Name of Provider: SAE Institute
UKPRN: 10007839

TEF Year Four provider submission

1 Provider Context

SAE Institute UK is part of the SAE Creative Media Institute (SAE Global), the world's largest creative media education provider with, at the time of writing, 49 campuses in 22 countries. SAE Global has been at the forefront of creative media education for the past 42 years. Now offering an unparalleled suite of programmes in a broad range of areas in the creative arts, SAE Global began as one of the world's pre-eminent schools of sound and audio engineering. SAE Institute UK (hereafter referred to as 'SAE') has the support of a global network of campuses and educational facilities in the world's centres of excellence for creative industries, including Los Angeles, London, Milan, Dubai, Berlin and Sydney.

Today, SAE offers undergraduate programmes taught by leading practitioners in Game Art and Animation, Visual Effects and Animation, Digital Film Production, Games Programming, Web Development, and Music Business, as well as Audio Production. In addition, SAE offers an online Master's degree in Professional Practice and a number of short courses and evening classes targeted at existing professionals. These degrees are validated by our partner Middlesex University.

Spread across four state-of-the-art campuses in the digital hubs of London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Oxford, SAE's mission is to be the *UK's leading educator for the creative media industries*. Conscious of our students' desire to embark on their favoured careers as swiftly as possible, SAE was among the first specialist HE institutions to pioneer **two-year accelerated undergraduate degrees** in the UK. The provision of high-level creative and technical skills for the audio-visual industries has reaped acclaim at the highest level: alumni of SAE have won Oscars, BAFTAs, and Grammys.

The Institute's success in training a large number of competent graduates ready for the workplace has occurred concurrently with enormous growth in the UK's vital creative industries. Statistics from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport demonstrate that the number of jobs in the creative industries increased between 2014 and 2015 by some 5.1% in comparison to a 2.0% increase in the UK economy as a whole over the same period,[1] while figures from 2017 show continued growth at a faster rate than the broader economy.[2]

The SAE CMI Alumni Association is a global network of over 15,000 graduates and industry professionals who have studied at SAE; while SAE UK has recently established its own Alumni network, with initial engagements and events taking place at each campus in the latter half of 2018.

In addition to global recognition within the creative world, SAE has received a commendable outcome from the review visit by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2016. QAA cited two *commendations* and seven areas of *good practice.* The most recent monitoring visit from the QAA in June 2018 confirmed that SAE continues to make acceptable progress.

[1] Dept. for Digital Culture, Media & Sport (2016). 'Key Findings' [Online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-2016-focus-on/key-findings
[2] Creative Industries (2018). 'Facts and Figures'. [Online] Available at: http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/uk-creative-overview/facts-and-figures/employment-figures

As of November 2018, SAE Institute UK has been approved for inclusion on the register of English higher education providers by the Office for Students (OfS). In meeting the conditions for registration, and looking ahead through 2019 and beyond at the ongoing conditions of registration, SAE is committed to improving all stages of the student life cycle.

We are unique for several reasons:

1. *Global footprint* – by being part of a global organisation, we benefit from the cross-pollination of ideas between staff (examples of this are shared in the following sections).

2. *Multi-campus* – we are the only alternative provider in the UK with the most geographically spread campuses, spanning Oxford, London, Liverpool and Glasgow. This also fosters synergies between campuses in learning and teaching discussed later.

3. *Comprehensive complementary creative media courses* – whilst most specialist creative media institutions focus their offering on single or dual disciplines, such as Audio and/or Music, SAE delivers wide ranging courses including Audio Production, Film Making, Animation, Games Programming, Web Design, and Music Business.

4. *Renowned alumni* – with our distinct model of hands-on learning and strong focus on industry and global engagement, many of our students have gone on to enrich the world with their creative talents winning Oscars, Grammys, BAFTAS and becoming digital entrepreneurs (see Student Outcomes and Learning Gain).

2 Commentary on Metrics

Summary of commentary on National Student Survey

SAE entered into the National Student Survey for the first time in 2017. This marked a major milestone for the institution as we wanted to take positive steps in listening to the voice of our students and improving the student experience on our programmes, enhancing the student journey and making SAE a better place to study creative media technology.

SAE recognises that our NSS results are below benchmark targets, and our expectations; in 2017 we achieved an overall satisfaction rating of 48% and shown marginal increase in 2018 to 51%. Individual areas of notable improvement were ‘Organization and Management’, up by 13.02% on the previous year; ‘Student Voice’ up by 9.56%; and ‘Assessment and Feedback,’ up by 2.52%. SAE has high aspirations and we believe we demonstrate rigour in all of our ongoing procedures to improve student satisfaction. Our 2018 NSS performance was mitigated by the fact that our benchmarks for individual scale areas drastically changed. Therefore, despite the increases in individual scales mentioned above in the NSS (albeit still below our expectations), this translated to only a small increase in our overall satisfaction.

