AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY AGENCY

Report of an Audit of the
Australian Institute of Music

January 2010

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

Background

In 2003 the Australian Government introduced the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) to allow students in non self-accrediting higher education institutions to receive financial assistance for their students' tuition fees through the FEE-HELP program.

Non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs) approved under the HESA for this purpose have become known as higher education providers, or HEPs. Although other institutions also provide higher education, the term 'HEP' is commonly used to denote only non self-accrediting higher education providers, and it is used in this sense in this Report. The HESA requires that HEPs in receipt of FEE-HELP funds must meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audit by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines.

This Report of the audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) of the Australian Institute of Music (the Institute or AIM) provides an overview, and then briefly details the Audit Panel's main findings, and its commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A brief introduction to the Institute, including its mission, vision and principles, is given in Appendix A; the mission, objectives, vision and values of AUQA in Appendix B; membership of the Audit Panel in Appendix C; and abbreviations and definitions used in this Report in Appendix D.

The Audit Process

AUQA bases its audits of non self-accrediting HEPs on each organisation's own objectives, together with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* (available at: http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya), the DEEWR *Audit Handbook for non self-accrediting Higher Education Providers* and other relevant legal requirements or codes to which the organisation is committed. The programs or courses of NSAIs are accredited by government accreditation authorities, so quality audits of HEPs do not include a detailed examination of the academic quality assurance processes for programs of study.

HEP audits under the HESA consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, first, the institution's objectives; and, secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The four QAFs are set out in the Handbook referred to above (and in the AUQA Audit Manual). Their primary purpose is to provide the HEPs with a framework for the review of certain aspects of institutional performance. In the report of its self-review (the Performance Portfolio or Portfolio), AIM reported against each of the QAFs. The chapters in this Report use the four main topic headings provided by the QAFs. Within each chapter, all the criteria for that QAF are addressed, but usually in a holistic way rather than criterion by criterion.

On 1 September 2009, the Institute presented its submission to AUQA, comprising an 81-page portfolio report against the individual QAF criteria, together with a list of documentary evidence. The Panel met by teleconference on 11 September 2009 to consider these materials.

AIM is situated in Surry Hills in Sydney. The Audit Visit took place from 15 to 16 October 2009. In all, the Audit Panel spoke with over 60 people during these audit visits, including members of the Board of Directors, managers, senior staff, academics, sessional staff, students and external stakeholders.

Sessions were also available for any member of the Institute community to meet the Audit Panel but no one took advantage of this opportunity.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 16 October 2009 and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. It records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the documentation provided by the Institution as well as information gained through interviews, discussion and observation. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the Institution's activities encompassed by the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

The Report contains a summary of audit findings together with lists of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. A commendation refers to the achievement of a stated goal, or to some plan or activity that has led to, or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a stated goal, and which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. A recommendation refers to an area in need of attention, whether in respect of approach, deployment or results, which in AUQA's view is particularly significant. Where such matters have already been identified by the Institution, with evidence, they are termed 'affirmations'. AUQA indicates that some recommendations and affirmations have a high priority. It is acknowledged that recommendations in this Audit Report may have resource implications.

Quotations taken from the Portfolio are identified as (PF p).

CONCLUSIONS

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. Other favourable comments and suggestions are included throughout the text of the Report.

Introduction to Findings

The Australian Institute of Music is in a challenging phase of development. With the resolution of a dispute over the ownership, the organisation is in a process of settling and consolidating. It is with this background that the Panel has recommended that the Institute undertake another AUQA audit by March 2011. The change of ownership has seen a number of senior staff and external academic representatives depart, and this provides the new senior management team with an excellent opportunity to redefine the academic agenda of the Institute.

The Institute is to be commended for the dedication of staff particularly through difficult times and the high quality of many of the academic staff which are held in high regard by students. The Institute has established a strong relationship with the creative industries and this is a major asset. To begin to make sense of the change process and to gauge staff opinion the Institute is conducting a staff survey to assist in redeveloping the organisation and this is also commended by the Panel. The Institute has also made some headway in developing an alumni network and the Panel acknowledges and affirms this networking activity.

As the senior management and staff are aware there is a large and challenging change agenda ahead for the Institute. Some of these challenges include the redefinition of the institutional objectives of the organisation and the development of a strategic plan. Institutional governance of AIM is being reviewed, including consideration of the roles and responsibilities of senior management, the Board of Directors, and the academic board which at the time of the Audit Visit was in the process of being reappointed. The Institute has a major strength in its casual sessional academic workforce, many of whom have been working at AIM over a number of years. The Panel is concerned that this human resource is not being well managed and the Institute needs to ensure that these staff are teaching at the correct Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels. Further, the Panel recommends that staff appraisal and professional development policies be equitably implemented across the Institute, and that an independent staff grievance policy be put in place immediately.

Other challenges for AIM include the development of an inclusive culture of scholarship and the development of standard academic practices across the institute. Finally, the Panel advises AIM to develop and embed a whole-of-institution quality management system.

