



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of London College of Creative Media Ltd trading as LCCM, November 2017

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 London College of Creative Media Ltd trading as LCCM (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the November 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 At the time of the November 2016 review there were 241 full-time student enrolments, with 19 part-time students. This compares with 244 full-time and 21 part-time students at the time of the monitoring visit, which represents an overall two per cent increase.

3 The College has had four new awards validated by The Open University: BA (Hons) Music Industry Management; BA (Hons) Creative and Professional Writing; BSc (Hons) Digital Product Development; and MA Creative Entrepreneurship. All new programmes except the BSc (Hons) Digital Product Development recruited their first cohorts in the 2017-18 academic year. All provision offered by the College is now validated and approved by The Open University, with no students registered to Middlesex University or Pearson awards. Both staff and students report that the transfer to The Open University has been successfully accomplished. Changes in the assessment structure and grading system have been welcomed.

4 The College reports that there have been some delays in relocating to new purpose-built facilities, however, the College confirmed that the relocation is to take place in January 2018. The Open University has undertaken an audit visit of the new facilities and has confirmed approval for provision to be delivered from January 2018. The College reported that it is at an advanced stage of negotiations with a new owner, which should be concluded later in 2017. Though ultimate ownership of the College is likely to change, the legal entity operating the College (London College of Creative Media Ltd) will remain largely unchanged, with all directors (board members) and senior roles maintained. These developments have been discussed with the Department for Education, HEFCE and The Open University, which is supportive.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College has continued to develop its actions in response to the recommendations and good practice identified at the November 2017 review. The review team found that the College has continued to make acceptable progress in building on the features of good practice, and that acceptable progress has been made with the recommendations. Progress on the two affirmations has continued in relation to increasing the range of student engagement opportunities, and the monitoring process for information provided to students.

6 The good practice of providing a comprehensive and developmental student induction programme, including an enrolment induction guide, workshop activity and student interviews with academic and support staff, has been maintained. New induction events in 2016-17 included sessions delivered by the Student Committee to promote student engagement across the College; an interactive session with an international focus for students new to London; training sessions to ensure all students could access the technology; and sessions on personal planning and independent learning.

7 The introduction of a Study Skills Workshop, delivered during induction, ensures that all new students understand the key skills required to support their transition to higher education, and also includes a summary of the College's Prevent Strategy. Students reported that they had seen a year-on-year improvement in start-of-year arrangements, mainly through the use of technology and social media. However, students also reported delays in obtaining some key start-of-year information, for example access to the academic calendar sooner, to be able to plan personal and work commitments, and obtaining student identity cards. The College reports that the training materials for student representatives have been reviewed and revised, and supported by an induction session run by the Head of Student Services.

8 The strategic and extensive development of student-centred learning through peer support, group work and skill sharing initiatives has been maintained. Students identified the benefits of extracurricular activities, such as the choir, that are part of some awards and are available as options for all students. There is a student skill sharing scheme where students volunteer to support and share their expertise with a peer. This widely used system is currently operating through a notice board and informal networking. The College continues to work with the Chair of the Student Committee to engage students. A recent external examiner reported that the principal study skills are one of students' main strengths. The Creative Industry Entrepreneurship module is common to all level 6 awards and provides an opportunity for students to realise business opportunities, which clearly aligns with the College Strategic Plan.

9 The considered, sustained and close engagement with music industry practitioners ensures the effective and coherent transition of students through and beyond higher education continues. The Marketing and Communications Team at the College leads a programme of promotional events. These continue to align activities to the range of creative industries that will attract the attention of prospective students, raise the College profile within the professional sector, and provide students with an opportunity to network and meet external professionals. Students speak highly of tutors, who are practicing professional and experts in their field, and of visits to locations that help to inspire their musical development. To help maintain the professional currency of programmes, programme leaders have reviewed the membership and terms of reference for the Programme Committee.

10 The College continues to contract tutors with a current professional profile for the delivery of provision. The majority are long-standing members of staff or join the College with previous teaching experience. The Staffing Policy is reviewed annually and programme leaders are contracted as permanent staff. The College reported that, as planned growth in student numbers materialises, it is expected that additional subject and module leaders will be contracted as fractional permanent positions. There is a peer observation of teaching in place, and the Academic Adviser from the University recently led a tutor development day. There is an annual review of all tutors undertaken by the relevant programme leader or formally delegated to another experienced tutor in an endeavour to involve and develop staff. The virtual learning environment offers a separate staff facing facility to make information readily available to staff.