While SAE acknowledges the low scores, we also believe that these are not truly reflective of the level and quality of teaching that occurs in our campuses. Institutional action plans and directives have been, and are being, developed and implemented in order to address the feedback being received through this and other channels; however, some time is required for these action plans to produce tangible results in the form of improve student satisfaction. We are forecasting, based on internal student surveys mapped against the NSS questions, a significant improvement on these scores in the 2019 survey results.

Mitigation of the low performance in the NSS-derived core metrics can be found in the following:

- Small student populations for many of our courses. For example, only 12 of 15 eligible Web Development students completed the NSS survey in 2018; while 14 of 20 Music Business students completed the survey. These relatively small cohorts mean that individual issues will have a more significant impact on the overall scores for the programmes in question.
- Studies have shown that creative arts subjects tend to fair lower in the NSS.[3]
- We offer accelerated degrees, however this mode of study is not currently accounted for in the benchmarks and metric calculation, in the similar manner that 'part time' provision is known to impact.

Since June 2016, SAE Institute UK has undergone significant transformation that has radically improved teaching quality, the learning environment and overall student experience:

- *Major restructuring and regionalisation plan* – a thorough review of our provisions and services across the campuses led to the development of a regionalised 'one team' approach. This means all four campuses now harmonise practices and equivalency of student experience. The review included an evaluation of faculty and technician roles, ensuring that they possessed the necessary skill set to teach and deliver the level and breadth of programmes offered. As a result, a UK-wide Executive Leadership Team was established with representation from across the UK campuses, helping to foster inter-connectedness, and a culture of continuous improvement with faster developments in improving student experience.

- *London Project* – SAE London is our largest campus with 305 students; this makes it nearly 3 times as large as our second biggest campuses, Liverpool and Glasgow, which have approximately 130 students each. London has faced challenges with its corresponding growth.
  The appointment of a new Campus Director in London has seen vast improvements over the year, managed through the London Project. This has included: swift hiring of new academic faculty to replace key campus leadership roles; the appointment of a Student Experience Manager; an enhancement of the Student Experience Team in London, including hiring a new Lead Student Experience Officer to oversee the team; as well as the implementation of a new Student Support Strategy aimed at, but not limited to, improving student support and mental health wellbeing. Students who participated in the NSS used in the TEF year 4 metrics did not benefit fully from these enhancements, and further significant improvements are expected in 2019 and 2020 due to the actions that have been undertaken.

- *3-year strategic plan to 2020* – The UK's current three-year Strategic Plan includes five key themes. Student experience is at the heart of the plan to improve student outcomes, as is a focus on developing staff and collaborative links with new partners, including schools and employers. A unique feature of the plan is Corporate Social Responsibility strategy focusing around men and mental health, and accessibility for women in Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET).

[3] Vaughn, D. and Yorke, M. (2009). *'I can't believe it's not better': The Paradox of NSS scores for Art & Design*. [online] Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/NSS-Report.pdf [Accessed 29 Nov. 2018].

Commentary on Individual Metrics

2.1 The Teaching on my Course

The 2018 score of 68.59% in this area showed a marginal increase from 64.62% in the previous year, a trend we expect to accelerate in coming years as measures and initiatives which have now been implemented begin to deliver results.

SAE is proud to deliver highly practical courses, with a strong focus on Project Based Learning (PBL), though a number of modules based around research, writing and other transferrable, non-discipline-specific skills also run through the programme. A thread of 'Common modules' runs throughout each of the degree programmes, aimed at embedding employability. These 30-credit modules are shared across all or most of the programmes, bringing students from different disciplines together to ensure a focus on developing transferable skills to boost employability. These occur at each FHEQ Level, and cover topics such as written and verbal communication; research skills; creative portfolio development; marketing and branding; creative media entrepreneurship and business skills

As lectures which involve tasks such as essay writing, group work, presentation skills, business and marketing, there is a tendency for students who are highly focused on developing discipline-specific technical and creative skills to feel unmotivated in classes that they perceive as secondary to their creative work. Though the requirements of an academic degree, and the usefulness of such transferable skills to their future careers, are made clear to students, it remains the case that many students do not see the full value of such topics until after they graduate. Internal surveys often return lower satisfaction scores for these classes, and SAE would stress that this does not reflect accurately on the quality of teaching, or content delivery. While student satisfaction is important, it might also be argued that seeking to develop what industry and employers have identified as key skills, rather than delivering only those topics most popular with the students, is a responsibility of a good curriculum and a good HE provider.

