Name of Provider: The Academy of Contemporary Music
UKPRN: 10013357

TEF Year Four Provider Submission

Introduction

0.1. ACM's core mission is to reach out to all students, many of whom may have felt traditional Higher Education was 'not for them', and provide an industry-centered learning journey that leads a pre-professional creative to a place where they have the requisite skills, knowledge, resilience and experience to build a sustainable portfolio career in the creative industries.

0.2. We operate within a group structure which includes Metropolis Studios, the largest independent recording complex in Europe in which 50% of chart music has passed through; and the Electric Theatre, a busy arts centre with community programming at its core. These venues allow our students to take strides on their journey, providing a safe industry testbed to try out their ideas and get continual feedback as they experiment their way to finding their areas of expertise. This occurs through: assessment delivered in a professional environment; access to leading professionals in the creative industries who work in, or are friends of, our sister companies; work experience opportunities which will build our student's CVs; and opportunities to use world-class industry facilities.

0.3. Our curriculum offers students the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects within the creative industries, and specialise with elective modules, so the unique skillset they graduate with will allow them to apply their creativity to numerous different industries, from gaming to film to community arts. We embed personal development and resilience into our core curriculum so our students' mental health and wellbeing can cope with the knockbacks every creative artist will come up against through their careers.

0.4. Although ACM has historically been known for Music, we are not a conservatoire. We run a rigorous audition process to allow us to unearth talent which may not have had the benefits of formal training or music lessons to fully surface. We feel this is incredibly important as music provision in schools diminishes. Combined with this, private music lessons and musical instruments can often come at a high cost to families which results in an imbalance of opportunity. To bridge this gap, we run further education programmes and a Foundation Year which focuses on developing technical skills.

0.5. Core to ACM's mission is to provide opportunities to the many, not the few. From John Lennon to Oasis and the current success of Grime, the UK has a strong heritage of popular music being produced by talented artists who felt Higher Education was 'not for them'. Lennon may have enjoyed a successful career as an artist but for the majority they will not become millionaires through their artistry. This is where a solid degree can provide a diverse skillset and allow creatives to apply their talent to different contexts and build a portfolio career which is robust in adversity.

0.6. ACM embeds problem solving into its curriculum. We teach students how to be creative, and develop their sense of emotional intelligence through class activities. Whilst doing this we provide continuous feedback to assist their holistic development. Although some of this might not seem relevant to students who start their programme with a fixed goal of where they want to be, the true value of these broad skills will equip them for their career post-graduation.

0.7. The true judgement of teaching excellence is the impact our graduates have on the industry they work in. For every high profile graduate we have thousands more graduates who sit in the background, producing hit albums; writing songs for the stars; running the record labels; managing artists; composing music for computer games or TV; running workshops for community groups; teaching music in their community. This is the measure of teaching excellence at a specialist provider like ACM and we are proud to play our part in developing the next generation of professionals in the creative industries.

0.8. Through the remainder of this submission we will provide some contextualisation of the metrics available to the TEF team and support this with evidence of the strategies, mechanisms and opportunities which underpin our core reason for being.

0.9. As a preface to this we wanted to place the student voice at the top of our submission. We consulted with Student Representatives throughout the preparation of the TEF submission and they were provided with opportunity to comment on drafts. As part of the process they provided the following in support of the submission:

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As current student representatives we have worked in partnership with ACM in preparing the TEF submission and this statement.

We are proud of the relationship we have with ACM staff and executive, and of the way ACM continues to try new ideas to engage students to improve the student experience. The recent 'question time' initiative which invites all students to regular meetings with the ACM executive team is an example of this. This initiative has allowed students to make an immediate and noticeable impact on their experience including what and how they learn and the activities ACM provides outside of our modules. We see that the organisation is always looking to improve quality of delivery and overall experience and students are fully engaged in this process.

As students we came to ACM because of their mission to provide a mini-industry within the academy. ACM provide an immersive culture, that pushes collaboration between students from different pathways of learning. We immediately feel we are part of a wider industry and must collaborate to succeed. ACM encourages us to work outside our comfort zone and provides effective training for the whole industry, not just for the area we might feel is our particular specialism.

ACM's industry focus means we are taught by and can be mentored by artists, producers, technicians and music industry experts. We work more closely with them than we would a university lecturer, all through our degree and are able to use their experience to help choose our path through the music industry. Access to one-to-one tutorials with industry professionals is a key feature of the programme. Our industry-based tutors provide continuous feedback as part of our creative process. We receive a wide variety and high quality of feedback, mostly outside of our formal assessments, which makes it hard to rate in a simple survey.
A key feature of the programme is access to a wide range of specialist credit-bearing electives which provide compact, industry relevant specialist content and experience delivered by enthusiastic and knowledgeable experts. ACM provides a valuable portrayal of what the industry is really like. ACM also offers diploma and foundation programmes to help students gain the qualifications needed for the degree programme. This is very important to many of our students who don't have the opportunity to gain music qualifications ahead of study.

Finally, we wanted to comment on the range of high quality and state-of-the-art facilities and resources available at ACM as this is not covered by the questions in the National Student Survey but is a vital part of our industry-focused learning and why many of us chose ACM. ACM ensures their facilities are always improving to meet the needs of new groups of students such as the new technical pathway, and to ensure the facilities are always industry relevant. In particular the recently added SSL studio, and access to Metropolis Studios (the worlds largest independent recording studios) is rated highly and provide ACM students with access to equipment and services not available outside of the professional industry.

ACM Student Representatives January 2019

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1. Provider Context

1.1. We are an independent higher education provider that specialise in the delivery of programmes preparing students for careers in music, the music business, and the wider creative industries, while providing a solid academic degree qualification. Alongside full-time HE provision we also deliver full-time FE programmes at Level 2 and Level 3 for 16-18 year olds, as well as a range of part-time short courses and a summer school.

1.2. We offer the following programmes of study, validated by Middlesex University, at our Guildford and Birmingham campuses: BA(Hons) Music Industry Practice, and BA(Hons) Music Industry Practice including foundation year.

