspectors visited 22 colleges where provision in arts, media and publishing had been judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. The sample covered work in the visual arts, performing arts, music and media. Inspectors focused on four main themes: creative teaching and learning; the development of technical and craft skills; developing students as practitioners; and inter-disciplinary work. The report gives examples of good practice and makes recommendations for further improvement.

Inspectors returned to five of the colleges visited in the survey to record directly the views and experiences of students, teachers and managers on what factors contribute to outstanding provision.

The report is accompanied by a DVD, which contains a short film that illustrates key characteristics of outstanding practice. Examples of best practice are highlighted in the text of the report with hyperlinks to extracts of the film.

Copies of the DVD are available from our publications centre while stocks last: freepublications@ofsted.gov.uk; 07002 637833.

Age group: 16+

Published: February 2009

Reference no: 070234

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Reference: 070234

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Executive summary

Between October 2007 and April 2008, six of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited a sample of 22 colleges where Ofsted had identified good or outstanding provision at their most recent inspection. The survey was conducted to identify features which enabled post-16 students to make good progress in arts and media.

Students' achievements were at least good in two thirds of the colleges visited and outstanding in a third. In half of the colleges the proportion of students achieving higher grades in their qualifications was above the national average and many made excellent progress.

There was much good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching, which resulted in a high standard of practical work, and a great deal of highly individual and personally expressive work. Students developed high levels of technical and craft skills in their chosen subjects, and were frequently encouraged and enabled to undertake experimental and exploratory work. They were challenged to push the boundaries of their previous experience and work beyond their comfort zone.

Curriculum leaders, who were supported well by senior managers, played a key role in setting high expectations for teachers and students. Where curriculum teams shared a common philosophy and approach to arts education, there was a great deal of consistency. This was evident in the ways that teachers worked with their students, and also in consistently high-quality outcomes for students. Senior managers gave such teams a high level of freedom and autonomy in managing the curriculum, which allowed for innovation and risk-taking without fear of failure. Curriculum area self-assessment was generally rigorous and accurate, although course level reports did not always evaluate the quality of teaching and learning sufficiently. Good practice was not always shared effectively across other aspects of provision to promote improvement.

A key feature of the best provision was the high quality and very personalised support students received from their teachers and tutors. Teachers knew their students very well, and were keenly aware of different abilities and personalities and potential barriers to progress. They were able to support and challenge students to achieve their best, in ways that were sensitive to individual students' needs and abilities. Most students, especially on vocational courses, received good subject specialist advice before joining their courses, but this was not always the case for A-level students in a few further education colleges.

Many teachers placed a strong emphasis on the learning experience, with greater importance accorded to creative processes than to the end product. Teachers encouraged and supported students in undertaking exploratory and experimental work; working with techniques and processes that were new to them and developing an intellectual and creative curiosity about the world around them. In the weaker sessions observed, inspectors noted insufficient focus on checking students'

understanding and learning. Occasionally, students in art and design relied too much on second-hand imagery and research, with insufficient development of drawing as a means to research and develop ideas. While performing arts students were often well versed in the expressive use of body and voice, not all students had sufficiently developed the technical skills demanded by some of their work.

Induction periods were used well to establish high expectations and a culture of learning and experimentation right from the start. Well-planned and sometimes ambitious projects helped to break down students' preconceptions of their subject areas and opened up a wide range of possibilities for how they could work. The students interviewed commented positively on how much they learned in a short time, and how the skills developed in the early stages helped support more independent working later on. They often reported that their experiences in arts subjects at GCSE had not been an effective preparation for advanced level study.

Teachers in the arts and media areas encouraged students to think and act as practitioners, strongly promoting professionalism in attitude and approach and developing good industry-related skills. Many colleges had developed very productive links with businesses and employers. Students benefited from a wide range of opportunities to work in industry-related contexts, to work on live or commissioned projects and to work alongside professionals and practitioners. They also benefited from access to industry-standard equipment and resources in many cases. However, there were very few examples of work-based learning or apprenticeship programmes in the creative industries.

Inspectors returned to five of the colleges visited in the survey to record directly the views and experiences of students, teachers and managers on what factors contribute to outstanding provision. The report is accompanied by a DVD, which contains a short film that illustrates key characteristics of outstanding practice. Examples of best practice are highlighted in the text of the report with hyperlinks to extracts of the film.

Filming in these five colleges took place between June and November 2008. The DVD contains interviews with students, teachers and managers and examples of work from exhibitions and performances.

Key findings

- Much practical work was of a very high standard, especially on level 3 programmes. The work produced was often individually expressive, technically proficient and demonstrated high levels of maturity in approach (film extract 1: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp01>).
- Strong curriculum leadership was a key feature of many arts and media departments visited. Curriculum leaders set high expectations for staff and students (film extract 2: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp02>). Curriculum teams often had a shared philosophy and ethos and worked very closely together to implement a common approach (film extract 3:

<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp03>). Staff were committed to a culture of continuing improvement and were not complacent, even where results were already very high.

- In many of the colleges visited senior managers recognised the strength of the curriculum teams and placed high levels of trust in their professional expertise and specialist subject knowledge. Curriculum managers were given considerable freedom and autonomy to innovate, take risks and develop the work of the area (film extract 4: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp04>).
- Inspectors observed much good teaching, with particularly strong teaching of the fundamental subject principles and related technical and craft skills (film extract 5: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp05>). Teachers knew their students very well and provided highly individualised support, which enabled students to achieve more than they thought they could. Much work was based on experiential learning, with the focus more on process and development than on creating an end product (film extract 6: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp06>).
- Most students were encouraged to reflect on their progress and the quality of their work through coursework and self-assessment. This was particularly well developed on visual arts courses, where regular one-to-one and group critiques were used well to develop students' critical skills and reflective practice. Teachers provided effective support to enable students to overcome potential barriers to learning (film extract 7: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp07>).
- Induction periods were often used extremely well to establish high expectations of students and to challenge any pre-conceptions they may have about the subject area. Students were challenged and supported to push beyond their previous experience and to work outside their comfort zone (film extract 8: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp08>). This accelerated their learning and progress in the early stages of the course and enabled them to work more independently as the course progressed (film extract 9: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp09>).
- The colleges visited used a range of strategies to help students develop as practitioners in their particular field of work. These included strong links with employers and arts industries and working with professional companies and practitioners to develop students' personal and work-related skills (film extract 10: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp10>). Students increased their confidence through regular opportunities to show their work and perform to public audiences.
- Students were often encouraged to work across different disciplines in the arts, and this collaborative work enhanced their range of skills and understanding. End of year exhibitions, productions and performances were often used very effectively to develop good collaborative work, as well as setting high standards and aspirations for new and continuing students.
- Students' prior experience, especially at GCSE, did not always prepare them well for advanced level study. There was often little correlation between the content

and demands of GCSE courses and students' previous experience, and what was expected and required of them on AS, A-level and BTEC national programmes.

