



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of LCCM AU UK Ltd trading as London College of Creative Media and LCCM, November 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 LCCM AU UK Ltd trading as the London College of Creative Media and LCCM (the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The College has 261 students currently enrolled compared to 258 in 2017-18. The majority are studying on the BMus Music Performance and Production programme with smaller cohorts on the Cert HE Music Performance, Cert HE Creative Music Practice, BA Music Industry Management, BA Creative and Professional Writing and MA Creative Entrepreneurship programmes, all awarded by the Open University (OU). In addition, modules on the BMus and BA programmes are offered to practitioners as continuing professional development, with the option of OU credit outside of a terminal award. A new partnership has been established with Falmouth University, a specialist creative arts institution, to deliver a BA Creative Music Technology programme under a franchise arrangement.

3 Specified assets of the College were bought by AU Bidco Limited and transferred to LCCM AU UK Limited in January 2018. Both companies are 100 per cent owned by Global University Systems BV (GUS). As of 12 January 2018, the legal operator of the College became LCCM AU UK Limited (the legal name). This has led to changes in the governance of the College with a new Board of Directors, replacing the previous Governors, with the new Chair undertaking a review of governance and a revised Governance Handbook put in place. Whilst this process led to inevitable uncertainty for staff, the effect on students was minimal with little disruption to their studies other than a loss of one week's teaching time, made up later in the term. The Principal is no longer a shareholder of the College. There are currently seventeen members of staff on full contracts, thirteen full-time and four part-time and forty, two-hourly paid staff. There are also five full-time Programme Consultants working on recruitment who are employed by GUS.

4 The College has moved to a single new site replacing its previous two sites. This is in the purpose-built Music Box building which includes teaching, technical and performance spaces with an increase of physical space from 10,000 square feet in the previous sites, to 22,000 square feet, and significant investment in new equipment.

Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College has maintained the good practice identified in the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) November 2016 report and has made further enhancements to the three areas (paragraph 6). The College continues to support ongoing progress on the three recommendations, which were reported, in the annual monitoring report 2017, to have

been addressed. For example, student representation has been added to preliminary validation panels, the complaints policy and procedure has been reviewed and further refinements have been made to the risk analysis procedure for performance venues external to the College premises (paragraph 7). The College has effective internal monitoring processes to identify areas for action to further enhance its higher education provision (paragraph 8). These processes have resulted in a review of the module curriculum for professional practice, the development of an area in the new building for creative writing, the introduction of an Academic Standards and Ethics Committee (amongst other things for approving master's students' research proposals) and improving student response rates to internal surveys (paragraph 8 and 10). The admissions process continues to be robust, systematic and thorough with a review having taken place over the 2017-18 academic year resulting in enhancements to the audition process (paragraph 11 and 12). The College developed its own assessment policy which is aligned to the Open University's regulations (paragraph 13). The College's assessment policy provides staff with procedures for marking and internal moderation with external examining by the Open University (paragraph 13). The nature of assessments and the integrity of the assessment process means that the College can be assured that the work is genuinely that of the student (paragraph 14).

6 The good practice of the student induction programme has been further enhanced through the introduction of Life in the UK sessions. Feedback on induction demonstrates that students feel that they are well prepared for their course of study and that the study skills workshops are valuable. The College has continued its good practice of providing student-centred learning through peer support, group work and skill-sharing initiatives. The Student Committee looks to extend its remit to run new music nights for students. The considered, sustained and close engagement with music industry practitioners ensures the effective and coherent transition of students through and beyond higher education. Students are provided with masterclasses and a variety of guest lecturers across the music and creative industries which are highly valued.

7 The College continues to increase the range and effectiveness of student engagement activities. This includes a wide range of extracurricular activities, improvements in student response rates to surveys and increased attendance by students at the staff/student forum. Students reported that these forums should be publicised well in advance to get higher attendance. The College has continued progress to implement the monitoring process for information provided to students. This includes updating the College's Public Information Policy and the provision of a new web-based service which provides a single centralised resource for students. At the time of the visit, the original LCCM Cloud was not functioning fully due to external interference - to address this, plans are being finalised to develop a new virtual learning environment platform.

8 The module curriculum for Professional Practice was reviewed taking into account feedback from both students and staff. This has enabled a better transition from Professional Practice 1 to Professional Practice 2 where the latter was regarded as insufficiently demanding for students. Feedback from external examiners stating that students' music sight reading skills could be improved has been addressed by the College. The College's new building has permitted the development of a new area for teaching creative writing as well as a quiet study space. An Academic Standards and Ethics Committee has been established, as part of the College's new governance arrangements. The terms of reference for this new committee are provided in the Governance Handbook and the first meeting is planned for spring 2019. It is too early for the College to evaluate the impact of the Academic Standards and Ethics Committee.

9 The College continues to make efforts to reduce non-completion rates, which are mostly regarded as legacy issues arising from the design of the Certificate in Higher Education and a previous HNC programme (paragraph 15). In the past some students on

the CertHE courses have been interested in using parts of the course for their professional development rather than wanting to achieve the overall award. To address this and provide professional development opportunities, the College created a new Music Development Programme which provides for modules to be taken for credit on a free-standing basis.