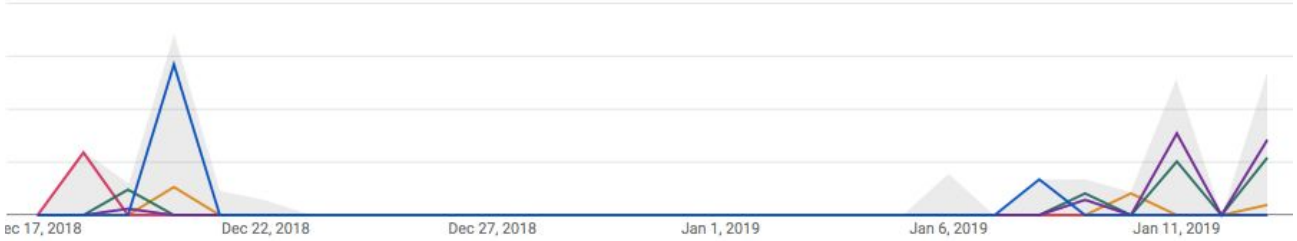
Steps have been taken, however, to improve satisfaction within these 'common' modules. Student feedback has suggested that they have difficulties applying the lessons to their own industry or professional practice. We believe this is why *Question 2: Staff have made the subject interesting* may have a low rating of 68.84%. In order to resolve this, a number of 'common' modules are now being delivered in smaller classes and/or with extra tutorials, split by discipline, to allow lecturers with specific industry knowledge to guide the students in applying lessons to their own practice. This approach has already shown an upturn in satisfaction levels within internal surveys from 2018.

2.2 Assessment and Feedback

SAE recognises that this has been one of our poorer performing areas. In 2017, we scored 45.72% overall and in 2018 we scored 48.24% overall in this particular theme. Looking at the subsequent questions a comprehensive review of NSS 2018 feedback was conducted in May 2018 to formulate an institutional wide engagement plan.

In question **8. *The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance***, we scored 44.62% (below the benchmark of 61%). As a direct measure to improve on this result, SAE academic staff wrote and recorded a series of Assessment Criteria videos for key modules at Levels 5 and 6. These videos, accessible through the VLE, provide students with a clear explanation of each grading criterion for each assessment, delivered by an experienced tutor in the subject. Examples of previous student work and/or industry standards are referenced in order to apply these rubrics to more concrete examples. These audio-visual aids assist students in developing a much clearer

understanding of the assessment, without impinging on the requirement for students to think independently and develop their own assessment work. This project was a significant undertaking by academic faculty across all SAE UK campuses, and having received good feedback on initial implementation is being rolled out further in 2019. Analytics have shown clear spikes in students viewing these assessment criteria videos (below) both in the final week of term, and again in the first week of the January 2019 term, which we are confident will translate into higher pass rates for these individual assessments.



Question ***10. Feedback on my work has been timely*** received particularly poor scores (30.15%, down from 33.18% in 2018, with a benchmark of 51%). We believe that this particularly low score was a direct result of exceptional circumstances in our London campus, primarily the sudden loss of key members of staff; due to this, the return of marked work and feedback to students was unacceptably delayed. Following from this a strict procedure has now been implemented in which all assessments are marked within 3 weeks of the deadline, and major projects (dissertations) are marked with 4 weeks of deadline. We have also introduced a marking tracker which is monitored by the Directorate of Academic and Student Services team, including the UK Dean, to closely monitor and ensure all campus faculty are sticking to this strict procedure.

2.3 Academic Support

This metric rose by almost 7% to a score of 68.26% in 2018. As a creative media institute with relatively low entry requirements, SAE takes access and participation very seriously and as such we have a high proportion of students who require additional support. Our support officers are easily contactable and available to students; this is reflected in question **12** ***I have been able to contact staff when I needed to***. We achieved a high score of 81.82% here (benchmark of 84%), up from 71% in 2017.

15.4% of the current SAE student population have a declared disability.

Research suggests that students with declared disabilities typically are less satisfied[4]; interestingly, the opposite seems to be true for SAE when looking at the breakdown of this metric.

Indicator (%)	Core metric		Disabled	
			Yes	No
Full-time headcount: 860 (100%)				
The teaching on my course	66.5	!	71.8	65.7
Assessment and feedback	46.9	!	53.2	46.0
Academic support	64.7	!	60.8	65.3

Our statistics show that students registered with a disability are more satisfied with the academic support provided. This supports our goal of addressing the

[4] Surridge, L. (2007). *2010/18 - Higher Education Funding Council for England*. [online] Available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180322111255/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2010/201018/ [Accessed 29 Nov. 2018].

diverse needs of our student population. It seems that these efforts may be detracting from support for student without declared disabilities; however, we are encouraged by early indications that the creation and appointment to the Student Experience Manager (SEM) role in 2018 has assisted in improving support across the board. This position has oversight of Student Experience Officers on each campus, providing matrixed management with local Campus Directors, to drive forward the various projects and elements that comprise student experience.

Campus	Students on Academic Support/ Pastoral Support	
	No.	% of current enrolments
Liverpool	38	28.4%
London	12	3.8%
Oxford	24	33.8%
Glasgow	17	15.0%

We have a dedicated Student Experience Team within each campus; whilst the number of these officers may differ in each campus, the responsibilities remain the same. We employ Financial Student Experience Officers whose primary role is to provide financial support to students, providing flexible individual plans to students who require help, as well as providing advice and guidance on best practice in regards to budgeting. We also have Academic Student Experience Officers whose primary role is to provide academic support to students, helping with academic writing, employability skills, study support and providing advice and guidance around pastoral support. All of these roles form the National Student Experience Team who work to strategically improve student experience across all campuses.

SAE hold student support in high regard, in particular their mental health wellbeing. SAE recognises that mental health wellbeing of students is a predominant factor in student experience and with the recent release of statistics around suicide rates in students and the upcoming Mental Health Charter by Student Minds we have curated a institutional **Student Support Strategy.** Between July 2016-July 2017, 95 students took their lives across the UK HE sector[5].

We partnered with MIND in 2018 within our London campus which allowed students to receive one to one pastoral care on site or over the phone in 30 minute sessions every 2 weeks. MIND do not charge us for this service however do limit the amount of time available which is currently set to 14 hours per trimester. This partnership is facilitated by our Student Experience Team and offered to students who were currently receiving academic support or had been identified as a risk by academic faculty who will directly benefit from the service.

Total Number of Hours Available in 18T3	Total Number of Hours Booked	Total Number of Hours Delivered
14	8	6.5

Based on these figures we can see that 46% of the total time made available by MIND was booked by students, which was below what we were expecting. Following this we have implemented an

[5] Caul, S. (2018). *Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics - Office for National Statistics*. [online] Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/estimatingsuicideamonghighereducationstudentsenglandandwalesexperimentalstatistics/2018-06-25 [Accessed 29 Nov. 2018].

awareness campaign to boost engagement with this service and hope to see improved metrics in trimesters to come.

Our Student Support Strategy emcompasses guidance and procedures surrounding staff training, awareness and recognising signs of risk. We also follow best practice guidance set out by Student Minds and Universities UK and attend regular training and refresher events to stay up to date with innovative ideas.

2.4 Continuation

The primary identifiable cause of SAE's failure to meet benchmarked targets for continuation has been through students encountering financial difficulties during their first year of study (32% of students from the last published figures). Prior to 2019, students with SLC funding have been required to provide £2835 towards the £9000 overall tuition fee costs themselves. This financial pressure has resulted in problems with both continuation and student satisfaction. SAE offers financial support through flexible payment plans, with around 120 students receiving support in this manner.

Further to this, as SAE UK is now on the OfS register, students enrolling from 2019 onwards will be eligible to receive student loans covering the full cost of fees across the two years of study. This should lead to a significantly lower number of students discontinuing studies for financial reasons; and, in turn, lead to a marked improvement in the Institute's continuation rates.

Students on Financial Support	
Number	**% of current enrolments**
43	32.1%
30	9.6%
43	60.6%
5	4.4%

Our forecasts of continuation to be published in March 2019 suggest that a significant improvement on current metrics has been made.

2.5 Graduate Outcomes

Our multi-campus nature makes us different to other providers. DLHE does not take account of the demographics and labour market trends in the locations surround our different campuses. Neither does it currently account for different disciplines such as creative media.

The creative industries are significantly different to other sectors in terms of the conception of graduate employment and early career paths. *'Many people in the creative industries work on a freelance basis, a world of short-term contracts [...] those starting out may face low wages and periods of financial instability.'*[6] Unfortunately, this is the reality of entry into many career paths within the creative industries and SAE supports students to prepare for such a portfolio career. We are pleased to see the the new graduate outcomes survey has been purposely adapted to this.

> *All assessments incorporate an element of embedded professional/employability skills and/or commercial contexts. The team have clearly worked hard to build an assessment strategy around a comprehensive employability and professional framework and they are to be commended on this.* --Kenny McAlpine, Chief External Examiner, June 2018

[6] ScreenSkills (2018). 'Advice for getting in.' https://www.screenskills.com/education-training/careers-information/advice-for-getting-in/

In 2018, SAE conducted a survey of alumni since 2005, aimed at understanding professional destinations upon graduating from the institute over a longer-term period, as well as how well SAE aided in development and preparation for industry employment.

92 respondents** over a **thirteen-year period
93% employment rate 3 years after study

In addition, 92% of graduates declared themselves 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their employment. These statistics demonstrate that, particularly for creative media, some time is needed after graduation for careers to take off.

As the SAE degree focus is very strongly on industry training and the development of practical creative skill sets, a very small percentage of our graduates go on to further study within the year following completion of their course. Reviewing the most recent DLHE data, it is acknowledged that only 3% of respondents were engaged in further study of some kind. Far more are focused on entering the workplace. This is true even more so as SAE does not have a research degree provision; the Institute's postgraduate scope is limited to Master's level, and even there aimed very firmly at Professional Practice for working professionals.[7] As such, the comparatively low figure of graduates in further study presented in the metrics represents not a failure to meet benchmarks, but rather a natural consequence of the Institute's stated educational aims.

3 Teaching Quality

Students really excel at assessment that involves creative practice. --Kenny McAlpine, Chief External Examiner, June 2018

In its 2016 Higher Education Review Report (QAA) cited as a good practice that:

> ***"**The effective resourcing and support for staff development which promotes learning and teaching practice that is informed by reflection, scholarship and industry needs."*
>
> *"The effective integration of professional and academic support which enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (B4 & Enhancement)."*
>
> *"The inclusive, accessible and clear assessment guidelines which comprehensively support student understanding of the assessment objectives, criteria and process (B6)."*

The most recent QAA Monitoring Visit in June 2018 concluded that the Institute has continued to make acceptable progress in monitoring, reviewing and enhancing our HE provision.

3.1 Personalised Learning and PBL

SAE globally has sought over recent years to implement a prominent Project-based Learning (PBL) approach across its programmes. In the UK amongst other regions, this has come into action since the 2015 revalidation by Middlesex University of our seven degree programmes. PBL is embedded

[7] SAE (2018). 'MA/ MSc Professional Practice (Creative Industries).' https://www.sae.edu/gbr/mamsc-professional-practice-creative-media-industries-postgraduate-masters-course?did=170

as a core part of the curriculum, and has been integrated further into the delivery of modules across levels and programmes with each year. Level 5 and 6 elective modules ("Creative Production" and "Advanced Specialized Project") are at the forefront of this: these modules require students to identify a self-directed learning path, write and agree a learning contract with their supervisor, and then complete a practical project, meeting agreed milestones during the trimester. Lecturers will facilitate learning in any necessary topics or areas during this time, help to provide learning resources, and guide the students in their work.

Some student comments on modules utilizing the PBL approach can be drawn from internal surveys:

- *"...liked the flexibility and creativity when it came to projects and assignments, the ability to work in groups and in a collaborative way, to develop your own ideas and use independent research to do so."* -- December 2018
- *"This module was very flexible and allowed me to complete a project that I felt would benefit my career."* -- August 2018
- *"I like the amount of independence given to students to work on projects they've wanted to pursue."* -- December 2018

We also note that implementation of PBL is an ongoing project, requiring an approach that may be quite new to both lecturers and students; we naturally receive some comments that help to show us where we need to continue to improve:

"...self-guided learning, which for me made it extremely difficult because I could have learned much more in the elective class as it is much more topic specific."

Whilst the practical elements of the courses are taught in great detail, after these lectures have finished the students are expected to do further research and put their new skills in play by using SAE technical resources to further expand their portfolios. Internal student surveys have highlighted this as a key aspect of the student experience at SAE, and as such we have encouraged a programme of technical workshops, aimed at reinforcing students' practical skills, delivered as a support to the curriculum by our Campus Support Technician team on each site.

4 Learning Environment

One of the key changes in SAE over the last two years has been the implementation of a 'Students As Partners' culture, in which our lead and campus student representatives play a key role in business and strategy decisions. Each of the four campuses now has a 'lead' representative who is consulted when appropriate by the respective Campus Director, as well as engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the Student Experience Team to ensure that all student feedback is listened to, and that students feel that they have agency and can contribute to the learning environment within the Institute.

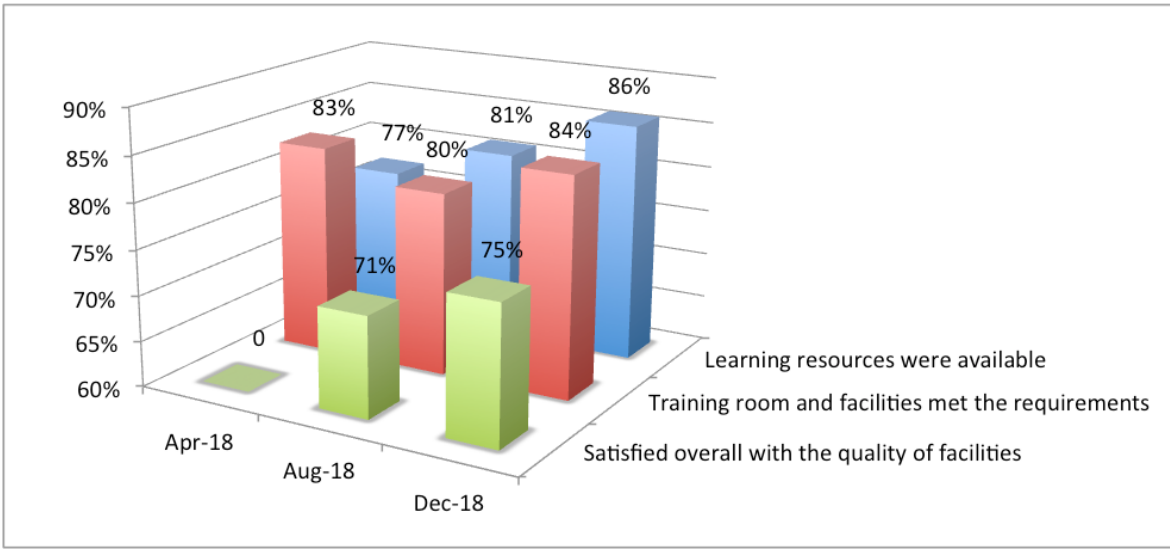
4.1 Resources & Facilities

For a specialist institution offering practiced-based education, we provide our students with world class facilities, often cited as the top reasons students choose to study with SAE. Excluding lecture theatres, we have 45 practical learning spaces. This includes music studios, live rooms, post production suites, green scroom rooms, animation labs and more. A crown jewel is our Energy Groove Music (EGM) Radio station, which has studios in three of the four UK campuses. Students from all programmes are encouraged to get real radio experience with these facilities. Audio

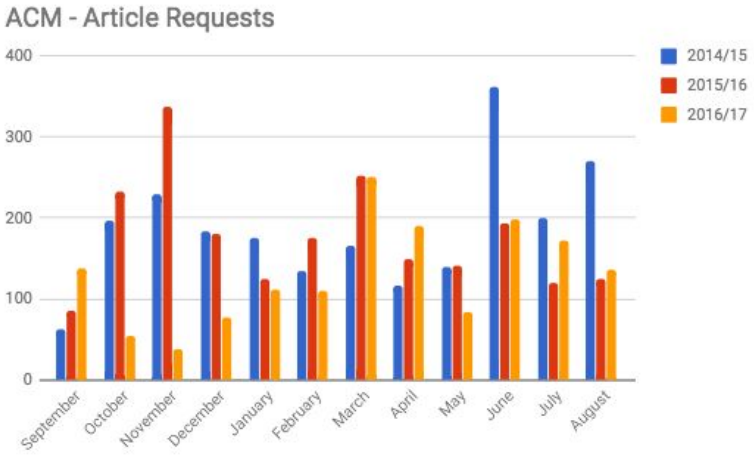
Production and Music Business students have worked to programme and deliver content on the station, both as extra-curricular projects and for credit within elective modules; while Film Production students in SAE Liverpool developed a podcast called 'The Big Picture,' which in late 2018 was given a weekly slot on EGM Radio.

During 2018 SAE Glasgow **expanded facilities** both in teaching space and new equipment, through the acquisition of a second building located close by the existing campus. This includes a purpose built studio for our Game Art and Animation course. The flexible design of the new space allows the rooms to be multifunctional, with the largest area seating seventy students. Development work in SAE Liverpool creating both a 'Learning Zone' and a new Web Lab, with an investment of c.£6,500. The Lab is equipped with 10 high-end PCs, and has created an excellent learning environment for the Web students.

The table below shows results from internal end-of-trimester student surveys, focusing on three questions centered on facilities. These results show a consistently high level of satisfaction from students in this regard, as well as a visible improvement in results across the calendar year 2018.



Library and Learning resources are of high quality, with dedicated library and study spaces in each campus for physical books and industry publications. The VLE has a dedicated Library and Learning Support page, which offers student access to a number of online library subscriptions, including JSTOR, the ACM and AES Digital Libraries, ProQuest, and Ebook Central, all with huge numbers of published works directly relevant to the creative industries and specific disciplines being taught. ACM, for example, averages over 7,500 views and 1,500 article downloads each academic year. Further additional resources developed by Programme Committees are available for a range of modules through the VLE.



In 2018, a pilot test of the Lynda platform was held, following on from which in 2019 SAE will roll out content from the platform to students. Lynda.com is an online video tutorial library with professionally produced content, organized into learning paths and disciplines. It specializes in technical skills for software tools in creative and digital media. The content to be used at SAE is being carefully curated by Programme Committees for each discipline, and relevant video sets will be made available directly through Moodle for different modules.

4.2 Staff Profiles

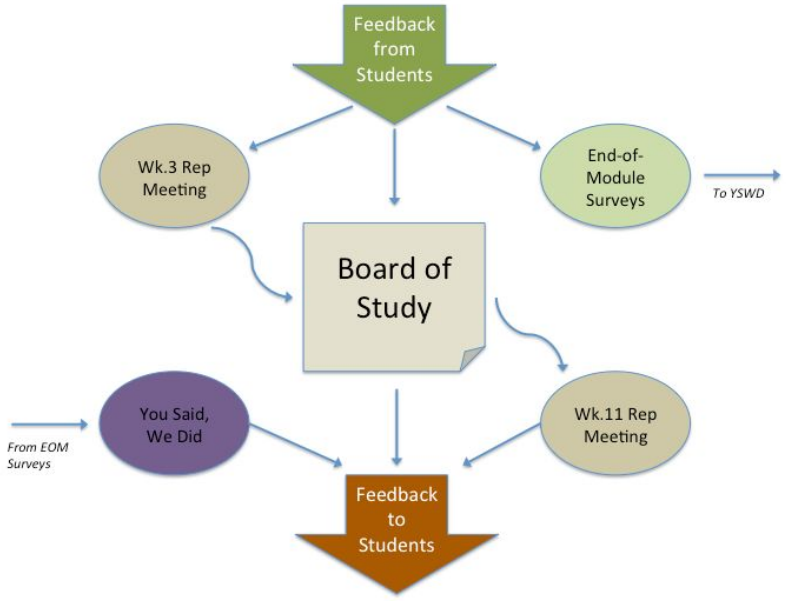
SAE academic and technical staff practitioners in their own fields, with wide and varied careers and experience with which to influence their teaching at the Institute. Aside from this, SAE is also proud of the academic standards upheld by teaching staff, many of whom also work on research projects and papers.

Professional development is an essential and ongoing part of SAE staff policy. In the previous year, the Institute has sponsored academic leadership from each campus in pursuit of Fellowships with the Higher Education Academy; 50% of the Academic Leadership hold HEA fellowships.

Over the academic year 2017/18, it is also notable that one staff member completed a PhD, while five completed Master's qualifications. SAE is committed to continuous professional development, ensuring that staff remain both at the forefront of their respective fields, and continue to develop their careers as educators.

4.3 Student Voice

SAE has continued to develop the Student Voice as a key area of growth around teaching and learning quality, echoing our 'Students as Partners' mindset.



We have implemented a trimesterly 'feedback cycle' to ensure that there are adequate opportunities for students to provide feedback on their course and broader experience, while also

giving clear channels for us to report back to the student body on how their feedback has been acted upon. This includes:

- Board of Studies;
- Student Representative meetings with Academic and Programme Coordinators;
- End-of-Module surveys;
- The 'You-Said-We-Did' campaign (see a short extract below).[8]

This results in three clear points each trimester where student feedback is gathered and reported on, thereby closing the feedback loop with students. Further focus groups and open forums are also held at key points, including recently in the run up to NSS 2019, and as a part of SAE's degree revalidation project, to ensure that students are consulted and given the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing business of SAE through our 'Students as Partners' culture.

5 Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

5.1 Student Outcomes

The table below shows SAE UK finalist awards during the Academic Year 2017/18; 326 awards were made in this period, with a further 24 students deferring or failing in their final term of study.

[8] Also visible through the 'Student Voice' page of our main website: SAE (2019). 'Student Voice'. https://www.sae.edu/gbr/student-voice

Qualification name	% First	% Upper second	% Lower second	% Third	% Unclassified	% Exit Qualification	% Exit Qualification
						Diploma	Certificate
BA/BSc Audio Production	15.30%	31.10%	20.60%	10.50%	11.50%	1.90%	9.10%
BA/BSc Digital Film Making, BA/BSc Digital Filmmaking	8.60%	32.90%	21.40%	12.90%	14.30%	5.70%	4.30%
BSc Games Programming	0.00%	40.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%
BA/BSc Interactive Animation, BA/BSc Game Art and Animation, BA/BSc Visual Effects and Animation	12.50%	25.00%	12.50%	18.80%	18.80%	6.20%	6.20%
BA/BSc Music Business	35.30%	29.40%	23.50%	5.90%	0.00%	5.90%	0.00%
BA/BSc Web Development	44.40%	22.20%	0.00%	0.00%	11.10%	0.00%	22.20%

As can be seen, student outcomes are strong, as 46% of students achieved a 'good' degree with first-class or upper second-class honours. A further 30% achieved lower honours on their degree. It is also noteworthy that, SAE Institute does not exhibit the kind of grade inflation that has been identified across the UK HE sector,[9] but has maintained a consistent level of first and upper second awards across a number of years.

Year	1 and 2:1 awards	2:2 and 3 awards
2017/18	46%	30%
2016/17	45%	30%
2015/16	48%	35%

5.2 Soft Skills

As mentioned in section 2, a thread of 'Common' modules runs throughout each of the degree programmes, aimed at embedding employability through development of transferable and soft skills, such as written and verbal communication; research skills; creative portfolio development; marketing and branding; creative media entrepreneurship and business skills. Many creative media students require time after completing their studies to develop and build a portfolio of work, which will then help them to advance in their industry of choice - while this has an affect on employment statistics in the months following completion, what is not sufficiently measured are the depth of these skills, and the fact that are graduates are imbued with an entrepreneurial mindset, key to independent and freelance creative work, as well as the soft skills to support them as they make their own work, build portfolios, and grow into the industry.