1.3. TEF metrics indicate that the majority of our students (73%) enter with low/medium entry tariffs, with 60% in the low/non-tariff category. 14% of students indicated a disability and 22% are from low participation postcodes Q1 & Q2. These results, all increases on previous year, indicate that ACM's widening participation agenda is successfully engaging more of those that might not typically consider higher education, and that the on-programme support provided, especially those with a disability, is appealing to underrepresented groups.

1.4. To support the delivery of programmes and our core aims we have made substantial investment over the last four years in various resources including staffing, physical spaces, systems infrastructure, registry services, student support services, and industry engagement services.

2. Commentary On Core And Split Metrics

2.1. As an independent provider we are relatively new to the data reporting now required of alternative providers. Our current metrics are based on just two years of data, and in the case of NSS and DLHE only two years of experience in running these under the new regulatory framework. Additionally, as a specialist provider, with a small number of programmes in a single subject area, the impact of each course is potentially disproportionate when compared with an HEI with a wide range of programmes. Further to this the metrics do not necessarily reflect recent investment in resources and services, and the provision of a newly designed curriculum introduced in September 2016. There is value therefore in providing some contextual commentary on the core and split metrics, as well as identifying various initiatives, both implemented and planned, to address any short-comings identified within the metrics.

2.2. Our metrics indicate continued good continuation rates just above benchmark (89.4%), reflecting a positive student experience. It should also be taken into account that these metrics relate primarily to accelerated degree programmes and students are further through their programme at the point of census compared to those on traditional three-year degrees reflecting in real terms a far more notable continuation rate. Rates for low-participation postcodes (Q1/Q2) are higher (93.4%), reflecting the effectiveness of the support in place for disadvantaged students.

2.3. *Employment or further study* metrics (93.3%) are just above benchmark (93.2%) and *Sustained employment or further study* is 3.1% above benchmark with positive flags for mature, POLAR Q1/Q2, and disabled students which is an improvement on previous year where there was just a single positive flag for mature. This reflects positively the substantial work done to support students in preparation for professional life.

2.4. We recognise performance below benchmark in the *Highly skilled employment or further study* metric. We are aware that this is a particular issue for graduates in the creative arts who typically enter into development of portfolio careers rather than a single employment easily categorised as 'highly skilled'. However, the Supplementary LEO metrics *(Above median earnings threshold or further study)* show improved outcomes for *mature, Q1/Q2, female* and *disabled students* reflecting positive outcomes that typically come through a longer-term career strategy. That said, various initiatives have been introduced in 2018/19 to help progression into highly skilled employment including Metropolis Blue (see 3.3.5), Music Gateway (see 5.2.8) and other Industry Link activities, and these are outlined below.

2.5. We recognise performance below benchmark in the three NSS metrics. Following publication of the result ACM undertook a review of the reasons behind the scores and identified two key aspects: the introduction of a new programme; and our methods of communication to student body. This resulted in a number of key actions that were implemented for 2018/19.

2.5.1. Students surveyed were the first cohort on a new degree programme. Internal surveys indicated an issue with a particular module effecting all final year students. To address this, the module was reviewed for the new academic year and substantial changes introduced. Within this exercise ACM also took a wider review of assessment and teaching across all modules.

2.5.2. We have invested in our communications team; provided a 'one-stop shop' Student Information Hub; and launched a new 'Question Time' forum so all students have regular opportunities to directly ask questions and discuss their experience with executive, senior management and other key stakeholders.

2.6. A Programme Evaluation Survey, using NSS style questions, undertaken in the 2018 Autumn term indicated improvements already across a number of areas for final year students when compared with the recent NSS. For example, in the area of Teaching on my Course: The course is intellectually stimulating (11% above NSS result), My course has challenged me to achieve my best work (10% above NSS result). In the area of Assessment and Feedback this includes: The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance (20% above NSS result). In the area of Organisation and Management: The course is well organised and running smoothly (42% above NSS result)

Teaching Quality

3. Student Engagement (TQ1)

ACM's mission and values seek to engage students across all aspects of the student experience. The following are indicators of how we encourage and enhance student engagement:

3.1.1. We recognise the value of students as partners in learning and this is evidenced through the programme design enabling students to define their emerging career path through the availability of electives and bespoke project based modules. This helps define their final year study, particularly their research focus and exit specialism. Engagement is further enhanced through student involvement in working groups, and forums alongside more formal methods of student feedback, to inform programme design.

3.1.2. Students have access to a range of mechanisms to help shape their experience including student forums, module and programme evaluation surveys, as well as involvement with the NSS. Termly Board of Studies, co-chaired by a student representative, review survey activity and facilitate monitoring and review of learning and teaching and provide opportunity to discuss matters openly and agree on actions and matters to be referred for consideration and approval. A key development in 2018/19 has been the introduction of 'Question Times'. These termly sessions provide a direct link to the executive and have resulted in immediate changes and enhancements that might not have been as promptly considered through traditional frameworks. Following the initial Question Times, in response to student feedback, the following was actioned: extended opening hours, improved access to high level industry professionals through new appointments and integration of industry activity into classroom, plans for new space and improvements to working environment. Feedback from students, gathered during preparation for the TEF, highlighted the positive impact the Question Times sessions had already had, and how it successfully bridged the gap between students and student representatives.

3.1.3. In 2016/17 we implemented an enhanced Student Representation system that has strengthened: the election process, the induction/training for representatives, ongoing support for student representatives, recognition for students that serve as a representative, engagement with the new board and committee structures. We have seen very positive and active participation from students within the new and enhanced committee structure with students making constructive and meaningful contributions to the Board of Studies meetings, with 16 representatives in place. Student reports presented within the meetings have highlighted the positive impact of various initiatives including pastoral and academic support provided to students, and extra-curricular skill development from 'Summer Live' concerts[1]. In

[1] Board of Studies July 2018, Student Representative Reports

July 2018 it was agreed that students would co-chair the Boards of Studies going forward and students were instrumental in the drafting of this.

3.1.4. We believe that prospective students should have real opportunities to immerse themselves in the ACM environment before making a final decision. In addition to open days our 'Access All Areas' initiative provides all applicants with access: to ACM facilities, targeted learning resources, live streamed classes with Q&A[2], and experience events. During 2018 this included three events held at Metropolis Studios in London enabling prospective students the opportunity to experience real-world professional environments. *'Good practice related to the audition process has been maintained and further developed' and 'Students stated that they had all had auditions and that they found the process useful in preparing them for admission to the academy'.* QAA Monitoring visit report Oct 2018

3.1.5. Our Student Ambassador scheme provides prospective applicants with the opportunity to meet current students and gain a peer perspective about studying at ACM. We currently have 24 Student Ambassadors supporting events, outreach and recruitment activities.

3.1.6. Students feature prominently on our website in a specific Student News page highlighting student activity and successes. A small selection of 2018 student news items include: *ACM Students record festive charity single,Student Interview: BRUCH talks Autism, Anxiety and Eps, Daisy Phillips- Raising Awareness for Mental Health, ACM Students Network at Midem 2018, ACM Students write for the stars at Catalyst Songwriting Camp, Interview: ACM Student Conan Mac releases 'Date Night', Introducing…Heather Jayne*

3.1.7. ACM Website Alumni News section also includes high profile alumni who return to do masterclasses and guest lectures for our students.
'ACM's Industry Link isn't just a clever name, they really are the link to the students' future in the music industry. When I was a student, they worked tirelessly to ensure that all students had constant audition opportunities and amazing guest speakers to pass on their knowledge. Which is why it is such an honour to now be one of those guest speakers. Richard Shaw Guitarist - *Cradle of Filth* and ACM Alumnus.

3.1.8. To help entry into higher education new students attend induction sessions and are provided with a comprehensive induction pack. A 'Buddy' system helps support and mentor new students at the start of term by linking them up with second year students. In Sept. 2018 there were more volunteers to be 'buddies' than were needed. Our QAA review reports in 2014 and 2016 identified '*the highly informative Induction Booklet, and the comprehensive range of online resources available as good practice'.*

3.1.9. Students representatives are engaged within the governance framework. All students have access to external examiner reports, committee meeting minutes and other relevant documents through the VLE. Students played a key part in our recent QAA HER Review and were fully involved in both the submission preparation and review visit. A review of the framework in 2019 introduced enhancements to the committee structure to make it easier for students to engage more effectively in governance.

3.1.10. Technology is used to support student engagement. The Canvas VLE allows all students access to course support material, assessment submission and feedback. The MyACM app enables access to a variety of resources and services via smart phones and other devices including practice room/studio and tutorial booking, and timetables. Over the last few years the app has been further enhanced to enable students to review their own attendance and progression data as well as access Student Services through a 'Help' button. QAA Review reports in 2014/2016 identified the *'rigorous systems for monitoring student progress through the in-house designed software, especially for students at risk, as good practice.*

3.1.11. In 2018-2019, ACM introduced a 'Digital Essentials' online IT induction for students including guidance on online behaviour, protecting oneself and others online, protecting one's work, email etiquette and where to get help with digital resources on campus. It also covered introductions to the main systems students use (myACM, Canvas and Panopto). Of the 610 participants, 270 responded to the evaluation survey at the end of the course with 88% rating it as Good, Very Good or Excellent.

[2] https://www.acm.ac.uk/exclusive-live-stream-workshop-series/

3.1.12. We provide a significant range of general and specialist support services for students including study skills support, wellbeing and mindfulness, access to counselling and wellbeing advisors, specialist learning support, and accommodation support. During 2017/18 the Student Services team received around 1000 referrals through a variety of mechanisms including referral by staff, self-referral, unscheduled drop-ins, and the MyACM 'Help' button. Students are also able to access a range of support resources via a Canvas VLE module. It has proved very popular averaging around 50 hits per day. Our Student Services team has 22 staff reflecting our core mission and aims as well as recognising creative arts tendency to attract those who work visually, aurally and kinesthetically, and may have specific learning support needs. Our learning, teaching and assessment strategy accounts for this through increased use of practical instruction methods and project based assessments. In 2017 we received the AMOSSHE sponsored award for 'Outstanding Support for Student Learning' at the Independent Higher Education (IHE) awards in recognition of our provision. Our QAA review reports in 2014 and 2016 identified *'the specialist student support and guidance in place at ACM as good practice'* and *'The Academy has continued with and taken forward good practice concerning the wide-ranging initiatives and support activities'.* QAA Monitoring visit report Oct 2018.

3.1.13. All students receive a student weekly newsletter highlighting student news, important dates, and programme, resources and assessment information. In October 2018 a Communications Manager was appointed to improve and enhance the quality of student communication.

3.2. Valuing Teaching (TQ2)

The following are indicators of the ways in which we value teaching:

3.2.1. A recent key strategy has been to employ more contracted teaching staff, whilst continuing to recognise industry profiles alongside academic profiles. This has been done to provide greater security for our current sessional staff as well as to enhance engagement of teaching staff in the teaching and learning strategy, and to build a stronger academic community to support professional development and the student learning experience. We now employ c.30 contracted staff covering 65% of our teaching needs and supporting a range of developmental activities beyond teaching and assessment with c.80 members of staff employed on a sessional basis.

3.2.2. We are committed to providing continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for all our teaching staff to ensure access to academic and scholarly activity, professional practice, maintain current industry and sector knowledge, undertake formal qualifications, and training. Over the last few years we have provided formal access to teaching qualifications through a formal arrangement with academic partners. We provide all new teaching staff with an induction and ongoing mentoring and support from senior staff. Training is supplemented with EduCare online training modules.

3.2.3. Department activity is sought to encourage opportunities to share good practice. For example, in 2018 the vocal department organised an event for 17 tutors to meet and discuss research and professional practice. A later event, attended by 11 ACM tutors, in partnership with Vocology in Practice[3] and Metropolis Studios brought together academics and professional practitioners in a voice science and pedagogy conference.

3.2.4. We run regular staff training activities to inform staff about key operational and regulatory matters and share best practice in learning and teaching. At the start of 2018/19 academic year all staff received a learning walk visit from their programme leads and all new staff formally observed. Every tutor received feedback and development action plans agreed. Improvements in Assessment and Feedback were noted in the recent Programme Evaluation Survey. See 2.6, External Examiner reports highlight staff professionalism. See 3.4.3

3.2.5. An annual Employee Development and Review (EDR) procedure ensures all staff are subject to performance monitoring and review. This further consolidates staff CPD, ensuring staff are well supported to develop their operational and academic skills and abilities. *The Academy is engaged with Advance HE and has 15 staff with fellowships and a further 20 staff working on applications.* QAA Monitoring Visit Report October 2018

[3] http://vocologyinpractice.com/

3.2.6. Teaching staff profiles are highlighted on the ACM website and on a featured wall within the campus. This is of particular value for students as they can book one-to-one tutorials with lecturers other than those they are taught by. The website also features video interviews with staff. The website news section includes notable accolades and activities of current teaching staff, and to introduce new staff. News items in 2018 included: Interview with Paul Geary, Sandy Beales goes on a Yamaha Schools Tour, Live Vocals Workshop with Kaya, Live Stream Workshop with Dave Cronen, Drum tutors featured in Rhythm Magazine.

3.2.7. Through the enhanced governance framework, and with the increase in the number of contracted lecturers, staff are now better able to contribute to decision making bodies with representation across the committee structure. Teaching staff are also engaged in various workshops and forums to support development of programmes and pedagogy. A key area of development currently is exploring ways in which staff can contribute to the development of a research culture based on both professional experience and academic research. This has recently resulted in the formation of a 'Working Research Group' bringing together a number of tutors with a shared interest to develop academic research skills, practice as research, journal access, research remission, conference development, and academic engagement.

3.2.8. QAA Review reports and External Examiner reports recognises the professional expertise of teaching staff. *'The Academy makes effective use of external links with the music industry in enhancing learning opportunities. In particular the partnership with Metropolis Studios enables both staff and students to have access to expertise.'* QAA Review Report 2014.
'The programme has been thoughtfully designed and is delivered by music professionals who understand well the demands of the profession', *'Overall the students believe that the staff are excellent in their fields, having worked as professionals in the industry.'* QAA HER Student Submission 2017. External Examiner Reports: See 4.2.12

3.3. Rigour and stretch (TQ3)

The following are indicators of how we challenge and motivate students to achieve their potential and meet professional standards.

3.3.1. We carefully monitor the industry relevance and professional standards through the governance framework to ensure learning, teaching and assessment is appropriate. The recent appointment of high level industry experts to work alongside the teaching team will provide cutting edge insight to the creative arts industry to further develop programmes and assessments.

3.3.2. We place great importance on engagement with opportunities to maximize student potential. In addition to directed learning through timetabled lectures, workshops and seminars, we provide access to one-to-one tutorials, practice and studio facilities and learning resources. Participation and engagement in activities is tracked and reports are provided both to individual students and to support teams to help with re-engagement. Access to support, tutorials and learning resources is highlighted in the Student Representative report. See 0.9

3.3.3. External Examiners reports across all subjects highlight the academic rigour and industry relevance of the programmes and the high standards being achieved by our students.
'The quality of work at the top end of the grade bands was impressive.' 'Practical production work that has been awarded the highest grades is in every case deserving of that distinction.' 'I was pleased to see such deep investigations into pedagogy and associated theory, as well as a diverse range of teaching styles and contexts covered.' 'Students are producing high quality work and are engaging critically, self-reflectively, and analytically with their creative processes.' 'The way in which the course blends the acquisition of technical skills and creative tasks encourages deep student engagement.' External Examiner Reports 2017-18

3.3.4. To further stretch and challenge students ACM offers a number of scholarships to reward excellence and increase accessibility. For 2018 these totaled more than £130,000.

3.3.5. Through Industry Link we provide access to various competitions and peer assessed opportunities to highlight and promote excellence in our students and to motivate, inspire and reward passion and commitment. These include high profile showcase and performance events including festivals, end-of-year showcases, and graduation ceremonies, as well as access to professional studio recording opportunities and commercial radio playlists. Gigs and live music events organised by Industry Link are profiled on the ACM Website. Recent examples include:

Winter Festival, a month long festival; Noise Theory gigs, regular events showcasing ACM student artists and bands; Discovery and Development Showcase; Network Monthly@Tileyard; 440 Sessions; and lunchtime sessions at Riverside Café. Introduced in 2018, 'Metropolis Blue[4]' is a brand-new record label initiative run by students for students with expert guidance from industry professionals. Activity is closely linked to curriculum so all students can benefit. By combining creative industry education with Metropolis world-class status, students gain the experience they need to get ahead in this competitive industry. Performers, song writers, artists, producers, business and technical students will not only be writing and releasing music, they'll be running a label, organising PR and launch events, developing branding and marketing output, managing sync opportunities, delivering technical support and working in a professional studio environment taught by established music professionals with a wealth of industry experience. '*The Academy continues to embed co-curricular opportunities within the programme and dedicated industry link tutors provide opportunities for students to connect with the wider industry'* QAA Monitoring visit report Oct 2018

3.4. Feedback (TQ4)

We aim to ensure that assessment and feedback to students on their work promotes effective and independent student learning and contributes to their academic, professional and technical development. The following are indicators of the priority we place on assessment and feedback.

3.4.1. Feedback for all assessments is contained within the VLE allowing for provisional grades to be released more quickly. The use of the VLE also enables more enriched feedback through such facilities as video/audio commentary, and annotation of written work, as well as originality checking through the Turnitin service. We have enhanced assessment practices with the use of grading rubrics to promote a standardised approach for assessments and provide more detailed feedback to students.

3.4.2. To ensure consistency of approach for marking, training and guidance is provided to tutors through Canvas VLE training modules and at training sessions.

3.4.3. External Examiner comments have highlighted the quality of feedback provided to students and the value of the VLE. *'The feedback and attention to detail in the marking continues to be of a very high standard. It is good to see that the focus is on suggestions for improvement going forward as this provides students with additional analytical tools.', 'Staff supporting the delivery, assessment and feedback of MIP601 and MIP603 should be congratulated for their rigorous approach.' 'I commend the module staff for the care, attention and detail of the feedback', 'Canvas is a positive improvement to the overall provision, allowing students to access vital information from a central source remotely.'* External Examiner reports 2017-18

3.4.4. We recognise the importance that students place on the form and timeliness of assessment feedback and this has been raised through Board of Studies, programme evaluation surveys and the NSS survey. Various strategic activity, including the recent implementation of Canvas VLE for all submissions, is being used as a driver to help meet student expectations. *'The Academy has taken action to improve the form and timeliness of assessment feedback by implementing online submission, marking and feedback. The academy policy is for marked work to be returned within three weeks. The feedback provided to students is monitored by heads of schools and recent external examiner's report praised the quality of feedback. Students indicate that assessment feedback is useful and timely.'* QAA Review reports 2014 and 2016.

4. <u>Learning Environment</u>

4.1. Resources (LE1)

We aim to ensure that all our learning resources, physical and service based, are relevant and accessible. The following are indicators of the priority placed on resources:

4.1.1. A 'Building Access Guide' is available on our public access website and this identifies provision for those with disabilities. At application stage we undertake assessment of any specific learning needs including provision for students with visual and hearing impairments, physical disability and specific learning difficulties. Outcomes for these learners indicate that they are not disadvantaged in terms of their ability to engage and achieve. See 5.3.1 Our QAA

[4] https://www.acm.ac.uk/metropolis-blue/

review reports in 2014/2016 identified *'the specialist student support and guidance in place at ACM as good practice.'*

4.1.2. We believe are facilities represent some of the best available at any creative arts educational institution in Europe. We have invested substantially in the last few years to enhance the learning resources at ACM. The Guildford campus now contains seven buildings totaling 65,000 sq ft, providing c.1500 students with a range of resources including suitably equipped teaching and performing spaces, state of the art recording studios, rehearsal and tutorial rooms, a professional theatre venue, library, student café and social space. All the facilities are reserved for the exclusive use of students and for class room delivery. We currently operate with extended opening hours allowing access to rehearsal and studio facilities in the evenings and at weekends.

4.1.3. The use of external spaces enables students to gain experience of professional environments including arrangements with a number of venues. Students also benefit from exclusive access to facilities at Metropolis Studios in London. In addition to extra-curricular experiential activities this has included specific programme related activity. For example, in 2018 elements of a production module were taught at Metropolis Studios. During these sessions students worked in professional environments with support from in-house engineers. This resulted in improved engagement and achievement for that module. Songwriting camps are held in Metropolis studios with external guests such as Carla Marie Williams' GirlsIrate events[5]. Artist development sessions are conducted in Uproar studios in Birmingham. Downtime recording sessions are made available at Metropolis Studios on the weekend with professional staff recording students work. The Electric Theatre is used for Technical Services students to gain hands experience in a professional environment. The Café bar is used for ADCO workshops and peer-to-peer co-curricular activities in songwriting and performance.

4.1.4. We provide access to a range of online resources for students and teaching staff via the Canvas VLE and the MyACM app, in addition to the learning resources available in our specialist creative arts library. In 2018 we received the Ellucian award for 'Technology for Learning' at the Independent Higher Education (IHE) awards in recognition of our provision.

4.1.5. The VLE provides access to a range of useful resources including learning materials, assessment information, and online seminar groups. This is particularly helpful to students who need time to absorb lecture content outside of timetabled classes and to access additional content to support further study. In the first trimester of its integration across all programmes the VLE was actively used by staff and students with c.1.4 million page views and c.18 thousand actions taken recorded[6]. The QAA identified the '*comprehensive range of resources on the student portal that are highly appropriate for contemporary music'* as good practice. QAA Review reports 2014/2016 *'Students find the resources such as technical equipment, and access to the recording studio very beneficial to their learning'.* QAA HER Student Submission 2017.

4.1.6. A key development for 2018/19 has been to provide more support material as videos to encourage wider use. Each term we prepare a range of professional published learning support materials for each course providing students and staff with details on content for each lecture as well as guidance on further study. The QAA identified these *'course notes for supporting teaching staff'* as good practice. QAA Review reports 2014/2016.

4.1.7. The MyACM app provides a range of services via mobile devices and via workstations located around the campus. The app provides support for learning including access to: class timetables, tutor bookings, room bookings and rehearsal space bookings, the 'Help' button, Student Services information, handbooks, policies and procedures, reports and meeting minutes, information about Industry Link, personal information, and provisional assessment grades. Students have been actively involved in the development of the app and many enhancements have come through student ideas and suggestions.

4.1.8. All classrooms are equipped with teaching tools including white boards, projectors, PC with internet access, and audio playback equipment. A number of rooms are setup for specific

[5] https://www.acm.ac.uk/girls-i-rate-songwriting-weekender/, and https://www.girlsirate.com/
[6] CANVAS VLE user analytics recorded September to December 2017.

delivery needs including rooms setup for drum instruction, a keyboard instruction room, performance spaces with stage and lighting, and rooms with music production workstations. We also consider the lighting and décor to provide students with inspiring, creative and engaging professional environments.

4.1.9. In line with our 'learning by doing' ethos many of the recording studio spaces also function as teaching spaces to enable instruction in a practical environment. A professional standard recording studio space at Guildford was completed early 2018 providing students with one of the best recording facilities available at any educational establishment. *'ACM has an enviable reputation for excellence that grown out of providing first rate teaching facilities and great teaching and support staff.'* Dan Duffell Solid State Logic

4.1.10. To support individual and ensemble performance rehearsal, and music pre-production activity we provide access to around 30 separate spaces including a number of rehearsal 'pods'. All these spaces are fitted with the necessary sound equipment and majority have acoustic drums kits.

4.1.11. In June 2017 ACM secured a 20-year lease for the Electric Theatre in Guildford. The theatre has at least 50% of its use dedicated to learning and teaching activities. The venue features a 200-seat auditorium and is used to support a range of learning opportunities, and hosts numerous events available to students as well as outreach activities.

4.1.12. ACM's library provides access to a range of learning resources and reference material that support students through all stages of their studies at ACM. The library has subscriptions to various digital databases that allow access to materials to support research activities. Students can use printing and binding services and have access to computers with word processing and various music production software installed. We also provide a range of study support seminars on various topics including information/digital literacy, referencing and critical writing and conceptual analysis. In response to student feedback extended opening hours for library facilities were introduced in 2018/19. To help support students further with academic writing and researching skills Study Skills courses were introduced in 2018/19 with specific targeted support for foundation year students and final year dissertation students. The Library team also offered additional content via the VLE including advice and guidance on academic writing, dissertations, use of Google Scholar etc. External Examiner reports have commented positively on the research and academic skills evident in student work. See 3.3.3 Also, *'Students stated that the Academy had briefed them on plagiarism, including a tutorial session on the use of anti-plagiarism software'* QAA Monitoring visit report Oct 2018

4.1.13. During induction week we provide all students with guidance on the learning resources available to them. This includes talks from relevant staff, and instruction videos on use of the VLE and MyACM. QAA Review reports commented positively on Induction Booklet provided to students. See 3.1.8

4.1.14. Our facilities are managed by a full-time team of technicians to oversee physical spaces and learning environments, ensuring that they are fit for purpose, kept safe and accessible, maintained and equipment kept up to date. They also provide advice and guidance to students outside of class time and access to additional equipment including percussion, microphones and mobile recording equipment.

4.2. Scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2)

The following are indicators of how we encourage and enhance scholarship, research and professional practice:

4.2.1. We expect staff to remain actively involved in their areas of professional and academic practice and provide support to encourage this through: the type and nature of employment contracts available to them; CPD activity including sharing of good practice; HEA membership; and through encouraging a collegiate community of practicing professionals and active researchers. We recognise that professional practice can often place staff in new situations and work environments requiring them to develop new practices which in turn inform teaching, learning and assessment. We view these as valuable examples of scholarship and research. This experience is fed into the curriculum through classroom teaching, contribution to learning materials and programme design, and shared through training and CPD activity, and by highlighting tutor activity through news updates and other forms of communication.

4.2.2. We are currently exploring ways in which academic research can further support teaching, learning and assessment. Recent appointments of PhD level staff will help further development of ideas and strategy in this area.

4.2.3. Our staff demonstrates a breadth and depth of professional and academic expertise to support industry relevant teaching, learning and assessment. A small sample of our current teaching staff includes: *Tim Hawes, songwriter and recipient of a prestigious Ivor Novello award. Joe Yoshida, drummer who has worked with Jessie J, and Mike Batt. Paul Geary, a bassist who has worked with George Michael, Simply Red, and Mary J Blige. John Gallen, a producer and studio engineer who has worked with major recording artists including, Queen, Motorhead, Simply Red, and Boy George. Dave Cronen, a music industry professional, who has worked for Virgin Records and Rough Trade.*

4.2.4. We provide a substantial range of services to students through our Industry Link team to develop professional practice. Run by staff with extensive industry experience and connections the team is dedicated to supporting the professional development of students, helping them take their first steps into the creative industries. Through regular networking events, work placements, professional showcases and audition opportunities, students are able to showcase their knowledge and talent. Industry Link offers every student, past and present, free guidance and support through creating bespoke programmes of work. These are tailored to an individual's needs, enhancing personal and professional development. In the last year the team has been expanded to further enhance the service it can provide with additional support to help students take full advantage of the opportunities on offer through the ADCO (Artist Development and Creative Output) team. ADCO helps to develop personal performance and creative musical development though events such as songwriting camps, peer-to-peer listening sessions, student networking and musical collaboration and showcase events. Personal tutorials can also be booked with ADCO trained staff and the ADCO methodology is also now being developed to be integrated into the curriculum in the classroom.

4.2.5. Industry Link activity this year has included: Freshers week and enhancement weeks gigs; masterclass and networking events; The 'Electric Theatre sessions', a regular event hosted in the style of a chat show which follows a different theme each show, and includes staff and guest interviews, networking opportunities and performances by solo artists, student bands and an ACM 'house band'; access to Music Gateway global site and private network, a service that matches creative with music professionals and professional development opportunities as well as student collaboration and opportunities; ACM graduate network, open to all alumni, enabling them to network, attend industry and alumni seminars/events and benefit from all Industry Link has to offer in terms of opportunities and tutorials; and many shows and gigs nationally. Industry Link typically run at least five events every week at professional venues in the local area and on campus providing opportunities for our students totaling around 170 events each year including 14 festivals. Events range from pre-booked gigs in venues, interactive workshops, showcases, external seminars and free entrance to events from music industry leaders. Music Gateway (see above) currently has around 2300 active ACM users with students and alumni engaged in around 1000 projects to date.

4.2.6. To broaden experience and understanding students have access to a range of masterclasses and extra-curricular activity including weekly 'Pro-Workshops'. Most terms we run around eight 'Pro Workshops' every week covering such areas as 'Soul Workshop', 'DJ Workshop', 'Mix Doctor', 'The Electron Choir', 'The Healthy Singer', 'Music Theory Godmother', Music Industry Bootcamp' and 'Synth Jam Workshop'. We run a large number of masterclasses providing access to a wide variety of musicians, music professionals and artists. Over 30 masterclasses have been organised during autumn term 2018 including: Clare Rose (PRS), Paul Jones Roughtrade, Danny Dove (DJ), Olly Steele (Monuments), Dave Ellefson (Megadeth), Live Stream Workshops, Kieran Robertson (Operation:Mindcrime). Over the last few years ACM has been fortunate to welcome Chad Smith, Roger Taylor, Newton Falkner, Guthrie Govan (Asia, Hans Zimmer), Phil Campbell (Motorhead), Mo Pleasure (Michael Jackson, Earth, Wind and Fire), Paloma Faith, Gary Langham, Phil Brown (Led Zeppelin producer) and Trevor Horn amongst many other high-profile industry professionals.

4.2.7. Each year we take 30 students to the international music industry conference 'MIDEM' in Cannes, France. There they get to network with music and creative industry professionals as

well as debate the latest industry activity. Students highly value the experience and bring back wider benefits for the student body through the increased understanding about management and promotion of ACM artists and bands in the real world. *'Going to MIDEM was a memorable experience! It coupled ACM's educational and social values perfectly. I also got some great information from the talks.'* ACM Music Business student.

4.2.8. ACM's Discovery and Development (D&D) initiative brings together new talent and student management teams. At D&D 'days' business students work with an ACM band or artist and help them prepare a press pack, develop new product, formulate marketing and manage them in the real world. The day includes presenting to an industry panel who provide valuable feedback. D&D also hosts auditions and regular showcase gigs integrated with Metropolis Blue providing input for artists. *'D&D was a really great opportunity to experience the modern world of music management.'* ACM Music Business Student.

4.2.9. In 2017 we received the Shakespeare Martineau sponsored award for 'Industry Partnership of the Year' at the Independent Higher Education (IHE) awards in recognition of the provision.

4.2.10. Our QAA review reports recognise our successful engagement with industry as good practice. *'The Academy provides students with direct links to music industry support for professional development. There are extensive opportunities for extracurricular activity through professional workshops and master classes, which enable skill development. The Industry Link team supports students through facilitating internships and work opportunities. Students said they greatly valued these opportunities. The extensive links to the music industry to support learning is good practice.'* QAA Review reports for 2014/2016

4.2.11. We have received many endorsements from industry professionals highlighting key aspects of our provision and its positive impact on students and staff. *'I am delighted and honoured to be a patron of the Academy of Contemporary Music. Amazing places like this didn't exist when we were learning to be a group.'* Roger Taylor. *'ACM continues to grow and encourage new talent in the area of music. Artist Development is sorely lacking now in the UK, and the more organisations and people that encourage this, the better.'* Tony Moss (BMG Music Rights). '*ACM is the most sincere and industry relevant music school and I am proud to be part of the strategic team building post-graduate and incubation programmes by creating Twin Music Inc.'* Nick Gatfield (Former Head of Sony and founder of Twin Music Inc.). *'I saw a vision for the future of musical education today. ACM lives in the real world too. The talent of the student body reflects the open minded, forward thinking brains behind the whole machine.'* Dorian Holley (Musical Director, American Idol). *'From the moment you cross the threshold you can feel the creativity throughout the building. It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm exuding from both the staff and the students.'* Nigel Elderton (ACM patron, President and Managing Director, Peermusic UK). *'Progressive, holistic, conscientious. Quite honestly a truly magical place to learn. A wealth of highly skilled professionals ready to impart their knowledge on to future generations.'* Gary Langan (Queen, Yes, ABC, Spandau Ballet, Co-founder of ZTT Records).*'ACM is an amazing place…After 20 years in the music industry, to find a fertile ground of training, ideas and talent is amazing. ACM can't be matched for their commitment and attention to detail.'* David Rowell (Autonomy/Communion, Mumford & Sons, Ben Howard, Laura Marling).

4.2.12. External Examiner reports evidence the vocational strengths of the programmes including industry relevance.
'I like the blend of vocational and academic approaches, and, with the case of MIP Education & Training, I was pleased to see such deep investigations into pedagogy and associated theory, as well as a diverse collection of teaching styles and contexts covered.'
'These are strong programmes that offer hands-on practical learning combined with rigorous academic underpinning. Students are producing high quality work and are engaging critically, self-reflectively and analytically with their creative practices. It's great to see.'
'The way in which the course blends the acquisition of technical skills and creative tasks encourages deep student engagement.' External Examiner Reports 2017-18

4.3. Personalised learning (LE3)

The following are indicators of how we encourage and enhance personalised learning:

4.3.1. Our degrees provide opportunity for students to design a bespoke pathway from over 100 modules to meet both general and specific career aspirations. Further specialisation is possible through elective modules and project based modules. The availability of a foundation year provides opportunity to learn more about their own individual preferences before joining the degree programme. Within the musician route, discipline areas (guitar, vocals, bass, keyboards and drums) are recognised separately through specific module delivery. In 2018 we received the Advance HE sponsored award for 'Innovation in Design or Delivery' at the Independent Higher Education (IHE) awards in recognition of our provision.

4.3.2. At the recruitment stage we provide guidance on the various pathways and electives. The auditions process recognises the separate pathways and discipline routes and applicants are assessed as applicable to their instrument (musician pathway) or other pathway as relevant.

4.3.3. Within the culture and environment of the campus each pathway and disciplines have their own distinctive character. One-to-one tutorial support, both academic, and professional through Industry Link, is provided by specialists to support the individual needs of students. Learning resources, whether through the VLE or library, provide specific discipline related material. For example, specially commissioned course notes for vocalists. Pro-Workshops, themed masterclasses and other extra-curricular further support recognition of personalised learning.

4.3.4. Our Student Support Services team, through the provision of wellbeing, counselling, and Education Guidance activity, ensure that the personalised needs of each student is carefully considered and supported as appropriate. We recognise that our students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have a varied range of needs that require individual attention. Our use of technology to support the monitoring of attendance and progression enable us to respond quickly to individual issues. Student outcomes for learners with specific disabilities, our QAA reports, and recognition of an IHE award are evidence of positive outcomes in this field. See 5.3.1, 3.1.12

4.3.5. New initiatives were introduced in 2018/19 to re-evaluate ways in which personalised student activity could be used to meet module learning outcomes. For example, for Advanced Stagecraft & Presentation, and Exit Specialism modules students were able to submit performances from outside gigs they were undertaking. This encouraged students to seek outside opportunities and bridge gap between studies and professional engagement.

5. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

5.1. Employability and further study (SO1)

Sustainable careers and support for disadvantage students is a core aim and our metrics overall indicate good student outcomes in these areas. The following are indicators of how we encourage and enhance employability and further study:

5.1.1. Personal and professional development is embedded across all our programmes. All students study a shared module that aims to help develop the necessary skills and tools to achieve career goals including time management, confidence building, interview techniques, networking, skills development, wellbeing and work life balance. A Level 6 exit specialism module helps prepare students for further study and careers. Personal and professional development is further supported by Industry Link, Pro-Workshops, and masterclasses.

5.1.2. We provide various services to alumni to access opportunities and further develop their skills and understanding. This includes continued free access to Industry Link services including Music Gateway and Artist Roster, as well as specific access to networking events. Alumni are also featured and promoted within our website news items. See 3.1.6, 3.1.7

5.2. Employability and transferable skills (SO2)

The following are indicators of how we encourage and enhance the development of transferable skills:

5.2.1. Programme design incorporates development of employability and transferable skills. All modules consider professional practice within the learning outcomes and are evidenced through the nature of assessments typically based on measuring performance against

professional standards. As they progress through the programme, following an introduction to different aspects of the industry including technical skills, contextual understanding, and business understanding, there is opportunity to select electives that further define their career aspirations, and final year modules that allow for development of professional standard portfolio and specialist areas of study. Research and dissertation activity provides pathways to further study at post-graduate level as well as the development of business ideas.

