



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

**ABBAY ROAD TRAINING LIMITED
t/a Abbey Road Institute**

Company reg. no. – 09201312

Full Name	Abbey Road Training Limited t/a Abbey Road Institute
Address	Angel Studios, 311-312 Upper Street, London, N1 2TU Abbey Road Studios, 3 Abbey Road, London, NW8 9AY
Parent\Company name	Abbey Road Institute
Telephone Number	02072667397
Email Address	london@abbeyroadinstitute.com
Website	www.abbeyroadinstitute.com
Principal	Mr Mike Sinnott
Proprietor	Mr Luca Barassi
Age Range	18+
Total number of students	66
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 66 FE only: 66
Inspection dates	29 – 31 March 2022

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges and, by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT	2
2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS	5
(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival	5
(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum	5
(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning	6
(d) Attainment and progress	7
4 STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY	8
(a) Health, safety and security of the premises	8
(b) Student registration and attendance records	9
(c) Pastoral support for students	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) Ownership and oversight	11
(b) Management structures and responsibilities	11
(c) Quality assurance including student feedback	12
(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks	12
(e) Provision of information	13
6 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	14
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	15

1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Abbey Road Institute is the trading name of Abbey Road Training limited, a private limited company with share capital incorporated in 2014. Oversight is provided by a board of five directors who provide industry experience and work closely with the Institute. The Institute is an FE learning provider of vocational music production and training in sound engineering offering a 48-week course Advanced Diploma in Music Production and Sound Engineering (NCFE) from its facilities at Angel Recording Studios in Islington and Abbey Road Studios in St John's Wood. It also recently launched a part-time Advanced Diploma in Audio Post Production for Film and TV. In addition, the Institute offers a number of short courses in music production which take place mainly at weekends. The campus manager provides day-to-day management and is supported by a small team of staff.
- 1.2 The Institute aims to develop students as professionals with the technical skills, knowledge and expertise for a career in music production, sound engineering or as a self-producing artist through an intensive programme in line with industry specifications to prepare for future employment in this sector. Enrolment for the diploma courses takes place in February, June and October each year. Students are required to apply by letter, submitting a CV and a portfolio of four music productions they have produced and are invited for interview, which includes performance on their chosen musical instrument.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection there were 66 students enrolled at the Institute. The majority of students are male and are all over 18 years. Most students come from the UK with the remainder from EU countries. The Institute has identified four students who currently receive additional support for learning difficulties and disabilities. The Institute does not provide accommodation.
- 1.4 The Institute was last inspected in 30 November - 01 December 2021 when it did not meet expectations for the quality of education and the quality of education had not been maintained.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The institute exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Initial assessment is excellent and is used effectively by teachers in planning lessons and identifying learner support needs. A thorough selection process ensures prospective students are able to meet the demands of the programme and progress to employment in the music production industry. The curriculum structure is excellent and closely reflects the requirements of the music production industry allowing students to make excellent progress. Comprehensive schemes of work and lesson plans are available to students through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) allowing them to prepare for their lessons. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and industry experience using these very effectively to develop student knowledge, understanding and skills. Assessment is excellent, marking and feedback are used constructively to support students and direct them how they may improve most effectively and is recorded in their individualised learning plan (ILP). Resources are excellent and mirror industry standards. Student outcomes are excellent and reflect confident, self-managed learning. Success rates are very high and the vast majority progress to employment within the industry. Courses on offer to applicants under student visa arrangements meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in Home Office guidance.
- 2.3 The arrangements for students' welfare, including health and safety, are excellent, staff of the institute have a very high regard for health and safety. There is an effective fire safety policy supported by staff properly trained as fire marshals. Alarm tests, equipment maintenance and evacuation drills are carried out regularly and recorded accurately. Staff and students are fully briefed on safety matters, including special consideration of safe working practice in the studios, and contribute towards the health and safety of the premises. Consultants in construction and safety have been effective in supporting health and safety for the institute's buildings renovation project. There is a good first aid policy which is effectively implemented and suitably supported by trained staff. Premises are of a high standard and mirror industry requirement studios. Registration and attendance records are very accurate and well maintained. Systems are in place for reporting to Home Office in the event of failure to enrol or unsatisfactory attendance of students under student visa arrangements. Pastoral support is excellent, relations between staff and student are excellent and students confirm they are confident to approach staff on personal matters.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. Ownership and oversight are excellent. Members of the board of directors bring considerable industry experience to the work of the Institute setting a clear educational direction and professional ethos. They play an active role in monitoring the activities and determining strategic development and compliance with legal requirements. The Institute has developed effective policies to direct its activities.

