Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of ICMP Management Ltd t/a The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance, March 2019

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) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the March 2018 monitoring visit.

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2   ICMP delivers programmes in contemporary music awarded by the University of East London (UEL), Pearson and the University of South Wales (USW). Since the last monitoring visit ICMP has ended its partnership with USW and programmes delivered in collaboration with it are currently being taught out. There are 963 students, an increase from 894 at the time of the previous visit. This increase is due to slight increases in enrolment on the master's programmes and progression on to the final year of the BA (Hons) Creative Music Production, validated in 2016.

3   Since the last monitoring visit ICMP has redeveloped its campus and has consolidated its estate into a single extended building adjacent to its former premises. The new development has enabled ICMP to extend the library facilities, improve the equipment loans service to students, open the building for longer periods, and facilitate access to the Academic Support Office for students by locating this on the ground floor. A part-time Subject Specialist Librarian and a full-time Student Engagement Administrator have been appointed since the last visit. There are 15 permanent and 77 hourly paid teaching staff.

4   A new BA (Hons) in Music Business and Entrepreneurship was validated in 2018 by UEL and enrolment on the new programme will begin in September 2019.

Findings from the monitoring visit

5   ICMP is making commendable progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. Actions arising from its own comprehensive cycle of planning, monitoring and review are being taken forward effectively. ICMP actively achieves an external perspective to both maintain and improve the student experience and ensure that governance reflects sector best practice (paragraphs 6, 7 and 18-19). The good practice identified in the 2015 Higher Education Review has been maintained and built on. ICMP effectively supports the development of staff and is currently working to further develop teaching and learning underpinned by research and scholarly activity (paragraph 8). A range of mechanisms facilitate student engagement and feedback on the enhancement of learning resources and the learning experience (paragraph 9). Student learning opportunities and employment prospects are effectively enhanced through extensive industry links and the provision of employment and careers services, which now include skills and careers planning tutorials embedded in all programmes (paragraph 10). The audition process has been further developed to assist applicants and admissions staff (paragraph 13). There are

effective admissions and assessment policies and procedures which align with the Expectations of the relevant sections of the Quality Code (paragraphs 11-16).

6   Policies and procedures for ensuring the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the student experience operate within a culture of improvement, which is critically reflective, evidence based and effective. An ongoing Strategic Plan and the Corporate Plan identify the overall aims of ICMP and the annual self-evaluation document and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) evidence a comprehensive approach to the management and monitoring of standards and quality. These processes are complemented by cyclical periodic reviews of programmes to ensure the currency of provision. Academic Board and the Corporate Board maintain oversight of ICMP's academic and operational committees respectively and all policies and procedures are reviewed annually during ICMP's Policy Week.

7   Outcomes of the quality cycle are evidenced by quantitative and qualitative indicators of achievement including survey results, external examiner reports, student feedback and validation reports. A culture of dissemination also permeates quality enhancement and reports at all levels highlight good practice for wider communication or further staff development.

8   ICMP provides high levels of support for continuous professional development for all staff. Pedagogic development centres on the Observation of Teaching and Learning Policy and annual reports on the observation process draw out targeted themes for improvement. These themes are further developed during the Learning and Teaching conference. Work is underway to develop a framework to capture the skills and research activity of staff to provide a base from which to plan the further development of research and professional practice. External examiners note the commitment of staff to pedagogic development and Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) Fellowship as well as their individual development as professional practitioners.

9   There is an extensive range of mechanisms that enable an effective response to enhancing learning resources for students. Students are actively engaged with the enhancement of learning resources through, for example, consultation on the Strategic Plan and providing feedback on the recent extension of premises and associated learning resources. The Facilities Manager attends all programme committees. Students praise the varied and effective lines of communication which exist between students and staff, which include a regular cycle of surveys, meetings with programme teams, tutors fast-response time to emails and queries, and the availability of academic support staff. External examiners also note the responsiveness of course teams to student feedback.

10   The breadth of engagements with the music industry effectively improves the quality of student learning opportunities and future employment prospects. The awarding bodies and organisation and external examiners comment positively on ICMP's links with industry, the use of industry guest sessions and the availability of opportunities for students to engage with companies and eminent entrepreneurs in the field. ICMP's Careers and Industry Hub provides mentoring, events and networking opportunities for students. The work of the 'Hub' has recently been extended and now includes embedding skills and career planning tutorials in all programmes.

11   ICMP has a detailed Admissions Policy and robust admissions procedures. The integrity of the admissions process is ensured through the implementation of the comprehensive and regularly evaluated Admissions Policy, the consideration of data to evidence the effectiveness of the admissions process and the provision of staff development in the context of admissions. The Admissions Panel confirms programme entry requirements and is responsible for the accuracy of public information guided by a Public Information

Policy which is reviewed annually by Academic Board. Where responsibility for aspects of the admissions process has been retained by the awarding bodies and organisation the team found that the responsibilities held by ICMP are clearly understood and documented.