5.2.2. We use a variety of mechanisms to ensure that our programmes and services are fit for purpose and relevant to students in terms of employability and transferable skills. This includes use of external industry professionals during the university validation process, and the External Examiner process to ensure consistency of standards within the sector. Our use of industry professionals within the teaching team provides sustained input of sector expectations into the classroom delivery on a day-to-day basis.

5.2.3. As outlined above (see 4.3.5) initiatives were introduced in 2018/19 to improve the ways in which learning outcomes for specific modules could be met through outside professional activity further promoting 'learning by doing ethos' and encouraging opportunities for real world experiences.

5.2.4. Industry Link services, and the Artist Development and Creative Output (ADCO) team, as described above, provide students with guidance on professional skills. As well as tutorials ADCO staff have been present in the classroom teaching their methodology in creative development in lectures such as Band Skills and Improvisation across all disciplines. ADCO also organises a showcase in the Great Escape Festival (Brighton) each year showcasing the most developed talent as well as now organising a multitude of up and coming artists for the Fat Tuesday festival in Hastings. ADCO also puts on Catalyst Songwriting camps, Catalyst networking nights, Lightbulb Sessions (open mic) and Watts Current (acoustic gigs). *'Having personally been involved in setting up of a number of high level writing camps that have produced US number one singles, I was thoroughly impressed by what I experienced at ACM today. The quality of writing was extremely high with the camp running like clockwork.'* ASCAP UK Director*. 'The Catalyst Songwriting Camp was an amazing experience. Being a producer, it was great to put into an environment of different singer-songwriters to collaborate with and build a network to potentially work with in the future.'* Samuel Towner, Production Student. *The Academy has continued with and taken forward good practice concerning the extensive engagement and links with industry.* QAA Monitoring visit report Oct 2018

5.2.5. We provide further opportunity for students to develop various transferable skills through their involvement as Student Representatives or Student Ambassadors. Through training sessions and engagement with their roles and responsibilities they develop a range of skills including networking, communicating, decision making, report preparation and project activity.

5.2.6. Where possible students are offered opportunities to be involved in the ACM and other external events ACM staff are involved in. For example, 12 students volunteered in the organisation of the voice science and pedagogy conference held in April 2018 (See 3.2.3).

5.2.7. In Jan 2019 the Education Guidance Team setup a new service to provide specific advice to DSA students in finding and securing work. This will include advice and guidance on the support they can access when they apply for, and get employment, both whilst they are at ACM and when they graduate.

5.2.8. To ensure greater value from the Music Gateway service available to all students it's usability and features have been improved for Jan 2019. It now showcases a Private Network for students and alumni to collaborate (including online workspace), as well as a professional Global marketplace where paid jobs can be pitched for, a global jobs board with top music companies and an ACM all campus opportunities section that offers anything from an audition to a paid local job.

5.2.9. In 2018 the Student Services team launched a service to support finding part-time work including CV workshops and drop in 1-2-1 tutorials to provide advice and guidance with 40 students accessing the service during the first six months of operation.

5.3. Positive outcomes for all (SO3)

The following are indicators of how we demonstrate positive outcomes for all our students:

5.3.1. Degree outcomes for students indicate that c.60% of graduates achieve Upper Second or First classification with around 28% achieving a First classification[7]. As in previous years a substantial number of DSA students continue to achieve high classifications with 68% achieving a Upper Second classification or above.

5.3.2. Our recruitment strategy, which is based on identifying talent and commitment through audition and interview, has a relatively low tariff entry requirement. Our TEF contextual data for entry qualifications indicates that 73% of entrants are in the middle or low tariff category with 53% in the low category. This suggests that students are achieving positive outcomes from the programme, especially for those that enter with low level previous academic achievement.

5.3.3. Our TEF metrics indicate *Employment and further study* is above benchmark for the majority of learners. We are extremely proud of our students past and present, who can be found working in all kinds of roles as musicians, artists, songwriters, producers, DJs, engineers and sound designers, industry executives, innovators and entrepreneurs. We track and highlight various graduate destinations and successes via our website through news items and alumni features. A small sample include: *Tim Steadman, working in design for IMG Artists. Yvonne Park, performing with many artists including Belinda Carlisle and Sonia. Lawrie Pattison, touring with the punk rock band Miss Vincent. Rianne Lewis, who has setup Cold Frame Productions. Ellie Fletcher, on a world tour with Crystal Fighters. Junior Kusi, working with artists like KYLA and RAYBLK. Ryan Ottley-Booth, working at Carlin Music Corporation, with offices in US and France.* Other graduates include: Newton Faulkner, Afrika Green (Pet Shop Boys), Zomboy, Rachel Coomber (BBC Introducing), Ben Kennedy (Foxes, Girls Aloud), Ed Sheeran, Members of band Lawson, and You and Me at Six, Mat Burr (Bastille), Crissie Rhodes (The Shires), Amelle Berrabah (Sugababes), Ted Dwayne (Mumford and Sons).

5.3.4. Current student activity and success stories are included on the student news section of the ACM Website. For examples see 3.1.6

5.3.5. We are committed to providing the highest standards of teaching and learning and an unparalleled student experience to those with a talent and enthusiasm for the music and wider creative industries, regardless of their economic or social background. To achieve these we provide a range of activities and initiatives to support and guide students at all stages of the student lifecycle from application to post graduation. This is important not just to uncover talent in unexpected places, but also to ensure that students are retained and graduate, before ultimately succeeding in their career aspirations. We believe that these activities and initiatives should be available to all ACM students and we are therefore committed to providing an inclusive widening participation provision, founded on a culture that recognises mutual respect and individuality. We achieve this through activity as outlined in our Access and Participation statement including: extensive outreach activity, a flexible programme portfolio, financial support through accelerated provision and bursaries, and resources available at no extra costs, support provided through induction, learning resources and Student Services, industry link opportunities and a creative inspiring environment. Student outcomes in terms of continuation for all learners, progression into employment and further study for all learners, and LEO data demonstrate the positive impact our approach is having on our students.

[7] Based on awards conferred at Finalist Exam Boards in 2017/18