Management is highly effective in self-evaluation, determining areas for development, setting priorities and monitoring action to achieve improvement. Rigorous processes monitor the quality of provision and outcomes for students. Appraisal is used effectively to monitor staff performance and includes lesson observation although this is not fully documented. Staff and student feedback information is collected and recorded systematically. Regular data reports on student activity are made to the board and are used well to improve the student experience. Technology is used well to record information and communication but is not always easily accessible. Staff recruitment is very well managed and all checks are made prior to confirmation of appointment although staff retention is very high.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to and on arrival is excellent. Accurate information on the institute and the courses provided is available through the website. The opportunity to arrange informal discussions and visits to the Institute can also be made through the website before applying.
- 3.2 The applications process is rigorous, thorough consideration is given to all applicants by the programme director and campus manager. The selection process is extremely well managed and is designed to identify student aptitude and ensure that the successful students are able to meet the exacting demands of the course and progress to employment within the music production and sound engineering industry.
- 3.3 Detailed and highly accurate records of all contact with prospective students are maintained from their initial enquiry to their visits to the institute for discussion with staff to assess their suitability for the programme.
- 3.4 Initial and diagnostic assessment is used very effectively by tutors in planning a programme of study which is very well matched to student interests, aptitudes and career intentions and in identifying detailed support needs of students. The outcomes of the assessment are used very effectively to inform the ILP's which are monitored frequently enabling students to take responsibility for the management of their own learning.
- 3.5 Students receive very effective support and guidance ensuring that they are well prepared for learning and for the challenges of working in the music and sound engineering industry. In consequence, the outcomes for students are excellent, withdrawal from programmes is low and success rates very high.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.6 Course provision and curriculum is excellent, the curriculum structure is clear and readily understood by students. Accurate and detailed information on the courses is available through the institute website.
- 3.7 The curriculum is very well designed with integrated components accurately reflecting the requirements of industry and student needs. Students receive excellent support to consolidate their understanding in areas in which they feel less confident. Students are encouraged to accept greater responsibility for their learning as the course progresses, developing the knowledge and skills, which they will require in their future employment.

- 3.8 Comprehensive, high-quality information in the schemes of work and lesson plans are available through the institute's VLE. Students are able to appreciate the progression of knowledge and skills demanded by the music production and sound engineering industry. In addition, it enables students to prepare effectively in advance of lectures and workshops.
- 3.9 The range of provision is excellent and meets the requirements of aptitudes, age and experience of the students who enrol, in addition to providing appropriate opportunities for progression to further study
- 3.10 Courses on offer to students under student visa arrangements meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in the Home Office guidance.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.11 The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are excellent and support excellent progress. Teaching is highly effective in enabling students to learn well and show high achievement. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and considerable experience of their industry which are used effectively in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding of students. Teachers exhibit in-depth understanding of the prior attainments, interests, aptitudes and aspirations of their students and use these very well to support and plan learning.
- 3.12 Teaching is extremely well planned using a wide range of strategies to engage students and sustain their participation and motivation. Relevant current examples from industry are used very well in developing activities which challenge students. The vast majority of students make very good progress in lessons, individual assignments, workshops and group projects. Resources are of high quality, of industry standard and are used most effectively to support learning. Activities address student needs accurately and reflect industry demands promoting highly effective learning. Students have a positive attitude towards learning and demonstrate enthusiasm for the development of their technical skills and knowledge.
- 3.13 Active participation is excellent and involvement is promoted in all lessons. Opportunities for checking learning are used very effectively and confirm individual understanding before progressing to the next task.
- 3.14 Assessment is excellent. Marking and constructive feedback are of very high quality and provide excellent guidance explaining the most effective ways students can improve. Marking schemes are used consistently by all staff, are clearly understood by students, and are matched to music industry standards. Meetings with students are regularly held to track their progress and establish targets for improvement and are recorded in their ILPs.
- 3.15 Students whose first language is not English receive very good support in English skills and technical language within the course. Further provision is made through association with a local English Language school. The curriculum makes provision for students who have learning difficulties or disabilities and accurately reflects

student prior attainment and cultural background. The teaching supports the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Teaching does not discriminate and promotes high levels of respect for others.

