BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT
(College)

INSTITUTION: School of Sound Recording (SSR)

ADDRESS: 65-69 Downing Street
Manchester
M1 7JE

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Ian Hu

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of visit: 22 August 2016

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 13 October 2016

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1.   Background to the institution

The School of Sound Recording (SSR) has its origins in a commercial sound studio, Spirit Studios, established in Manchester in 1980 by the founding Director. SSR is located in central Manchester, in premises which have been fully converted for the purpose of teaching its programmes. As an educational organisation, SSR was established in 1984.

SSR has over 30 years of experience providing education for the music and media industry. SSR and has strong, well-established links within the music and media industries, with over 100 partners. SSR has particularly strong links with Advanced Music Systems (AMS) Neve Ltd, and SSR has academic collaboration with a number of northern universities.

Graduates have reportedly gone on to work with some of the biggest artists and companies in the music and media industries and many have set up their own businesses or become successful freelancers.

2.   Brief description of the current provision

SSR continues to deliver programmes of study in collaboration and partnership with higher and further education providers, in technical training and sound production technology, as well as offering their own courses and summer schools. SSR is currently in talks with Salford University, Bolton University and UCLAN to develop Masters programmes.

SSR offers courses in 5 main subject areas: Music Production & Sound Engineering, Disk Jockeying, Film, Games & Animation, and Music Business & Journalism.

SSR has a wide range of high-quality studio and computing facilities, and trains students for careers in music production, sound engineering, audio post production, film, television and radio.

3.   Inspection visit process

The inspection process was carried out at the main campus in Manchester over half a day. Documentation was reviewed and there was a practical demonstration of the 'Stingray' student management system. Most of the teaching rooms were visited, as well as the refurbishment of a teaching room that was still in progress. All documentation requested was made available. The inspector met with the head of the institution, the Academic Director, the Director of Marketing and one of the staff responsible for using the records and student management system, Stingray. This inspection report is in relation to the provider's provision in the United Kingdom only.

4.   Inspection history

College Reaccreditation Inspection: 11 - 12 November 2014

Interim Inspection: 31 January 2012

Full Accreditation: 25 - 26 May 2010

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE
The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1.   Significant changes since the last inspection

The arrangements with Stockport College and Manchester Metropolitan University have now ended. However, the current degree programmes offered by SSR are appropriately validated by Universities with Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs).

A scheduled inspection by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2015 did not go ahead as it was seen to be premature and SSR wanted more time to plan for the academic provision. However, the process of preparing for inspection by QAA is included within the next 5-year strategic plan and SSR is hopeful of obtaining a Tier 4 Student Licence by 2018.

2.   Response to actions points in last report

25.2 One particular carpet in a recording room was worn and should be replaced.

The worn carpet in a recording studio has been replaced. All rooms are well equipped and furnished to a high standard. Serious consideration has been given to décor to aid the learning process.

Response to recommendations

SSR should provide evidence of verification of qualifications of staff before employment.

Qualifications are verified when new staff are appointed, but there is no established system for this.

SSR should produce a formal annual performance review report to augment its regular reviews and to provide a basis for future strategic planning.

An annual institutional report is produced by the senior management team which, among other things, includes notes of staff meetings, charts institutional progress and development and identifies good practice seen in teaching sessions.

Both the member of staff under classroom observation and the observed should sign the observation form after feedback has been given to verify the operation of the classroom observation system.

Classroom observation forms are signed by the observer and the observee following observations.

Continue to develop the stock of texts in SSR's library including multiple copies of each so that they can be loaned to students.

The stocks of books in the library have been increased and there are now multiple copies of key texts. The layout has been improved to encourage students to use the books.

The student cohort statistics received from the partner institutions should be maintained on a data base to provide comparisons over at least three years.

Student cohort statistics are maintained on a database and used for comparison purposes in the Annual Institutional Report

The Academic Director should proceed to delegate the attendance at partner exam boards to SSR's Course Leaders as they have better knowledge of the individual students whose assessments are being considered.

Course Leaders are now required to attend partner exam boards instead of the Academic Director.

It is recommended that the "wheelie bins" stored in the area of the fire escapes are re-positioned possibly in a separate covered area outside the main building to prevent egress from the building being compromised in the event of fire.

Wheelie bin storage has been changed so that egress from the building in the case of a fire is not compromised.

3.   Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

3.1   Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be		✓		
Comments				

The management team of the college is still the same. However, the senior management team have now become shareholders of the business.

There is still no dedicated HR department as SSR does not consider itself to be big enough for this. However, SSR are investigating how they could use outside expertise.

All staff are now required to have DBS checks prior to employment.

The lack of formal teaching qualifications for some staff has been addressed and there is an allocated amount in the staff budget for staff development.

3.2   Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

Stingray, which is a student management system is being used in a more integrated way in the college. For example, staff are now able to access Stingray at home and create schemes of work that are recorded on the system. There is a secure log-in for all college staff.

SSR have instigated a structured weekly timetabled tutorial which is available both as a group tutorial or as individual tutorials.

There is now a staff/student liaison committee and all modules of study are reviewed and SSR respond to comments and suggestions made by students through these reviews and through questionnaires.

One innovative form of feedback introduced to students has been audio as well as written feedback. One example of this, is a recording of two lecturers discussing a student's work which is then sent to the student. A new observation process has been put into operation.

3.3   Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

SSR take their responsibilities to equality of opportunity very seriously. They have recently taken over the sponsorship of 'Girl Geeks' (a not-for-profit group for women and girls with an interest in Science, Technology,

Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)) and are explicitly trying to widen the student profile through other marketing exercises.

SSR have reviewed all of their publicity materials, policies and procedures, using CMA guidance to make sure they deliver what they promise.

SSR have reviewed their website materials to make sure they conform to realistic student expectations.

From last year, all applicants for SSR courses are interviewed in a one to one session.

3.4   Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✔			

Comments
The college operates an internal audit process in which all of the resources and facilities are reviewed and upgraded where appropriate.

Last summer, two new classrooms were developed and contain state of the art equipment.

A finishing suite has been completed and a new games studio is being developed. Another classroom is in the process of being re-furbished.

The layout of the computer rooms has now been changed to islands in the rooms so that students are encouraged to work collaboratively.

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths
Proactive management team. State of the art resources. Commitment to going beyond the requirements of equal opportunities. Willingness to respond positively to student feedback. Innovative use of formative feedback.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
3.1 A formal written process of verifying staff qualifications before employment at SSR must be put in place.	M

It is recommendation that
The college uses the services of an organisation such as the CIPD to enable them to benchmark their policies and procedures against best practice.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES

Further comments, if applicable