- Although further education colleges offered a wide range of courses, with clear progression routes, very little work-based learning or apprenticeship provision was offered. In a few colleges, links with employers or practitioners were still underdeveloped.

Recommendations

The survey identified many aspects of good practice in the arts and media departments visited. To improve further the quality of provision, the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) should:

- take steps to disseminate further the good practice that exists in arts and media courses so that all colleges can learn from the best practice.

DIUS and the Learning and Skills Council should:

- ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate work-based learning and apprenticeship provision to meet students' and employers' needs.

Colleges should:

- ensure that students taking A-level art and design courses in further education colleges achieve as well as those on vocational level 3 programmes
- make sure all teachers are clearly focused on what students are learning, through setting clear learning objectives and regular checking of learning
- ensure all students are well prepared for higher education and employment by providing sufficient opportunities for reflective learning and evaluation
- make sure students make sufficient use of first-hand research and experience to develop their ideas and approaches
- evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more effectively through course level self-assessment reports
- strengthen the sharing of good practice between the arts areas and across the whole college
- ensure all students have appropriate subject specialist initial advice and guidance prior to joining their courses.

Colleges and their main feeder schools should:

- ensure that the GCSE curriculum in arts and media supports coherent progression to advanced level study.

Background

The 22 colleges chosen by Ofsted to contribute to this good practice report were graded good or outstanding in their most recent inspection. The sample included 14 general further education colleges, six sixth form colleges, one independent specialist college and one specialist art and design college. Most of the colleges offered a wide range of courses in art and design, performing arts, music and media. In the colleges visited, almost 80% of all enrolments were on level 3 courses. Of these, there was a broadly even split between vocational and A-level programmes. The general further education colleges offered courses from level 1 to level 3. Most of the provision in sixth form colleges was AS and A-level. The number of enrolments on arts and media courses ranged from 300 to over 2,700.

Performance data showed that overall success rates for arts and media provision in 18 colleges were at or above the sector national average in 2006/07. In 18 colleges success rates had improved or were maintained at previously high levels. Performance was strongest at level 3, where over 80% of the colleges surveyed had success rates above national averages.

Factors contributing to good-quality provision

Students' achievement

1. Success rates were high in most of the arts and media provision seen. Almost all colleges had success rates above the national average, and in one-third of the colleges sampled, overall success rates were outstanding. Over half the colleges had very high success rates on level 3 courses. In half of the colleges the proportion of students achieving higher grades was above the sector average, and in most of these, students were making very good progress, relative to their prior attainment. In a few colleges the proportion of high grades was exceptional and students made outstanding progress (film extract 11: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp11>).

Case study:

In one sixth form college almost every student who studied A-level art or textiles gained a grade A. The staff team shared the belief that every student has the potential to be highly creative and can achieve the highest grades. All students were set an aspirational target of a grade A, regardless of their average GCSE points or their grade in art at GCSE. Almost all students achieved this target and value-added data showed that many of them made exceptional progress.

Staff set very clear expectations for students about the amount of work required, including homework. The very well-structured induction period provided students with the skills and confidence to work with a variety of media, techniques and approaches. This enabled them to work

independently on more open-ended projects and to make individual choices about the direction of their work. Teachers and the curriculum manager monitored their progress closely and provided good individual support and feedback. Students rose to the demanding challenges set. While initially they found the approach very demanding and very unlike their previous experiences at GCSE, they realised how it helped them to improve their work rapidly and achieve standards of practical work beyond that which they thought themselves capable of (film extract 12: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp12>).

2. However, in five of the 12 further education colleges that offered both A-level and vocational courses, it was noted that overall success rates for students taking AS and A-level courses were significantly lower than for those on level 3 vocational provision. In four of these five colleges, the numbers of students taking vocational courses greatly outweighed those on A-level provision. In a few further education colleges specialist staff had insufficient involvement with the initial advice and guidance process for A-level art applicants. Students joining these courses were often not fully aware of the course requirements and the type and amount of work expected when they started their courses.
3. Students produced work of a very high standard, the best of which regularly exceeded the level expected. Much practical work was both individually expressive and technically proficient. Students in all disciplines were encouraged to think about and develop their own practice as artists, performers, producers and critics, over and beyond the requirements of the qualification. Through their coursework, students developed very creative approaches, combining well-developed and rehearsed technical skills with exploratory and experimental approaches. They were encouraged to take risks, try out new or untested approaches and develop their own solutions to problems. Students frequently devised their own themes and topics for exploration, increasingly so during the later stages of their courses as they developed greater maturity of approach.
4. Regular opportunities to show their work and perform in college and public venues helped to build students' confidence. Students often took responsibility for planning and organising these events, which developed their ability to work autonomously.
5. Students often carried out comprehensive and detailed research around a particular subject or topic, using a variety of methods to record and annotate their findings. For example, art and design students often made excellent use of sketchbooks and technical notebooks to record ideas and information, visually and in written form. However, in a few cases there was insufficient use of drawing and first-hand research to develop ideas through sketchbooks or design sheets. Students sometimes relied too heavily on second-hand imagery and references, with too much cut and paste and not enough of their own development and manipulation of ideas or images.

6. Performing arts students honed their performance skills through a very disciplined approach to rehearsal, preparation for public performances and workshops with visiting artists. They developed very good use of the core expressive instruments of voice and body and were able to incorporate the theory they had been taught into their practical performance work. In most performing arts courses the standard of technical competence was high but inspectors noted a few instances where not all students had developed sufficient technical skills for some of the performance work. Although this was usually taught as part of the course, students did not always spend enough time developing and extending this outside lessons.
7. Much of the best work seen on media and music courses grew from students developing very good work-related skills specific to the relevant industries. This often involved very good communication and teamwork and the ability to work across several disciplines, as well as developing subject-specific skills. The media and music technology students observed were very proficient in using industry standard software and equipment, and their work was very professionally produced and presented.

Curriculum management

8. Strong curriculum management was a key strength in the arts and media departments visited during the survey. Curriculum managers and heads of department often had a very clear vision of the fundamental purposes and principles of arts education, which was clearly communicated to staff teams. Frequently there was a well-defined philosophy or ethos underpinning the work of the department, to which all staff subscribed. This led to staff adopting common and consistent approaches in working with students and in turn, this contributed to consistently high-quality provision and outcomes for students.
9. Managers had high expectations of what could be achieved, and supported their staff teams well to enable them to rise to the challenges set. They demonstrated a commitment to continuing improvement, even where standards of work and students' achievements were already very high. This was often well supported by rigorous, self-critical and accurate self-assessment and regular reviews of the curriculum structure and content. Staff regularly revised and adapted assignment briefs to meet students' needs and interests and to keep the work fresh and exciting for both students and staff.

