

Southampton Solent University

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 133878

Name of lead inspector: Harriet Harper HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 December 2011

Type of provider: Further Education in Higher Education

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Information about the provider

1. Southampton Solent University is a higher education (HE) institution offering primarily undergraduate and postgraduate awards. In 2009/10 it enrolled around 13,000 students on its HE courses and 1,833 on its further education (FE) provision.
2. The university provides FE in two distinctive areas of learning. The Warsash Maritime Academy (WMA), which has its own campus, offers a wide range of training and education for seafarers and for those intending to make a career in the maritime industry. The majority of students are White British. In 2009/10 there were around 1,400 students on FE programmes at the WMA, mostly on short courses. The majority were aged 19 years or over and around 90% were male.
3. Sport Solent, the university's sports and recreation service, provides a wide range of coaching courses. In 2009/10 approximately 400 students undertook FE water-based courses. Again, the majority of these students were White British and aged 19 or over. About 75% of the students were male.
4. Ofsted undertook a monitoring visit in April 2009. On this visit, inspectors agreed with the institution's own judgement that its FE provision was, at that time, good.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to 18)	453
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	1,364

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
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Capacity to improve	Grade 1
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Maritime Studies	1
Sport	1

Overall effectiveness

5. The university's FE provision is highly successful. Outcomes are outstanding. In both subject areas teaching is good and staff at all levels share an unwavering focus on ensuring that students achieve their goals. Consequently, almost all students are successful, regardless of their background, gender or ethnicity and cadets on full-time courses are prepared well for life at sea and further study. However, the explicit promotion of equality and diversity is a not a strong feature of the provision at the WMA.
6. Students on FE courses benefit from outstanding care, guidance, academic and personal support. Their safety and well-being are a priority for staff. Resources for both WMA and sports students are excellent and value for money is outstanding. Leadership and management are good. At the WMA the imposing credentials and expertise of staff secure an all-pervasive clarity of purpose. Their international standing in the maritime industry ensures that the university can steer changes in national policy and respond rapidly and highly effectively to developing industry needs.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are outstanding. Students on FE courses are highly motivated and develop very good vocational and study skills. A very high proportion of them successfully complete their courses and progress to the next stage in their careers and/or studies.
- Teaching is good. Tutors are experts in their subject area and have very high expectations of their students. The very best teaching is inspirational, but not all teaching is of such a high standard. In classes and practical sessions, tutors draw very effectively on their own professional experience. At the WMA they work in partnership with sponsoring companies to foster in each student an unremitting determination to succeed.
- Outstanding care, guidance, personal and academic support play a pivotal role in ensuring that students succeed. The high tutor-to-student ratio for practical sailing skills ensures that each student receives clear, individual feedback on their progress. Students are very well supported at the WMA and their academic progress is closely monitored, by both staff and sponsors, to ensure they are on track to succeed.
- The range of courses meets the needs of students and employers particularly well. Entry courses in nautical science and marine engineering provide coherent progression to higher education and professional certification. The range of short courses is excellent.
- The excellent range of partnerships brings demonstrable benefits for students. WMA tutors' wide-ranging and insightful knowledge of the shipping industry means that the needs of students, sponsors and employers are fully met.
- Leadership and management are good. The WMA is characterised by strength of leadership. Shared values promote a common culture of remarkable diligence, courtesy and an unswerving determination to succeed. The opportunity for FE students, in both maritime studies and sport, to study in a higher education environment affords many advantages, not least of which are heightened expectations and ambition.
- The safeguarding of students and cadets is good. Tutors and university staff respond swiftly and appropriately to any welfare issues. The safeguarding of students at sea is entrusted to the relevant shipping company. Employment checks on staff are carried out in a satisfactory manner. Safe working practices are commendable.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is a key priority for the university. Procedures for monitoring its work and the impact of its policies on students and staff are good. The equality scheme and the related objectives are robust. However, at the WMA, the active promotion of positive attitudes to equality and diversity is under developed and the take up of relevant training is low.

What does Southampton Solent University need to do to improve further?

- Provide systematic support to develop tutors' teaching skills, so that teaching is consistently of a high standard.
- Actively promote positive attitudes towards equality and diversity in all areas of the WMA's activities to equip students with the values espoused by the university.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being part of the WMA which has an excellent reputation within the maritime industry
- tutors who are experts in their subject/profession
- the virtual learning environment (MyCourse)
- the support from tutors
- comradeship at the WMA.

What learners would like to see improved:

- quality of food in the canteen
- the speed of the internet
- on-site living accommodation
- availability of sports facilities for WMA students.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

7. The university's capacity to make and sustain further improvements for its FE provision is outstanding. The university has maintained extremely high standards on FE maritime and water sports courses for the last three years. The quality of provision is very strong, with expert tutors, excellent support for students and exemplary links with relevant employers and regulatory bodies. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and, where necessary, promotes prompt and effective action.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

8. Almost all students who undertake FE courses at the university are successful. This very high standard has been maintained over the last three years. For those aged 19 or over, who represent the overwhelming majority of students, 99% successfully completed their course in 2010/2011. The proportion is lower for students aged under 19, but was still high at 94% in 2010/11.
9. There are no significant differences between the rates of retention and achievement for different groups of students analysed by gender, ethnicity or support needs. When retention declined on a marine engineering course in the previous academic year, primarily due to weaker attainment in mathematics, tutors and managers took swift action, with success, to implement appropriate improvements.
10. The development of students' economic and social well-being is exemplary. At the WMA, punctuality, relentless hard work and drive for success prevail. Full-time cadets are prepared very well for life at sea and further study at HE level. Students who undertake sailing courses gain valuable additional qualifications, giving them the edge in a competitive environment. They grow in self-esteem and develop the skills needed to work effectively in a team.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

11. Teaching is good. In the very best classes, some of which are outstanding, teachers explain clearly, illustrate topics well and challenge students to devise ways to solve problems. In these classes the pace is brisk enough to stimulate interest and tutors draw heavily on their own experiences as well as those of the students. Not all tutors are sufficiently skilful, though, in ensuring that their exposition is clear and that the questions they use are effective in checking students' understanding, particularly in theory classes.
12. The culture at the WMA is such that students quickly acquire the skills to learn independently. For some, this means they make extensive use of the MyCourse, the virtual learning environment, to prepare for classes in advance or as a revision tool. Others routinely attend additional mathematics classes or are

proactive in seeking out tutors for one-to-one support outside class time. Sailing students, too, are mature in their approach to gaining new knowledge and skills.

13. The range of courses at the WMA is entirely suitable for those following or planning a seafaring career. Full-time entry courses in nautical science and marine engineering provide an excellent bridge to higher level study and coveted certificate of competence. Programmes are designed to promote speedy progress and to balance theory and practice.
14. A very extensive range of short courses is fully compliant with relevant international standards. These provide excellent opportunities for professional updating. Such courses cover, for example, fire-fighting, safety, personal survival, proficiency in rescue boats and medical first aid. They enable students to meet the requirements of work in the shipping and off-shore industries.
15. The university works in partnership with local FE colleges to provide courses in water sports. Although the range of FE water sport courses is narrow, it meets the needs and interests of learners well. The courses provide students with the opportunity to gain qualifications in keel boat and power boating at beginner and intermediate level. This provides a progression route and enhances their main programme of study and offers progression for those with prior experience. For example, for those on advance level public services courses the qualifications help prepare them for employment.
16. Tutors at the WMA have an extensive and profound knowledge of the specific needs of the shipping industry. They work extremely closely with sponsors and employers to ensure that their requirements are fully met. University staff are represented nationally on the Merchant Navy Training Board and, as such, are hugely influential in the design of relevant qualifications. The university is admirably responsive to the rapidly changing needs of employers.
17. Close partnerships with an extremely wide range of organisations, sponsors and employers in the maritime industry allow the university to design and refine its courses. This cooperation ensures compliance with relevant national and international standards. The university sees imaginative partnerships as key to making a significant contribution to social justice and economic competitiveness.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

18. Leadership and management are good. FE courses are aligned closely with key areas in the university's HE provision of maritime studies and sport. The university is committed to progression and partnership. This brings clarity of purpose and direction. The university has made good progress in adapting its systems to embrace the highly flexible provision on the Warsash campus.