12   The work of the Admissions Panel is supported by the Visa Compliance Committee (VCC) which reports to the Executive Committee and liaises with all ICMP departments to ensure that policy and practice are fit for purpose in the context of UK Visas and Immigration. In addition to appropriate academic qualifications the VCC ensures that prospective students have the appropriate certificated evidence of English language and/or evidence of study and assessment in English at level 3. The VCC also maintains oversight of agent recruitment, carrying out evaluations according to a suite of key performance indicators for the different agents and maintaining records of live, dormant and no longer used agents.

13   The management of auditions has been reviewed and developed further during 2018. Changes have been introduced to improve assessment of candidates' holistic suitability for the programmes and identify additional support needs. Students confirmed that information relating to admissions is accessible and clear and that the process of interview and audition helped them to make a decision as to the suitability of their proposed course.

14   ICMP operates a robust assessment process overseen by the Learning Teaching and Assessment committee, the programme committees and the awarding bodies and organisation. The assessment policy is embedded within ICMP's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Guidance on policy and principles and exemplars of good practice are provided to both staff and students within the Assessment Pack and the Guide to Assessment Practice. The assessment guidance was created during the 2016-17 academic year and has now been in operation for one full academic cycle. Evaluation of data obtained from ICMP's National Student Survey scores confirm the success of the initiative as well as areas for ongoing action.

15   External examiners and the awarding bodies and organisation report sound assessment procedures and have praised the rigour and criticality with which the process of setting, marking and moderating marked assignments is carried out. The imaginative design and range of non-traditional assessments across the programmes has also been commended by external examiners for developing an understanding of industry approaches and benchmarks. Exemplars of assessment practice provided within the Assessment Pack have had the additional benefit of encouraging tutors to use the assessment and feedback process to flag academic skills resources available for students.

16   Equality and parity of student access to assessment is ensured through the design of programme content and assessment activity, which is clearly contextualised and includes a range of intellectual and practical exercises linked to students' areas of specialism. External examiners have praised this feature for providing relevant learning in a fast-moving industry. Additional support requirements are identified during a pre-enrolment interview and ongoing support is provided by ICMP's Disability and Well-being Team if required. ICMP also makes effective use of the virtual learning environment to support learning and assessment. Information about academic misconduct is introduced during induction and via programme handbooks. Students comment very positively on the timely and useful information provided on assessment, the relevance of the assignments, the accessibility of staff and the availability of formative feedback on their work.

17   ICMP monitors and analyses data systematically throughout the year. Annual monitoring reports include qualitative and quantitative data for each module and programme and ICMP uses data derived from the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework benchmarks and returns to HESA to monitor and improve retention and

completion. Retention for students on all programmes in 2017-18 is 90 per cent compared to 85 per cent in 2016-17. The retention rate for students on the three year BA (Hons) programmes who completed their studies in 2017-18 is 73 per cent and the pass rate is 88 per cent. Retention on the one year MA programmes is 100 per cent for both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 cohorts. The pass rate on the full-time MA programme in 2017-18 is 77 per cent compared to 92 per cent in 2016-17. Student attendance is monitored systematically and a variety of mechanisms is in place to identify and support students at risk of leaving or failing. ICMP is using its internal monitoring processes, as well as participating in discussion with validating partners and higher education sector organisations, to monitor trends in degree classification.

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

18   ICMP demonstrates highly effective engagement with a wide range of relevant external reference points to help assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Quality assurance and processes for programme design, approval and review ensure alignment with the relevant Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), while also taking account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the Higher Education Credit Framework and Subject Benchmark Statements. The recently validated BA (Hons) Music Business and Entrepreneurship demonstrates systematic engagement with external reference points in programme design and setting academic standards. Since the last monitoring visit ICMP has been actively involved in consultation and discussion relating to the revised Quality Code and internal briefings on the Code have been circulated to all staff.

19   ICMP draws extensively on its strong industry links in the design and delivery of its programmes. In addition to its Industry Advisory Panel which includes external representation, ICMP makes effective use of the wide-ranging experience of its tutors who continue their professional practice within the music industry as well as acting as external examiners. ICMP is actively engaged with a number of sector networks including GuildHE and Independent HE. Substantial work has been undertaken in preparation for registration with the Office for Students (OfS) through, for example, the production of a Widening Access and Participation Statement, a Student Protection Plan, review of governance arrangements, and review of information in accordance with Consumer Protection Law. ICMP received confirmation of its registration with the OfS on 10 October 2018.

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 Dr Elizabeth Smith, Reviewer, and Dr Judith Foreman, QAA Officer, on 21 March 2019.