Case study:

In one sixth form college, performing arts teachers had committed themselves to trying something new in their teaching at least every half term. In another college, art and design teachers revised and revamped projects every year and rarely did the same thing twice.

10. However, not all self-assessment reports at course or curriculum area level placed sufficient emphasis on the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. The good practice evident in many areas was not always shared effectively across all the arts areas, and good practice in the arts was not always used to best effect to support improvement in other parts of the college.
11. In many colleges it was evident that senior management teams placed great trust in the curriculum managers and their teams. They were very aware of the strengths in the provision and valued the specialist knowledge and expertise of the subject staff. In these cases, curriculum managers were often given considerable freedom and autonomy to organise their departments ([film extract 4](#)). This allowed them the creative space to innovate, to take risks and to continually develop and renew the work of the area without fear of failure or censure. Senior managers valued the fact that many staff were still practitioners in their areas and recognised the benefits that could bring for the students and the college. In most of the colleges visited the arts are given a high profile, and are seen by senior managers as an important part of the public face of the college. This is enhanced through the regular display and performance of students' work in the college and in local community venues.

Case study:

In one sixth form college, the head of art was able to organise his teaching timetable in such a way as to allow some time in the week for him to carry out his own work in the art studios, where students could see him at work. Students clearly valued the direct observation of his practice. The college also supported him in staging a public exhibition of his work in the local community.

Teaching and learning

12. Inspectors observed much good teaching, with some outstanding and inspirational work taking place. In all disciplines there was some very strong teaching of the fundamental subject principles and the technical and craft skills relevant to each area of work. It was clear that teachers knew their students well, and this enabled them to provide very good individual support and challenges for each student.
13. Much of the work seen demonstrated a very strong emphasis on the process of learning, making and doing. Greater importance was placed on the process than on creating an end product, which reflected the importance of the students' learning journey, rather than the arrival at a predetermined point. Teachers often encouraged students to reflect on and evaluate their work. In the best lessons observed, this often occurred while work was in progress, as well as at the end of an assignment. In art and design lessons in particular there were regular opportunities for students to reflect on their work through one-to-one discussions with the teacher and with their peers in group critiques.

14. Teachers took great care to plan work to meet the necessary awarding body requirements, but the best work was not constrained by the unit or qualification criteria and the need to achieve qualifications. In the best lessons, teachers inspired students to produce work beyond the level they thought they could achieve. As a result of this approach, students also achieved high results in their qualifications. In the best lessons observed, the whole process was a journey of discovery, sometimes for the teachers as well as the students, as they responded to new ideas emerging as students' work developed.

Case study:

When working with an art student with a visual impairment, the teacher, recognising in the student's work some stylistic similarities with the work of Chuck Close, brought a study of his approach to portraiture into some of her teaching. This led her and the students into a consideration of how light and different materials distort, fragment and reflect, and into practical experiments with how the organising principle of the grid allows the artist to set warmth against cold, circle against square, light against dark. A further interest emerged in the nature of pixelation as a primary compositional feature of digital photography and video, in contrast to other techniques, and how this changed our way of seeing the world. In this way teacher and students were taken on a highly personal journey of discovery.

15. Although there was evidence of much good teaching, in the weaker lessons observed there was not enough focus on learning, or ensuring that students had understood what they had learned. Concerns raised by inspectors included the use of lesson objectives that focused more on completing tasks, rather than what students were expected to learn. Occasionally, the range of teaching and learning strategies used was too narrow to engage and maintain all students' interest, and there were instances where students were not given enough time to formulate responses to questions asked.
16. The survey found some successful examples of inclusion and engagement of disadvantaged, disaffected students or those with little previous exposure to the arts. Colleges ensured in these instances that the course structure and content was planned around the students in order to better meet their needs.

Case study:

One further education college developed an innovative project, which was funded through the Aim Higher initiative, to engage students who were not achieving and had low aspirations. They worked closely with students to help them modify their attitudes and behaviour and to engage them actively in learning. As this project was very effective the college paid for further staff training and many staff were using it now as part of their teaching strategy. The work focused on how these techniques can support

students to change their behaviours and how to influence those things that they thought were beyond their control. This gave students a much greater sense of empowerment and helped them to feel confident in making their own decisions and choices.

Case study:

In one sixth form college, a tutor skilfully supported a group of music students on a first diploma course, many of whom had not achieved well at school. Highly detailed programme planning, monitoring and recording of student progress enabled the tutor to support students' individual learning and development. Each student had their own personalised learning programme with an individual set of assessment and learning criteria. Students had many opportunities to develop skills and gain experience and assessment opportunities through regular gigs at local venues which they managed themselves. The buzz and excitement of performing focused their attention on the need to acquire a good understanding of project management, budget planning, marketing and publicity and rehearsal schedules. The tutor's strategy to motivate these students was centred on developing the curriculum around the students' interests and their capacity to sustain interest in both the aspects they enjoyed (the practice) and the aspects they did not like as much (the theory).

Developing technical and craft skills

17. Teachers successfully developed high levels of technical and craft skills in their students. These were often built up carefully over periods of time, through careful and sequential planning, to enable students to continually extend the depth and range of skills and their professionalism.
18. In the best art and design departments visited, great emphasis was placed on developing the core skills of drawing, observation and first-hand research, the use and exploration of a wide range of media and processes, the understanding and use of colour, tone, texture and other formal elements and different ways of developing and manipulating ideas and imagery. Where sketchbook work was best developed, students had received very clear guidance to support them in developing their sketchbooks as highly personal research and enquiry notebooks, which informed and supported their other work. In a few art and design lessons observed there was too much reliance on secondary images and insufficient drawing or manipulation of imagery to fully develop students' ideas through sketchbooks and design sheets.
19. Teachers emphasised the professional aspects of the media industry to their students, with a very clear focus on the relevant industry-related skills that students would need. Teachers ensured students had a sound grasp of the key

elements of programme making and production, including narrative, genre, storyboarding and post-production work. Projects often involved students working in small production teams, where they would take on different roles, often working with students from other disciplines, such as music or performing arts.

