



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the London Film Academy, October 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 London Film Academy (the Academy) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [monitoring visit](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 Since the last QAA monitoring visit, the Academy has entered into a collaborative partnership with the University of Derby, which has led to the introduction of a new BA (Hons) Filmmaking programme. The Academy continues to offer the full-time, one-year postgraduate diplomas in Filmmaking and Screenwriting. In addition, it offers various shorter certificate, specialised and foundation courses in filmmaking, screenwriting and specialist topics such as shooting and lighting for film and television. For the Filmmaking and Screenwriting diplomas, the Academy has a formalised articulation agreement in place for progression to a Master's programme with the University of Derby, in addition to existing arrangements with the University of Hertfordshire and Anglia Ruskin University.

3 The Academy has sustained overall student numbers, with 48 enrolled across the diploma and degree programmes. This compares with 44 students who were enrolled on the diploma programmes at the last monitoring visit.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The 2017 annual monitoring report concluded that the Academy had made acceptable progress on the six recommendations in the 2016 Higher Educational Review (Alternative Providers). The Academy has continued to demonstrate further development in relation to these recommendations although not all actions have been completed or embedded fully (paragraphs 5 to 9). While the focus of the past 12 months has been on securing validation and implementing the BA programme, the Academy has continued to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to quality assurance and enhancement through the application of its existing processes (paragraph 10). The Academy's effective admissions processes and accompanying information continue to support students in making appropriate course choices to enable success (paragraph 11). The Academy has a clearly defined assessment strategy that ensures that the development, approval and scrutiny of assessments is thorough and consistent (paragraph 12).

5 The recommendation to develop a course approval process which incorporates independent external expertise has now been completed. Although the Academy has not recently developed any new in-house programmes, the appropriateness of the course approval process was demonstrated by the development during the academic year 2017-18 of the BA (Hons) programme, approved by the University of Derby without conditions. Extensive consultation with external expertise informed the development process with clear reference against the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

6 No additional progress has been made with the recommendation to include student representatives as full members of senior committees. Although student representation is evident at Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) and Course Committee meetings, the Academy has taken a conscious decision not to include student representation at Executive Committee level due to issues of confidentiality. Although no formal training is offered to student representatives, other than the information outlined at induction and in the Student Handbook, the Course Leader provides support if required. Student representatives on the BA programme will be in post for the entire academic year, while those on the diploma programmes serve only for one term. Diploma students the monitoring team met commented that their limited understanding of the role, due to the lack of training and the short duration of appointment, impacted on their effectiveness in the role and could limit discussion at SSLC meetings.

7 The Academy has taken additional steps to enhance further a systematic process to monitor and assure the continued effectiveness of all teaching staff. The Academy has introduced staff and tutor engagement, development and appraisal processes that now require all tutors to undergo peer observation annually. Scheduling and monitoring of delivery is centrally coordinated and monitored, and tutors are provided with detailed feedback which is well received and valued by staff. The Academy has built on actions taken to address the challenge of systematising this activity across its range of freelance tutors by introducing initiatives such as the re-induction of tutors.

8 External examiner reports are published and made available to staff and students through the Academy's student and tutor portals. The Academy makes students and tutors aware of reports at induction. Staff and students the review team met confirmed their awareness of where to find the reports.

9 The Academy has now introduced its periodic course review process in 2018 following external consultation and benchmarking against existing review processes, other higher education providers and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The process draws upon a diverse range of evidence and feedback from students, faculty and external stakeholders, enabling the Academy to effectively scrutinise and enhance provision. The review is critically evaluated by a panel that includes student representation and an external academic prior to final review by the Executive Committee and integration of any necessary actions within the Academy's Operational Plan. At the time of the monitoring visit, the Academy was in the process of completing their first full review cycle for the Filmmaking Diploma.

10 While the focus since the last monitoring visit has been on securing validation with the University of Derby and the implementation of the BA programme, the Academy has continued to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to quality assurance and enhancement through the application of its existing processes. The need for review and enhancement of policies and procedures, using the Academy's operational plan, is recognised and routinely monitored and evaluated by the Senior Executive. Collaboration with the University to enhance further existing processes are being discussed. Further steps to coordinate, monitor and report on action plans arising from quality assurance cycles across all levels would enable the Academy to more robustly demonstrate how assurance and enhancement measures are enacted.

11 The Academy has an inclusive and detailed admissions process which ensures that students are well suited for the course and enables them to succeed. Oversight of course recruitment sits with the Head of Academic Governance in collaboration with Course Leaders and the Admissions and Operations Leader. Students attending the Academy are recruited from both the UK and abroad through a highly informative website and a range of industry relevant marketing activities. Acceptance decisions for Academy programmes are

made in discussion between the Admissions team and the Course Leader, with final approval for the Diploma courses made by the Joint Principals. Admissions requirements for the BA Filmmaking degree are agreed with the University of Derby. Course-specific requirements are clearly detailed within application guidance, the programme specification and on the Academy website. All students deemed suitable to study are required to undergo a standardised interview with the Course Leader and a Course Tutor. Final approval for admissions for the BA (Hons) programme is the responsibility of the University.

The Admissions team, using a variety of contact methods, offers close support to prospective students throughout the application process as well as closely monitoring their interest, general suitability for the course, and English language competence. Students the review team met reported the application process to be straightforward, with clear entry criteria and comprehensive guidance when needed.

12 The Academy has a clearly defined assessment strategy, which ensures that the development, approval and scrutiny of assessments remains thorough and consistent within and between courses. Assessment strategy and the monitoring and implementation of assessment procedures within each course is the responsibility of the Course Leader in collaboration with the Lead Tutors who set assessments informed by feedback from students and tutors. Assessment pro formas are used to ensure consistency across the Academy. The Academy has effective procedures for internal moderation and verification, formative and summative assessments, provision of clear and detailed grading criteria, academic misconduct, and the running of Assessment Boards. Students the review team met confirmed that the Academy clearly explains what is required of them at different stages of the assessment process and informs them about academic misconduct.

13 The 2017 spring intake for the one-year Filmmaking Diploma had a 100 per cent retention rate and 100 per cent pass rate, while the September intake had 90 per cent retention, with three drop-outs, and 100 per cent pass rate. For the 2017 Screenwriting Diploma intake, there was 100 per cent retention and 100 per cent pass rate.

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

14 The Academy continues to engage with the Quality Code by informing staff of any updates. The Executive Committee routinely reviews updates to the Quality Code and undertakes action where necessary.

15 Relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are reviewed by the Course Committee. Tutors are encouraged to review any new publications and provide feedback on how new guidance might inform delivery. Tutor responses are considered as part of the Academy's annual review of course documentation prior to approval at the Executive Committee.

16 As part of the development of the BA programme, the Academy has engaged with external expertise through the Advisory Board.

5 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 Mr Simeon London, Reviewer, and Mr Lee Smith, QAA Officer, on 6 November 2018.

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