- 3.16 Student outcomes are excellent and illustrate their skills as confident, reflective and independent learners who are able to progress into music production and sound recording industry on completion of the course.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.17 Attainment and progress are excellent. Attainment is consistently high over time; students make good progress in their courses and against their starting point. Completion rates are high and success against each of these measures is maintained over time. Student success rates are very high and are maintained at this level. The pass rate of 80% in examinations is achieved by all but a very small minority. Achievement of learning goals during the course is very good and most students make excellent progress developing skills and understanding relevant to their core objectives of employment within the music production industry. Progress is monitored closely and highly effective support provided where necessary.
- 3.18 Reference to historical data from the Advanced Diploma is used for comparison and to ensure consistency of standards. Student performance is monitored through regular progress reports made to the board and is matched against industry requirements. Employment rates of students successfully completing the course are very high. Career destinations are effectively recorded through the Institute's Alumni.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Health, safety and security of the premises are excellent, the institute and staff have a very high regard for health and safety. Highly effective arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and visitors to the premises and to minimise risk from fire and other hazards. Students and staff make an active contribution to all matters relating to health and safety including good working practices.
- 4.2 The comprehensive fire safety policy is supported through effective facilities management at both Institute sites. Updates are made regularly following review in any changes to the buildings. Appropriate alarm systems are tested frequently and detailed records maintained. Fire equipment is well maintained and located at suitable points in the buildings. Evacuation drills are held regularly and equipment placed to give effective support in evacuation for persons with disabilities. Thorough risk assessments and fire safety audits have been conducted by a specialist consultancy and recommendations fully implemented. Clear signage is located throughout the building. All appropriate measures have been carried out to ensure that there is legal compliance with Health and Safety requirements. Staff and students have regular briefing on matters of Health and Safety, including fire safety, during induction. Students views on safety matters are positively sought and acted upon. Special attention is drawn to the specific safety measures for dedicated work spaces. Staff are properly trained fire marshals.
- 4.3 The Institute has a very good, written first aid policy which is implemented well and supported by trained staff who receive regular updating. Appropriate records of incidents are maintained and actions take to minimise future incidents.
- 4.4 The Abbey Road Studio premises are fit for purpose and provide a high quality safe and secure learning environment. The Angel Recording Studios premises have been completely renovated and upgraded. Specialist consultancies in construction and health and safety confirm full compliance with building and safety regulations. The Angel studios are fit for purpose and are very well maintained to a standard which ensures the health and safety of students, staff and visitors. Effective measures are in place to ensure the security of those who visit or work in the studios. Access to the premises allows all students, including those who have special needs, to enter or leave in safety. Students are involved in discussing matters of safety with senior management and regard the safety of the learning environment as good.
- 4.5 Free drinking water is available from a number of points in the buildings.
- 4.6 There are sufficient washrooms for staff and students including those persons with special needs and disabilities.
- 4.7 All study areas and studios are extremely well equipped and fit for purpose. The buildings are maintained to a very high standard in a clean, tidy and hygienic state.

The lighting, heating, ventilation and sound insulation in teaching and public areas are very good. There is an excellent standard of maintenance and decoration throughout the premises. Furniture and fittings are appropriate for the needs of all students recognising the demands of the working environment.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.8 Student registration and attendance records are excellent. The institute maintains highly accurate records of admissions. Student information is kept on electronic files which are secure. Students are clear about fee collection procedures, including deposits and fee refund, which they consider to be fair.
- 4.9 There is a clear and effective attendance policy of which students are informed in induction. Attendance is accurately and meticulously recorded at the beginning of each class. The register is electronic and allows for various reports to be produced. In this way management do monitor attendance within each class and generate attendance reports. Levels of attendance are excellent. There are effective systems for making contact with students who are absent and clear procedures for reporting to the Home Office when students fail to enrol or do not comply with attendance requirements.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.10 Pastoral support is excellent, there is a well written pastoral care policy with clear procedures for the support of students. A senior manager has responsibility for pastoral care. Focussed sessions to raise staff awareness of matters relating to student care are arranged for staff through the Human Resources department. Learning support needs are recognised early during the course and there is evidence that the support provided has a positive impact on learning promoting good progress and high achievement.
- 4.11 There are excellent relations between staff and students and among students. Students receive high levels of support from tutors on both personal and academic professional issues. Students confirm that they feel confident to approach staff on personal matters.
- 4.12 The institute promotes tolerance and integration very strongly. There are very few instances of bullying and harassment, any that do occur are dealt with rapidly and appropriately.
- 4.13 Students receive a highly effective induction at the beginning of their course which introduces them to the course requirements, the resources and regulations. Students are well prepared to meet the demands of the programme of study and expectations of employment within the music production and sound engineering industries.

- 4.14 There is a very productive social programme which serves to introduce student groups to recent graduates of the course and newly qualified students working in the industry.
- 4.15 Throughout the course excellent careers advice is provided by teaching staff, visiting tutors and specialists working in the industry. Students receive excellent guidance enabling them to make informed choices about their progression to further study or employment.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 Ownership and oversight are excellent. The proprietor as a member of the Board of Directors provides very effective oversight of the institute in accordance with its aims. Responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, staffing, accommodation, resources, and welfare health and safety are fully and effectively discharged. The proprietor has a positive presence and is involved with senior management in setting the aims and purpose of the Institute.
- 5.2 Members of the Board of Directors have excellent appreciation of the working of the Institute and lead its strategic development. They bring considerable industry expertise and are highly effective in monitoring the performance of the Institute, and bringing appropriate support and challenge. They ensure the effective performance of the Institute and successful outcomes. The proprietor and members of the board ensure that the Institute holds all legal permissions.
- 5.3 The Board of Directors is very effective in monitoring the Institute's progress; it meets quarterly and receives management reports from the Institute against the key performance indicators (KPI's).
- 5.4 There is a very effective relationship between the proprietor and the senior staff of the institute. Working closely with Institute staff, their communication is direct, very effective and support is highly productive.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.5 Management structures and responsibilities are excellent. Leadership and management are highly effective in discharging their devolved responsibilities. They support a clear educational direction in line with the aims and development of a professional ethos. This is reflected in the quality of education, care of students, fulfilling the Institute's aims and ethos.
- 5.6 Management provides highly appropriate policies which direct the activities of the Institute and ensures that these are well implemented and regularly reviewed for effectiveness.
- 5.7 Leadership and management are very effective in self-evaluation identifying areas for development and establishing priorities, targets and timescales monitoring actions which lead to improvement in outcome.
- 5.8 Management is appropriately and highly effective in identifying and supporting high quality staff through contacts within the industry and ensuring that they are sufficiently qualified and experienced to meet student needs.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.9 Quality assurance is excellent, there are robust quality assurance mechanisms in place which result in the improvement of the quality of the educational experience for students.
- 5.10 Management is very successful in identifying areas for development through self-evaluation. Effective planning meets the priorities for improvement and implementing decisions. Staff are aware of the institute's strengths and areas for development through self-evaluation. Managers have good access to a range of accurate data, analyse it and use it very effectively to manage and improve their provision.
- 5.11 There is a very effective appraisal strategy including lesson observation which contributes to identifying development opportunities and areas for improvement including peer observation although not all details of the scheme are fully documented.
- 5.12 Accurate reports of student data on attendance, progress and achievement are used with KPIs and submitted regularly to the Institute board and are used effectively to improve provision.
- 5.13 Regular comprehensive feedback from students is sought, recorded and used very well to identify aspects of the course for development and which result in improvement of outcomes for students.
- 5.14 Technology is used very effectively in recording information and communication. The extensive management information held electronically is not always readily accessible to support monitoring performance.
- 5.15 There is a clear complaints procedure, available on both the website and VLE, which allows records to be kept at each stage of the process. Should the matter fail to be resolved there are effective opportunities for impartial, external resolution.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.16 Staff recruitment is excellent, there is a clear staffing policy. Prior to confirmation of staffing appointment appropriate checks are carried out to confirm identity and right to work in the UK. In addition, employment history, qualifications and experience are confirmed with references taken up. A probationary period is undertaken under supervision to determine teaching skills and abilities. Prospective teachers are identified through contacts with the music production and sound recording industry.
- 5.17 There is a small core staff which is augmented through a programme of highly experienced visiting lecturers who are specialists in their field of music production and sound engineering. Staff retention is very high.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.18 Provision of information is excellent; the Institute website contains all of the information required and the Institute provided all of the information required by inspection in a timely manner.
- 5.19 The information available on the website is sufficient to enable prospective students to make an informed choice of course and location of provider.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the Institute should:

- Ensure that all information held electronically is readily accessible.
- Document the lesson observation scheme fully to contribute to appraisal.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the Institute.

Inspectors

Mr Peter Wood	Lead Inspector
Ms Margaret Arokiasamy	Team Inspector