Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of ICMP Management Ltd t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, March 2018

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 the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (ICMP) has made commendable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the 2017 Annual Monitoring Visit.

2   Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2   ICMP continues to deliver programmes in contemporary music validated by the University of East London (UEL), Pearson and the University of South Wales (USW). At the time of the monitoring visit there were 894 students, an increase from 815 at the previous monitoring visit in 2017. This increase is due to progression into the second year of the new Certificate of Higher Education and BA (Hons) in Creative Music Production and the increase in enrolment of students onto the MA in Songwriting, all of which were approved in 2016. There have been no material changes.

3   Findings from the monitoring visit

3   ICMP has made commendable progress with the implementation of its action plan. It has a thorough and evidence-based approach to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the student experience. This is demonstrated by the now well-embedded quality cycle. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is fully integrated into the overall institutional strategy (see paragraph 10). ICMP has addressed targets robustly and dynamically, basing actions on internal and external review outcomes. The institution's commitment to exceeding expectations in fulfilling its action plan has resulted in many positive impacts. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy greatly enhances the provision of learning opportunities, teaching activities and assessment practices (paragraphs 4-6). The student experience is further enhanced by comprehensive arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their full potential (paragraph 7). Moreover, the features of good practice from the 2015 Higher Education Review have been sustained and further developed. They make a positive contribution to the academic quality and are worthy of wider dissemination (paragraph 8).

4   ICMP's aspirational Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides for activities that systematically enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. ICMP has successfully migrated to a new virtual learning environment (VLE) during 2017. Teaching staff use it extensively as a key learning tool and students appreciate access through a mobile application.

5   There is a comprehensive continuous personal development framework which ensures that staff are qualified, supported and developed. In 2016-17 a cohort of 14 staff completed UEL's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which led to accreditation by the Higher Education Academy. The Observation of Teaching and Learning Policy identifies best practice and areas for development, including peer

observation. An ambitious research agenda aims for teaching and learning to be underpinned by research. There are six annual research development seminars and the research outputs or professional practice feed into ICMP's annual research conference. One impact of these learning and teaching initiatives is a significant improvement in the results of the National Student Survey (NSS). There has been a 12-point gain of overall student satisfaction during 2016-17. All students report satisfaction with their BA (Hons) Music Business programme. The students say that the teaching is excellent and that they would definitely recommend their programme. External examiners also commented on the high standards of teaching by enthusiastic tutors.

6   ICMP consistently and transparently applies the processes detailed in its Assessment Pack. There is full training in assessment methods and grading for staff. External examiners confirm that the ICMP teaching team applies rigorous assessment methods across the curriculum, aided by standardised rubrics, and makes excellent use of the VLE. Robust standards are reinforced by very rigorous internal moderation processes. The module handbooks contain assessment details and grading criteria. Students show their assessment satisfaction through the NSS, focus groups and module feedback. They are very complimentary about the constructive and timely feedback they receive.

7   ICMP has effective arrangements for student support and high quality resources which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential. External examiners confirm that there is a wide range of help and support available to students, and this is clearly explained in the Student Handbook. The fully integrated Careers Hub provides conventional employment advice as well as access to music and performance networks, guest speakers and a careers panel. Students appreciate the comprehensive, supportive and informative tutorials. These include topics such as study skills, professional resilience, contemporary music debates, and professional branding. Students also greatly value the digital mental health and wellbeing service and the availability of a famous mindfulness technique. ICMP also has a very close relationship and interaction with the music industry. The Industry Advisory Panel meets annually and advises on curriculum development, for example on the currency of module content and the application of specialist software.

8   ICMP has further developed and fully embedded features of good practice noted in the 2015 HER report. Features of good practice that make a positive contribution to academic quality include the experts directory, which identifies experts from within the teaching team as mentors. This is particularly useful in supporting part-time tutors. Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) are scrutinised through a process of peer review by another programme leader, which further strengthens this quality process. There is also an action register which records matters raised by students from all sources. This enables ICMP to maintain institutional oversight of student issues, track progress of these matters, and report actions taken back to students. In order to promote their professional potential, students and graduates have access to the ICMP match funding initiative for innovative business ideas. ICMP also has a wide and extensive range of external contacts (see paragraph 14) offering independent expertise and objective advice.

9   ICMP's admissions procedures are robust and provide an effective basis on which to admit students to contemporary music programmes. The admissions and Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) processes are available on the ICMP website. Students confirm that they received accurate information about admissions. The Academic Board and the Admissions Panel ensure that admissions criteria are met and that the annual admissions processes are reviewed against Academic Quality Indicators (AQI) data. An independent Visa Compliance Committee examines all CAS applications to ensure that applications are in line with ICMP policy and legal obligations. There are explicit requirements for English language competence at both undergraduate and postgraduate

levels. Trained teaching staff, supported by the admissions team, conduct selection auditions and interviews and provide detailed feedback to applicants whether they are successful or not. Students commented very favourably on the efficiency of the application and admissions process, with useful open days and auditions with detailed feedback.

10   ICMP has adopted a considered and comprehensive strategic approach to its quality cycle. Programme teams develop an AMR with input from students, which includes a focused action plan with measurable targets. These reports feed into an organisational Quality Improvement Plan which is updated regularly with live action tracking. The QIP contributes to a reflective and self-critical self-evaluation. The action plans contribute to the functional Annual Operational Plan and are included in ICMP's Strategic Plan, which is passed to the Executive Committee and Corporate Board for oversight and endorsement. The Corporate Board reviews the Strategic Plan quarterly. ICMP also undertakes a four-yearly periodic review which includes external advisers.

11   ICMP has an effective system of student representation. Each programme has student representatives who sit on Programme Committees and consider AQIs, AMRs and external examiner reports. Students are represented by the Student President and Vice President on appropriate institutional operational committees. There is a process for training student representatives with training materials and handbook. The Student President chairs the Student Senate, which comprises representatives from each level of each programme and the Quality Manager, with other senior members of staff invited where appropriate. ICMP operates an open-door policy with staff regularly accessible to students, which enables issues to be discussed informally and resolved effectively. Students commented very positively about their views being valued and acted upon.

12   ICMP monitors and analyses data regularly and systematically. The AMRs include qualitative and quantitative data for each module and programme. These are retention, progression, achievement and metrics from the NSS and the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys. ICMP plans to measure students' learning gain and is committed to using the data to further enhance their programmes and the support available to students. Programme teams carefully analyse and report on reasons for withdrawal and non-completion. Retention rates have increased across all programmes and are now at 87 per cent, with a range of 75 per cent to 100 per cent. The student satisfaction data show an overall improvement across all programmes. ICMP conscientiously addresses issues identified by the data.

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

13   ICMP demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points. ICMP bases all its quality assurance and enhancement processes on the Expectations and best practice indicators established within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The programme specifications for the UEL and USW awards align with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. For Pearson programmes, ICMP chooses predefined units which align to the FHEQ.

14   As well as the Industry Advisory Panel, ICMP has an extensive range of external contacts which provide impartial and independent advice and assist in meeting UK expectations for higher education. Teaching staff are able to gain insights into practice across the sector by working as external examiners and in the performance business. The external examiner for BA (Hons) Music Business confirms that the real-world delivery and professional reflection assists in improving student performance.

15   ICMP is able to refer to further external reference points by subscribing to QAA, OIA, HESA and HEFCE. ICMP is represented on the HESA Data Futures programme body and Prevent working groups, the UK Quality Code revision consultation group, QAA benchmarking panel, and Guild HE.

5   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 Millard Parkinson, Reviewer, and Catherine Fairhurst, Coordinator, on 20 March 2018.