A summary of commendations, affirmations, and recommendations follows. They are listed below in the order in which they appear in the Report.

Commendations

Affirmations

Recommendations

1   INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The background information on AIM and its mission statement can be found at Appendix A of this Report. The AUQA audit of AIM was conducted when lengthy litigation regarding the ownership of the Institute, between the original founder of the Institute and a former business partner, had recently come to an end. At the time of the Audit Visit on 15–16 October 2009, the Institute had a new Managing Director, Executive Dean and Chief Operating Officer. This senior management team was beginning to come to terms with the operations and future strategic directions of the Institute.

1.1   Institutional and Educational Objectives

With the resolution of the dispute over ownership, the organisation is in a process of settling and consolidating. The new senior management is working to clarify roles and responsibilities for the Institute. There is a tremendous amount of goodwill throughout the Institute for the senior executive and, in particular, for the newly appointed Executive Dean.

The Institute has a mission and vision statement, which emphasises the fostering of creativity and passion in music and the arts. But this statement is at odds with the information provided to the Audit Panel in the AIM Performance Portfolio, which stressed a focus on 'social justice'. AIM strategic aspirations varied at different levels of the organisation, and this resulted in many different staff interpretations of the future directions of the organisation. It became apparent to the Audit Panel through the course of the audit that the Institute needs to adjust to a new ownership and management and to redefine the institutional and educational objectives of the organisation, and then to undertake a strategic planning process that is inclusive of all staff. Once this is done, it will need to ensure that all activities in the Institute align to the educational and strategic objectives of the organisation.

> **Recommendation 1**
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> **(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music define its educational and institutional objectives, with the input of all stakeholders, and that these objectives become the basis upon which all strategic planning and other activities are prioritised.**

1.2   Institutional Structure

The new senior management team at AIM is currently considering the institutional structures and how these structures will underpin all future activities. There is a need for this team, including the Managing Director and the Board of Directors, to quickly define the respective roles and responsibilities at all levels of the senior management team to ensure that all participants are clear in their functional oversight. The roles and responsibilities of the Managing Director and Executive Dean, in particular, do not have clear operational boundaries. It is important to clarify these to ensure that each is aware of and can operate with the appropriate authorities.

Recommendation 2

(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music clearly specify the roles and responsibilities of the Managing Director, the Executive Dean and the senior management team.

1.3 Institutional Governance

AIM, with the recent change in ownership, now has an opportunity to critically consider and develop an institutional governance structure to support the achievement of the institutional objectives. The academic governance committee structure reported in the Portfolio, with numerous committees, appears unsustainable given the small size of the organisation. The Panel was advised of the numerous meetings attended by some staff. Workloads also need to be considered in the developing institutional governance structures, particularly as the same staff appear to have been involved on numerous committees. The corporate and academic governance structures which have been evolving since the change of ownership need greater consideration, again in the context of defining roles and responsibilities and realistic staff workloads. The governance structures should also formalise AIM's industry relationships, to capitalise on this major strength (see 1.6 below). It is also important that formal systems are implemented to monitor, review and regularly report on the achievement of AIM's educational objectives within the institutional governance structure.

Recommendation 3

(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop and implement sustainable corporate and academic governance structures, including reporting processes and clearly define staff roles and responsibilities within these structures.

The recent change of ownership had seen the resignation of all of the external members of the Academic Board, including the Chair. AIM is in the process of redeveloping an Academic Board and has appointed an external Chair and at the time of the Audit Visit was moving to appoint other external members. At the time of the Audit Visit the new Academic Board had yet to meet. It will be important that members of the reconstituted Academic Board provide sound advice in steering the development of an appropriate academic governance framework for the Institution.

1.4 Academic Management

The Executive Dean is responsible for the academic management of the Institute, and there are many challenges for this new appointment. The majority of staff in the organisation approve of the Executive Dean (who is a former member of staff), and most staff interviewed also see the Executive Dean as the one who will now be responsible for addressing a myriad of issues which have built up in the Institute over a number of years. The Executive Dean has an open door policy with staff and students. Through interviews it became apparent that both staff and students have large expectations that the 'new Dean' will solve all problems. This leaves the Executive Dean in a vulnerable position in managing the change process and in being seen as the source of solutions to all issues, big and small.

Because of the large change agenda ahead of the Institute, the Panel believes that the Executive Dean will need assistance to manage many of the required change processes. This would be in the form of support from the senior management, and in terms of human resources, in the form

of an academic operations project manager or similar position. It is also important that the senior management team begin to manage staff expectations of change, and the Panel believes that this could be undertaken primarily through the redefinition of the educational objectives and a revised strategic planning process within the organisation, which should be undertaken and include consultation with stakeholders.

Further, the senior management of AIM advised, and the Panel agrees, that in the short term the Institute's focus should be on consolidating programs and on ensuring that correct academic and administrative policies, processes and systems are implemented throughout AIM, to achieve ongoing quality of operations. The Panel encourages the Institute in undertaking this review and consolidation of all academic programs.

