



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of London Film School Limited, 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 London Film School (the School) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the October 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There are currently 212 students studying for a master's programme at the School. Twelve students remain on the MA Filmmaking programme currently being taught out through a validation arrangement with London Metropolitan University. The other 200 students are studying on one of two programmes validated by the University of Warwick, the MA Filmmaking (177 students) and the MA Screenwriting (23 students). Both programmes were launched in 2016. The one significant material change at the School is in the appointment of a new Director, formally appointed in June 2018. There is a planned relocation for the London Film School for 2020 from its current base in Covent Garden to London Island in east London. Due to a commendable judgement in the 2016 review, there was no annual monitoring visit in 2017.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The London Film School has completed the actions set out in the 2016 Higher Education Review, including consolidating good practice and further enhancing the student learning experience (paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). The School has robust admissions processes in place (paragraphs 9 and 10). Assessment processes, and subsequently the annual quality review plan, are being reviewed to encompass the requirements of both the University of Warwick and the School to cover all aspects and will be rolled out shortly (paragraph 11). The School engages with external reference points and in addition its programmes are accredited by Creative Skillset (paragraph 13).

4 The recommendation arising from the 2016 review to 'consolidate its strategic approach to enhancement of learning opportunities' has been completed by the formulation of an enhancement of learning opportunities policy approved by the Board of Governors in March 2017 and subsequently rolled out across the School. This has resulted in the continued review of curricula and further enhancement of learning, for example through evening classes for students and greater engagement with industry.

5 The School continues to embed industry practice and has developed this further by creating links with the British Film Designers Guild to enhance production design learning, organised tours and work placements with post-film production companies. Some of these have resulted in job offers to graduating students. The School is also extending its graduation ceremony to enable students to show their work to industry. There is also considerable engagement with film festivals. The School engages with an industry advisory group and has developed draft terms of reference for its operation. Students praised the engagement with industry and the varied experience they received including visiting

speakers, professional critiques of their work and visits to industrial venues. Students spoke positively about their tutors, that programmes were up to date with industry trends and teachers were helpful, available and skilled, and current within the industries.

6 The development of a fully interactive virtual learning environment (VLE) has continued and contains course material, course handbooks and academic information. Each department of the School also includes self-learning materials, teaching tools and lecture notes. Students noted that while it was a little hard to find things, it remained very useful as a learning tool as well as a reference area, and it was noted that the VLE also acted as an archive for Film Studies. Staff review material on the VLE and there is a huge resource of material available. Each department's VLE area is reviewed systematically to ensure material is up to date and fit for purpose. An IT team manages functionality and system upgrades and provides support to the users.

7 The School continues to be proactive and creative in the engagement of students to engender a strong sense of community. The opportunity to mix with students from other years and across programmes, as well as with alumni who come in to share experience, and the chance to develop industry networking with the help of tutors are highly valued. Students have ready access to tutors for support and receive two tutorials per term with more available if needed. In order to support students further a number of staff completed a mental health first-aid course.

8 The actions arising from the affirmation relating to student feedback continues to develop and the School is proactive in finding ways to enhance this by involving the Students' Union in the process of designing survey questions that they feel are pertinent and will increase completion rates, which have been poor in the past. The students were positive about this engagement. The formal feedback framework remains in place with end-of-unit reviews for academic courses.

9 The School has a robust and positive admissions process developed in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) including a comprehensive Recognition of Prior Learning policy which outlines the process and requirements for application by this process. Students applying for courses whose first language is not English need to provide proof of proficiency in English. Results are checked by the admissions staff and verified by the International English Language Testing System report verification service.

10 Prior qualifications and suitability to study are a requirement of the admissions process and applicants are required to provide relevant certificates which are checked. Applicants are required to provide a personal statement and a piece of work such as a short script. With regard to intention to study, applications are reviewed by staff and applicants have to provide a statement of why they feel they are suitable for the course. The admission process follows three stages. This ensures that applicants are genuine and meet all requirements. Students praised the robust process for admissions.

11 The assessment processes at the School follow the Quality Code and the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies. Assessment methods are set in line with the module and programme specifications. The industry engagement of the School enhances and informs the students' professional practice and currency. The School has a Code of Assessment Practice that outlines all aspects of the process. External examiners' reports are positive and the School has active and ongoing conversations with awarding bodies and external examiners. Recently, to strengthen the assessment process, a new assessment policy was drafted and discussed by the Academic Board and has now been approved by the Board. The process is being reviewed by the University of Warwick who have recently approved it. Roll-out is planned for spring 2019. One of the changes, recommended by

external examiners, has been the move from double blind-marking for students' course work in film to a panel assessment. The School has completed all actions in the annual quality review plan and is in the process of implementing a quality review monitoring plan that encompasses the requirements of all awarding bodies and its own quality enhancement processes.

12 Estimated recruitment for 2018-19 is 124 students, an increase on 2017-18 where recruitment was 98 students. This would continue the pattern of steady increases in student numbers over the past three years. The 2016-17 and 2017-18 cohorts have 94 per cent retention rates for the one-year Screenwriting programme (two students discontinued and one deferred) and 94 per cent for the two-year Filmmaking programme (four students have deferred their studies). Students usually discontinue or defer their studies for financial reasons. The 2017-18 cohort of Screenwriting students achieved a 92 per cent pass rate, with 23 of the 25 students getting a qualification. Due to extensions and having start dates at different times of the year, detailing pass rates for 2016-17 Filmmaking students would provide an incomplete picture. For the 2015-16 cohort who started on the London Metropolitan University validated Filmmaking programme, the pass rate was 84 per cent with 16 of 19 students achieving a qualification.

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

13 The School demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points including the Quality Code and references its policies and procedures accordingly. The School references SPA good practice guidance, Universities UK guidance and regulations and policies from awarding bodies. Industry practice informs the School of currency and appropriateness of provision. The School is also engaging with the Office for Students' requirements. The School's programmes are accredited by Creative Skillset, with the recent reaccreditation of the Screenwriting programme highlighting positive work of the School in the areas of graduate tracking and employment opportunities, links to industry and retention linked to admissions.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

14 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.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Jonathan Baker, Reviewer, and Mr Rafe Smallman, QAA Officer, on 3 October 2018.

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