20. Music students were often well versed in the core skills needed for good musicianship and developed a sound understanding of harmony, rhythm and melody, as well as high levels of proficiency in their chosen instruments. In performing arts, students explored and expressed character, narrative, rhythm and movement, as well as the expressive qualities and physicality of the body and voice.
21. Performing arts and dance students were encouraged to see themselves as creators, performers and critics of their own work. Theory, context and practice were integrated effectively in technical classes, and safe practice was continually reinforced. Students were able to synthesise previously learnt and new learning, and demonstrated a clear understanding of choreographic concepts, style and genre in performance. In a few performing arts lessons, inspectors noted insufficient development of students' technical skills for some dance and performance work. Students did not always devote enough time to this outside studio sessions.
22. In all subject disciplines students were expected to make effective use of contemporary, historical and contextual references and to be able to relate their own practice to that of others. Inspectors observed some good examples of theory and contextual studies being very well integrated into courses, so that this work supported and extended the students' practical work effectively.

Case study:

Current dance repertoire was used particularly well in one sixth form college to challenge and extend students' individual choreographic work. The teacher also used a wide range of teaching strategies to keep the class stimulated and motivated. Good pace and timing; effective demonstration of new material and reinforcement of previously learnt material; learner-led warm-ups; and individual and group work, made the session varied and demanding. Frequent questions, short bursts of discussions and reflection on technical, dynamic and spatial elements enabled the learners to clarify their understanding. Short video clips and reflections on the choreographer's work further promoted technical and artistic understanding. Learners were challenged to use the choreographer's dance material and choreographic structure as a springboard for exploring their own ideas.

Case study:

In one sixth form college media students were given immediate and highly stimulating opportunities to put theory into relevant practice through small-group work based on an exploration and elaboration of a particular theoretical aspect. Students' understanding of the theoretical concept was substantially enhanced and extended by this approach.

At the start of the lesson, the theory or underpinning knowledge was introduced very clearly as key theoretical concepts, with sufficient information to aid understanding, but not so much as to confuse or cloud with detail. Students were then given a group-based task putting the underpinning knowledge into practice. For example, in a film studies class students were introduced to theory on narrative structures in film, including exposition, development, complication, climax and resolution. The class was divided into groups of three and, with the aid of thorough and detailed handouts, they were asked to create their own narrative storyline around a particular film genre, such as horror, gangster or romantic comedy. Students immediately engaged with the idea and took part in lively, thoughtful debate. The tutor sat with the groups in turn, asking direct and searching questions and challenging and provoking further thought, much in the style of a creative corporate development session in a professional setting. Particularly notable was the extent to which students brought new and prior learning to bear on the task and in the process consolidated and expanded their knowledge and understanding.

In this particular case the technique was highly involving, energetic, stimulating and noisy! Students commented that they found such lessons challenging and enjoyable, valuing the contributions of others' different perspectives and life experiences.

Creating a culture of high expectations

23. The best work in all subject areas was supported by teachers having high expectations of their students and setting out very clearly what they expected from them. Teachers did not accept work below the standard expected and carefully supported and challenged students appropriately to help them achieve the best they could.

Case study:

In a musical theatre lesson in jazz dance, the teacher was taking students through a short choreographed sequence from the 'Cell Block Tango' number from Chicago. After each practice run, she gave very specific technical corrections and performance notes, building each time on what

the students had taken on board from the previous run. Thus they collectively and incrementally improved on such features as their angular movements at points of transition, their rhythmic use of dance accent and their emotional gestures through the narrative of the choreography.

Students maintained high levels of concentration and personal discipline because before each run the teacher identified what she would be looking for in particular, and set high expectations. Students at all levels of ability were being individually extended. Throughout the lesson, the teacher made good use of the mirrored wall to make students watch their own technique. She also invited a number of individual students to take short solo parts within the sequence, and then drew teaching points from what those students had done. On several occasions, she also demonstrated a point herself to illustrate what she was looking for students to do. Students responded in a very mature and focused way, taking every possible opportunity to sharpen their technique and practise their movement in between the runs. They looked for criticism and correction, both from the teacher and from each other, and as a result they improved the quality of their work.

24. The better teachers observed and encouraged students to develop their own critical and reflective skills through evaluating their own work and that of their peers. This was done through group or individual critiques during lessons, through assessments at the end of projects and in specific review or tutorial sessions which were built into the timetable. Teachers challenged students to think critically about their work and how to improve, and not to be too easily pleased with what they had achieved. This regular, critical evaluation of their own work was instrumental in helping students improve.
25. Students valued the opportunities which colleges provided for extended working and being given time to think and develop their work over a period of time. In further education colleges, timetables were often arranged so that students could spend a whole day on a particular practical activity, which really allowed them to concentrate on the task in hand and achieve much more than might be possible in several shorter sessions.

Case study:

In a foundation diploma life-drawing class, the teacher had set the students a challenging and dramatic pose, which they worked on for a full day. The model was seated high up at the top of a step ladder, presenting students some significant challenges with viewpoint, foreshortening and extreme perspective. Students worked with brush, pen and ink to capture the pose and perspective as well as the tonality and form of the figure, building up their drawings through layers of wash and line. Throughout the day they regularly stepped back from their work to evaluate their progress with ongoing individual support and mini-critiques from their

teacher. Examples of work from a previous similar exercise were displayed around the studio to provide guidance. The quality of drawing by the end of the day was very strong, as students had worked and reworked while they resolved the formal and technical problems set.

Integrating key skills

26. Key skills were taught where appropriate, but with variable outcomes and success rates. In most areas, key skills were integrated and contextualised within the curriculum provision. A few colleges have achieved good success rates in key skills by ensuring that key skills and subject specialist staff work closely together to plan assignments, assess work and design projects related very directly to the students' main areas of study.

Case study:

One further education college had developed an innovative programme to better support the core and key skill needs of students on vocational programmes. 'One Big Friday' was a day set aside for students to study key and core skills integrated within critical and contextual studies. Following initial assessment students were allocated to learning groups at an appropriate level. To maintain students' interest and motivation, each group was given a name from the world of fashion, such as Gucci, Armani, Chanel and Versace. Support staff and subject specialists shared expertise and there were packages of lessons at appropriate levels for students and lecturers to support better links between theory and practice. Students developed their literacy and numeracy skills within their vocational context, which helped them to see the relevance of key skills.

27. One specialist college of art and design has achieved very high key skill success rates by devising assignments relevant to the main area of study, which also help to develop students' numeracy and communication skills.

Case study:

Students on the first diploma course in art and design undertook a project based on Islamic design and geometry, through which they developed numeracy skills. The students demonstrated a wide range of prior achievement in numeracy from entry level to level 3. This assignment was designed to broaden the students' cultural awareness, while integrating numeracy through art and design. It was developed in discussion with course leaders and subject specialists. Students were introduced to the use of pattern in Islamic culture and the associated meanings, in particular the exploration of symmetry through geometrical patterns and architecture.

In creating their own representations, students used rulers, compasses and protractors, which naturally led them to use units of measurement

and lines of symmetry. Finally the students each created a frame, which was then used to develop a wall of art. The outcomes were very positive. Students who had previously objected to formal numeracy work engaged well with the task. The assignment also inspired some very creative designs that contributed to student achievement on the diploma course.

Students on national diploma courses in contemporary design and fashion worked on a 'Design to Sell' project, which incorporated application of number and communication key skills. Planning for this project was carried out jointly by the subject teams and the key skills teachers. Students began the project with a visit to a contemporary crafts show where they researched their market. They then organised and produced craft-based goods to display and sell in a gallery in the weeks before Christmas. By organising the show themselves, students developed their communication skills. Evidence produced for their key skills portfolios included records of discussions, letters and brochures. The students also costed materials and planned the display spaces using calculations of areas allocated and surveyed the public about gift options. They analysed and presented their findings through the use of charts and graphs and this evidence was presented for the application of number portfolio.

Induction

28. Well planned and carefully structured induction work was a key factor in enabling students to engage with their subject area and to challenge and raise their expectations of the creative arts. Initial projects were often interdisciplinary in approach. They helped to develop teamworking, break down students' preconceptions about the subject area and working practices, build their confidence and self-esteem and assist in the acquisition of new skills. In some colleges these activities were focused on a short project, perhaps lasting one week, whereas others planned a sequence of work that lasted for the first six to eight weeks of the course.

Case study:

All new students on BTEC music performance, stage management and music production courses starting in September 2007 took part in a multi-disciplinary, cross-course, collaborative project based around a performance of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. This large-scale, all-embracing assignment was carefully designed to address a wide range of assessment criteria for all participating students and to expose them very early on in their course to the rigours, frustrations and demands of industry. Students worked in small creative teams, but had individual briefs that modelled a professional contract with clear deadlines and technical expectations.

Three performance stages were used in sequence, and students had the opportunity to explore theatrical, choral and instrumental elements in

performance. Throughout the project the sense of teamwork was very strong and students experienced directly the interdependent component parts of such a complex piece of performance work.

As they worked on rehearsing and preparing for public performances, students undertook related contextual studies and reflective work on the specific characteristics of stadium rock concerts of the 1970s and 1980s. They studied the music, tablature and lyrics of the piece and kept critical logs of the entire project. The realistic working environment ensured that students learned to work alongside each other very quickly, to put all their work in a direct professional context with realistic practical, legislative and budgetary consequences, and learned at first hand the structure of a complex production process. They discovered early on in their course the particular strengths and weaknesses of themselves and each other. Many weeks later, the specific learning points and personal memories from the project still acted as a powerful motivator for students and as valuable reference points for teachers.

In 2008, the college organised a similar induction project, based on the performance of work by The Beatles ([film extract 9](#)).

Case study:

Music students at a further education college were divided into small groups and were given a sheet with notes corresponding to letters of the alphabet. Each group chose one of the students' names and used the corresponding letters to compose a simple tune. Students had to develop the piece with the instruments they were able to play, mostly the guitar or piano. The project effectively broke down students' preconceptions about starting points for music composition, built confidence and helped the group to get to know each other. Over several weeks students then used these small sections to work on an ensemble piece for the whole group to perform.

Case study:

In a sixth form college, AS-level performing arts students spent their first two weeks studying three different practitioners and exploring related concepts. Students then worked together to put on a performance based on this work in the second week of term. They found this a considerable challenge, but ultimately a very positive experience. Students said that they were challenged in this work to push beyond their previous experiences, and while they found this unnerving at the start, it had

accelerated their progress, built confidence and enabled them to bond with and learn from each other.

29. Students recognised the importance of this induction work in challenging their perceptions and in building new skills in their subject area. Many of the students interviewed by inspectors said they felt they had learned more in their first six weeks at college than in all their previous experience of the subject. Students who had studied GCSE arts and performing arts at school did not think that this had been a particularly good preparation for advanced level study. While at school, they felt the main focus had been on achieving a certain grade, whereas at college the focus was much more on the broader learning experience and skills development. For example, some students who had studied GCSE or A-level art at school described their previous experience as one where they found something they were good at and then repeated and refined it in a relatively narrow way, whereas their college experience was centred much more on the discovery of new ideas and ways of working and this challenged and stretched them much more.

Support for students

30. Academic and pastoral support for students, in and outside of lessons, was a major strength in the colleges visited. Teachers and tutors knew their students very well. They had a very clear understanding of individual students' work and abilities and a good knowledge of individual personal aspects which might affect students' experience and performance. The students surveyed commented on how their teachers and tutors used this knowledge sensitively to provide tailored, individual support and guidance to help them achieve and overcome potential barriers to progress. Good use of in-class learning support staff helped to build students' confidence and raise their achievement. The best support was highly effective in meeting a wide range of needs.

Case study:

In an independent specialist college a teacher provided very well-tailored support for an art student with a visual impairment. The student could only see images very close up because he only has crisp focus at the centre of any image; the edges are blurred. He wanted to paint a large self-portrait from a photograph, but was unable to see the whole image in sufficiently clear detail to enable him to do so. With the help of his teacher, he enlarged the photograph and then dissected it into sections on a grid. By masking all but the central section that he wished to capture in paint and moving the mask over the grid, section by section, he was able to work across the whole photograph in squares, until finally the whole face was painted. At no point could he see the entire image, and even when finished, he was not able to see the picture as a whole except from a considerable distance. As a direct consequence of the technique he had to adopt because of his visual condition, the final painting was fragmented

and distorted by the grid composition. It had remarkable power as an image because it reflected the literally disconnected way in which the young artist saw the world.

31. Communication between support staff and subject specialists was usually very good. Additional learning support in one college was so well embedded in the programme that the supporting staff member joined the performing arts team. Staff regularly devoted considerable amounts of additional time to support students on additional curriculum enrichment activities such as projects, research visits and trips. Teachers and tutors often received good training in aspects of student support. In one college, staff attended workshops with professional leaders in the field of disability in the performing arts, to enhance their own ability to support students.
32. The colleges visited promoted a strong sense of inclusion that was evident in their approach to supporting and caring for students. Thus students spoke very positively about their sense of belonging and being well cared for and supported. Students on different types and levels of course were all equally valued and students confirmed that there was no hierarchy within their departments.

Case study:

In a further education college students spoke very highly of the support they received from their subject teachers and support staff. For example, a paraplegic student received one-to-one support for studio work and as a result was able to use digital technology to produce high-quality design work unaided. Effective personalised support was instrumental in enabling a student with Asperger's syndrome to succeed on the Foundation diploma in art and design. The student gained the college's student of the year award, progressed to a degree course in animation and moved away from home for the first time. Students with dyslexia also received very good support. One student commented on how much the support had changed her experiences and developed her abilities and self-esteem. Learning support was so well integrated that support staff working with curriculum teams were perceived by students to be part of the course team.

33. Students frequently benefited from excellent support from technicians, many of whom were also practitioners, which enabled students to develop a breadth of skills. In a few colleges, access to industry-standard facilities and specialist equipment, instruments and studios, outside of taught sessions, was exceptional. Resources were often available until late in the evening. Technicians were often an excellent source of expertise and provided additional opportunities for students to gain extra training in a range of creative and health and safety qualifications. For example, a small sixth form college offered additional training and skills development, using the expertise of its technicians,

in crafts, photography, textiles, sewing, bookbinding, printmaking, information technology and digital imaging to enhance students' capacity to develop new approaches and ideas.

34. Students generally received good advice and guidance prior to joining their courses. Most students on vocational programmes were interviewed or auditioned by subject specialists, who were able to ensure they were placed on the right course and level. However, in a few instances specialist staff had insufficient involvement with the initial advice and guidance process. For example, in a few further education colleges A-level art students were not always interviewed by subject-specialist staff and did not always have a clear understanding of the course requirements and the type and amount of work expected. In such cases, overall success rates were low, affected by higher than usual numbers of students failing to complete the course. In one college, difficulties in timetabling A-level provision during the day contributed to lower than average retention rates.

Developing students as practitioners

35. In many colleges there was a strong focus on encouraging students to see themselves as practitioners in their chosen field, not just as students taking qualifications. This was developed through a range of strategies. Full- and part-time staff in the majority of colleges had a high level of industrial and teaching experience and many are current practitioners. Students' views and ideas of careers within the industry were informed and extended through this wealth of professional experience.
36. Teachers frequently placed a strong emphasis on students developing as practitioners and acquiring self-discipline, motivation to study, a strong work ethic, including timekeeping and personal responsibility, in preparation for both higher education and employment. This ensured that students developed very good personal, core and employability skills, as well as subject-specific, technical and craft skills. Occasionally, students' punctuality and attendance were below the expected level.
37. Many colleges provided an extensive range of enrichment and progression opportunities, promoting students' wider interest in the creative industries and developing their enterprise skills and economic well-being. Students benefited from well-designed enrichment projects and regular visits to performance venues, theatres, galleries, exhibitions and fashion shows, which were an essential part of the curriculum and helped to foster a broader understanding of the creative and cultural industries.

Case study:

A sixth form college developed an excellent whole-college approach to planning and integrating enrichment activities within the curriculum. For

example, all A-level students with instrumental skills were able to participate in the school orchestra, whether or not they studied music at college. This timetabled enrichment session did not conflict with any A-level classes.

An enthusiastic arts team brought useful industry practice and experience into their classes. They created a realistic experience and were effective in introducing students to the reality of the industry. All teachers took students on well-designed international and cultural visits linked to building students' confidence and concept and craft skills. Music technology students had many opportunities to record under professional conditions and music students organised their own music society to run events. Drama students created and facilitated drama festivals at the college. Students spoke very positively about how these activities enhanced their experience at college and contributed to building their skills and confidence.

38. Workshops with visiting artists and industry speakers were often used well to enhance students' and teachers' understanding of approaches to professional practice and often crossed subject boundaries to enhance learning.

Case study:

In one of the colleges visited, artists-in-residence were employed regularly to work alongside the arts teachers. This brought current practitioner expertise and perspective into the daily lives of both teachers and students, and introduced freshness and a sense of the unknown. Their brief was to do their own work in the college setting, and to make themselves available to teachers and students for demonstrations, technical advice and direct instructions and sometimes just to talk with them about their work and how they manage a career as freelance artists. Recent examples of artists-in-residence have included a ceramicist, a sculptor, a printmaker and a storyteller.

Work that flowed from the residence of the storyteller was particularly illuminating. As well as running workshops for performing arts students on how to construct and tell stories using voices, bodies, masks, props and sound effects, he worked directly with teachers on their own use of narrative and anecdote as part of their teaching. Students told their own life stories and used what they learned about folk tales and myths to reinterpret their own stories in terms of character and narrative. The storyteller set up mark-making sessions with visual arts students while they listened to his stories, encouraging them to give line, shape and texture to their live personal responses to his narrative. Students who were studying child development and the acquisition of language explored in a live, dramatic way how different children might hear and respond to language, and how language structures influence what we hear. Students

found much of this work challenging but highly stimulating, as it allowed them new ways of seeing and expressing their ideas and feelings and broke down traditional perceptions of an artist and the purpose of art.

39. Students frequently benefited from very high quality specialist accommodation and resources, often to current industry standards. Many colleges visited had invested significantly in their accommodation and maintaining up-to-date technologies and industry-standard software, which enabled students to develop practical and working skills directly relevant to employment.
40. However, inspectors noted examples where colleges were still making very good use of older, more traditional equipment, such as in design crafts, and not all colleges visited had new or state-of-the-art facilities or accommodation. Curriculum managers and teachers worked hard to find creative solutions to make the best use of the space and resources available and to achieve positive outcomes for students where space and resources were sometimes limited.

Preparing for progression and employment

41. Students received good advice and guidance on career progression, and progression rates to specialist and prestigious higher education programmes were very good. Preparation for higher education in all the colleges was clear and well planned. Students were supported well to develop the appropriate level of portfolios, audition and interview skills. Guest speakers from higher education and industry were used regularly, often contributing to a subject-specific assignment.
42. Many colleges have developed very strong community links and productive relationships with industry, sector skills councils, local employers, businesses and professional organisations. The colleges surveyed often developed wide-ranging partnerships to enhance students' experience of working in the creative industries. These included live briefs in liaison with local businesses; collaborative projects with the local community; local and national partnerships; and links to provide work placements or work-based learning with a wide range of creative and cultural companies and professionals.

Case study:

A further education college received funds from a local economic partnership to provide a centre of advanced training for the creative industries, working with a range of community partners. The initiative 'Critical Mass' was coordinated and managed by the college's media and performing arts department. Critical Mass is a vocational training programme for actors and dancers to prepare graduates for employment in the creative industries. Current students benefit from appropriate work experience with regional companies and arts organisations and appropriate progression routes directly into employment.

43. Many colleges have been particularly successful at developing positive relationships with employers, with benefits for students and employers. They made good use of local employers, businesses and community arts groups to develop real working opportunities for students.

Case study:

A further education college had invested a great deal of time into building successful working relationships with the small- and medium-sized businesses in its district. Industrial liaison breakfast networking meetings were used to help employers share their ideas and opportunities with each other and also to understand how they could benefit from the work of the college.

A contribution from the New Technology Initiative (NTI) fund had helped the college to buy expensive specialist equipment for pattern cutting and garment construction for fashion students and the local fashion industry. This has benefited both students and local employers. The college also distributed, on behalf of the regional NTI fund, grants of up to £12,000 for businesses to buy their own specialist equipment. Then through a European Social Fund project, the college provided a range of specialist training opportunities specifically for the needs of the employers. Everyone gained from this mutually beneficial relationship. The contribution of the employers, through guest speakers, advice and work-placement opportunities added significant value to the students' experience.

Case study:

One college worked closely with a local corporate media company serving a diverse range of clients. Its scale and type of operation represents one of the likely employment routes for students of media at the college. The company approached the college with a request to use college facilities and premises to make a corporate DVD for an external client. The college agreed terms for this work, but part of the agreement was that students should be able to work alongside company staff to learn how such work was managed and executed, and to see how the brief was carried out. During the process, students were recruited to undertake some shooting for the company's brief, and they received professional critical feedback on the work they produced. Students were able to follow the crew throughout the job and talk with them about their background, training and working conditions, and the wider world of media production. The company was highly flexible and responsive to these additional demands on its time and attention, partly because these issues had been carefully discussed and informal protocols agreed before the on-site work started.

Students considered that they got a great deal out of the experience – in effect, this was a condensed collective work experience.

Case study:

One further education college incorporated the 'Arts Depot', a fully functioning community arts centre, with two fully equipped theatres; an exhibition gallery with opportunities for multi-media projections and displays; rehearsal studios for music, dance and theatre; and a disability arts and education forum. All the arts work was sited in this public community arts centre and the result was a pioneering model of shared use and realistic vocational training in a professional community environment. Students were inspired by the venue, they treated the space with respect and behaved and worked to professional standards. They acquired a degree of realistic creative practice that could not be replicated in a college where students were only occasionally exposed to the public. Watching them work in this environment was more akin to watching a fledgling company rehearse than observing a group of students being taught.

The unique venue and its environment was a great motivator of previously disaffected or disengaged young people. In conjunction with the local youth work team, the college established a community youth radio station broadcast as a 'remotivational instrument' for disaffected young people in the area who would otherwise not engage in education, employment or training. This has now become an accredited qualification and, in many cases, was the first qualification gained by the young participants.

44. Students frequently had opportunities to work on live projects or commissions which provided direct experience of working with external clients. This was particularly true in graphic design and media courses, but also occurred in other subject areas such as theatre, music and dance.

Case study:

In one session observed, graphic design students were working on publicity materials for the local Connexions agency and presenting their work to the client. The brief was to design posters and booklets to encourage young people to participate in education or training. Over the course of the project students developed and presented design ideas to the clients at several different stages of the work. They received useful feedback from the client and were able to adapt their ideas and designs to meet the client's needs. They gained experience and confidence in presenting their ideas and design work to external customers and enjoyed working on a real project, with clearly structured deadlines and set costs.

Case study:

The performing arts department in one further education college had very strong links with its local community and creative industries. This exposed students to a wide range of regional and national artists' work and newly commissioned work and repertory pieces. Regional companies and practising artists shared their crafts, skills, artistry and experience through workshops, talks, directing student performances and auditioning students for commissioned professional work. The college also worked with two community performance companies, which gave students first-hand experience of devising and producing work within realistic conditions of limited budgets, tight timescales and constraints of venues.

45. Where colleges made very effective use of their knowledge and understanding of the industry sector area to plan the curriculum, both students and employers benefited. For many students, the exposure to professional working environments informed by the industry sector was a powerful motivation for learning.

Case study:

In one case, a professional company was working in partnership with a further education college and university to provide vocational education and training in the audio and media industries for students aged 14 upwards. The college offered a range of courses from level 1 to 3.

The company had strong links with awarding bodies and the sector skills council, Skillset. Through working with the local authority in acquiring nearby buildings for new businesses to start in, the company was developing astute solutions to the challenges of finding employment and work experience in the arts. Students were guaranteed work experience opportunities in these new businesses. The company's film, audio, and design and technology commercial operations also provided real work experience opportunities for those students who progressed from level 3 to 4. All students had access to good-quality resources to develop their skills in acoustically well-structured, professional audio and media environments.

Case study:

One college identified a gap in the training for industry professionals in web design and interactive media following the significant growth of computer technology in media internet usage and particularly in games development. They noted that not only have more jobs become available in this fast-growing industry, but it is also an area of increasing student interest and demand.

The college worked with an awarding body and the sector skills council, Skillset, to develop a qualification in games development. Students enhanced their higher education opportunities and employment skills through working with industry-standard software, researching the games industry to support their personal career development, as well as studying business aspects such as financial and ethical issues.

Case study:

A further education college developed an innovative 'Screen Academy' project supported by the sector skills council, Skillset. The 35mm project provided students from the college and the University of the Arts, London with professional studio-based experience in the production of an advertisement and a promotional and music video, over 10 days at Elstree studios. This project also involved construction and hair and beauty students. Initially reluctant, the construction students discovered that there is more to construction work than their previous experience in building. Five of the 12 carpenters involved in the project last summer subsequently gained employment at Pinewood studios. The programme began with a 'boot camp' based at the college and culminated in a 10-day 35mm studio shoot. Each student received specialist training, studio visits and mentoring from industry professionals ([film extract 10](#)).

46. The survey found few examples of work-based learning apprenticeships in arts and media. In a few colleges visited, employer engagement and opportunities for work-based learning experiences were underdeveloped. Some colleges found it difficult to find sufficient opportunities for work placements or work experience in their local areas. In these instances, students had insufficient exposure to industry organisations, visiting artists and companies and opportunities to explore the breadth of their subject area.
47. Most colleges offered a wide range of programmes in the arts with a good range of levels and progression opportunities and a balance of visual, performance, technical and production-based programmes; traditional methods and crafts were valued, as well as new technology. Links with schools through the increased flexibility programme were strong in most instances, but in a very small number of colleges, partnerships and progression opportunities in the arts for 14–19-year-olds were underdeveloped. Smaller colleges found it difficult to offer the breadth of sector qualifications, particularly in technical aspects of production, sound and lighting and events or stage management. The changes to adult learners' funding in colleges have raised some concerns about the ability to maintain the breadth of curriculum offer and sufficient opportunities for progression.

Interdisciplinary working

48. Students often had opportunities to work with those from different arts-related courses, and occasionally with students from completely different subject areas. This collaborative provision took many different forms and benefited students in a variety of ways. Students in colleges where there was little interdisciplinary work expressed some disappointment about the lack of opportunity to work with students on other courses and levels.
49. Students spoke very positively about what they thought they gained from interdisciplinary working. This included increasing their motivation, building confidence and working within a team, often with a specific role, or making a particular contribution. This developed a sense of responsibility in them as they did not want to let their team down. They also felt that it helped them improve their communication and presentation skills and exposed them to different ways of working; it exposed them to a range of design or production criteria and this helped them improve their work and build stronger portfolios.
50. By working with others from different courses or disciplines, students developed a better understanding of how other artists, designers, performers and producers work. This enhanced their broader understanding of the creative and cultural industries. It challenged them to think and work differently and provided an opportunity for a simulated working experience that included working to a client brief; creating a real product; working to deadlines; and receiving client feedback.

Case study:

In one art and design department, there were regular opportunities for art and design students to work together on joint projects. For example, students on a national diploma in fashion designed and made all the costumes for the student production in performing arts. The fashion students were given a synopsis of the play and main characters in order to develop design ideas which they then presented to the performing arts students. When particular design ideas were chosen, the fashion students worked very closely with the performing arts students to make specific costumes for individual members of the cast, including all the necessary measuring, fitting and adjustments. They needed to take into account the practicalities of how certain fabrics would move, how the costumes would be seen under theatrical lighting and how the performers would be able to express their character while wearing them.

Graphic design students were given a project to design suitable packaging for a fashion accessory that had been designed by fashion students. The fashion students presented their designs and maquettes to the graphics students, who then developed a number of design ideas based on the product. These were in turn presented to the fashion students for

feedback and amended accordingly. Both sets of students gained practical knowledge and expertise from this 'client–designer' relationship.

51. Colleges made good use of end-of-year exhibitions, productions and performances to create opportunities for collaborative working. For example performing arts productions and fashion shows often involved students and staff from drama, dance, art and design, media and music. In the best developed examples, hair and beauty students were also involved in fashion shows and media shoots and travel and tourism students worked on events planning and marketing activities. One college involved construction students in set building at a professional film studio, where several subsequently gained employment.
52. End-of-year exhibitions and performances were also used very well to set the standard and high expectations for prospective or continuing students. Many colleges invited prospective students to attend these events and used it as a way of introducing them to the work of the department and getting new students to start to think about what they would be doing. Students at the end of their first year in college were encouraged to review and evaluate the work of the second year students, to prepare them for their next stage of development.
53. The interdisciplinary work seen in the survey was mostly based on a collaborative servicing approach. For example, media students filmed performing arts productions or music performances, during which they learned about camera use, lighting, and editing. Art and design students often made costumes, props and sets or publicity materials for productions or designed CD covers for music students' recordings.
54. Inspectors did not see examples of interdisciplinary projects where students from discrete subject areas were exploring the commonalities and differences between various art forms as a springboard to developing new ideas and work.

Notes

The survey was conducted between October 2007 and April 2008. A sample of 22 colleges was selected, comprising six sixth form colleges, 14 general further education colleges, one independent specialist college and one specialist college of art and design. These colleges were selected because the arts and media provision had been judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted in their previous inspection.

The visits were conducted by six HMI. The majority of time during the visits was spent evaluating examples of good practice suggested by each college and which were relevant to one or more of the four survey themes: creative teaching and learning; the development of technical and craft skills; developing students as practitioners; and interdisciplinary work. Evidence evaluated included lesson observations and scrutiny of course documentation, including curriculum area and

course level self-assessment reports; analyses of performance data; samples of students' work; and meetings with managers, teachers and students.

Useful websites

The Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The arts and media education section of QCA contains details of the wide range of qualifications in the subject and useful links to relevant awarding body websites; www.qca.org.uk.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's website has useful information on innovation and excellence in the post-16 learning and skills sector; www.lsis.org.uk.

The LSIS excellence gateway is for post-16 learning and skills providers. Here you will find examples of good practice, self-improvement and suppliers of improvement services plus materials to support teaching and learning:

- <http://excellence.lsis.org.uk>
- Ofsted Good Practice Database: <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/gpd>.

There are three sector skills councils whose work relates to the arts and media areas. These are:

- the Creative and Cultural Skills Council which covers the visual and performing arts; www.ccskills.org.uk
- Skillset which is responsible for the audio-visual industries; www.skillset.org
- Skillsfast which is responsible for the fashion and clothing, footwear and textiles industries; www.skillfast-uk.org.

The (DCSF) provides links to a range of learning resources that are useful in the teaching of arts and media courses post-16;
www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials.

The specialist creative and media diploma started in some colleges and schools in September 2008. More details on the qualification and specifications are available on these awarding body websites:

- www.edexcel.org.uk/quals/diploma/creative/
- www.ocr.org.uk/news/2007/item_88.html
- www.diplomainfo.org.uk/qualifications/creativeandmedia.html.

Further information on the wider 14–19 curriculum is available from the DCSF website at: www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=1.

Colleges participating in the survey

Amersham and Wycombe College

Barnet College
Castle College, Nottingham
Chesterfield College, Derbyshire
City of Bath College
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College*
Esher College
Godalming College*
Greenhead College, Kirklees*
Halesowen College, Dudley
Leicester College
Mid Cheshire College
New College, Telford
Newcastle College*
Newham Sixth Form College
Oldham College
Plymouth College of Art and Design
Richard Huish College, Somerset
South Birmingham College
Strode College, Somerset
Stroud College
Treloar College, Hampshire*

* colleges featured in the film for the survey

Appendix 1

Film extracts

1. Images of students' work. (3'02") <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp01>
2. High expectations of staff and students. (3'57")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp02>
3. Common philosophy and approach to arts education. (2'07")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp03>
4. Freedom and autonomy to manage the curriculum. (1'23")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp04>
5. Godalming College. Developing the fundamental skills. (2'57")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp05>
6. Developing creativity and innovation. (1'52")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp06>
7. Treloar College. Meeting individuals' needs. (4'04")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp07>
8. Newcastle College. Beyond the comfort zone. (4'26")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp08>
9. Inventive induction programme. (4'54")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp09>
10. Professional practice. (5'52")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp10>
11. High standards and success rates in the best colleges. (1'07")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp11>
12. Godalming College. Achieving the impossible – 100% grade As at A level for around 110 students each year. (0'47")
<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/amp12>