> **Affirmation 1**
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> **AUQA affirms the Australian Institute of Music's decision to consolidate all academic programs, academic support activities and processes.**

> **Recommendation 4**
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> **AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music not commence any new programs until it has undertaken its next quality audit.**

1.5   Strategic Planning

As AIM is in changeover mode, the new management has abandoned the former strategic plan and a new plan has not yet been completed. The Panel was advised that a new strategic plan will be developed under the auspices of the Board of Directors, the senior management and the Academic Board. The Panel believes that the achievement of AIM's educational objectives needs to be reflected through the development of a strategic plan, which also has clear accountabilities and performance indicators. The strategic planning process should begin to prioritise the numerous issues and activities which need to be addressed and which comprise the short term and longer term change agenda within the Institute.

> **Recommendation 5**
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> (**urgent**) **AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop a strategic plan with clearly identified accountabilities.**

In the advice provided in the Portfolio, it was not clear to the Panel how resourcing decisions are made at AIM, as in the past these decisions do not appear to have been transparent, and were made by the Board of Directors on an ad hoc basis. In developing a new strategic plan and reporting framework, it is important that formal and inclusive processes for consideration of resource requirements and budget allocations are developed and implemented which align with the strategic plan. Further, as the Institute moves to redefine the institutional governance structure it is also important that within this framework, formalised systems and processes are developed which monitor, review and report on all aspects of the strategic plan.

1.6   Relationships with Industry

AIM has a strong reputation within industry and this is a powerful attribute of the organisation which needs to be better reflected in the institutional governance structures, and further developed and fostered as the Institute moves to redefine itself. AIM is well placed in the

opinions of stakeholders of the creative industries and many academic staff are active in their professions. This involvement with industry is also a key attraction to students in seeking out and enrolling to study at the Institute.

Commendation 1

AUQA commends the Australian Institute of Music for its standing in industry and the training of many current industry practitioners, established over a 40-year operation.

2   ACHIEVING EFFECTIVENESS IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

AIM has an academic tradition grounded in the creative industries and in a practical industry-based approach to learning. The challenge AIM is currently facing is to redefine its academic approach to continue to support the Institute's 40-year tradition of developing 'performance and music skills for the real world' (PF p5).

2.1   Teaching and Learning

2.1.1   Standardisation of Academic Practices

The Panel believes that AIM needs to share good and innovative academic and business practices across disciplines, and encourages the Institute to standardise good practices where possible. For example, it appeared that practices at the Australian Academy of Dramatic Art, which was incorporated into AIM in 2006, are more cohesive and could perhaps be further developed across the Institute. The Panel believes that further consistency should occur across the academic activities of the Institute through the development of standard approaches to teaching, including the implementation of academic policies in a systematic manner across all disciplines. For example, making course materials available via the web, and ensuring student feedback mechanisms, models of support for pastoral care and other student support activities should be consistent across disciplines. This Institute-wide approach to the implementation of academic policies should discourage fragmentation and aid in the provision of better academic delivery. The Learning and Teaching Plan, which is currently under development, should further encourage standardised approaches in academic support and administration activities, and assist the largely sessional academic workforce, in understanding their roles and responsibilities.

It is important to note that this more consistent approach to academic activities should not be at the expense of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Its core intent is to ensure that a clear academic support framework is established to underpin the many creative practices in teaching and learning that a highly skilled and diversified workforce brings to AIM, through sessional teaching activities and participation within the Institute.

> **Recommendation 6**
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> **AUQA recommends that as the Australian Institute of Music moves to reinvent its academic management, standard approaches to academic support and delivery be adopted across the Institute.**

2.1.2   Monitoring Student Feedback

AIM advised that a process of regular student feedback commenced in semester one of 2009, and that this process had been formalised and reports were compiled electronically. The feedback from this first survey was provided to the Panel and highlighted many of the various issues the new management of the Institute must now consider. A snapshot of the highlighted issues includes: the quality of library and computers; crowded facilities; the grading and returning of assignments; and the poor quality of student interactions with administrative staff and the overall administrative functions of AIM. The Panel was provided with both a former survey and a completed survey from this first semester. The Panel believes that the former survey was too simplistic and not of any use to the Institute in collecting information. The newer survey provides a wealth of qualitative information. It is important that student feedback

surveys continue to be undertaken in a systematic fashion across all programs and the results reviewed and acted upon.

In redeveloping the institutional governance processes of AIM it is important that all relevant staff, the academic board and the senior management committee develop coordinated approaches to the resolution of many of the issues highlighted in this first student feedback survey. Also, after each survey student feedback needs to be discussed and provided to all relevant teaching staff through the Institute's staff performance appraisal processes. Further, under the auspices of the Academic Board the Panel advises that more sophisticated approaches to the collection and monitoring of student feedback be developed or adapted by the Institute, focusing on program delivery as a means of strengthening the academic capacity of the Institute.

> **Recommendation 7**
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> **AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music adopt a standardised approach to student feedback and that the Institute's response to student feedback be monitored through the institutional governance reporting structures.**

2.2   *Prospective Students*

The Marketing and Recruitment Department of the Institute has a well-managed approach to prospective students and student recruitment, with clearly defined processes for communication and follow up. The Panel was also advised that admissions are regularly monitored and benchmarked against competitors, which provides the Institute with a picture of movements in the marketplace. The approach to prospective students is constantly being reviewed and improved. A post census report is conducted each semester to consider enrolments, conversion rates, and in the report provided, consideration of resourcing issues given optimal student numbers. This report and process is one of the few examples of a continuous improvement approach to quality at AIM. The Panel encourages further iterations of this report to refine actions for improvement and anticipates that reports such as these are considered and acted upon under the future AIM institutional governance framework.

2.3   *Alumni Network*

The Institute has recently begun the development of an alumni network, making email and Facebook links with past students and collecting information on graduate destinations. The development of the alumni network is largely being driven by former students now working in the marketing area of AIM. Due to the nature of creative industries, and as many staff at AIM are also former students of the Institute, AIM has largely operated its alumni on an informal word of mouth basis. The Institute is keen to further build the alumni network and to involve its alumni in a range of institute based activities. The Panel is of the view that a strong alumni network can play an important role in the institution's monitoring of student outcomes and graduate activities, as well as further enhancing industry links, and student recruitment. The Institute is encouraged to develop an approach to managing the alumni which capitalises on the significant networks and achievements of graduates.

> **Affirmation 2**
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> **AUQA affirms the Australian Institute of Music's recognition that it needs to improve the management of the Institute's alumni network.**

2.4   Learning and Teaching

The Panel found limited evidence of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning, exacerbated by the recent exit of a number of senior academic staff and external academic board and committee members from the organisation. The Institute provided the Panel with a draft Learning and Teaching plan which had been developed by senior staff and appeared to be 70 per cent complete at the time of the audit. Very few staff at AIM had any knowledge of this Learning and Teaching plan, and none could define the Institute's approach to teaching and learning. The Panel was advised by the senior management that ownership of the plan would be encouraged amongst heads of department once the plan is finalised.

The Panel believes that under the auspices of the new Academic Board there needs to be a strengthened approach to teaching and learning, and to the development of the above Learning and Teaching plan. All relevant staff, including heads of department, need to be consulted in the development of this plan, rather than the plan being presented to them after it has been developed. Further, academic support functions need to be considered in the development of this plan, particularly given the large growth in enrolments that the Institute has attracted over the recent year, and the flow-on impact this has on academic support services. The Panel ascertained that there had been no consultation with the library in the development of the plan, so it is unclear to the Panel how the activities of the library were aligned to the Institute's approach to teaching and learning, and then how library resources were planned for to achieve the educational objectives of the Institution.

2.5   Assessment

The approach to assessment at the Institute is also variable. Students report that the turnaround of feedback responses to assessment tasks vary and in some cases marks are not returned until the end of semester. Students are concerned that delays in receiving marks can have a negative impact on progress, particularly in iterative approaches to formative assessment. In some cases, students advised, communication between lecturers and tutors has been poor resulting in some basic criteria outlines for assessment not being passed on to students. In other instances, whilst students received much verbal feedback, they believe that written feedback would be good so that they have a point from which to measure their improvements. Institute-wide approaches to assessment are encouraged, and the Panel believes that it is important for AIM, to assist staff in developing good practice approaches to the assessment of student work. The Institute also uses a number of external industry professionals on assessment panels, particularly in final year subjects and this appears to work well.

2.6   Scholarship and Creativity

The Panel could find no evidence of a depth of understanding of the importance or the meaning of scholarship, nor of a need to develop a culture of scholarship to underpin teaching and learning at the Institute, and more importantly an understanding of AIM's role as a provider of higher education. This is a major concern to AUQA as the Institute is largely staffed by sessional academics, yet there was no evidence of any academic forum or discussions in which all academic staff could be involved to allow them to develop and critically reflect upon their teaching and assessment practices. Furthermore, there was no evidence that the Academic Board has provided any leadership in this area. The Panel believes that all teaching staff, including casual sessional staff, need to be included in the development of AIM's culture of

scholarship. Staff appraisal and professional development should incorporate the maintenance of currency in scholarship.

The Panel was advised of a number of cross-disciplinary activities which are carried out across the Institute, whereby students from the music disciplines work with the drama and music theatre students and staff to put on productions attended by members of the AIM community and students from local schools. The Panel encourages consideration of the development of further cross-disciplinary approaches to learning as the Institute develops an approach to scholarship.

AIM acknowledged that much work needs to be done in the area of academic policy and support and a total reinvention of the academic activities is desired, building on an AIM-developed approach to scholarship. Scholarship and approaches to scholarship are informally described by students and teaching staff in their characterisation of the Institute as a good practical training institute for the performing arts. Whilst practice is not scholarship this statement goes some way in assisting the Institute to begin to define an appropriate AIM definition of scholarship, grounded in practice and industry connectedness.

Recommendation 8

AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music define and develop a culture of scholarship to underpin the quality of all teaching and learning activity.

3   ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT TEACHING AND LEARNING AND OTHER CORE ACTIVITIES

The senior management team at AIM is currently in a challenging period of redefining many of the governance and decision-making roles within the organisation. The approach being pursued is to encourage a greater openness and transparency in organisational structures and in how decisions are made across the Institute. The new Executive Dean has an open door policy, and is available to all staff. This is intended to encourage stability and to bring a new approach to academic leadership to the Institute.

3.1   Organisational Structures and Decision Making

With the departure of a number of senior staff appointments from the old management structure and the appointment of a predominantly new management team, there has been some flux in the decision-making processes. The Panel could find little evidence of formal structures for decision making and these now need to be defined and communicated to staff at all levels. This must include the roles and responsibilities of all committees within the academic governance structure. As mentioned previously, the Academic Board Chair and external members are in the process of being reappointed and, at the time of the Audit Visit, the Academic Board had not met since the change of ownership.

It appeared that previous management practices within the Institute and management decisions were neither open nor consultative. AIM now needs to develop a management model which is not dependent on an individual's discretion but is in the first instance based on formalised systems and processes, and the achievement of agreed objectives. The challenge for AIM is to develop both management and academic decision-making structures which provide clear leadership and direction for staff.

3.2   Management of Academic Sessional Staff

One of AIM's key strengths is its sessional industry-based workforce, which needs to be developed as a valuable resource. It is the casual sessional staff's involvement with industry which has established AIM's reputation in the performance and creative industries. One stakeholder interviewed described the AIM reputation as growing and 'their reputation precedes them'. Many academic staff at AIM have been working at the Institute for a number of years and are also active in their respective professions. It is this staff hands-on involvement within industry, the commitment many academic staff have to their students, and the 'strong assistance with the transition from student to performer' that students hold in high regard. For example, academic staff are acknowledged by students for assisting wherever they can with advice or information on the industry and the various networking opportunities that arise. Students highly value these opportunities and they described it as one of the major advantages of studying at AIM compared to similar institutions.

Commendation 2

AUQA commends the Australian Institute of Music for the high level of industry experience among its academic staff, for the enthusiasm these staff have in working with students and for the assistance they provide to students.

The Panel has a number of concerns about how this workforce is being managed by the Institute. It became apparent to the Panel that under the previous management some staff have received access or support for professional development to ensure that they are up-skilled to teach at the correct Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications levels, while some staff had not. Not all academic staff are currently teaching with the appropriate AQF levels usually required of one level above the level being taught, but a number had many years of industry professional experience.

The Panel could find no consistency in the definition of 'industry professional experience' across the academic teaching staff, so in some cases this was classified as 10 years experience and in other cases less. Other than through ad hoc meetings with heads of department, there appeared to be no systemic approach to providing ongoing academic support to ensure that all casual sessional staff have the capacity to teach in a higher education environment. The Panel was advised that there is no formal performance appraisal at the Institute for casual staff. There was no evidence that casual staff are involved in any academic or teaching and learning development activities within the Institute other than through their contributions to AIM's theatrical or musical productions.

> **Recommendation 9**
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> **(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music ensure that all relevant academic staff are provided with the support needed so that they are qualified to teach at the appropriate higher education level of the Australian Qualifications Framework.**
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> **Recommendation 10**
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> **(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop an approach to the management of all academic sessional staff to ensure that these staff are involved in the academic activities of the Institute and the development of a culture of scholarship within the Institute.**

3.3   Administration and Administrative Staff

The Panel was advised that many of the administrative functions in the Institute have a poor history of operation and much improvement could be made, including in finance and payroll. The Panel was also advised that in the future, customer service would be a priority in the Institute. AIM intends to streamline administrative services and processes and to develop staff with more and better experience in customer service and in working with students. Students advised that improvements in some of these areas were occurring but more work needs to be undertaken to make the interface between student and the Institutes administrative services and processes a more positive experience for students.

> **Affirmation 3**
>
> **AUQA affirms the Australian Institute of Music's intentions to further streamline administrative services and to improve customer services.**

As previously commented, workload distribution is also an area which needs to be considered, to ensure that there are equitable and realistic workloads for administrative and academic staff. It is important that all staff be involved in regular performance appraisal which is linked to organisational objectives. All staff should also have access to professional development which is aligned to work plans and skill requirements in each administrative area.

3.4   Staff Grievance Policy

The Panel found no evidence of an operational and independent staff grievance policy, and due to the poor management practices of the prior management structure, staff are reluctant to lodge grievances. Further, it became evident to the Panel that there had been a poor culture of trust between staff and the former management of the Institute, which had resulted in a separation between the two groups and limited communications. Decisions were often made by management with no consultation. The Panel was also advised that staff now feel more positive and that they have a voice in the future regarding issues within the Institute.

Recommendation 11

(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop and implement an independent staff grievance policy immediately.

3.5   Staff Survey

The Panel saw the results of a staff survey undertaken in 2007, which highlights the best and worst aspects of working at the Institute. The best elements were described as fellow employees and interactions with customers/students. This was confirmed through the Panel's interviews. The worst aspects of working at AIM were described as poor communication, ineffective leadership, not being treated with respect and not feeling valued. The Panel was advised that the senior management group has commissioned another staff survey which was open for responses at the time of the Audit Visit.

Commendation 3

AUQA commends the Australian Institute of Music for its conduct of staff surveys, and encourages the Institute to continue to conduct these surveys regularly.

3.6   Staff Appraisal and Professional Development

The Panel found limited evidence of an approach to staff appraisal within the Institute, and no systematic approach to professional development. Some staff had undergone performance appraisal and some had not. Staff access to professional development appears to have been selective. The majority of professional development appeared to be a response to the need to ensure academic staff had skills at the correct AQF levels. Academic sessional staff had not undertaken any staff appraisal, and generally did not access professional development. The Institute needs to develop and implement an equitable approach to professional development and ensure that all staff, administrative and academic, permanent and casual undertake regular staff appraisal. In the future AIM will need to consider how to include the results of student feedback surveys in academic staff appraisal discussions and processes.

Recommendation 12

AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop and embed staff appraisal and professional development policies throughout the Institute, for all staff.

3.7   Support and Student Learning

3.7.1   Open Culture of Learning

The Panel acknowledges the open culture between academic staff and students and the enthusiasm which both students and staff have for their disciplines. This commitment and enthusiasm is a mark of the AIM brand established over a period of 40-years of operation. Despite the many operational issues which have affected the Institute and the ad hoc and often unsupported approach to teaching and learning, the Panel noted the appreciation and respect with which many students spoke of their teachers. This highlights why students are attracted to studying at the Institute.

3.8   Academic Workload Policy

As previously highlighted, there is an inconsistent approach to the management of workloads and the Panel found no evidence of the application of a standard workload policy for academic staff. Further, issues of student contact and assessment, marking and pastoral care for students are not factored into staff workload allocations. For example, heads of departments have traditionally held responsibility for pastoral care of students. But with increasing cohorts of students, this model is no longer viable particularly with large enrolment in some disciplines. This means that AIM needs to consider more sustainable models for supporting students, and providing advice and support services. It is important that an academic workload policy is developed which supports staff in the achievement of academic activities at the Institute, and provides a balance between these and administrative and student support activities.

> **Recommendation 13**
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> **AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music immediately develop and implement a workload policy which recognises and allows for professional development, student contact and assessment and pastoral care**

3.9   Three Semester Model

In 2006, reportedly without consultation, the then senior management of the Institute advised staff that AIM was to move to a three semester model. This three semester model of delivery was then introduced apparently with little notice or preparation time for staff to develop the proper processes and support mechanisms to underpin this accelerated form of delivery. A number of staff interviewed commented on the teaching pressure derived from working under this three semester model with such short breaks between semesters. Staff advised that there is not much time to fully prepare classes and update academic materials between semesters. The move to a three semester model has also put an increased pressure on the facilities of the Institute. In interviews with students, the Panel heard little support for the three semester model. Senior management advised the Panel that the three semester model and the wear and tear on staff and students is a concern and the viability of this model will be given fuller consideration as the Institute moves to redefine its approach to teaching and learning.

3.10   Facilities

Students made a number of critical comments on the state of the facilities at the Institute, including the need for more space and improvements in common areas. As enrolment numbers have grown the Institute has become pressed for space, and students commented frequently on

the difficulties in accessing rehearsal rooms etc. Staff are also pressed for space with permanent academics all working in an open plan office which is not conducive to providing pastoral care to students. The Panel was advised that more space in the Foveaux Street building is becoming available to the Institute in the new year and this should go some way to alleviating space issues. As the Institute continues to grow it will be important that AIM develops a master plan to ensure that any future growth in enrolments is supported with the corresponding resources and equipment. Issues of occupational health and safety were also highlighted in some interviews. It is important that the Institute attends to the maintenance of facilities to prevent any occupational health and safety incidents occurring.

> **Recommendation 14**
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> **AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop a facilities master plan to support future growth of the Institute.**

3.11   Information Resources

3.11.1   IT Infrastructure

The Panel was not convinced that the IT infrastructure of the Institute has developed in line with the growing academic and administrative needs of the business. The Panel was advised that at many levels the IT infrastructure is not presently fully supporting the needs of the organisation. In the administrative areas of the Institute, this has resulted in a number of administrative systems not being able to talk to each other, and the double handling and duplication of data. In the Library this has resulted in a limited number of computers and access to databases. The Panel was advised that more computing facilities were being set up for students at the time of the audit. IT support is currently outsourced, and not available on a full-time basis, and helpdesk requests need to be authorised if IT support is not on site at the time.

The Institute uses the Paradigm student-management system but the Panel was unsure, from minutes provided, whether all course notes are up to date and available on line, or if staff are using IT in their teaching. Further, when the Panel accessed the Institute's intranet, limited documentation and minutes were available. All information resources need to be considered and developed within a teaching and learning framework.

> **Recommendation 15**
>
> **(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music develop, resource and implement an IT Plan to support the administrative and teaching and learning functions of the Institution**

3.11.2   Library Services

AIM has a small library. Students' comments on the library were not positive, reflecting problems with computer access and software, printing and library assistance. Also, library opening times are changed without notice, and are not aligned with class schedules. For example, the library is not open and available for a reasonable period before and after classes. It is important that in any future strategic planning, including the development of the Learning and Teaching plan, that the activities and resourcing of the library are aligned to the achievement of the educational objectives of the Institute.

4   MAINTAINING A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

As the new management moves to redevelop the academic practices and process within the organisation, it will be paramount for AIM to also establish and embed a culture of quality within the Institute.

4.1   *The Quality Management System*

The Panel found no evidence of an understanding of, or systematic approach to, quality across AIM or appreciation of the benefit to the Institute of an approach to continuous improvement. Further, the Panel found no evidence that a self-assessment had been conducted in support of the development of the AIM Portfolio, or that staff had any appreciation of quality and the benefit of a systematic approach to quality in any of the administrative or academic activities of AIM. This is not to say that there was no approach to quality in any of the activities being undertaken. There is evidence that AIM has approaches to quality embedded into some of the activities within the organisation but these are ad hoc and have come about more by virtue of the individuals involved, rather than in a systematic and inclusive manner which encourages and shows evidence of continuous improvement.

> **Recommendation 16**
>
> **(urgent) AUQA recommends that the Australian Institute of Music define and develop an approach to quality, and implement a whole-of-Institute quality management system.**

The Panel believes that it would be appropriate for AIM's progress in this to be subject to external validation sooner than the standard five-year audit period to ensure that the foundations of a quality management system have been established, and that the Institute's approach to quality management is embedded and is contributing to continuous improvement within the organisation.

> **Recommendation 17**
>
> **AUQA recommends that there be another AUQA audit visit to the Australian Institute of Music before March 2011.**

Further, in establishing and embedding an approach to quality and a quality management system within the Institute, it will be important that AIM puts in place systems and processes to monitor and measure continuous improvement. The Panel found limited evidence on the quality of monitoring and review of administrative and academic processes. This had improved somewhat since the change of management but is still not adequate. The Institute has a formal benchmarking policy, and provided evidence of a couple of benchmarking activities which had been conducted in the past. There is scope for more work to be undertaken to develop and formalise approaches to benchmarking within the context of the implementation of a quality management system.

Finally, in considering and developing a quality management system, the Institute will need to consider who is responsible for quality and how the implementation of a quality management system will be managed and embedded throughout the Institute.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

ABOUT AIM

The Australian Institute of Music is a music school which has been preparing people for music careers since 1968, and has evolved and developed into the major independent music-education provider in Australia. In addition to music, AIM offers degrees in Acting and Entertainment Management.

AIM is situated in Surry Hills in Sydney. At AIM, the focus is on performance and music skills for the real world. AIM's facilities include 'QStudios', where students have the opportunity to record their work and the 'John Painter Hall' (300 seat auditorium) where students get to practise their skills on a professionally equipped stage, and the Pilgrim Theatre, downtown at 262 Pitt St, where many of AIM's theatre performances take place.

AIM courses are recognised for delivering music tuition and unique industry-focused programs to prepare students to maximise their potential for success in an ever-changing industry.

AIM's LEGAL HISTORY AND ANTICEDANTS

- In 1969 Dr Peter Calvo started a business called the Sydney Spanish Guitar Centre which was incorporated in 1987 as a proprietary company limited by shares.

- In1989 it changed its name to the Australian Institute of Guitar Limited. Its constitution was amended so that it became a public company limited by shares and by guarantee.

- In 1991 it changed its name to The Australian Institute of Music (AIM) and was registered as a public company limited by shares.

- In 1996 AIM became an organisation eligible for tax deductibility of donations and listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations maintained under the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* (Cth).

- In 1989 AIM was accredited by the New South Wales Department of Education as a provider of tertiary courses providing a three-year Diploma in Music.

- In 1995 it became accredited by the Department of Education for a four-year Degree of Bachelor of Music.

- In 2005 AIM was registered as a Higher Education Provider.

- In 2006 AIM incorporated the Australian Academy of Dramatic Art into its business entity.

AIM Mission

The Mission of the Institute is:

'The Australian Institute of Music is dedicated to excellence in education through:

- the fostering of creativity and passion in music and the arts throughout Australia and the world;

- the provision of a range of courses of the highest quality;

- its graduates empowered with practical skills, versatile tools and knowledge of the digital revolution now changing the very essence of creative work in music and other performing arts.'

