



Press Release

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## Major Capital of Culture role for Leeds Arts University

Leeds Arts University has a major role to play in helping secure European Capital of Culture status in 2023, according to the city's Lord Mayor.

Coun Jane Dowson praised the range of facilities and courses available at the University during a recent tour of the Blenheim Walk campus in the city centre.

The Lord Mayor of Leeds met the University's Vice-Chancellor Professor Simone Wonnacott, along with students working in their studios.

"The facilities here are wonderful, and the students are getting such a superb breadth of experience," said Coun Dowson.

"There are so many areas here to study, such as fine art, fashion, illustration, animation, printed textiles and music.

"It's so important to have facilities like these in our city because art has such a huge part to play in the bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2023.

"The bid shows how ambitious we are to make Leeds an even more inspiring place to live, study and work."

Coun Dowson's visit was arranged to celebrate the university - formally Leeds College of Art - being granted full university status by the Privy Council last August. Leeds Arts University is now the only specialist arts university in the North of England.

Leeds Arts University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Simone Wonnacott, said: "It has been a pleasure to show the Lord Mayor around the award-winning facilities we're able to offer our students as a specialist arts university.

"Coun Dowson was particularly interested in the wide range of courses we offer, and the fact that students travel from across the globe to study here.

"It was also a good opportunity to update the Lord Mayor on the progress of our £22m state-of-the-art expansion on Blenheim Walk, which will open next summer and include new music and film studios."

**Picture Caption: Lord Mayor of Leeds Coun Jane Dowson tries her hand at screen printing at Leeds Arts University, assisted by Heather Ledbetter-Lyon, a Printed Textiles and Surface Pattern Design degree student.**

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## Editor's Notes

Founded in 1846 as the Leeds Government School of Art and Design, Leeds Arts University has contributed significantly to the development of art education in Britain and across the world. In 2016 the University was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and in 2017 was awarded full university status. Leeds Arts University has an impressive history of notable past students, including Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth who were students in 1919 and 1920. In later years Damien Hirst, Marcus Harvey, Eric Bainbridge, Clio Barnard and Georgina Starr all studied at the University, known then as the Jacob Kramer College. The University's recent graduates continue to win prestigious international awards year on year and enjoy successful careers in the creative industries. Leeds Arts University has been recognised for its industry standard facilities at the Whatuni awards (winners in 2014 and 2016, runner up 2017) and has recently been ranked the highest arts university in the UK, and the highest ranked university in Yorkshire for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2017.

The £22m expansion is being developed on the current car park area at Blenheim Walk, creating a five storey building, 6,000 square metres in size using a bespoke design drawn up with architects DLA Design. It will accommodate purpose-built art, design and performance facilities for increased student numbers and new courses, including BA (Hons) Filmmaking and BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance in 2018.

Specialist facilities will include a 230 seat auditorium, music, film and photography studios, and a larger specialist arts library. There will also be an open plan atrium-style entrance with a public exhibition gallery and coffee shop, together with an enterprise centre to further engage with regional businesses and the local and wider communities of Leeds, as part of our employability agenda for students and alumni. The building will have many sustainability features including solar energy panels and an urban roof garden.

For more information and images, contact Ian Rosser, PR & Communications Officer at [ian.rosser@leeds-art.ac.uk](mailto:ian.rosser@leeds-art.ac.uk) or on 0113 202 8044/0790 5055 163.

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