



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Central Film School, May 2018

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the Central Film School (the School) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The School continues to deliver programmes in filmmaking and screenwriting validated by the University of Gloucestershire. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 69 registered students. The newly validated MA Directing Fiction enrolled six students in 2017. The Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) report stated that there were approximately 70 students studying at the School. There are 14 full-time staff members and 12 freelance tutors. The School appointed a Head of Curriculum during 2016-17, and a new Chief Executive Officer in 2017-18.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School has made acceptable progress, taken firm ownership of its own Action Plan, and successfully completed further actions in addition to the recommendations of the HER (AP). These are now fully integrated into its overall strategy. The School's Quality Assurance and Academic Management Meetings (QAAM), previously the Senior Management Team meetings, scrutinise the action plan monthly to check progress and currency before reporting to the Academic Board. The School has fully implemented all the recommendations from the HER (AP) report and the further actions contribute to ensuring the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of the quality of student learning opportunities.

4 The School has worked closely with all stakeholders to revise and expand current academic regulations so now they are fully comprehensive. The academic appeals, complaints procedures and students' terms and conditions are clear, accessible and meet in full, the regulatory and statutory requirements (paragraph 5). The School thoroughly monitors and evaluates the impact of attendance patterns on the development and achievement of all students (paragraph 6). Students' academic development is fully supported by the extensive study skills material on the virtual learning environment (VLE) (paragraph 8). Students with additional learning needs are supported by personal tutors and the specialist staff (paragraph 7). The deliberative structures of the School include full student representation and evidence of their engagement in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (paragraph 9). Moreover, the features of good practice noted in the HER (AP) have been further developed and embedded together with other examples (paragraph 10). These make positive contributions to the School's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision.

5 The School has worked closely with staff, students and the awarding body to revise and expand current academic regulations so they are now fully comprehensive. The academic appeals, complaints procedures and students' terms and conditions are clear, accessible and fully meet regulatory and statutory requirements. The students confirm that they have a presentation on the regulations at induction and have signposted access to them on the VLE. They say they received sufficient information to make an informed decision to study at the School and that the information produced by the School is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

6 The School systematically monitors and evaluates attendance patterns of all students. The Academic Board and the QAAM receive detailed and frequent reports for monitoring and evaluating attendance by module. The attendance monitoring spreadsheet demonstrates acceptable attendance patterns in 2016-17 and this was confirmed by the current students.

7 The School has developed a fully proactive approach to the identification and support for students with additional learning needs based on the Student Disability and Learning Difficulty Policy. The students confirmed that they had the opportunity to self-declare any additional needs at admission in addition to a full discussion at their induction. There is a new system of personal tutorials, the appointment of specialist staff, referrals to a dyslexia diagnostic organisation and the support of the awarding body.

8 The School has reviewed its approach to the provision of study skills and a comprehensive programme is now embedded across all modules in all programmes. There is a dedicated library budget for specific academic skills tutorials and extensive study skills material on the VLE which fully support the students' academic development. The external examiner confirmed that academic standards are comparable, if not higher in some cases, with comparable awards in other institutions.

9 The School takes deliberate and positive steps to engage students further in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience which staff and students confirm are fully embedded in the deliberative structures. There are student members of the Academic Board and the QAAM. The Course committee meetings specifically provide students with the opportunity to take part in organisational and developmental processes. The students confirm that the student representative system has had significant impact on the enhancement of their programmes and are able to give examples of how their opinions have been acted upon, such as changes to module content and assessment schedules.

10 The School has further developed and embedded good practice which makes positive contributions to the quality of student learning opportunities. Students particularly referred to the good practice of reviewing the previous cohort's module evaluation questionnaire results and consequently making recommendations for changes to the Head of Curriculum and the QAAM. In addition, the School has maintained and enhanced its programmes, which provide a wide range of practical and professional skills relevant to the filmmaking industry. This has been achieved through embedding Personal and Professional Development in all level learning outcomes, the introduction of a documentary course, technical workshops, and the considered, sustained and close engagement with film industry practitioners and the tutors who are practising professionals. To help assure the professional currency of programmes, programme leaders identify clear industry links and opportunities for industrial experience which are made available to all students. The staff training videos continue to be produced to a high standard and staff have access to the awarding body's study skill videos available on the VLE. Together with the weekly training emails, this is a manifestation of comprehensive staff development with needs identified through annual staff appraisal and teaching staff observations.

11 The School has robust admissions procedures which are published on its website including the admissions policy, details of the application process and the admission appeals process. This policy clearly identifies essential and desirable admissions criteria. Students can apply either directly to the School or through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Services. The Head of Curriculum manages the interviews of all applicants either personally or by telecommunication software and considers their personal statement to assess an applicant's genuine intention to study. An applicant's proficiency in English language is assessed through internationally recognised language proficiency test scores. These processes provide an effective basis for assessing an applicant's prior qualifications, their ability to study their subject, academic ability and their motivation for learning. The QAAM standing agenda item reviews all standard operating procedures monthly including that of admissions. Specialised software processes determine the timings of actions such as acceptance letters. Any non-traditional applicants are assessed in accordance with the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL). Students confirm that the admissions process is transparent, supportive and provides equality of opportunity.

12 The School's monitoring and review processes are comprehensive and rigorous. The Academic Calendar identifies the annual quality monitoring cycle. Strategic oversight is through the Academic Board. The awarding body has oversight through the Partnership Boards, the Annual Partnership Review report and the Continuous Enhancement Review. There is continuous quality monitoring through the School's deliberative committee structures - which feed into the annual monitoring event - and Academic Board. The School's thorough annual monitoring procedure is informed by qualitative information including student feedback, minutes of meetings, tutor module reviews and external examiner reports. The process uses quantitative data for student progression, retention, assessment and reassessment, and degree classification.

13 The School monitors data systematically within its annual monitoring procedures as identified in paragraph 12. The data demonstrates that retention progression and achievement rates are high - always between 80 and 100 per cent. Small cohorts could expose statistical anomalies and data could be significantly affected by individual cases, for example, the mean numbers enrolled on the BA Screen writing has been annually about eight and the 2017 enrolment of the MA is six. Final year completion and pass rates remain high and trends consistent.

Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

14 The School demonstrates effective engagement with relevant academic and professional external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). It continues to build on its use of the Quality Code in the development and revision of policies and procedures in the new Student Engagement Strategy and the teaching and learning strategy. The School's programmes are routinely aligned to the relevant chapters of the Quality Code and draw effectively on Subject Benchmark Statements. As there is no postgraduate QAA Subject Benchmark for film, development of the MA Social Impact Documentary Filmmaking programme has been mapped against the SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Level 7 (2010). The external examiner confirms that academic standards adhere to the benchmarks and the School uses them well for future programme development.

15 Staff make regular use of a range of professional links to inform the curriculum and its delivery. These links include specialists drawn from the range of disciplines within the film industry, graduates, employer contacts, visiting contributors from the film production world,

and professional associations. The School has also drawn on guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the Competition and Markets Authority.

Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by David Malachi, Reviewer, and Catherine Fairhurst, Coordinator, on 30 May 2018.

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