



## QUALITY ASSURANCE & ENHANCEMENT POLICY

### Scope of the policy

This policy statement summarises the Screen & Film School 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 SFS operates.

### Policy Objectives:

- SFS aims to provide its students with a high quality academic and vocational experience underpinned by rigorous academic standards.
- SFS 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 the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ).
- SFS is responsible for the implementation of policy under the leadership of the Principals with the assistance of the Academic Board.
- The strategic approach to standards and quality is decided upon at the SFS Academic Board (AB). AB has the Board of Studies (BOS) as a standing sub-committee.
- In line with awarding institution requirements and the UKQC/NQF, key quality assurance and enhancement procedures benefit from the participation of external peer reviewers. SFS's awarding institutions receive minutes from all relevant academic committees and university link tutors are full members of Film School 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 SFS

We strive to ensure that our teaching is informed by pedagogic research. 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. SFS 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**

SFS 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. SFS 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 our awarding institution requires us to submit a detailed annual report and action plan, which are discussed at Film School Boards of Studies (BoS). An executive summary of all annual reports and combined action plans are then discussed and approved by AB.

SFS 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.

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

### **Assessment of students**

SFS 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 Film Schools in course and student handbooks and the VLE.



### **Quality assurance of teaching staff**

SFS is committed to attracting and appointing practitioners from the Film & Broadcasting industries who are capable of excellence in teaching and research and who support the core SFS values of teaching and learning.

It is a mandatory requirement for new members of teaching staff with significant regular teaching at SFS (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 SFS are formally observed annually and the results from this observation scheme are fed into the quality assurance process. There are also regular informal peer observations (see our Observation Policy Addendum 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 Principal. The Director of Finance has management responsibility for IT Services, Estate Management and Health and Safety. 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 leads and Heads of Year 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.

### **Student support**

SFS has a Head of Student Services. This role leads the student support teams in each Film School 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, Heads of Year 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 Film Schools and students can book meetings as part of the tutorial system.

The Industry Engagement team provides careers advice and guidance alongside opportunities for industry placements, internships, live project briefs, site visits, master classes and progression into employment.

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 are 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

### **Course information**

Course-level data is provided by SFS's Management 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.

### **Information**

SFS publishes information for prospective students via the SFS prospectus and on its website. Course specifications (held in the course pages of the SFS website) detail the course learning outcomes, structure of the curriculum and the teaching, learning and assessment methods employed.

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/QQI 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 Board Team 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/QQI.

The College Principal is responsible for providing leadership, day-to-day management of the curriculum and its delivery, and for the financial and academic management of their Film School. The College Principal is supported by Head of Education, Heads of Year, 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 Academic Board to report on and make recommendations to the Film School 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.

### **Teaching and Learning Development**

In terms of deliberative structures, oversight of teaching and learning development is by the Head of Education and BoS, reporting to AB. AB has oversight of SFS's academic portfolio under delegated authority of the SFS 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. AB is 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 BoS include student representation and staff members from SFS.

For SFS courses, Examination Boards (EBs) and Award Boards (ABds) have two principal operational functions: ABs are responsible for marks assurance; ABds 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 AB. The terms of reference and composition of all committees at SFS are set out in organograms, which are updated as required.

### **The development of policies**

The Academic Board is responsible for the maintenance of academic policies and procedures across SFS and have final authority for the development and approval of SFS academic policy. Our awarding institution partnership staff supports, 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.

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

SFS operates a Student Representative Scheme overseen and implemented by SFS academic services. The Film School team manage the formal election of representatives and representatives who are then inducted and trained by the Head of Student Services at SFS. Representatives attend the Film School-based Board of Studies (BoS).

### **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 the academic board 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 Film School resulting from their engagement in the processes and in the light of good practice. Revisions to policy are overseen by the Quality Assurance teams and approved by AB.

### **Strategic approach to quality enhancement**

SFS 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, SFS 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 will be revised on an annual basis in order to align with SFS's Mission Statement, its Strategic Plan and as new institutional priorities are determined. SFS'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 SFS 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**

SFS 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 Film School. BoS meet once a term to discuss aspects of the course, making suggestions and recommendations that are fed upwards through the academic committee structure. Film Schools 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 and the meetings are recorded formally, as are any resulting actions. The BoS reports to the AB.

### **The Quality Cycle**

The SFS 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 Film School Boards of Studies and combined into reports for our awarding institutions. 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.