

Optional student submission template for TEF 2023

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

As a student who has been on the student council since the beginning of my second year, I can clarify the methods used by ACM to gather evidence and feedback of student experience. The student council recruits a rep from every course if possible, and hold events at the beginning of the academic year to ensure new students are aware of its existence and how to apply. The council gathers peer feedback, concerns and issues and raises them at monthly meetings presided over by the member of staff responsible for the council. For the case of smaller issues that can be rectified simply, a group discussion will be held within these meetings as to the possibilities and best actions to solve them. In the case of a larger issue, this can be escalated to the relevant team members and brought up at our termly committee meetings where we bring our feedback to the governors.

Feedback gathered by students is largely conversational and informal and is usually converted into a formal issue during these meetings. There are occasional surveys that are sent out as per each rep's digression, however it has been found that students are more likely to engage in conversation about their problems than submit it on a form.

Because of this approach to the gathering of evidence, I can confirm that the information provided in this report reflects the experience of the general student population to the best of our ability.

2. Student experience

Being at ACM is truly a unique experience from the get-go. A breath of fresh air after years of formal education, the small campus environment often feels more like a creative space than one of strict learning. There is a large focus on collaboration across the scheme of work, so you become very well-adjusted to the sort of multi-disciplinary work that is expected of you in the working world. Having a relatively small student population compared to non-independent universities allows for constant access to facilities and equipment when necessary. Furthermore, there are termly evaluation surveys for us to fill out to ensure we believe the course is serving us the best it can in terms of delivery and practise work. During my time at ACM, I have seen the structure of the modules change significantly and the assignments constantly being tweaked to ensure they are nothing but beneficial for the continued growth of skills and focus areas.

Specific issues that have been addressed during my time here include a move to a completely new campus in Brixton, allowing the potential for new facilities and spaces to support us delving into whatever aspect of the creative industry we want to. This has also allowed for the game course to create its own identity and have specialised spaces built for it including the latest technology and equipment, such as virtual reality headsets which were purchased due to student requests. Our newest piece of technology, the full body motion tracking and haptic feedback Teslasuit comes alongside a collaboration with the company, with them running a masterclass at the Brixton campus which all students were welcome to attend. Other important actions of ACM in terms of equipment included the 'Campus in a Box' scheme, which allowed many students to get a full experience and education even when unable to physically attend campus during the pandemic. This was a system that let students order and receive (for free) the equipment they would need for their course on loan for the duration of the pandemic. Many of my peers received equipment in this method and found it invaluable as they found their footing in our first year.

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Attention to detail and emphasis on student growth and course modernity stretches to all the courses at ACM. The Industry Link team seems to work tirelessly to provide students with endless streams of opportunities, as well as offering mentoring whenever students require it. It often feels like, at ACM, anything is available for those who ask for it. Rooms on campus can be booked out using an online portal, allowing students limitless access to facilities. Student Council helped to facilitate a "Studio Passport" which allows non-production students to get the ability to use the state-of-the-art studios safely when booked, opening the facilities up even more to every student – something that came about as a direct response to student feedback about the rules around using a studio. Bookable rooms have also seen improvements based on student feedback. Student council surveys in 2021 found that students on the music courses particularly were struggling to book rooms due to a lack of space or complications with the booking system. We responded by allowing almost every room in the university to be bookable and revamped the booking system to help the process be smoother. This allows for student bands to practise easier and gives everyone a space to hone their craft. Another example of a place where ACM feels unique is that you often feel more than just a student on the pathway you have picked. You are free to pursue your interests regardless of where they lie, whether that requires a 1 to 1 tutorial with a lecturer on a different course or simply to sit in a lecture when you have a gap on your timetable.

This is perfectly complemented by the new course structure that ACM has rolled out across the music courses, and plan to include the games in. This new structure creates one interdisciplinary degree, where any avenue in the creative industry can be explored. This works by using pathway focused lectures and cohort sessions, and then having every student on every pathway come together for big project sessions that give an industry brief and allow them to work on a massive project across every discipline. Perfect for preparing students for the industry and the next strides in technology, this could allow game students and music students to put their knowledge and skills together to create some truly astonishing projects. They are also creating extra units that students will do 15 of throughout their degree alongside their typical pathway modules. ACM offer an interdisciplinary masters and a foundation year, for those looking to delve deeper or get a first look into the course respectively. They have also begun to offer a 3 year degree and masters course, allowing students to dedicate their entire time at ACM towards finding and diving deep into their specialism. It is exciting to see ACM innovate in programme design in this way, and really sets it aside from other universities which are much less focused on collaboration and therefore lack certain aspects that really make ACM students ready to go into their chosen industry.

3. Student Outcomes

From my knowledge of myself and other students, I am aware of a variety of ways ACM support student progress and achievement both during and after their degree is completed. Student retention is extremely bolstered by the academic recovery bootcamps on offer to allow those who are on track to academic termination a chance to get back on track and has saved hundreds of students from an untimely end to their studies. There is evidential data to support this, showing 85.8% completion rate and 83.6% continuation rate for full-time students in the years 2016-2020 respectively. I have personally seen the impact this has, with students making significantly more progress as a result of these bootcamps. ACM is also extremely flexible in the case of a student wishing to repeat a year, something that was extremely helpful during the pandemic and allowed students to get a full university experience if they felt a part of it had been affected by the circumstances.

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Due to the smaller class sizes that ACM offers, one-on-one support from lecturers is attainable at any period throughout the course. This makes help not only approachable but easily obtainable, which I believe is so important for creative industry courses, particularly those that use a lot of complicated technology. This sentiment has been echoed by other students, who have praised the lecturers' efforts to be of support in any possible way, even going so far as to lend their musical talents to personal projects. ACM also has a dedicated mentorship team alongside Industry Link, who are available throughout the week to support student development as well as guide them in personal projects and creative pursuits. This has led to increased exposure for students and many opportunities.

To guide students towards the end of their degree, the university place a large emphasis on attendance to industry events that are accessible through the industry link boards, as well as partnerships such as the one with Ukie for game development events. Talks from industry speakers are booked to help students with the final push and the next steps, and many opportunities are set up to help students with their portfolios. One such example is a celebrity photographer being booked in to take Level 6 students' headshots, allowing them to look their best when portraying themselves online or as a brand.

ACM maintains a connection with alumni, offering them access to the facilities even after they have finished with their course. This is important, as it gives them a space to continue the collaborative work that is instilled in them at ACM. Alumni are also asked to return to the university to speak to students, which is very inspirational as it allows the students to more directly visualise their path when they graduate. Due to the collaborative nature of work at ACM, this connection with alumni often goes beyond just being someone in a higher year than you, students often work with those in other years in projects and extra-curricular activities, meaning deep networks and friendships are often generated. This is extremely valuable for the industry and opens many doors for students both creatively and professionally.

Overall, ACM is extremely supportive in both progression and completion, and have many innovative and above-and-beyond methods to ensure students get everything they can out of their course. As well as this, student experience is consistently bolstered by the sheer modernity, forward-thinking attitude, and deep understanding of the industry that comes from the ACM team. I am really excited to see where this foresight will take the university in the coming years, and I am extremely proud to be a member of the student council and have an impact on the shape of this path.