19. Leadership is particularly strong. The WMA is run like a ship. Students swiftly learn to respect those in command and their peers. The marine campus and wearing of naval uniforms instil in the students self-discipline, politeness, loyalty and pride in their achievements. The integration of FE students within an HE environment brings tangible benefits. Cadets set their sights from the outset on higher education and the professional certification required for a career as a Merchant Navy officer.
20. Governors provide clear direction. They monitor the quality of outcomes through the self-assessment report. They do not shy from challenging managers where appropriate. For example, they have insisted on more extensive training on safeguarding in accordance with the university's own procedures.
21. The university protects and safeguards its students well. The safeguarding policy is appropriate and reviewed regularly. The university's response to welfare concerns is prompt and appropriate. Liaison with relevant agencies is productive. Appropriate employment checks are made on those with regular and unsupervised access to students under the age of 18. With respect to safety, working practices are exemplary. Key personnel have had appropriate training, but the university has not yet trained all the relevant tutors to recognise signs of abuse or how to respond to disclosures.
22. The promotion of equality and diversity is a strategic priority. The university does much to celebrate diversity and its equality scheme draws together existing policies on race, gender and disability. There are clear roles, structures and responsibilities for assessing the impact of the university's work. Targets in the equality scheme are appropriate. They are derived from consultation and analysis of data relating to students and staff. One objective relates to the promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning.
23. However, at the WMA, the promotion of equality and diversity is not sufficiently well embedded in the ethos of the site or in the teaching, learning and assessment. While there are training opportunities relating to equality and diversity, these are voluntary. Comparatively few staff from Warsash have attended.
24. Tutors make good use of their students' views to enhance their courses. They have adapted the university's system of surveys to ensure they capture and respond to the views of those who leave for sea during the academic year. Class representatives, student representatives and a student forum help the university improve its work. Employers' views are integral to the design and evaluation of courses.
25. Arrangements for quality assurance and self-assessment are robust. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Each unit of work is evaluated thoroughly and systematically as it is completed, drawing on data and students' views. This brings high levels of accountability and allows improvements to be

made promptly. Action plans derived from self-assessment are not always sufficiently precise and success criteria can be vague.

26. The university appraises the quality of teaching through the use of proxy indicators, such as student satisfaction, pass rates and retention rates. It does not observe classes directly. Tutors actively engage in continuing professional development in order to keep up to date in their subject area. They readily debate with each other new developments and resources but are less comfortable discussing approaches to teaching and learning.
27. The university examines closely the cost effectiveness of courses. With outstanding success rates and progression to HE and employment, the FE provision gives very good value for money. Specialist resources and equipment are superb. However, the access FE students have to cutting-edge simulators, for example, is limited. Sustainability and protection of the environment are a priority for the university.

Subject areas

Maritime Studies

Grade 1

Context

28. In the current academic year, around 1,400 students have undertaken FE maritime programmes at the WMA, mostly on short courses. The WMA recruits around 90 students annually on to its full-time entry diploma courses in marine engineering and nautical science. On part-time and short courses, almost all students are over 19 years of age. On the entry diploma courses around one third of the cadets are aged 16 to 18. Fewer than 10% of the FE students are female.

Key findings

- Almost all students successfully complete the short courses. In fact, no students have failed the fire fighting and rescue and survival boat courses over the last few years. The small proportion of female students on FE courses achieve particularly well.
- On the entry diploma nautical science course over 90% of students were successful in 2010 and 2011, with the majority progressing to higher level programmes. Not as many were as successful on the marine engineering diploma in 2009, but staff recognised the underlying causes and took effective action to improve the provision.
- Students enjoy their time at the WMA. They set themselves high expectations and are proud of their work. They develop quickly and efficiently the maritime-related skills they need for employment and further study. They are conscientious and work hard to attain the levels of understanding and knowledge needed to progress.
- Teaching is good. Knowledgeable and experienced tutors plan well for classes where they often need to cover a significant amount of material in a relatively short time frame in order to meet certification requirements. They draw effectively on their own experiences as seafarers and blend practical and theory well. For example, in the fire ground, tutors teach the theory of fire fighting. They then demonstrate on real fires and give students the opportunity to extinguish the fires themselves. Students learn well from practical activities and from observing each other.
- Tutors' marking of written work is excellent and students quickly learn where they have made errors and what they need to do to correct them. The use of practical and other learning aids and equipment is good and in those classes where dedicated facilities are used, for example in fire fighting and boat work, it is excellent.
- Students benefit from outstanding care, guidance and support. Tutors give readily of their own time to support students. Additional mathematics sessions

are well attended. Very good academic support enables those who find particular topics difficult to get back on track quickly. Sponsoring employers liaise routinely with tutors to discuss and monitor each student's progress.