11 The three recommendations identified in the 2016 review have been addressed. To strengthen the involvement of students in programme design and pre-validation processes the College has reviewed and updated the Validation Policy to include student representation at the internal planning meeting. There is also a student representative on the Academic Board, and Board meetings considers papers and reports from various stages in the validation process.

12 The Complaints Policy has been reviewed and updated and will continue to be reviewed annually. It is now clear, consistent and comprehensive, and includes a flowchart that makes clear in what circumstances a complainant would contact The Open University or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Students are aware that they can find the policy on the virtual learning environment and in their student handbook.

13 The College has improved the risk analysis procedure for external performance venues visited, compiling a register of risks with annual updates to be accessed online. This is the responsibility of the Marketing and Head of Resources, who ensures that venues are checked for health and safety requirements, public liability and risk. Most venues are professional locations and operate as performance venues for other organisations and the general public.

14 The College has continued progress against the two affirmations: to increase the range and effectiveness of student engagement opportunities; and to effectively implement the monitoring process for information provided to students.

15 The College carries out termly student surveys by email and results are summarised and shared with students. However, the College reports that response rates have been low, between 10 and 17 per cent; therefore, for this academic year the College has decided to switch to an entirely paper-based method, with collection during classes, to address this issue. The College has in place an extensive range of extracurricular activities, which all students benefit from and can influence what is offered. The Student Committee functions effectively; it is chaired and organised by the student body; and its terms of reference indicate that it deals mainly with extracurricular activities. The Academic Reviewer from the University reports that students are confident and able to share concerns.

16 The Public Information Policy, together with the Communication Policy and Crisis and Critical Risk Policy, has been reviewed and updated by the Academic Board. Students reported that they were kept informed of significant changes within the College. To minimise the duplication of information the College is developing a single point of storage, with a single editing facility, and publication via the College website and/or Student Portal.

17 As a result of the College becoming a member of UCAS, all admissions processes have been reviewed. Applicants evidence their academic potential and commitment through a personal written statement, interview and audition. To ensure consistency of admissions across all programmes the College uses an admissions database to analyse progression and performance across cohorts of students. There is an admissions appeals process. International applicants are required to evidence their English capability within the application process. Students reported that the process was effective and supportive, and that they had all been interviewed and auditioned, many via Skype.

18 The College has progressively, over the previous three academic years, transferred all validated provision from Pearson and Middlesex University to The Open University. During this period (2014-15 to 2016-17) retention rates range from 75 per cent to 91 per cent. Pass rates range from 88 per cent in 2014-15 to 94 per cent in 2015-16 and 62 per cent in 2016-17. In relation to the pass rates, the 2015-16 and 2016-17 years only include Pearson and Middlesex University graduating students.

19 The College has introduced actions to address the fall in pass rates on the Cert HE awards in the 2016-17 academic year. Changes have been made to the Jazz Re-Harmonisation module, which was identified as the main concern. The College has introduced systems to monitor and track students from commencement of their studies. This involves the programme leader and Head of Student Services reviewing first assessment data to enable interventions to be put in place. However, at the time of the visit, the review team was unable to assess the impact of these measures on improving success rates on the Cert HE awards. Retention figures, however, have been improving: for example in 2016-17 progression on the BMus (Hons) Music Performance and Production from year 1 was 90 per cent; year 2 progression was 95 per cent; and year 3 completion was 100 per cent.

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

20 During the 2016-17 academic year the College has developed, and had validated, three new awards with The Open University. In developing the new programmes, the College makes explicit reference to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). The validation of the BA (Hons) Music Industry Management programme reported that each level of the programme had designated learning outcomes that align with the FHEQ. Relevant professional body requirements have been utilised, including National Association of Writers in Education 'Creative Writing' (2008) for the BA (Hons) in Creative ND Professional Writing. The BSc (Hons) Digital Product Development makes reference mainly to United States standards: the Association for Computing Machinery, the Association for Information Systems, and the IEEE Computer Society. The College has also undertaken a detailed mapping exercise against the Quality Code, with a number of associated actions.

21 Updated Subject Benchmark Statements were used to inform the writing and structure of the new programmes and to review the BMus (Hons) Music Performance and Production learning outcomes. External advice from subject experts has proved useful in benchmarking programmes. The College is in the process of establishing an Academic Advisory Committee, with mainly external membership, to advise the Principal and to act as an additional source of external guidance and networking opportunity.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

22 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.

23 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Jenny Gilbert, Reviewer, and Mr Robert Saynor, Coordinator, on 8 November 2017.

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