Australian Institute of Music student enrolment data 2009

Course	Headcount	EFTSL
Diploma of Music - Audio	9	7.29
Diploma of Music - Classical	5	4.05
Diploma of Music - Composition	12	9.72
Diploma of Music - Contemporary	76	61.56
Diploma of Music - Music Theatre	3	2.43
Bachelor of Music - Arts Management	29	23.49
Bachelor of Music - Audio	59	47.79
Bachelor of Music - Classical	32	25.92
Bachelor of Music - Composition	74	59.94
Bachelor of Music - Contemporary	224	181.44
Bachelor of Music - Music Theatre	36	29.16
Bachelor of Performance - AADA	17	13.77
Graduate Certificate of Music	2	1.62
Graduate Diploma of Music	8	6.48
Masters of Music	4	3.24
Graduate Certificate in Management	3	2.43
Graduate Diploma in Management	1	0.81
Master of Arts Management	24	19.44
TOTAL	**616**	**498.96**

Source: Australian Institute of Music student data collections

APPENDIX B: AUQA'S MISSION, OBJECTIVES, VISION AND VALUES

Mission

AUQA is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education with the responsibility of providing public assurance of the quality of Australia's universities and other institutions of higher education, and assisting in enhancing the academic quality of these institutions.

Objectives

AUQA is established to be the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education, with responsibility for quality audits of higher education institutions and accreditation authorities, reporting on performance and outcomes, assisting in quality enhancement, advising on quality assurance; and liaising internationally with quality agencies in other jurisdictions, for the benefit of Australian higher education.

Specifically, the objectives of AUQA are as follows:

1. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of:

    *   the quality of the academic activities, including attainment of standards of performance and outcomes of Australian universities and other higher education institutions;

    *   the quality assurance arrangements intended to maintain and elevate that quality;

    *   compliance with criteria set out in the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes;

    and monitor, review, analyse and provide public reports on the quality of outcomes in Australian universities and higher education institutions.

2. Arrange and manage a system of periodic audits of the quality assurance processes, procedures, and outcomes of State, Territory and Commonwealth higher education accreditation authorities including their impact on the quality of higher education programs; and monitor, review, analyse and report on the outcomes of those audits.

3. Publicly report periodically on matters relating to quality assurance, including the relative standards and outcomes of the Australian higher education system and its institutions, its processes and its international standing, and the impact of the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes on Australian Higher Education, using information available to AUQA from its audits and other activities carried out under these Objectives, and from other sources.

4. Develop partnerships with other quality agencies in relation to matters directly relating to quality assurance and audit, to facilitate efficient cross-border quality assurance processes and the international transfer of knowledge about those processes.

Vision

To consolidate AUQA's position as the leading reference point for quality assurance in higher education in and for Australia. Specifically:

- AUQA's judgements will be widely recognised as objective, accurate and useful, based on its effective procedures, including auditor training and thorough investigation.

- AUQA's work will be recognised by institutions and accrediting agencies as adding value to their activities, through the emphasis on autonomy, diversity and self-review.

- Through AUQA's work, there will be an improvement in public knowledge of the relative academic standards of Australian higher education and an increase in public confidence in Australian higher education.

- Through AUQA's work with other quality assurance agencies, the international quality assurance requirements for Australian higher education institutions will be coherent and rigorous, avoiding duplication and inconsistency.

- AUQA's advice will be sought on quality assurance in higher education, through mechanisms including consulting, training and publications.

- AUQA will be recognised among its international peers as a leading quality assurance agency, collaborating with other agencies and providing leadership by example.

Values

In its external relations, AUQA will be:

- *Rigorous:* AUQA carries out all its audits as rigorously and thoroughly as possible.

- *Supportive:* AUQA recognises institutional autonomy in setting objectives and implementing processes to achieve them, and acts to facilitate and support this.

- *Flexible:* AUQA operates flexibly, in order to acknowledge and reinforce institutional diversity, and is responsive to institution and agency characteristics and needs.

- *Cooperative:* AUQA recognises that the achievement of quality in any organisation depends on a commitment to quality within the organisation itself, and so operates as unobtrusively as is consistent with effectiveness and rigour.

- *Collaborative:* as a quality assurance agency, AUQA works collaboratively with the accrediting agencies (in addition to its audit role with respect to these agencies).

- *Transparent:* AUQA's audit procedures, and its own quality assurance system, are open to public scrutiny.

- *Economical:* AUQA operates cost-effectively and keeps as low as possible the demands it places on institutions and agencies.

- *Open:* AUQA reports publicly and clearly on its findings in relation to institutions, agencies and the sector.

APPENDIX C: THE AUDIT PANEL

Mr Ian Kimber, Executive Director, Queensland Office of Higher Education (Chair)

Ms Karen Treloar, Audit Director, Australian Universities Quality Agency

APPENDIX D: ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following abbreviations and definitions are used in this Report. As necessary, they are explained in context.

AIM	Australian Institute of Music
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
DEEWR	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EFTSL	equivalent full-time student load
FEE-HELP	FEE-HELP is a loan given to eligible fee-paying students to help pay part or all of their tuition fees.
HEP(s)	higher education provider(s)
HESA	*Higher Education Support Act 2003*
IT	information technology
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (now MCEECDYA (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs))
NSAI(s)	non self-accrediting institution(s)
PF p	Performance Portfolio page reference
Portfolio	Performance Portfolio
QAFs	Quality Audit Factors

Notes

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