



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of ICMP Management Ltd t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, March 2016

### Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that ICMP Management Ltd t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (the Institute) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the February 2015 [Higher Education Review](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The Institute's current number of enrolled higher education students is 790, which represents a decrease of 70 students from the Higher Education Review in 2015.

3 The Institute has undergone three external reviews since the last QAA review: a Pearson Academic Management Review in March 2015; a University of East London revalidation event in April 2015; and a further University of East London validation event in February 2016. As a result, existing provision has been revalidated and six new programmes have been added to the Institute's offer: Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education and BA (Hons) Music Practice, validated in April 2015; and Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education and BA (Hons) Creative Music Production, validated in February 2016.

4 The Institute has also developed its Academic Committee into an Academic Board with three external non-executive members and has become a member of Guild HE.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The Institute provided an evaluative update to its action plan, which shows that it has further developed all five points of good practice and addressed the two recommendations from the previous review. Student evaluations show continuing satisfaction with most aspects of the learning environment. The Institute has further refined its good practice in auditions during admission and has provided more support for continuous professional development for its staff. It has enhanced learning resources for students and has broadened its engagement with the music industry. The Institute has further developed 'The Hub', both as good practice to enhance students' professional practice and career opportunities, and also to address the recommendation to maximise opportunities for industry engagement in quality assurance. It has also extended its periodic review processes to provide parity of monitoring for all of its programmes. Overall, the Institute's admissions and assessment of students is fair and effective. The response of the Institute, as shown through the action plan and supporting materials, demonstrates that acceptable progress is being made.

6 The Institute, after review and reflection, has further refined its audition processes and continues to build on the good practice identified in this area. It has provided further training for its staff and has removed its online portfolio submission to concentrate its focus

on in-person auditions and interviews. All applicants are offered an on-campus audition or interview and all of those who attend receive written feedback.

7 The Institute continues to develop its support for continuous professional development. Fifteen tutors will submit applications to become fellows of the Higher Education Academy in June 2016, which, if successful, will mean that the majority of Institute staff will be accredited by the target date of May 2017. Four members of staff are currently studying for Master of Music (MMus) degrees. Some staff will enrol with the University of East London for the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, beginning September 2016.

8 The Institute has enhanced its student learning resources by supporting the student body to set up a students' union and by enabling student access to staff. This includes opening up the Administration Office for longer hours, establishing a Help Desk, setting up individual student email accounts, and putting in place a Service Level Agreement to set standards for responding to student email. It has, together with its student representatives, contacted the National Union of Students and participated in a research project on Student Engagement at Alternative Providers through The Student Engagement Partnership, which is part funded by QAA.

9 The Institute has widened its engagement with the music industry by establishing an Industry Advisory Panel, which held its first meeting in January 2016. The Panel's first impact was its scrutiny of the proposal for the new BA (Hons) Creative Music Production degree, which included suggestions for improvement. It will recruit student representatives for its next meeting in May 2016.

10 The Institute continues to develop the reach and impact of The Hub, its forum for music industry engagement, which enhances students' professional practice and career opportunities by extending industry opportunities to its alumni and by developing professional networks between its past and present students. The Institute has reviewed The Hub activity and will evaluate its Embedding Employability pilot in 2016.

11 The Institute developed an in-house Pearson Periodic Review Policy and Procedure to cover its Pearson Education programmes, and, in November 2015, held a review event based on a critical evaluation document. The finding that the current level 5 BTEC Professional Diploma in Music (Performance) does not fit the Institute's overall offer, and the recommendation to offer other programmes validated by the University of East London - the Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education and BA (Hons) Music Practice - has clearly had an impact on the curriculum going forward. The Pearson review process now parallels the University of East London cyclical reviews for its validated provision.

12 The Institute's admissions procedures are outlined in its comprehensive Admissions Policy, which is reviewed annually by the Admissions Panel in light of the past year's activity. The Admissions Panel reviews against key Academic Quality Indicators and spot checks audition paperwork to ensure that the policy and processes are fit for purpose. All applicants who audition receive constructive written feedback from tutors, who continually enhance their feedback technique through training events.

13 The Institute requires non-native English speakers to verify that they have an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 5.5 overall, with a minimum of 5.0 in each component, and supports this with cross-references to programme specifications. Admissions Advisers, who are trained in UK Visa and Immigration procedures, carry out initial checks on documentation, and then verify results through the IELTS verification service, of which the Institute is a registered user.