10 To improve student response rates to internal satisfaction surveys the College has reverted to paper questionnaires which students complete in class. This has resulted in response rates increasing from 20 per cent to 60 per cent. The College has identified three areas for improvement for the 2018-19 academic year: communication with students; room booking and timetabling; and maintenance of musical equipment. These three areas have been raised by students through the Staff-Student Forum. The latter two areas had been addressed. However, students reported the need to improve communication between staff and students, especially in relation to events and matters outside of their programme of study. Staff recognised this as an area to work on and plan the introduction of a newsletter to assist in this area.

11 The College operates a robust, systematic and thorough admissions process that involves three main stages. Full-time prospective students apply through UCAS, and part-time directly to the College. Student Advisers check qualifications, interest in the subject and any relevant work experience. This is followed by scrutiny of the personal statement, checks on qualifications and personal details by the Admissions team. The Admissions team then refer the application to the appropriate Programme Leader who assesses the prospective student through interviews and auditions. For applicants whose first language is not English, the College requires Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Certificate (CEFR) Level B2 and C1 for undergraduate and postgraduate courses respectively. The use of interviews, auditions and portfolios allows the College fully to assess the intention to study and ensures that the applicant is applying for an appropriate course of study. Students found the admissions process worked well and was a valuable experience prior to starting their course of study.

12 The College reviews its admissions policy and procedures on an annual basis. A major review and revision took place over the 2017-18 academic year to align with the UK Quality Code of Higher Education (Quality Code), *Chapter B2*. This involved changes to the audition process by including more staff and introducing a new system to record interviews and auditions, which was fully implemented in the 2017-18 academic year. Staff who conduct auditions and interviews hold training sessions for other College staff to share good practice and discuss grading standards which helps to ensure the consistency of the admissions procedures. The College has published a procedure for applicants to appeal against the audition process if it was thought not to be correctly conducted.

13 Assessment is conducted according to the Open University's regulations. The College has developed its own assessment policy which conforms to the Open University's validation requirements and Quality Code, *Chapter B6*. The assessment policy provides College staff with procedures for marking and internal moderation with external examining by the Open University. Assessments at the College fall into three main categories: live assessments of performance and recitals; written examinations; and coursework which may involve individual or group tasks. The assessment requirements for each programme and the constituent modules are approved through the Open University's validation process. The College states that it provides provisional marks and feedback to students within fifteen working days for live performance assessments and twenty working days for course work and examinations. Students met by the team confirmed that feedback on assessed work was prompt and to stated timescales. Students are informed that marks are provisional until approved by an Assessment Board following scrutiny by external examiners. The College operates a policy and procedure for extenuating circumstances which may lead to deferment or mitigation of assessment for students. Live assessments and practical examinations are

all double marked, and coursework and written examinations are sampled for second marking. Programme Leaders are responsible for final moderation of assessed work prior to a meeting of an Assessment Board. External examiners report that standards of marked assessed work are appropriate and comparable with other similar courses nationally. The external examiner for MA Creative Entrepreneurship reported that the College procedures for internal moderation had not been followed. Whilst the overall standard of marking and provision of feedback was deemed to be excellent; where there had been a discrepancy between the first and second marker which had not been resolved, the external examiner achieved resolutions through discussions with the Programme Leader. The MA team will be provided with further training on assessment procedures to address this matter.

14 The College operates a policy and procedure for Academic Misconduct. The College regards any form of unfair, improper or dishonest practice, as well as not complying with examination invigilator instructions, as academic misconduct. Students are briefed on good academic practice and avoiding plagiarism at induction. The nature of some of the assessments and the integrity of the assessment process, particularly the range of live performance assessments and examinations, means that the College can be assured that the work is genuinely that of the student. For coursework, knowledge of the student and the use of formative assessment help to ensure the integrity of the assessment process. The College does not at present operate a plagiarism detection system but is considering this for the future.

15 Recruitment across all provision in 2018-19 has increased by approximately one per cent on 2017-18 figures, from 258 to 261. Retention on the BMus programme has increased by two per cent largely due to more students progressing from Level 5 to Level 6. The pass rate decreased by five per cent due to two students retaking modules. Retention rates for other programmes range from 86 per cent to 100 per cent with an exception in the Cert HE Creative Music Practice where retention is currently 50 per cent. This is due to a number of self-funding students seeking professional development rather than the full qualification. The College has developed a Music Development Programme to provide this acquisition of individual modules for professional development. Retention and achievement rates are considered at Examination Boards and Academic Board. The College considers sector and competitor comparative data in evaluating its own data on student achievement, award, progression, satisfaction and employment. Sector data is also used to underpin programme development.

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

16 The College has undertaken a mapping exercise of its policies and procedures against each Expectation of the Quality Code with clearly defined responsibilities and actions. Another mapping exercise will be undertaken following publication of the revised Quality Code. The programmes validated by the Open University were designed by the College, aligned to the Quality Code and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualification* (FHEQ) and informed by appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements.

Background to the monitoring visit

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Donald Pennington, Reviewer, and Millard Parkinson, QAA Officer, on 15 November 2018.

QAA2306 - R10351 - Jan 19

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk