

Section 6: BIMM Institute Quality Assurance & Enhancement Policy

Scope of the policy

This policy statement summarises the British and Irish Modern Music Institute's (BIMM) approach to the maintenance of academic standards and to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities offered to higher education students. It provides an overview and direction to the policies and procedures that provide the framework within which the BIMM Colleges operate.

Policy Objectives:

- BIMM aims to provide its students with a high quality academic and vocational experience underpinned by rigorous academic standards.
- BIMM policies for maintaining academic standards are in line with the requirements of its awarding institutions and the expectations of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), UK Quality Code (UKQC), Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ).
- BIMM colleges are responsible for the implementation of policy under the leadership of the College Principals with the assistance of the Academic Development and Quality Assurance Team (ADQA).
- The strategic approach to standards and quality is decided upon at the BIMM Academic Board (AB). AB has four standing sub-committees:
 - Learning Teaching & Enhancement Committee (LTEC)
 - Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)
 - Research & Enterprise Committee (REC)
 - College Boards of Studies (BOS)
- In line with awarding institution requirements and the UKQC/NQF, key quality assurance and enhancement procedures benefit from the participation of external peer reviewers. BIMM's awarding institutions receive minutes from all relevant academic committees and university link tutors are full members of college BOS. AB membership includes senior academic representation from our awarding institutions. An external academic advisor may also be invited to join AB.

The relationship between teaching, research and the creative industries at BIMM

We strive to ensure that our teaching is informed by pedagogic research (including through the action research projects pursued by staff as part of their teacher training on our bespoke Post-Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (PG-Cert)). This involves ensuring that assessment and the learning development of students enables them to understand both the nature of research and the more practical skills required by the creative industries our students aspire to become part of.

Through the input of industry externals, the non-executive directors at board level and the provision of Industry Advisory Panels (IAPs), our provision is actively informed by our connection to the industry we serve. BIMM is dedicated to expanding our engagement with local and national employers and to delivering high-quality, skilled and innovative graduates, boosting the productivity of the regional economy close to each of our centres.

The organisation of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement system

Academic standards

Academic standards for courses are established and maintained through partnership with our awarding institutions and engagement with the UKQC/NFQ. Regulations, policies and procedures for the maintenance of standards are approved by our awarding institutions at recognition and course approval/validation events in line with the expectations of the UKQC/NFQ.

Approval, monitoring and periodic review of courses

BIMM has its own formal mechanism for the approval of new academic courses and changes to the existing curriculum, which is set out in the Course Approval Policy. BIMM also complies with our awarding institution procedures for approval of new courses and periodic review of existing provision.

The formal procedures for the annual monitoring of courses are set out in the quality assurance documents of our awarding institutions. In general each awarding institution requires us to submit a detailed annual report and action plan, which are discussed at college Boards of Studies (BoS). These reports are then combined to produce an overarching report for provision across each group of colleges that is discussed at LTEC. An executive summary of all annual reports and combined action plans are then discussed and approved by AB.

BIMM does not currently review its provision formally outside of the requirements of our awarding institutions, as this would seem to add an unnecessary, additional level of scrutiny, with our awarding institutions already conducting regular reviews through re-validation and re-recognition/periodic reviews in addition to regular reviews by the QAA and the QQI. However, the currency and future development of the curriculum is addressed through the IAPs (One of these panels principal aims is to ensure the continuing validity and relevance of the courses on offer) and is regularly reviewed at AB. Furthermore QAC and LTEC are empowered to instigate thematic reviews of areas and departments in order to assure and enhance quality across BIMM.

Student representatives are also consulted on the development or review of courses and minor modifications as members of Boards of Study (BOS) and LTEC, QAC and AB. Our external examiners also comment on the currency of our provision in their annual reports.

Assessment of students

BIMM has established a policy to ensure fair, valid, authentic and robust assessment of its students. Our awarding institutions also test our assessment regime and course design through the approval/validation and periodic re-approval/re-validation process. Generic and course-based assessment criteria is published to students by colleges in course and student handbooks and the VLE.

Quality assurance of teaching staff

BIMM is committed to attracting and appointing practitioners from the music and creative industries who are capable of excellence in teaching and research and who support the core BIMM values of teaching and learning.

It is a mandatory requirement for new members of teaching staff with significant regular teaching at BIMM (on full or proportional contracts) and without formal teaching qualifications to undertake and complete a two-year, part-time, Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching.

All teaching staff at BIMM are formally observed annually and the results from this observation scheme are fed into the quality assurance process through LTEC and reported on in AMRs. There are also regular informal peer observations (see our Observation Policy appendix one of the Learning and Teaching Strategy).

Staff appraisal is conducted bi-annually for all established staff. The key outcome of the appraisal scheme involves the production of a personal action plan; staff are expected to reflect before the appraisal meeting on the effectiveness of their work in relation to generic objectives incorporated in personal action plans which include teaching, learning and assessment.

Learning resources

The strategic planning and management of resources to support teaching and learning rests with the College Principals through the college group Senior Management Team (SMTs) reporting to the BIMM Board and where appropriate to LTEC or AB. The Director of Finance has management responsibility for IT Services, Estate Management and Health and Safety. The budgets for the Electronic Library and IT Services are set through the BIMM Board and informed by SMT/LTEC as part of BIMM's annual planning process.

The adequacy of learning resources to support new courses is considered by our awarding institutions through the course approval process.

Library resources for teaching and learning are prioritised, acquired and managed on the basis of new demands, which arise through the course approval process. There is an ongoing dialogue with module and course leaders in order to manage demand for the existing curriculum where course reading lists are submitted by teaching staff. There is an annual management cycle for the receipt, checking and processing of these reading lists.

IT Services' resources to support teaching and learning are monitored and updated throughout the year, with major changes such as the upgrade of computers and changes to computer software taking place over the summer.

A range of mechanisms and procedures are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Library and IT Services, which include consultative/user groups and usage statistics, feedback from student representation and module surveys.

BIMM also connects with local music and creative businesses in its use of off-site resources for teaching and learning including; concert halls and venues, music and video production studios and lecture theatres.

Student support

Each college has a Head of Student Services. This role leads the student support teams in each college and reports to the College Principal. Student support teams provide pastoral support and manage referrals to our student counselling and disability support providers. They also provide administrative support for academic processes. These teams also include assessment/examinations officers who support academic staff in the assessment and examination processes. In terms of personal support and guidance, Course and module leaders act as academic advisors; their principal role is to provide individual advice to students on academic matters, and are available in all colleges and students can book meetings as part of the tutorial system.

The Music Industry and Careers (MIC) team provides careers advice and guidance alongside opportunities for placement learning.

Academic support, advice and guidance generally take three forms:

- Firstly, induction and re-induction is a key mechanism for providing advice and guidance to students on what is expected of them throughout the forthcoming year, or stage of their course.
- Secondly, students are provided with advice and guidance at strategic points in each academic year when they need to choose module options. This may take the form of briefing documents and option briefings where advice and guidance is available to assist students in making an appropriate choice.
- Thirdly, each student is guaranteed access to a range of one to one tutorial meetings with an academic, vocational or careers advisor. The role and responsibilities of advisors are set out in the Student Handbook which is updated annually and which provides comprehensive information for students on their responsibilities as students, the full range of services and support available, key University regulations and policy documents, progress and assessment matters and details of complaints and appeals procedures
- Quality Assurance infrastructure, and policy documents and reports can be found on the BIMM website at: <http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/>.

Course information

Course-level data is provided by BIMM's Management Information Systems (MIS) department to our awarding institutions for the annual monitoring of courses.

In order to support the marks assurance phase of Module Examination Boards, all boards are routinely provided with course-level data on assessment outcomes. Various key indicators are provided in detail for each course (e.g. detailed distributions and from 2013-14 recent historical comparisons).

Information

BIMM publishes information for prospective students via the BIMM prospectus and on its website. Course specifications (held in the course pages of the BIMM website) detail the course learning

outcomes, structure of the curriculum and the teaching, learning and assessment methods employed for all courses. Supplementary information on courses is produced in more user-friendly form in course handbooks and on the website course pages.

External examiners' reports and QAA/QI reports are shared with student representatives through BOS, as are course Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). Module Leader Reports (MLRs) and AMRs and External Examiner Reports are published to students on the VLE.

The responsibilities of staff in the assurance and enhancement of quality

The Academic Development and Quality Assurance Team (ADQA) portfolio comprises academic leadership for all matters related to standards, curriculum innovation and development, quality of learning opportunities and teaching and learning, including the maintenance of relationships with our awarding institutions and the approval and review process with our awarding institutions and the QAA/QI. The Director of ADQA and the Dean of Higher Education, working closely with the Executive Principals and College Principals have oversight of quality assurance and enhancement of the overall student experience at BIMM.

College Principals are responsible for providing leadership, day-to-day management of the curriculum and its delivery, and for the financial and academic management of their college. Each College Principal is supported by Heads of Education, Course Leaders and Module Leaders, who have a significant role in the quality assurance and enhancement of students' learning opportunities. It is recognised that no one individual can be responsible for the maintenance and enhancement of quality and it is therefore the role of ADQA to report on and make recommendations to college SMTs and BOS in this regard and the job of the College Principals assisted by their academic and student support staff to implement actions agreed at AB, LTEC, QAC and REC.

Teaching and Learning Development

In terms of deliberative structures, oversight of teaching and learning development is by the LTEC reporting to AB. AB has oversight of BIMM's academic portfolio under delegated authority of the BIMM Executive and with explicit responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of academic standards and for the assurance, development and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. LTEC is specifically charged with the enhancement of teaching and learning through the Learning and Teaching Enhancement strategy and monitoring of the teaching observation scheme. Both AB and LTEC include student representation and staff members from each of the BIMM colleges.

For BIMM courses, Module Examination Boards (MABs) and Progress and Award Boards (PABs) have two principal operational functions: MABs are responsible for marks assurance; PABs are responsible for recommending progression and award, all examination boards report directly to our awarding institutions. Reports from Exam Boards are also included in Annual Monitoring Reports submitted to LTEC and AB.

The terms of reference and composition of all committees at BIMM are set out in organograms, which are updated as required.

The development of policies

ADQA is responsible for the maintenance of academic policies and procedures across BIMM, reporting to QAC/AB who have final authority for the development and approval of BIMM academic policy. Our awarding institution partnership staff supports ADQA and link tutors in policy development. In general terms, new policies are developed in line with existing awarding institution practice. All new and revised policies are taken to AB and our awarding institutions for comment and approval before being published to staff and students.

ADQA also provides support for staff in the development and design of new courses and leads staff development in new and innovative pedagogical approaches.

The Exams Officer(s) working with the MIS Team oversee the integrity of examination marks recording systems and processes and administers all unseen and special-needs examinations.

The involvement of students in quality assurance and enhancement

All BIMM students are surveyed annually on both the experience of learning on their individual modules and the experience of BIMM and their courses more generally. This data is used to inform annual monitoring and quality enhancement.

BIMM operates a Student Representative Scheme overseen by ADQA/QAC and implemented by college Student Services teams. The college teams manage the formal election of representatives and representatives who are then inducted and trained by the Head of Student Services at the relevant college. Representatives attend the college-based Board of Studies (BoS) and one representative from each college is also nominated to attend the three key academic committees (AB, LTEC and QAC).

The ways in which policy is implemented, monitored and revised

The deliberative structures provide a management framework within which implementation of policies is monitored and in which the policies themselves are regularly reviewed by ADQA and QAC on a four-year cycle (and after the first year of operation for new policy). Policy review and change may also be triggered by awarding institution or QAA/HEA/NFQ/QQI initiatives or, frequently, through changes proposed by staff and students at the colleges resulting from their engagement in the processes and in the light of good practice. Revisions to policy are managed by ADQA/QAC and approved by AB.

Strategic approach to quality enhancement

BIMM is committed to the continuous enhancement of quality, working with our students as equal partners in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of their learning opportunities. Rather than establishing a separate quality and enhancement strategy, BIMM has developed an overarching Learning and Teaching Enhancement Plan (LTEP) which incorporates all our aspirations and targets for the improvement of the student experience for the foreseeable future. The LTEP has been developed by LTEC and will be revised on an annual basis in order to align with BIMM's Mission Statement, its Strategic Plan and as new institutional priorities are determined. BIMM's LTEP is seen as the main driver for change and for systematic enhancement.

Annual Monitoring

Responsibilities for the strategic management academic standards and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities for all BIMM higher education courses rests with the Academic Board (AB) to which all other academic committees report. Course teams report into AB through its sub-committees on an annual monitoring cycle.

Board of Studies

Each BIMM College is required to have a Board of Studies (BoS). This is a group of academic staff from the curriculum management team, student services and student representatives from each year of each course running in the college. BoS meet once a term to discuss aspects of the course, making suggestions and recommendations that are fed upwards through the academic committee structure. Colleges also run Student Representation Forums (SRFs) attended by all student representatives, which feed into the BoS. The Student Representatives attending BoS represent their course and are responsible for raising issues brought to their attention by other students and discussed at SRFs. The Boards of Studies are chaired by the relevant Head of Education at each college and the meetings are recorded formally, as are any resulting actions. The BoS report to the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC) and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), as appropriate.

The Quality Cycle

The BIMM quality cycle is closely tied to the academic year and the production of an annual monitoring report. The quality cycle begins with the receipt of external reports (QAA/QQI reviews, awarding institution reports, Professional and Statutory Body (PSRB) reports and External Examiner reports), these reports are considered by the relevant academic committee and action plans are prepared to respond to any issues raised. In addition the academic committee structure processes feedback from staff and students through Boards of Studies and from student module and end of year surveys. Course-level reports are discussed with students at college level Boards of Studies and combined into reports for our awarding institutions. These reports and associated action plans are discussed and approved by LTEC. A summary report and institutional action plan is then collated from the awarding institution reports and presented to AB for approval where strategic oversight is maintained across the institution.