14 The Institute's Admissions Team uses the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre system, the UCAS tariff point system, and its own audition and/or interview method to assess applicants' prior qualifications and their suitability to study the subject and academic level for which they apply. The Institute follows its awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's assessment and accreditation of prior learning policies, as outlined in their various checklists, and works closely with their appropriate external examiners and Link Tutors.

15 The Institute carries out its assessment with rigour and integrity. It ensures students' understanding of the assessment process by placing assessment statements in module specifications and, as students confirmed, by publishing them on the virtual learning environment. Staff also engage in discussion with students early in module sessions to clarify students' understanding of specific module assessments. Students' academic writing practices are developed through software, including online tools for plagiarism detection. Programme handbooks clearly cover academic misconduct and plagiarism, as outlined by the policies and practices of the relevant awarding body or organisation. Module teams agree and standardise across samples of student work to set the framework used for unit/module assessment, with sample double-marking sometimes taking place side by side rather than through blind marking. Students and staff confirmed that markers are not always identified on feedback, and that some students would like them to be. Internal and external reports verify that the Institute follows its awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's processes for internal and external verification of assessment.

16 The Institute provides four main forums to promote staff and student discussion and decision making on how the student experience can be enhanced: the Student Senate, the Programme Committee Meeting, the Academic Board, and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. The terms of reference, reporting lines and position within the Institute's committee structure are clearly set out in the Quality Manual. It articulates how students can engage in the Institute's quality assurance and enhancement systems, and how the Institute collects feedback (via module evaluations and surveys), considers it (at programme and institutional levels) and uses it to drive improvement. It recognises the need for continual improvement in its most recent self-evaluation document and includes feedback improvement in its accompanying action plan. Students appreciate feedback, but are sometimes confused about when and where feedback is collected and how it is used. The Institute also uses a Student Charter to make clear that feedback is an expectation of students, to help improve the student experience through partnership.

17 The Institute has had three external reviews since the last monitoring visit: a Pearson Academic Management Review in March 2015; a University of East London revalidation event in April 2015; and a University of East London validation event in February 2016. The outcome of the Pearson review was positive, with good general comments and three areas of exemplary practice. The University of East London events were also successful. The Institute used the revalidation event as a review, rather than simply an exercise, to repackage module delivery from 20 and 40 credits to 15 and 30 credits in line with the new University of East London academic framework. The outcome was that all programmes were revalidated and updated to current industry standards with only a few minor conditions. The new suite of Creative Music Production programmes was validated with no conditions.

18 Retention rates on programmes vary, with the lowest being BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance at 74 per cent; BA (Hons) Creative Musicianship at 73 per cent; Certificate of Higher Education Creative Musicianship at 78 per cent; MMus Popular Music Performance at 77 per cent; and Higher National Certificate Music (Performance) at 75 per cent, although some programmes have low cohort numbers. In all but one of these programmes, the Higher National Certificate Music (Performance), some students either

transferred or were admitted by advanced prior learning to other programmes within the Institute. The Institute has recognised the need to improve its retention and has addressed it in its most recent self-evaluation and action plan documents. The Institute identifies two reasons for student withdrawal: first, support issues are not being picked up early enough; and second, in a minority of cases, the audition processes may not adequately test an applicant's commitment to study music at higher education level. The Institute has reviewed processes and identified two further action points. The first is to instigate a formal student withdrawal interview protocol and paperwork. The second is to develop a more rigorous and consistent pastoral and academic support system (tutorials). Both will be implemented in the coming year.

## **Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

19 The Institute continues to use a range of external reference points relating to academic standards and quality for higher education, including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*; the Qualifications and Credit Framework; and its awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's procedures. The University of East London's revalidation report contains specific reference to, and discussion of, the Subject Benchmark Statement for Music. The Institute maps its Academic Quality Indicators against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and regularly reviews them. Its annual Observation of Teaching and Learning uses a form that has been mapped to the Higher Education Academy Professional Standards Framework and the Quality Code.

## **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

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

21 The monitoring visit was carried out by Professor Edward Esche, Coordinator, and Ms Deborah Trayhurn, Reviewer, on 8 March 2016.

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