One way in which this *is* reflected is in the number of graduates who positively state that they are freelancing, self-employed, or starting their own businesses (**57** out of **194** respondents, roughly **29%** fell into these categories in the latest published DLHE results).

[9] "According to the latest research, the proportion of firsts and 2:1s combined has increased from 67% in 2010/11 to 78% six years later": Sally Weale & Pamela Duncan (2018). 'Universities watchdog threatens fines over grade inflation' in *The Guardian*. [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/dec/19/universities-watchdog-threatens-fines-over-grade-inflation [Accessed 7 January 2019].

> *These are practice-led, industry-focused programmes that aim to embed employability skills both within teaching and assessment, and which build critical and analytical skills as students progress through successive stages of the programme.*
> --Kenny McAlpine, Chief External Examiner, June 2018

5.3 Portfolio Development

Since, as stated, the development of creative portfolios and showreels is an integral part of the early career of many creative professionals, The SAE curriculum is built around a structural skeleton that encourages this development. A module in the first trimester ('Information, Communication and Professional Media Practice') includes as its final assessment the initial development of an online portfolio using relevant websites and tools. Throughout further trimesters, students are explicitly encouraged to develop and improve on this portfolio, particularly through the production of major practical works in their specific disciplines at Levels 5 and 6.

One particularly noteworthy elective module ('Industry Engagement') allows students to engage in professional work placement activities for academic credit; the major assessment for this module is a resubmission of the student's portfolio of work, showcasing how the skills and experiences taken from work placements over three months have fed into their understanding of both their creative discipline, and the reality of finding work or attracting employment.

5.4 Industry Links and Events

The announcement in December 2018 of a major new Creative Careers Programme, with over £20 million investment to the creative industries, is of significant importance to SAE UK.[10] A huge boost to apprenticeships and work placements will link both with the curricular scope for Industry Engagement as a source of credits within the SAE degrees; and provide valuable links for graduates to pursue worthwhile further training and entry into industry.

SAE prides itself on maintaining links with both local and global industry contacts, as well as allowing students the opportunity to showcase their work prior to graduation in order to begin the process of networking and portfolio building. During 2018, the Liverpool campus hosted a Film awards event showcasing student work; while the Oxford campus hosted a showcase day with invitation to industry contacts as well as the general public. Representatives from national and international companies such as Audient, Focusrite, Rebellion and many more have attended showcases and campus events over the past year, often working with students.

[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/20-million-to-boost-creative-industries-across-england

5.5 Alumni

SAE promote significant networking and mentoring potential with our Alumni Network. The global footprint of SAE and international alumni contacts ensure that students going to any creative hub in the world are likely to see the benefit of SAE networks. In November 2018 as part of a new mentoring scheme **18 graduate mentors were signed up to be matched with students.**

Within the UK, there has been a renewed emphasis on local alumni and graduate events in 2018. Networking evenings are held at suitable locations close to each campus, enabling graduates from many years to meet and develop networks both locally and nationally; these are also an opportunity for some current students to meet with alumni. Graduates with key industry skills or positions are regularly invited back to conduct guest workshops or classes, within the curriculum, and to deliver public lectures and sessions under the 'SAE Extra' events scheme. These again provide current students with valuable insight into industry, which feeds into their employability and ensures they are focused on building up the specific technical and soft skills needed for their career of choice.

6 Student Consultation

This submission has been reviewed by the Lead Student Representatives from all SAE UK campuses, who have provided their input and feedback on the document.

7 Summary

In conclusion, SAE has a long standing history of delivery practice based education and unique two year accelerated degrees. We acknowledge that improvements are needed in the core metrics in the accompanying data. However, we strongly believe that our teaching quality and outcomes are at as low a level as this data suggests.

In mitigation for the first three metrics, we would posit that, now entering our third year of participation in the NSS, we have largely addressed the initial negative feedback and implemented UK-wide action plans in order to improve these three key areas; internal satisfaction levels have risen noticeably, and we forecast an equivalent and significant rise in our NSS scores in the coming year, which will be more reflective of the level we firmly believe our teaching to be at.

Having surpassed the benchmark for continuation in the previous year's TEF metrics, SAE has been unfortunate to suffer a bad year which can, as stated, be largely shown to have resulted from students with financial difficulties, and to a lesser extent from exceptional circumstances within the London campus. With SAE students from 2019 eligible for full funding from the Student Loans Company, we again expect this metric to return to meeting and then surpassing the benchmark targets in the coming years.

With regards to graduate employment and outcomes, SAE's position within the creative industries means that there are unique considerations for the careers of our graduates. Benchmarks for the sector may not be realistic for the particular fields into which our graduates are moving, and through a strong programme of alumni connections and career support, SAE believes that our graduate outcomes are commendable, with further improvement targeted.

Overall, significant planning and investment of resources has been pushed into holistic improvement of the student journey at SAE, and we expect to see the benefits of this coming through more and more in a quantifiable manner.