- Strategic partnerships with numerous large and high-profile employers have enabled the WMA to develop a rich curriculum that caters exceptionally well both for its full-time FE students and those who undertake short courses. The WMA has a significant national and international presence both within the maritime and offshore industries and within the regulatory bodies that determine training needs.
- Operational and strategic management are good. Provision at the WMA comes under meticulous scrutiny from a range of regulatory and professional bodies. Within a culture of continuous improvement that takes into full account the views of sponsoring employers and students, staff ensure that they maintain high standards. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Tutors keep up to date with developments in the maritime industry and with curriculum changes, but do not systematically share best pedagogic practice.
- Arrangements for health and safety are good and comply with industry standards. With its extensive support network, the WMA protects and safeguards its students well, although not all tutors have yet had safeguarding training. The safety and well-being of students at sea are deemed to be the concern of the shipping companies.
- Staff and students demonstrate respect for each other. Tutors have high expectations of all students, regardless of their backgrounds. They do not, though, place sufficient emphasis on the promotion of equality and diversity to ensure that students are confident in challenging, where appropriate, discrimination and stereotyping.

What does Southampton Solent University need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the very best professional teaching and assessment practice are identified systematically and disseminated across maritime disciplines.
- Actively promote positive attitudes towards equality and diversity in all areas of the WMA's activities to equip students with the values espoused by the university.

Sport

Grade 1

Context

29. Sport Solent offers water-based courses for students from local FE colleges as well as students on the university's HE courses. In the current academic year, some 362 learners have enrolled on Royal Yachting Association two-day courses at introductory and intermediate level, covering theoretical and practical aspects of keel boat and power boat sailing.

Key findings

- Almost all students complete their courses successfully. During lessons they make very good progress, developing new skills and gaining knowledge quickly. They develop excellent team working skills, build their confidence and support each other well to achieve tasks. In one lesson, for example, all participants learned how to gybe, despite high wind conditions.
- Most students attend the courses for leisure purposes although those on advanced level public services courses at a local college recognise the value of the qualifications to prepare them for future employment. Some are new to sailing and power boating, whilst others take advantage of the chance to develop further their existing skills and gain qualifications.
- All students work safely throughout lessons, using correct commands and wearing appropriate clothing, taking care for their own safety and that of other sea users and group members. Tutors reinforce safety aspects particularly well in both theory and practical lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good. Tutors provide very clear explanations and guidance. They make excellent use of students' time and regularly check students' understanding to ensure that the students develop very good skills, particularly during practical lessons. Tutors' proficient demonstrations help students to learn new skills quickly.
- The use of resources to support teaching and learning is excellent. Tutors make very effective use of information and learning technology to engage students in understanding the weather conditions and the implications for the practical sailing session to follow. Students understand what the charts show them about the conditions.
- Although tutors provide each student with a copy of the course text book, they do not always explain how their lessons link to the syllabus or show students how the lessons are linked to the assessment outcomes. Tutors do not always make clear to students how they will be assessed for their qualifications.
- A narrow range of well-focused FE provision, sitting within the context of a much broader range of courses, meets the needs and interests of students well. Partnership working with local colleges is good and provides students with an opportunity to gain qualifications in keel boat and power boating at beginner

and intermediate level. Southampton Solent is sufficiently flexible and responsive to change or extend courses if weather conditions are poor. Partnerships with community organisations and schools are limited.

- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Tutors give individual support for students who miss lessons to help them catch up. Students appreciate the extra tuition they receive and tutors support to help them develop their skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the qualification.
- Leadership and management are excellent. Students benefit from ongoing investment in equipment and resources. Tutors use their up-to-date vocational expertise well and attend regular training sessions and qualification updates to ensure that they maintain a high level of skill and competence in accordance with awarding organisation requirements. Tutors take safety, equality and diversity seriously and have attended appropriate training sessions. Tutors routinely seek, and act upon, the views of students.

What does Southampton Solent University need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tutors make explicit the relationship between theory, practical application and assessment tasks.
- Research community needs further in order to identify and respond to demand for a broader range of FE programmes.

Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the university's associate dean (enhancement), as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the university's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews. They looked at written work completed by students. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the FE subject areas offered.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Southampton Solent University
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		400	1,000
Overall effectiveness	1		
Capacity to improve	1		
Outcomes for learners	1		
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1		
How well do learners progress?	1		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1		
How safe do learners feel?	1		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>			
Quality of provision	1		
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1		
Leadership and management	2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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